



## Salim Ali : Birdman of India

- Prof. Madhuri D. Sawant

### Dr. Salim Moizuddin Abdul Ali

(November 12, 1896 - July 27, 1987) was the pre-eminent 'Ornithologist of India'.

Many people retain just animals and birds, yet every animal and bird has a different life narrative. One such internationally renowned Indian bird scientist who is familiar with this life story is **Salim Ali**.

Born on November 12, 1896, Dr. Salim Moizuddin Abdul Ali, more often known as Dr. Salim Ali, was India's foremost ornithologist and was dubbed the '**Birdman of India**'. Salim received an air gun from his uncle when he was ten years old. One day, a sparrow with a golden streak below its neck was shot by young Salim. He was referred to the Bombay Natural History Society by his uncle in order to identify the bird. W. S. Millard, the Honorary Secretary, identified the sparrow as a **Yellow-throated Sparrow** and showed him the magnificent collection of stuffed birds the Society has. Through this one event, Dr. Salim Ali developed a passion for birds and decided to pursue a career in **ornithology**.

Salim Ali endured years of struggle and unemployment as a young man. At that time, India scarcely had any openings for ornithologists. Salim Ali relocated to Burma in 1919 to manage the family's mining and logging operations. The naturalist had a great trip because there were numerous opportunities to explore Burma's woodlands. Salim Ali attempted to apply for a position as an ornithologist with the Zoological Survey of India after returning to India, but he was turned down because he lacked a doctorate or a master's degree in science.





Salim Ali made the decision to continue his education in order to be qualified for a position as a guide lecturer at the recently established natural history area of the Prince of Wales

Museum in Bombay. Salim Ali travelled to Germany to further his education under a renowned naturalist. However, he discovered that there weren't many chances for his profession when he returned to India. Then he had a light bulb moment. He made the choice to make an opening.

He learned that the guide lecturer position had been discontinued due to a shortage of funding upon his return to India in 1930. Salim Ali and Tehmina relocated to Kihim, a seaside community close to Mumbai, after failing to find a suitable work, where he started recording his initial observations of the Baya Weaver. At that time, little was known about weaver birds. For about three or four months, he carefully observed the birds. He gained notoriety in the world of ornithology after publishing his research on the bird in 1930.

Large areas of India existed, notably in the princely states, where the avifauna had received little exploration or research. For the BNHS, he offered to do local ornithological surveys in these locations. If the Society and the state government paid for the camping and transportation, he would offer his services without charge. The princely kingdoms easily accepted this unique notion because they were more than eager to have their birds documented for future generations.

Thus, with the support of the rulers of these princely states—Hyderabad, Cochin, Travancore, Gwalior, Indore, and Bhopal—Ali conducted systematic bird surveys there. In Berlin, Ali used all he had learned about field ornithology. Salim Ali had the best years of his career during those years, even though the working conditions weren't optimal for the normal city kid at the time. Dr. Ali is one of the few Indians who truly know every area of their nation, no matter how distant or difficult-to-reach. This is due to the extensive time he spent studying birds in the field over the course of many years.

“My leader hobby in bird examine has continually been its ecology, its existence records under natural situations and





not in a laboratory underneath a microscope. by means of travelling to those faraway, uninhabited places, I could have a look at the birds as they lived and behaved in their habitats”, he as soon as remarked. Ali rediscovered an extraordinary weaver-chook species, Finn’s Baya within the Kumaon Terai area, but changed into unsuccessful in his excursion to find the **Mountain Quail** (*Ophrysia superciliosa*).

Though the ones ornithological survey trips had been a long way from clean bird watching sorties, Salim Ali’s spouse followed him and made camp life as cushty as viable in the ones far flung areas. She turned into not only his spouse, however additionally his script editor, fellow fowl watcher and inspiration.

In 1939, Salim Ali’s spouse Tehmina died unexpectedly after minor surgery. It turned into a first rate blow. Her dying turned into one of the finest tragic experiences of Salim Ali, but, possibly it drove him deeper into the world of birds.

The **Black-rumped Flameback** Woodpecker, first accumulated in Kerala by Ali, is called after his wife, Tehmina (*Dinopium benghalensetehminae*).

After India’s Independence from the lengthy British rule, Salim Ali took over the BNHS and, controlled to shop the 200 - yrs. old institution from last down because of loss of price range. He wrote to Prime Minister Pandit Nehru for help, who at once got here to the rescue, and gave the society price range to tide over its tough period.

It became the sincerity of conviction that had received him awards and medals from everywhere in the world.

Dr salim Ali passed on to the great beyond in 1987 at the age of 91, once a prolonged battle with prostate cancer. However despite all the celebrity and adulation showered upon him, Dr. Ali remained what he was as a 9 year recent - an ever curious person with a passion for birds. The legendary “**Birdman**” opened zoology for the plenty that might otherwise have had life seeing wave shapes and colors. Because of his single-handed contribution, there’s a little cluster of people bird observation in Republic of India today. Dr. Ali is not any additional but his legacy lives on.



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