

## What Happened to the Reptiles

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### SUMMARY OF THE LESSON

The narrator Prem lived in a village close to the jungle. There were all kinds of people in the village. They differed in faith, colour and size. They spoke different languages and had different eating habits.

Last year, the people went mad in the name of their religious faith. They fought with one another. They burnt temples and mosques. Prem's house also went up in flames. With some money and clothes, he fled from the village. He travelled for two days and two nights. He reached a village called Pambupatti. He fainted near a well.

An old man took Prem under his care. So many people came to visit him. Prem was surprised to see such peace and harmony in the village. The old man then told him a story. He explained why the people in that village lived in peace.

The incident happened a long, long time ago. There were no schools then. People lived in caves. The forest had only panthers, elephants and reptiles, like snakes, crocodiles, lizards and tortoises.

The reptiles used to meet once a month. The meeting was presided over by the huge and powerful crocodile, called Makara. Nobody dared challenge his authority. They went along with him.

One day Makara decided to get rid of the tortoises. He wrote to them not to come to the meeting. He told the reptiles that tortoises were useless creatures. They were slow and stupid. But without tortoises, the forest was filled with the foul smell of rotting fruits and fishes.

Next month Makara drove all the snakes out because they were slippery and ugly looking. The rats multiplied in the absence

of snakes. Then came the turn of insect-eating lizards. Now only the crocodiles lived in the forest. But the rats, frogs, insects and foul smell made their lives miserable.

It was a terrible time. The reptiles revolted against Makara. They called all the tortoises, lizards and snakes back. In a short time the forest was back to normal.

The people later on realised that all sorts of creatures played equally important roles in the world.

### TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED

#### EXERCISE

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**1. In what way is Pambupatti different from any other village?**

**Ans.** While the people in other villages clashed with one another, people of Pambupatti lived in peace. They did not fight in the name of religion or language. In this way, Pambupatti is different from any other village.

**2. Why is Prem determined not to return to his village?**

**Ans.** Prem had left his village when the people had gone mad. They set the houses on fire and killed one another. So Prem is determined not to return to his village.

**3. Why did Makara dislike tortoises, snakes and lizards? Write a line about each.**

**Ans.** Makara disliked tortoises because they were slow and stupid. They even carried their houses on their backs.

He disliked snakes because they were slimy and they made funny noises.

Makara hated lizards because they were undependable because they changed colour.

**4. What went wrong when the tortoises, snakes and lizards left the forest?**

**Ans.** There came a tough time. The forest got filled with foul smell of rotting fruits and fishes in the absence of tortoises. Rats multiplied in the absence of snakes and without lizards, there were millions of insects in the forests.

**5. Why do you think Prem wants to tell the story of the reptiles to the people of his village?**

**Ans.** The people of Prem's village had gone mad. They fought with one another in the name of religion. The story of Pambupatti gave the message of peace and coexistence. It underlined the importance of living together. So Prem wanted to carry that message to his own village.

**6. Do you agree that it is difficult not to go along with someone who is very strong and powerful? Express your views frankly and clearly.**

**Ans.** It is true that the common people are peace loving and weak. They live in constant fear of the strong and powerful. It is human nature to go with the strong, to be on the safe side. But the people also stand up against the bully when they are driven to the wall. They take up arms and fight the enemy successfully.

**7. If you were a baby crocodile, would you tell Makara that he was wrong? What would you say to convince him?**

**Ans.** As a baby crocodile, I have a privilege to oppose my parents boldly. I would tell the elders that this world is a common property of all living creatures. To convince my dad, Makara, that he is wrong, I will give him a couple of reasons. First, it is the duty of the strong to protect the weak, and not to harass them. Secondly, this earth is not the sole property of any one person or animal. All are inter-dependent. Together, they make this earth a place worth-living.