



## Lesson- 3

### The Boy with a Catapult

**Summary:** The story is about Bodh Raj, the oddest fellow in the author's class. Bodh Raj was a terrible child, everybody was afraid of him. He would catch a wasp with his bare fingers and pull out its sting, tie a thread around it and fly it like a kite. He would pounce on a butterfly sitting on a flower and crush it between his fingers or stick a pin through it and put it in his notebook. It was said that if a scorpion stung Bodh Raj, the scorpion would fall dead. He always carried a catapult with him and used to shoot birds which were his favourite target. He would climb up trees and take away eggs and completely destroy the nest. He took pleasure in hunting others. Even his mother called him a Rakshasa.

The author lived in a large, old styled bungalow which had a garden full of trees and shrubs which had many nets, monkeys roamed about and under the bushes lived a pair of mongooses. Bodh Raj, found the garden a good hunting place. The author's mother did not approve of their friendship and called Bodh Raj a devil. She once asked the author to call Bodh Raj and make him clean their storeroom since he was very fond of destroying nests. The storeroom was full of birds nest, bird droppings, broken eggs, bits of straw littered from the nests and feathers, it was filthy. So, when Bodh Raj came, the author was quite apprehensive as he was afraid Bodh Raj might kill the birds or eggs and destroy the nests. Both of them found a nest of Ganga Myna which was not usually found in that areas. In the nest they found two chicks and the parents might have gone in search of food. Bodh Raj took out his catapult and made a shot before the author could even stop him. The pebble hit the corrugated iron-sheet on the roof and the cooing of the chicks ceased as they were frightened. He shot at the nest again and again, until both of them suddenly felt the blocking of the sunlight through the ventilator. They saw a large kite with its wing outstretched, gazing down at them fiercely. The kite left the ventilator and perched on the rafter, folded back its wings and peered to the right, and the left. The chicks began to shriek frightened cries. Bodh Raj realised that the kite had come before and attacked other birds and ate them. So Bodh Raj made a plan to save the little myna chicks from the kite. He gave his catapult to the author and asked him to continue hitting the kite while he ran and pulled up a table right under the myna's nest and also placed a broken chair on the table. He climbed quickly on the chair and

gently lifted the nest and slowly stepped down. They ran out of the room and came to the garage, which had only one door and a window in the back wall. A beam ran across its width. Bodh Raj knew that the kite won't be able to get inside the garage, so it was safe for the myna. Bodh Raj asked the author to bring some water as the chicks were thirsty. He fed them with drops of water. They stayed in the garage for a long time with the chicks and discussed plans to close the ventilator so that the kite would not be able to enter again. Bodh Raj came the next day with a bag of seeds and fed the young mynas and spent hours watching their antics.

## Glossary

- Assortment - diverse group or mixture
- Sharpened - made or become quick to understand
- Embarrassment - feeling of awkwardness or shame
- Giggle - laugh in a suppressed spasms in an affected or silly manner
- Countenance - composure
- Pinched - gripped tightly especially between finger and thumb
- Callous - unfeeling, insensitive
- Wasp - stinging insect with black and yellow stripes and a very thin waist
- Rend - tear or wrench forcibly
- Vindictive - tending to seek revenge, spiteful
- Hedgehog - small nocturnal insect eating mammal having a pig like snout and a coat of spines/ porcupine
- Viciously - cruelly, wickedly, ferociously
- Shuddered - trembled violently especially with horror
- Fling - throw or let go off forcefully
- Clamps - places or hold firmly to fasten
- Bristles - short stiff hair
- Apprehensive - uneasily fearful, dreading
- Menacingly - threateningly
- Perched - settled
- Scraggy - thin - short stiff hair
- Apprehensive - uneasily fearful, dreading
- Menacingly - threateningly
- Perched - settled
- Scraggy - thin, bony
- Panting - gasping for breath
- Ravaged - taken by force, robbed
- Crescendo - gradual increase of loudness
- Alighted - got down, landed, settled

