



Stories in pictures

CHANCES AND CHOICES

VIDYA AND RAJARAM SHARMA

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Vidya
Online

A PARTNERSHIP FOR TEACHERS, CHILDREN AND EDUCATION



A story based on observations made at a residential campus in South Delhi during the months of May - July 2016.

Photographs in this book may not show the actual size of birds.



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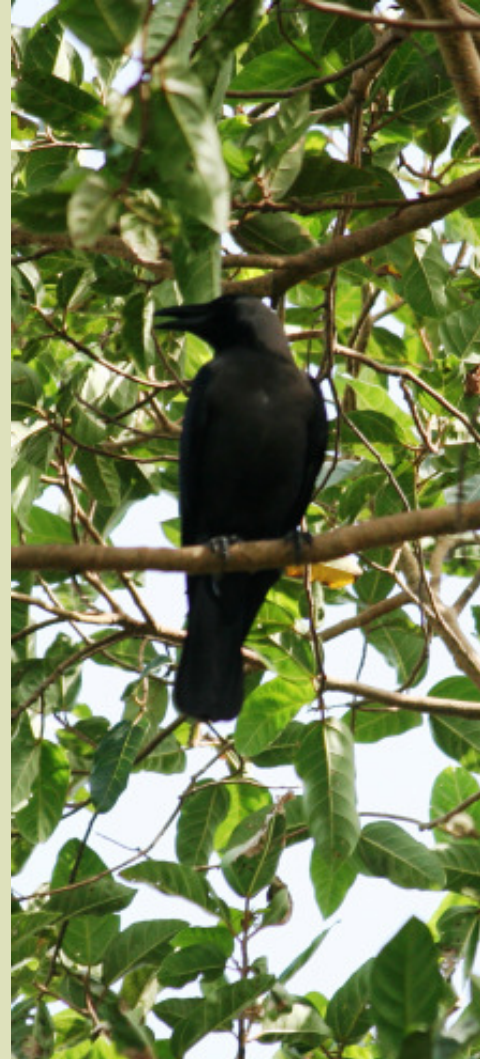
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When you make a choice, you take a chance;
things may go one way or the other.

You speak in riddles. Now, who is this 'you'?

Let's say 'us'. Both you and me!

Oh! A riddle again. What about us? What
choices have we made?





Well ... don't be jumpy. I speak of the Babbler family.

Oh! So it is not about you and not about me!

Patience! It is about us. About all of us who makes choices and takes chances.

I promise to be patient! I am all ears. But spare me the task of connecting dots. Be explicit and clear. Nothing more nothing less.





So be it. Listen: The starting point is a banana plant. This plant has no choice. It is a plant and not a tree –

Plant ... tree ... now what – ?

I warned you... not to interrupt! A tree is a plant of course. But banana is a non-tree plant. Where is the confusion? Why ask when you know what I meant. Now shall I proceed?





Good! Now listen and attend to what I say.

As a matter of chance, the banana plant, the one I speak of, was planted in this garden. Again, as a matter of chance this plant received good nourishment. It grew tall and healthy. As normal, when the plant grew sufficiently, it set out to flower, one tier of flowers after the other. From the flowers emerged the fruit.





The healthy plant produced many tiers of banana. The whole bunch turned out to be huge!

Sometime in May, a family of babblers eyed the forming bunch and made a choice. They chose the gap between the topmost two tiers to build their nest! They based their choice on a well accepted checklist. To their delight, they could completely and fully check all items on the list.

Babbler's nest building checklist

1. Safe ☒
2. Hidden ☒
3. Appropriate height ☒
4. Spacious ☒
5. A sturdy base to build on ☒
6. Good supply of raw materials
for building the nest (nearby) ☒
7. Good supply of food for themselves
and their chicks (nearby) ☒





Hectic activities – 15 days of nest building; about the same time for incubating their lovely blue eggs; feeding the hatchlings – everything proceeded like clockwork!

When the chicks were about four days old, it was time for change to make its presence felt. The gardener forgot to support the plant. And the plant could do little to support itself. The ripening banana bunch weighed the plant down.





The weak stem bent and angled itself.
Checklist items 1 to 3 got unticked!

The new geometry of the banana plant
brought down the nest from over 10 feet to
less than 3.

The nest however remained sturdy in the
new position. The babblers continued to
nurture their chicks. All four of them.





Now, it is all too well known that chance accompanies every change and changes offer newer opportunities.

Our present case is no exception. It was time once again for chance to present itself. A chance that a snake took.

Don't gasp! I know you have guessed what would have followed but let me describe the happenings in my words.





With the checklist item 1 unticked, a snake used the bananas to slither up and sneaking into the nest, gobbled up two chicks.

However the opportunist was spotted!

The spotter then got a chance to make a choice. He made a choice that favoured the babblers and sounded the death knell for the snake.





Of the two remaining chicks, nobody knows what happened to one of them. The other remained in the nest; safe.

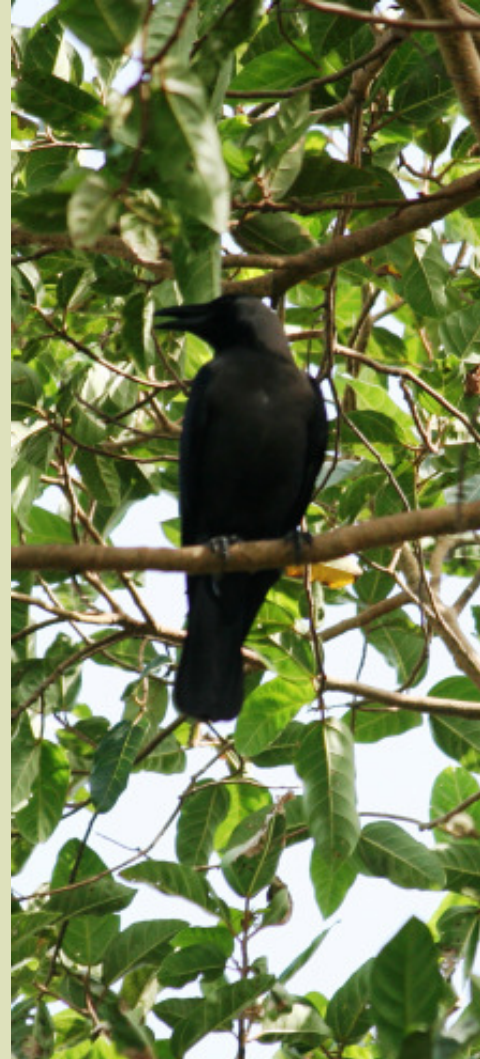
With the snake out of the picture, the sole survivor flourished under the continual parental care and fledged.

The fledgling made a clever choice and created for itself a safe niche between the fences. There it stayed till it could fly.





Therefore ... it is easy to see that status quo holds in the matter of chances and choices – things may go one way or the other. Unless of course





The Nesting Dairy of Jungle Babblers

- May 04 Commencement of nest building
- June 01 The first egg hatched
- June 04 Banana plant got bent
- June 10 Snake attacked the chicks
- June 11 The lone chick fledged





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