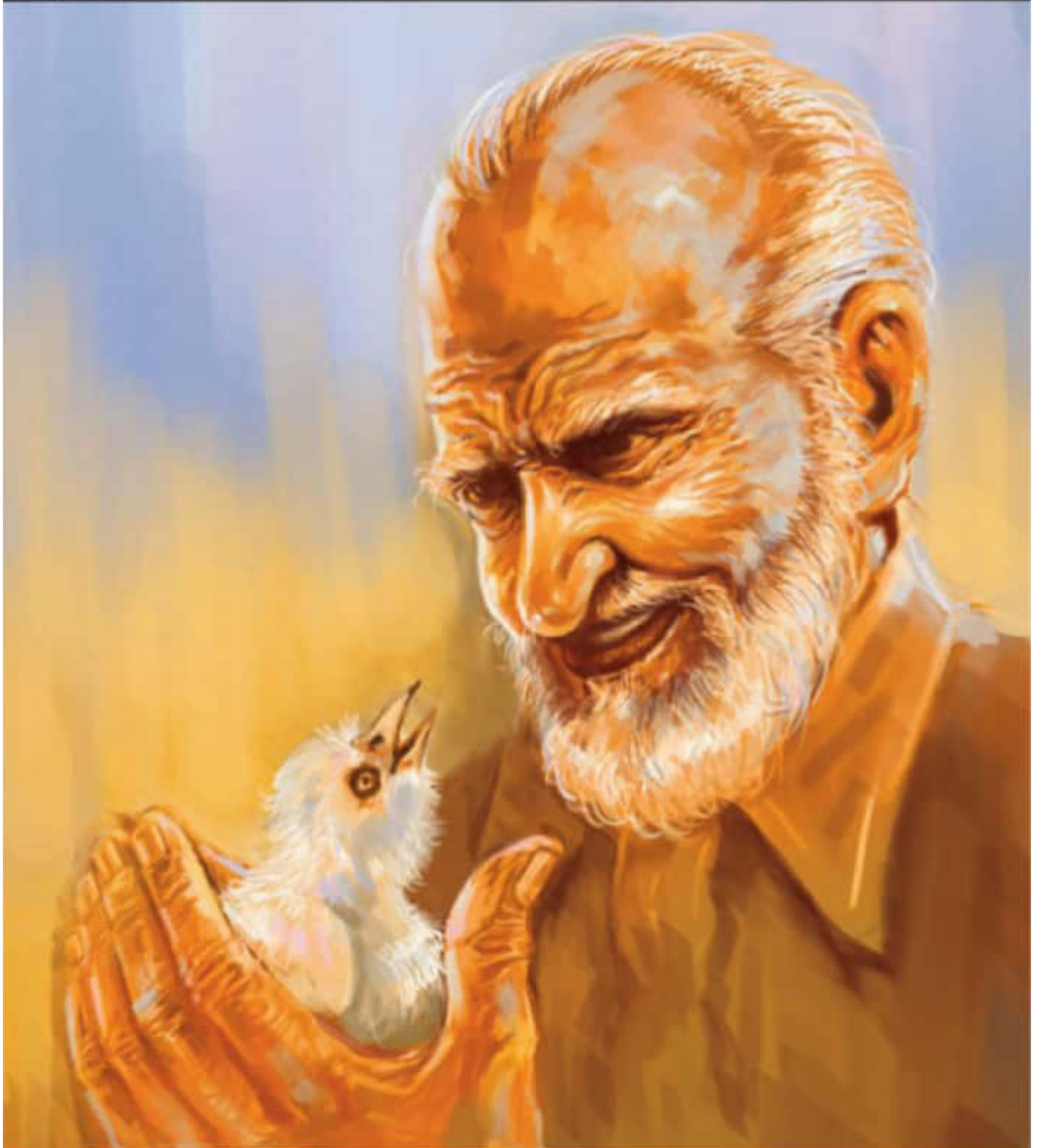




SÁLIM ALI

THE BIRD MAN OF INDIA

Vol. 835



SÁLIM ALI

BOMBAY, 1899. AMIRUDDIN TYABJI AND HIS WIFE HAMIDA BEGUM WERE VERY UPSET.

OUR POOR SISTER, ZEENAT-UN-NISSA, IS NO MORE. HER CHILDREN ARE ORPHANED. COULD WE ...

... ADOPT THEM? IS THAT WHAT YOU'D LIKE?

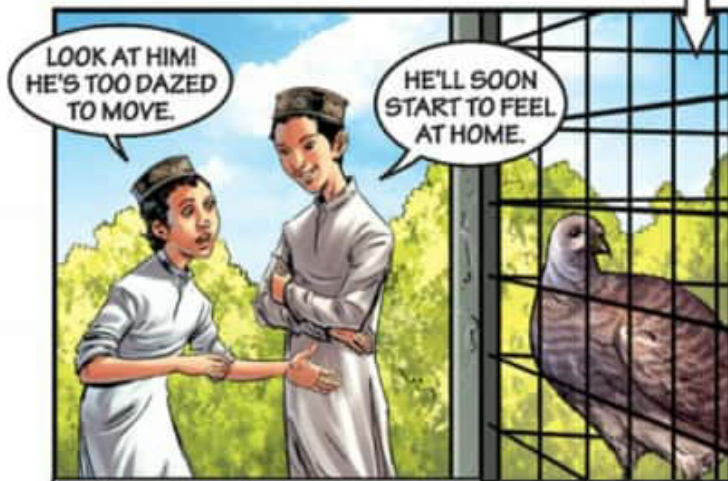
YES. POOR THINGS. THE YOUNGEST, SÁLIM, MUST BE JUST THREE YEARS OLD!

SÁLIM* AND HIS EIGHT SIBLINGS CAME TO LIVE WITH THE TYABJIS IN BOMBAY^. SÁLIM GREW UP WITH LOTS OF COUSINS, NIECES AND NEPHEWS. SOME YEARS LATER -

SÁLIM, I THINK THAT PARTRIDGE KNOWS YOU'VE SAVED HIM FROM THE KITCHEN.

KATEETAR...

* PRONOUNCED SAA-LIM
^ NOW CALLED MUMBAI



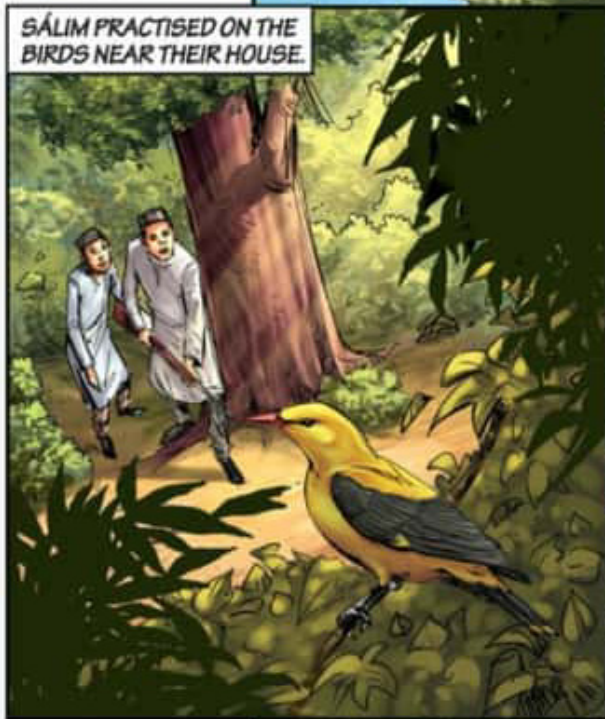
SÁLIM AND HIS NEPHEW SULEIMAN SPENT HOURS WATCHING THEIR PETS.

AMIRUDDIN WAS A KEEN SHIKARI.



AT THE TIME, BOMBAY WAS SURROUNDED BY FORESTS. PEOPLE HUNTED FOR FOOD AND BECAUSE IT WAS CONSIDERED A GENTLEMAN'S SPORT.

SÁLIM YEARNED TO BE A HUNTER LIKE HIS UNCLE. WHEN HE WAS ABOUT NINE -



SÁLIM SOON BECAME VERY GOOD AT SHOOTING DOWN SMALL BIRDS, BUT HE ALSO GOT INTERESTED IN THEIR BEHAVIOUR, OBSERVING THEM CLOSELY.



ONE DAY, SÁLIM SHOT DOWN A LITTLE MALE SPARROW STANDING GUARD OVER A NEST.



AN HOUR LATER, HE PASSED THAT WAY AGAIN.



BANG.



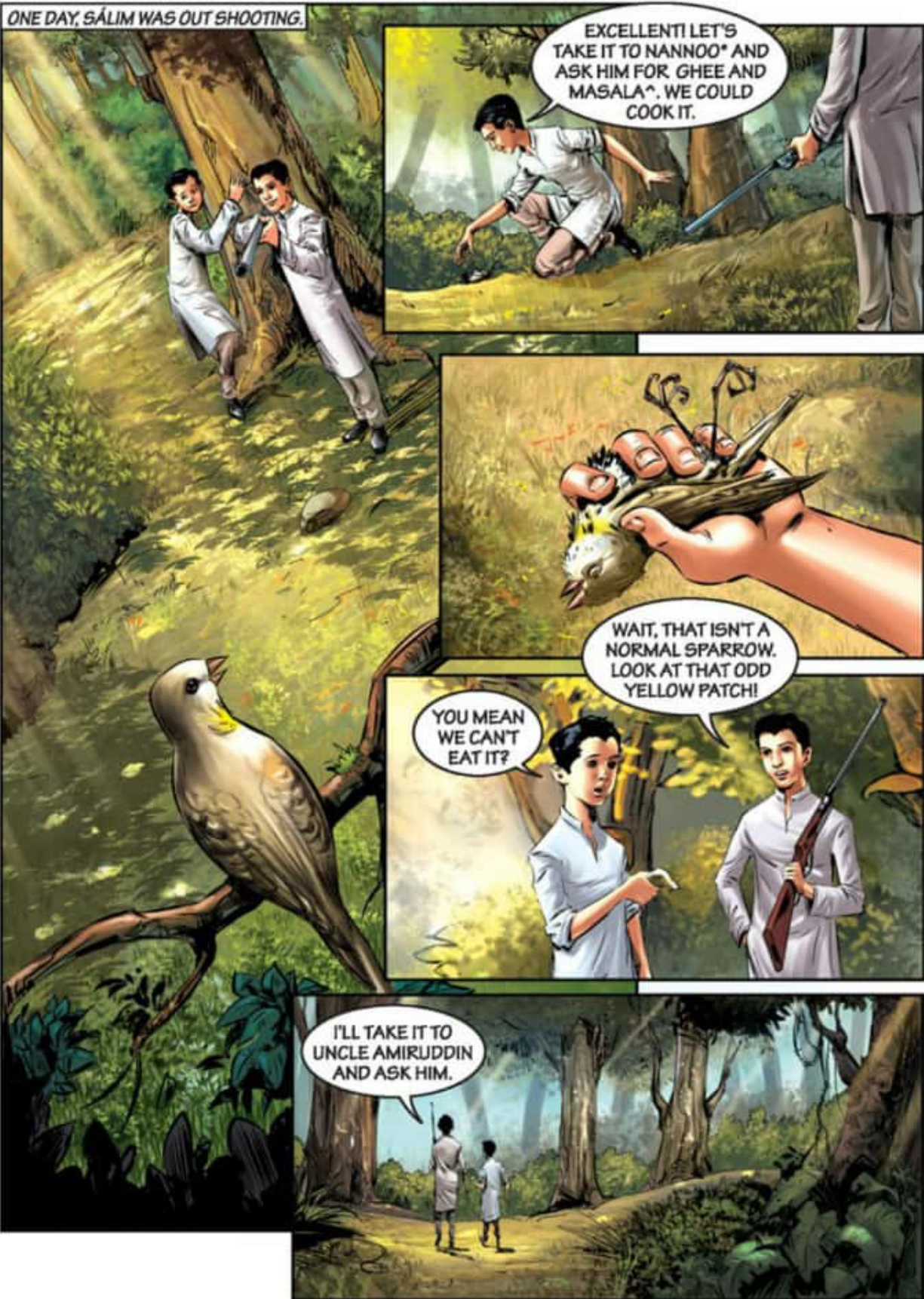
BUT A SHORT WHILE LATER -



SÁLIM WROTE THAT IN SEVEN DAYS, HE SHOT EIGHT MALE SPARROWS WHO HAD COME TO GUARD THE NEST.



ONE DAY, SÁLIM WAS OUT SHOOTING.



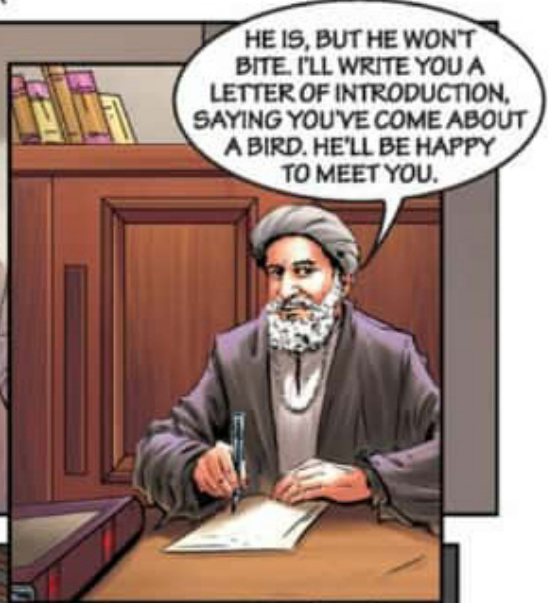
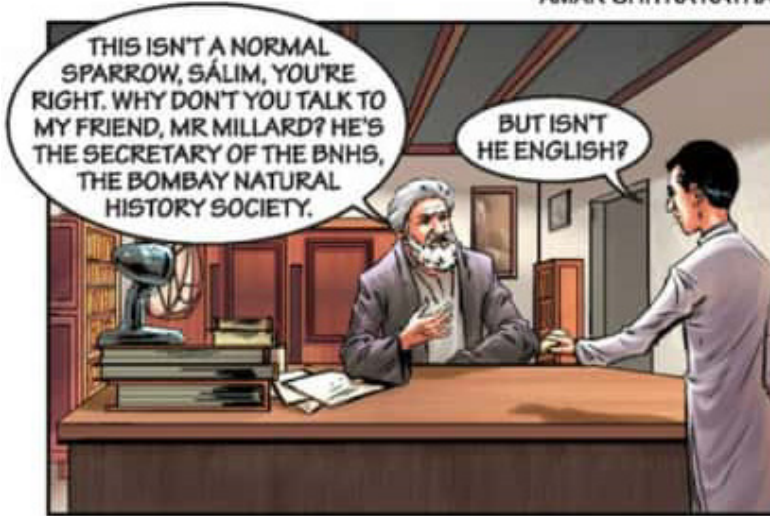
EXCELLENT! LET'S TAKE IT TO NANNOO* AND ASK HIM FOR GHEE AND MASALA^. WE COULD COOK IT.

WAIT, THAT ISN'T A NORMAL SPARROW. LOOK AT THAT ODD YELLOW PATCH!

YOU MEAN WE CAN'T EAT IT?

I'LL TAKE IT TO UNCLE AMIRUDDIN AND ASK HIM.

*NANNOO WAS THE TYABJIS' COOK. HE WAS VERY FOND OF THE CHILDREN, EVEN HELPING SÁLIM WITH HIS AVIARY.
^ CLARIFIED BUTTER AND SPICES



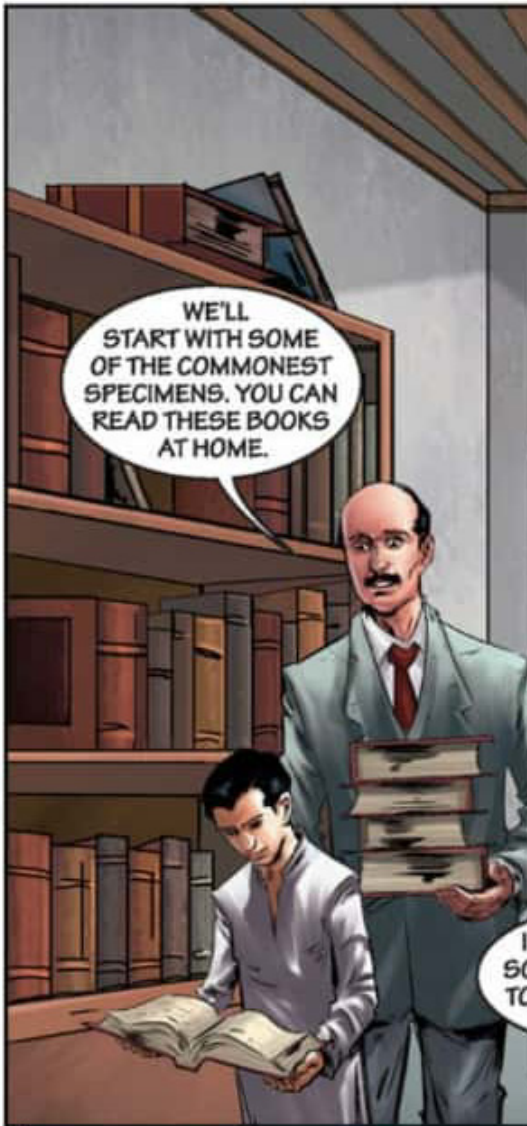
AS SÁLIM WAITED OUTSIDE MR MILLARD'S ROOM AT THE BNHS -



SÁLIM SHOWED MR MILLARD HIS LETTER AND BIRD.



* ALSO CALLED A CHESTNUT-SHOULDERED PETRONIA

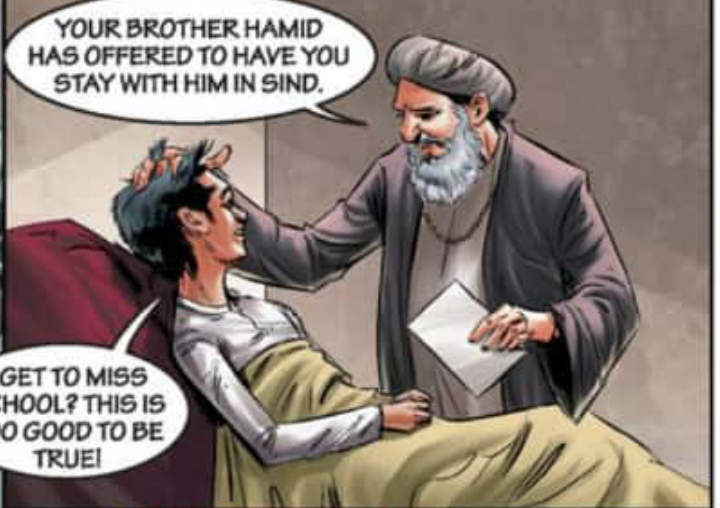


WE'LL START WITH SOME OF THE COMMONEST SPECIMENS. YOU CAN READ THESE BOOKS AT HOME.

THAT NIGHT -



WHEN SÁLIM WAS 14, HE HAD SEVERE HEADACHES. UNABLE TO SAY WHAT CAUSED THEM, THE DOCTOR SUGGESTED HE TAKE A TERM OFF FROM SCHOOL.



YOUR BROTHER HAMID HAS OFFERED TO HAVE YOU STAY WITH HIM IN SIND.

I GET TO MISS SCHOOL? THIS IS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE!

SÁLIM LED AN EXCITING OUTDOOR LIFE IN SIND, EXPLORING THE NEW TERRAIN. HAMID WAS, LIKE MOST OF SÁLIM'S FAMILY, AN EAGER SHIKARI. EARLY ONE MORNING, ON THEIR WAY TO A PARTRIDGE HUNT -



LOOK, SÁLIM, HALLEY'S COMET! IT WON'T APPEAR AGAIN TILL 1986.



I WONDER IF ANY OF US WILL BE ALIVE TO SEE IT THEN.

SÁLIM DID SEE IT AGAIN IN 1986, WHEN HE WAS 90 YEARS OLD.

BUT THE HOLIDAY ENDED, AND SÁLIM MOVED BACK TO BOMBAY. HE MATRICULATED IN 1913, AND JOINED ST XAVIER'S COLLEGE.

I WISH I COULD LEAVE COLLEGE AND BE A HUNTER, UNCLE.

BUT YOU WANT TO LEARN ZOOLOGY.

I DO, BUT WHY DO I NEED TO STUDY MATHS?

YOUR BROTHER JABIR WANTS YOU IN BURMA. YOU'LL BE HIS PARTNER IN A NEW VENTURE, MINING WOLFRAM*.

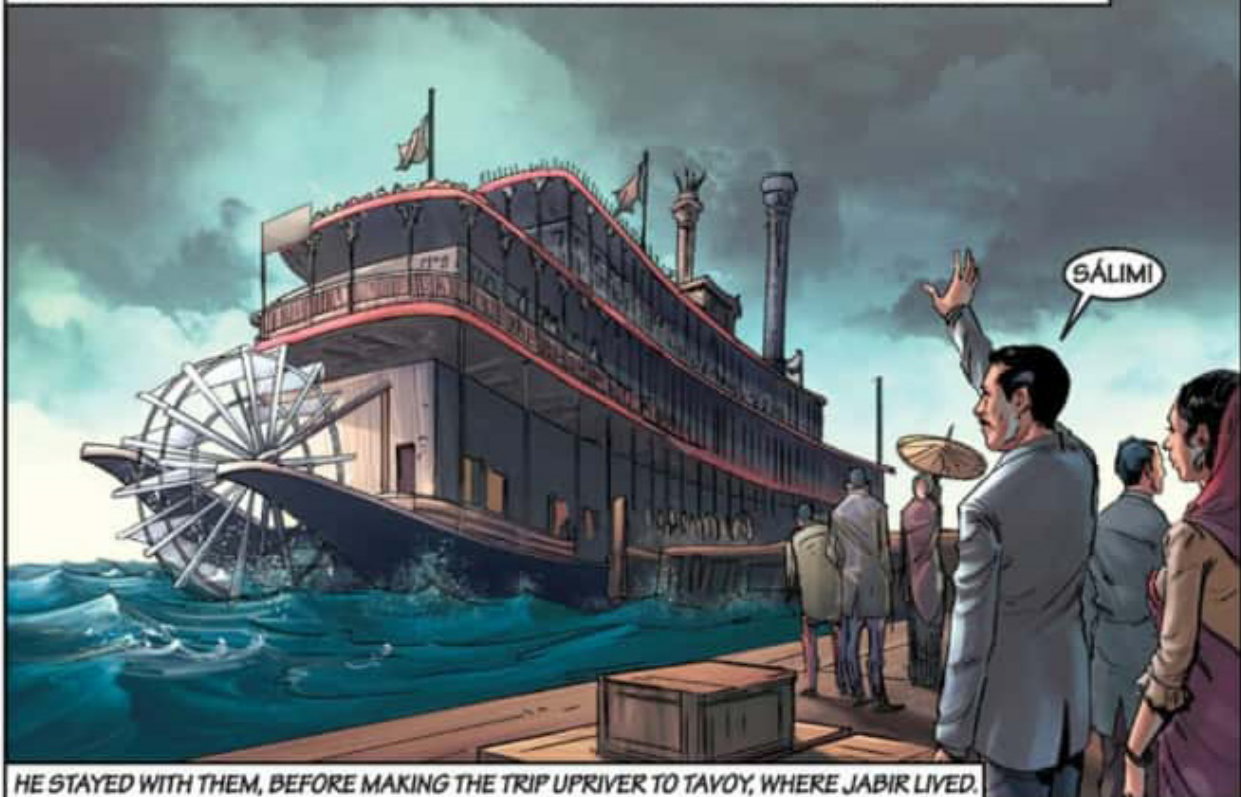
SÁLIM WAS IN LUCK.

SOUNDS INTERESTING!

BUSINESS CAN'T BE WORSE THAN COLLEGE MATHEMATICS. I'D LIKE TO SEE BURMA.

YOU'LL MISS YOUR EXAMS, SÁLIM.

SÁLIM LEFT BOMBAY IN SEPTEMBER 1914. HE TOOK A TRAIN TO CALCUTTA[^] AND THEN A STEAMER ACROSS THE BAY OF BENGAL TO BURMA. HIS SISTER AKHTAR, AND HER HUSBAND SALAH, CAME TO MEET HIM.



SÁLIMI

HE STAYED WITH THEM, BEFORE MAKING THE TRIP UP RIVER TO TAVOY, WHERE JABIR LIVED.

* A RARE METAL, ALSO CALLED TUNGSTEN

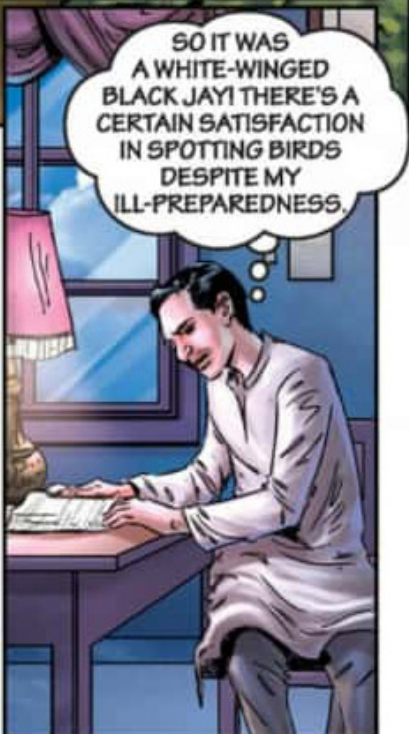
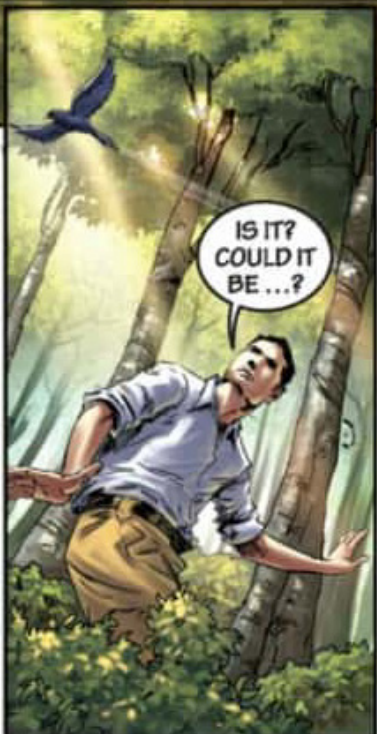
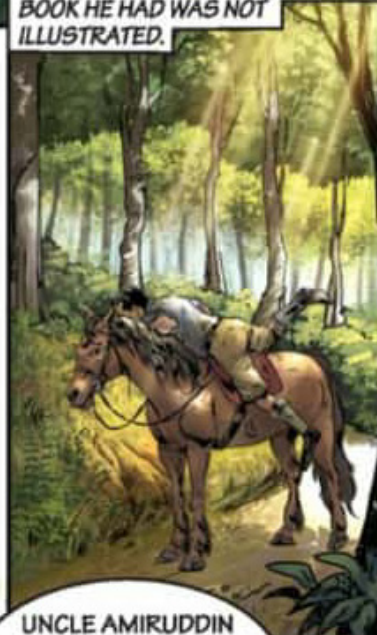
[^] NOW KOLKATA

IN TAVOY, SÁLIM WORKED HARD LEARNING THE BUSINESS. ON WEEKENDS HOWEVER HE WAS FREE TO EXPLORE THE COUNTRYSIDE.

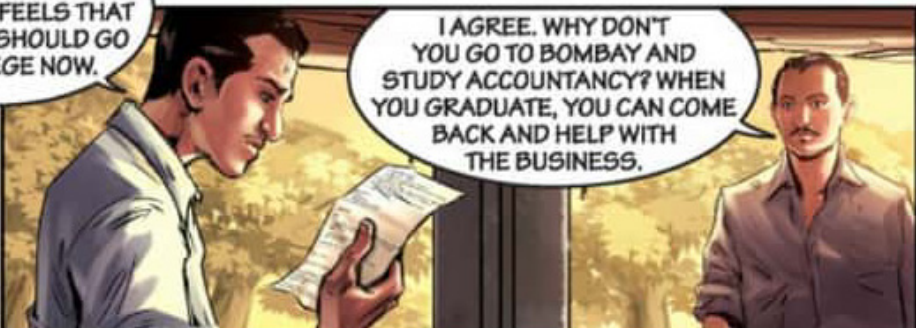


HE OFTEN WENT TO ORCHARDS AND RUBBER PLANTATIONS, WHICH ATTRACTED A RICH VARIETY OF BIRD LIFE.

SÁLIM KNEW ALMOST NOTHING ABOUT BURMESE BIRDS. HE HAD NO BINOCULARS, AND THE ONLY BOOK HE HAD WAS NOT ILLUSTRATED.



UNCLE AMIRUDDIN HAS PASSED AWAY. THE FAMILY FEELS THAT PERHAPS I SHOULD GO TO COLLEGE NOW.



BACK IN BOMBAY, SÁLIM ENROLLED IN A COURSE IN COMMERCIAL LAW AND ACCOUNTANCY AT DAVAR'S COLLEGE. HE HAD CLASSES FROM 8 TO 10 EVERY MORNING. AS SOON AS THEY WERE OVER...



THEY WOULD SPEED ON ...

... HE WOULD PICK UP HIS FRIEND, STANLEY H PRATER.

HOP ON, PRATER, WE'RE GOING TO BE LATE!

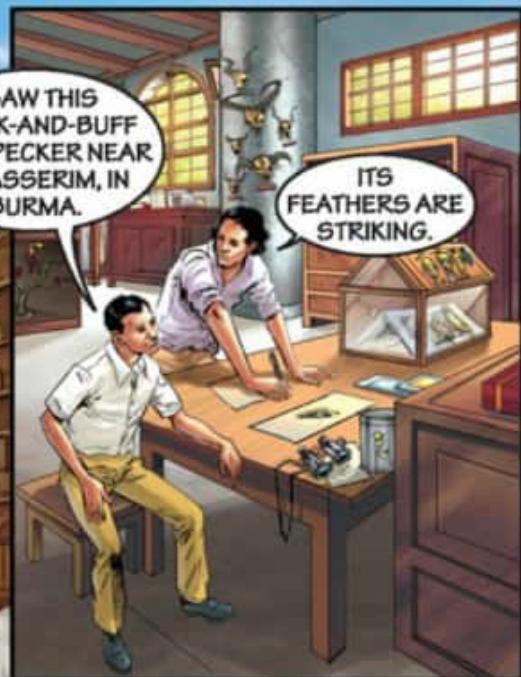


... ARRIVING AT ST XAVIER'S COLLEGE, JUST IN TIME FOR THE ZOOLOGY CLASSES TO BEGIN.



I SAW THIS BLACK-AND-BUFF WOODPECKER NEAR TENASSERIM, IN BURMA.

ITS FEATHERS ARE STRIKING.



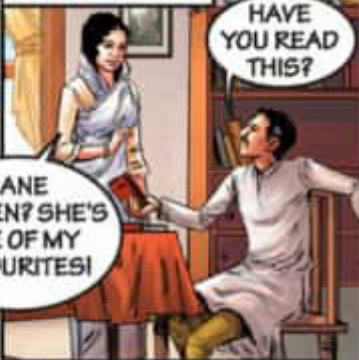
SÁLIM'S SISTERS KAMOO AND AKHTAR HAD THEIR OWN PLANS FOR HIM -



SÁLIM THIS IS TEHMINA, AN OLD FAMILY FRIEND. SHE'S JUST RETURNED FROM FINISHING SCHOOL IN LONDON.

FINISHING SCHOOL IN LONDON! SHE MUST BE QUITE SOPHISTICATED. WHAT WILL WE TALK ABOUT?

BUT AS THEY TALKED, SÁLIM FOUND THAT THEY SHARED MANY INTERESTS.



HAVE YOU READ THIS?

JANE AUSTEN? SHE'S ONE OF MY FAVOURITES!

TEHMINA LIKED LONG WALKS, FORESTS AND GARDENING.

IN 1918, SÁLIM AND TEHMINA WERE MARRIED. THEY WENT TO BURMA, WHERE THEY KEPT A VARIETY OF PETS, INCLUDING A LEOPARD CAT, A FLYING LEMUR, AND A HORNBILL.



HOWEVER, THE WOLFRAM BUSINESS WAS NOT DOING WELL.



WE COULD START A TIMBER BUSINESS.

THE BRITISH ARE BUILDING THOUSANDS OF KILOMETRES OF RAILWAY LINES IN INDIA. THEY'LL NEED WOOD FOR THE SLEEPERS*.

SÁLIM HAD TO VISIT REMOTE FORESTS FOR TIMBER. HE ENJOYED IT THOROUGHLY.



SEE THAT? IT'S RHINOCEROS DUNG.

I DO HOPE WE SPOT A RHINO.

SÁLIM NEVER DID SEE A RHINO. MEANWHILE, THE BUSINESS DECLINED, AND FOLDED UP IN 1924. SÁLIM AND TEHMINA MOVED BACK TO BOMBAY.

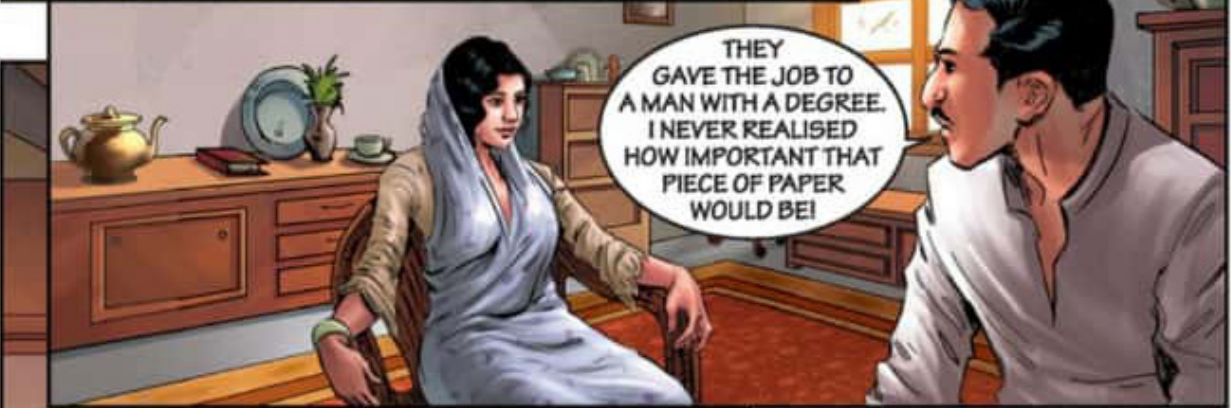
* HORIZONTAL PLANKS OF WOOD LAID UNDER RAILWAY TRACKS AS SUPPORT

SÁLIM LOVED THE WOODED AREAS AROUND BOMBAY.

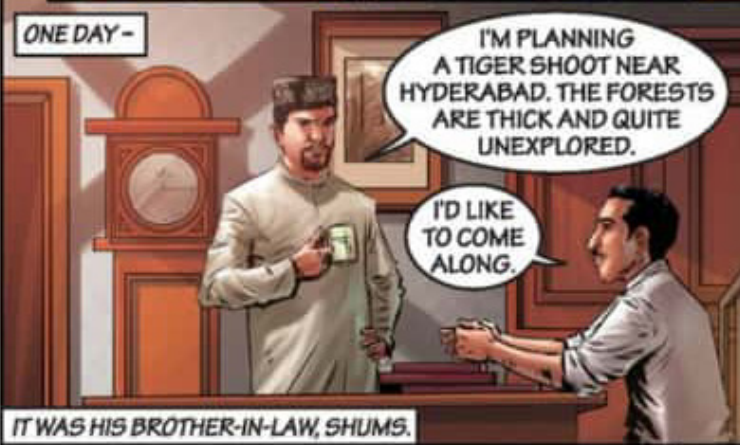


THIS LAKE ATTRACTS SO MANY BIRDS.

TEHMINA STARTED WORKING AT THE WOMEN'S COUNCIL. SÁLIM APPLIED FOR A JOB AT THE ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA. BUT -



THEY GAVE THE JOB TO A MAN WITH A DEGREE. I NEVER REALISED HOW IMPORTANT THAT PIECE OF PAPER WOULD BE!



ONE DAY -

I'M PLANNING A TIGER SHOOT NEAR HYDERABAD. THE FORESTS ARE THICK AND QUITE UNEXPLORED.

I'D LIKE TO COME ALONG.

SÁLIM GOT THE JOB. SHORTLY AFTER, THE FAMILY GOT SOME VERY BAD NEWS INDEED.

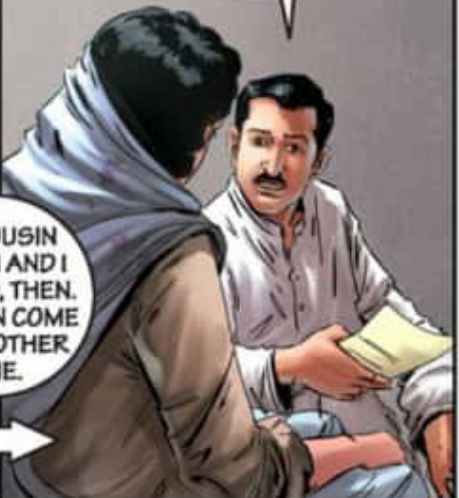
POOR SHUMSI A TIGER HE SHOT TURNED ON HIM AND MAULLED HIM TO DEATH. AZEEM MANAGED TO FIGHT IT OFF BARE-HANDED. HE IS IN HOSPITAL, RECOVERING.



BUT A FEW DAYS LATER -

I'M SORRY, SHUMS. I CAN'T COME. THE MUSEUM IS OFFERING A JOB FOR A NATURALIST. I WANT TO APPLY.

MY COUSIN AZEEM AND I WILL GO, THEN. YOU CAN COME SOME OTHER TIME.



IN THE MUSEUM, SÁLIM DESIGNED A SYLLABUS TO TEACH GROUPS OF STUDENTS ABOUT WILDLIFE AND ECOLOGY IN INDIA.



YOU CAN RECOGNISE THE HORNBILL BY ITS BEAK.

THERE IS SO MUCH MORE I HAVE TO LEARN ABOUT THESE BIRDS. I NEED TO STUDY THEM PROPERLY!

AND SOON -

THEY WANT ME TO GO TO BERLIN I WILL BE STUDYING WITH A PROFESSOR ERWIN STRESEMANN.



THAT NIGHT, SÁLIM DECIDED TO ACT ON AN IMPULSE.

THE BERLIN UNIVERSITY, ASKING IF THEY'LL LET ME STUDY BIRDS AT THEIR MUSEUM.



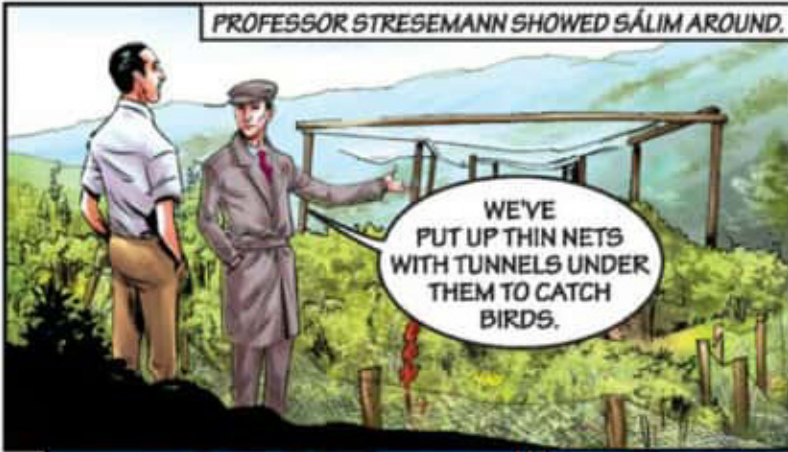
WHILE AT BERLIN, SÁLIM WENT TO HELIGOLAND, A SMALL ISLAND IN THE NORTH SEA. IT IS ON THE MIGRATION ROUTES OF MANY DIFFERENT BIRDS.



I CAN SEE HELIGOLAND'S LIGHTHOUSE, PROFESSOR STRESEMANN. THE LIGHT MUST ATTRACT MANY BIRDS EVERY NIGHT.

IT USED TO BE A BARREN ISLAND. OUR SCIENTISTS MADE POOLS OF WATER AND PLANTED TREES AND SHRUBS. BIRDS PASSING BY NOW LAND HERE.

PROFESSOR STRESEMANN SHOWED SÁLIM AROUND.



WE'VE PUT UP THIN NETS WITH TUNNELS UNDER THEM TO CATCH BIRDS.



ON SOME NIGHTS, THERE ARE AS MANY AS 1200 BIRDS. WE PUT TINY RINGS AROUND THEIR LEGS AND RELEASE THEM.

THIS IS WONDERFUL! THESE RINGS WILL TELL US WHERE THE BIRDS ARE TRAVELLING. I'D LIKE TO DO THE SAME THING IN INDIA.

IN 1930, SÁLIM RETURNED TO INDIA, TO FIND THAT HIS OLD POSITION AT THE MUSEUM HAD BEEN SCRAPPED. HE AND TEHMINA MOVED TO A HOUSE HER FAMILY OWNED IN KIHIM, OUTSIDE BOMBAY.

A BAYA WEAVER!

MALE BAYAS GET TOGETHER AND BUILD NESTS. WHEN THEY'RE HALF DONE, A GROUP OF FEMALES COMES TO INSPECT THEM.

OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, SÁLIM WATCHED THE BAYAS FOR HOURS EVERY DAY.

ALL MALES! AND THEY'RE BUILDING.

"WHEN A FEMALE FINDS A NEST SHE LIKES, SHE MOVES IN ...

"... AND THE MALE BUILDS THE REST OF THE NEST AROUND HER.

"BUT ONCE THAT NEST IS DONE, THE MALE BUILDS ANOTHER ...

"... AND ANOTHER, UNTIL HE HAS FOUR OR FIVE NESTS AND AS MANY FAMILIES."

SÁLIM'S PAPER IS REGARDED AS AN ORNITHOLOGICAL* CLASSIC. WITH NO TECHNOLOGY, HE RELIED UPON HIS CAREFUL OBSERVATIONS TO ANALYSE THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE BAYA WEAVER.

* ORNITHOLOGY IS THE STUDY OF BIRDS.

SÁLIM WAS FULL OF IDEAS -

LOTS OF PEOPLE WILL BE EAGER TO HAVE OUR BIRD LIFE MAPPED AND SURVEYED IN A SYSTEMATIC WAY. YOU JUST NEED TO FIND THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY.

YOU'RE RIGHT, I'VE DONE ENOUGH HUNTING FOR JOBS. I'LL JUST MAKE MY OWN!

THE RULERS OF THESE STATES WILL BE PROUD TO KNOW ABOUT THE BIRDS THEY HAVE.

WE KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT INDIAN BIRDS, TEHMINA. IT'S A PITY. THE PRINCELY STATES HAVE HUGE UNSURVEYED FORESTS.

WE CAN START WITH HYDERABAD STATE*. IT HAS VAST FORESTS AND A RICH VARIETY OF BIRDS.

THE BNHS AND THE HYDERABAD GOVERNMENT AGREED TO HELP AND PAY EXPENSES. SÁLIM TOOK NO SALARY. HE WROTE TO PROFESSOR STRESEMANN AND TO AN ORNITHOLOGIST FRIEND, HUGH WHISTLER, ASKING FOR ADVICE.

THEY ASKED SÁLIM TO GO AHEAD AND COLLECT LOTS OF SPECIMENS. IN THOSE DAYS, VERY LITTLE WAS KNOWN ABOUT INDIAN BIRDS. THEIR FIRST CAMP WAS IN MANANUR.

I DON'T THINK THIS FOREST HAS EVER BEEN STUDIED!

LOOK, TIGER PUG MARKS!

AND THEY SEEM QUITE FRESH.

LET'S HOPE WE DON'T MEET IT!

*NOW PART OF ANDHRA PRADESH

THEY STAYED IN EMPTY HUTS, GUEST HOUSES, AND ONCE, IN AN ABANDONED COWSHED.

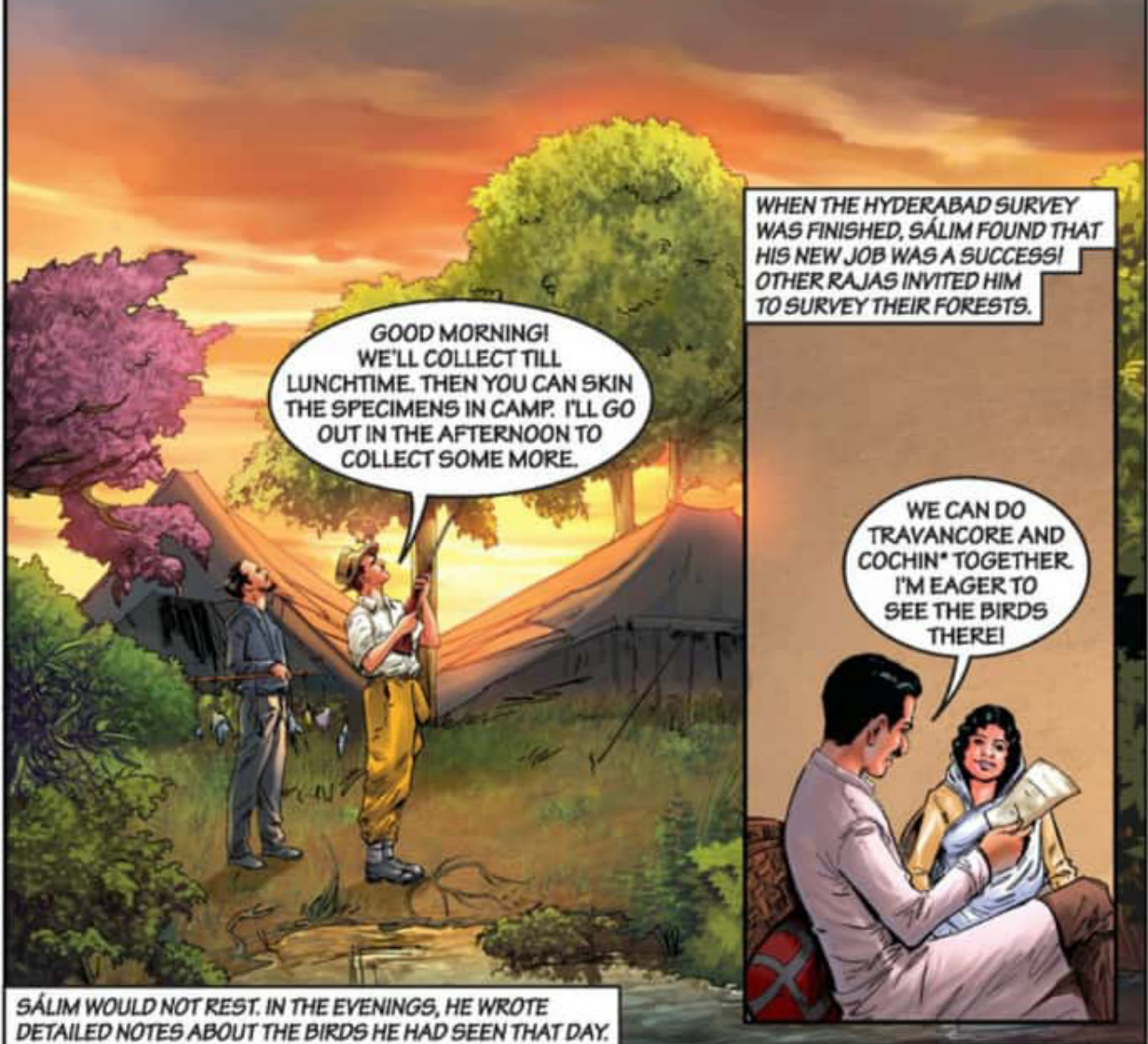


THERE, NOW IT'S LIKE HOME. WE CAN READ AND WORK HERE PEACEFULLY.

HA HAI YOU BROUGHT CURTAINS AND VASES TO A FOREST?

SÁLIM WORKED TIRELESSLY AT THIS WONDERFUL NEW JOB HE HAD INVENTED FOR HIMSELF ...

... AND EXPECTED EVERYONE WORKING WITH HIM TO DO THE SAME.



GOOD MORNING! WE'LL COLLECT TILL LUNCHTIME. THEN YOU CAN SKIN THE SPECIMENS IN CAMP. I'LL GO OUT IN THE AFTERNOON TO COLLECT SOME MORE.

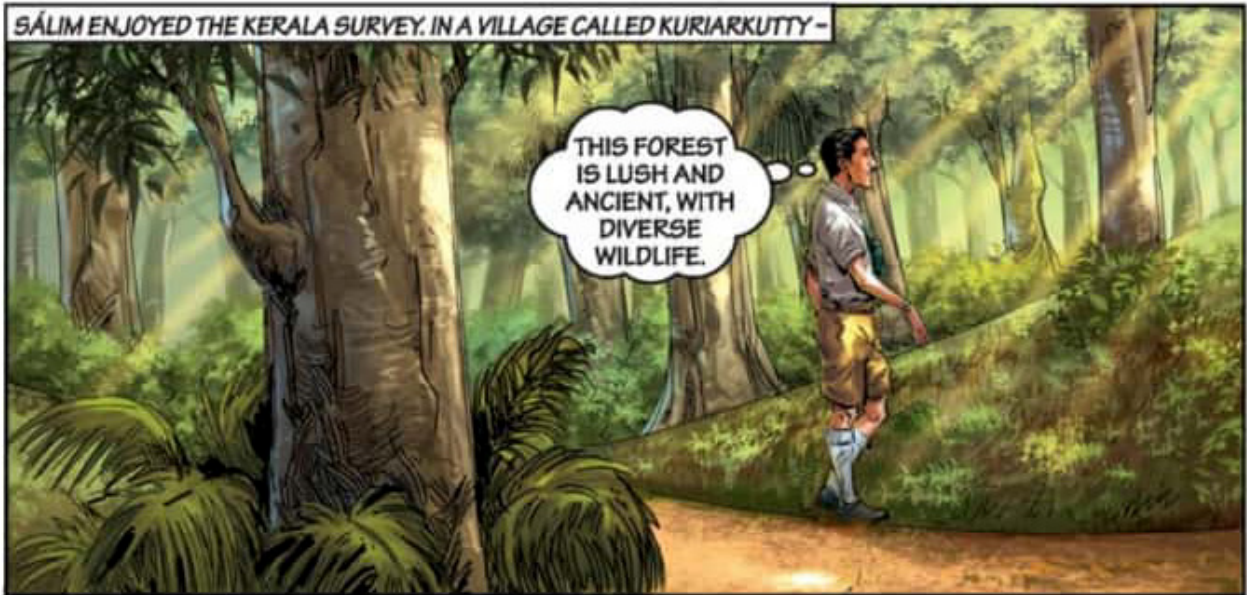
WHEN THE HYDERABAD SURVEY WAS FINISHED, SÁLIM FOUND THAT HIS NEW JOB WAS A SUCCESS! OTHER RAJAS INVITED HIM TO SURVEY THEIR FORESTS.

WE CAN DO TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN* TOGETHER. I'M EAGER TO SEE THE BIRDS THERE!

SÁLIM WOULD NOT REST. IN THE EVENINGS, HE WROTE DETAILED NOTES ABOUT THE BIRDS HE HAD SEEN THAT DAY.

* THE PRINCELY STATES OF COCHIN AND TRAVANCORE WERE COMBINED INTO ONE STATE, KERALA, UPON INDEPENDENCE.

SÁLIM ENJOYED THE KERALA SURVEY. IN A VILLAGE CALLED KURIARKUTTY -



IN A NEARBY VILLAGE, PARAMBIKULAM, A FIREMAN ON THE COCHIN FOREST TRAMWAY WAS LESS HAPPY -



SO ON HIS NEXT TRIP, THE FIREMAN HOPPED OFF THE TRAM AT KURIARKUTTY -

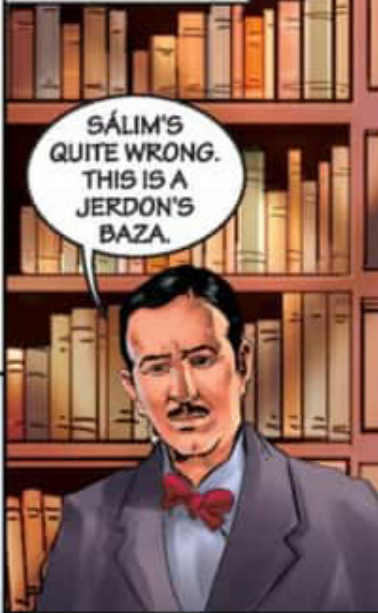


WHEN THE MAN LEFT -

ANOTHER BIG BIRD? OH NO! WE'RE SHORT OF PACKING SPACE. I DON'T KNOW HOW WE'LL FIT THIS ONE IN.



THE SPECIMENS WERE SENT TO HUGH WHISTLER AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM IN LONDON.



SÁLIM'S QUITE WRONG. THIS IS A JERDON'S BAZA.

THE BIRD WAS RE-EXAMINED. IT TURNED OUT THAT WHISTLER TOO HAD BEEN MISLED.



THAT BIRD IS ACTUALLY A RARE FEATHER-TOED EAGLE! I'M GLAD IT JUSTIFIED ALL THAT TROUBLE!

OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS, SÁLIM VISITED DIFFERENT KINDS OF ENVIRONMENTS TO SURVEY BIRDS. HE WENT TO THE COOL DAMP KOTAGIRI HILLS IN TAMIL NADU ...



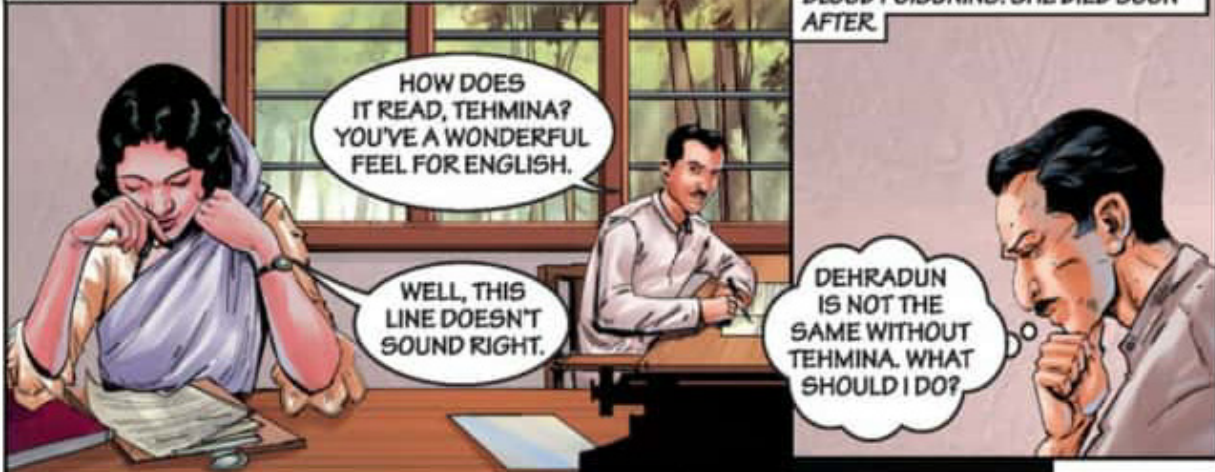
... THE ARID DESERT OF BAHAWALPUR* ...

... AND TO THE CHILLY ALPINE FORESTS AND MEADOWS OF THE HIMALAYAS.

* NOW IN PAKISTAN

FROM 1934 TO '39, SÁLIM AND TEHMINA LIVED IN DEHRADUN. THEY WERE IDYLIC YEARS, FILLED WITH LONG WALKS AND STIMULATING CONVERSATIONS. SÁLIM WAS WRITING A BOOK ON BIRDS.

BUT IN 1939, TRAGEDY STRUCK. AFTER AN OPERATION, TEHMINA GOT BLOOD POISONING. SHE DIED SOON AFTER.



HOW DOES IT READ, TEHMINA? YOU'VE A WONDERFUL FEEL FOR ENGLISH.

WELL, THIS LINE DOESN'T SOUND RIGHT.

DEHRADUN IS NOT THE SAME WITHOUT TEHMINA. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

SÁLIM MOVED BACK TO BOMBAY. HIS SISTER KAMOO AND HER HUSBAND HASSAN INVITED HIM TO LIVE WITH THEM.

SÁLIM WORKED FURIOUSLY ON HIS BOOK, 'THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS'.

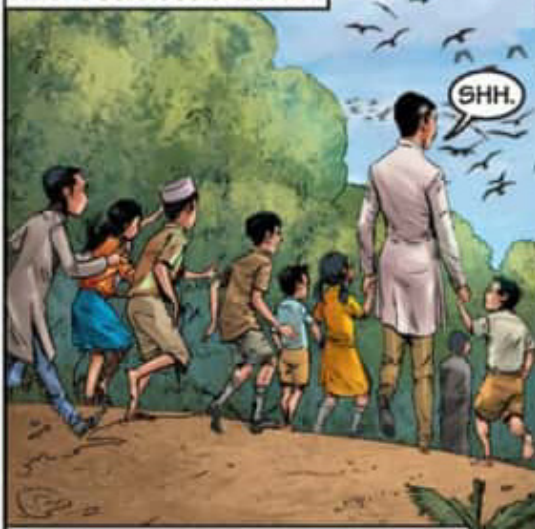


THIS IS YOUR STUDY, SALOO. YOUR BEDROOM'S NEXT TO IT.



BUT HE ALWAYS HAD TIME FOR BIRDING. HE ACQUIRED QUITE A FOLLOWING AMONG THE NEIGHBOURHOOD CHILDREN.

SÁLIM SPENT A LOT OF TIME IN THE BNHS, WITH ITS EXCELLENT LIBRARY, ITS COLLECTION OF BIRD SPECIMENS ...



SHH.

I GOT IT IN BAHAWALPUR. IT'S THE EXACT COLOUR AS THE SAND AND VERY HARD TO SPOT. WHEN IT RAINS AND THE SAND GETS DARKER, ITS PLUMAGE GETS DARKER TOO!

A HOUBARA BUSTARD. LOVELY!



AMONG THEM WAS KAMOO'S DAUGHTER LAEEQ, WHO WOULD LATER WRITE A BOOK, 'ABOUT INDIAN BIRDS', WITH SÁLIM.

... AND ITS FELLOW BIRD-ENTHUSIASTS.

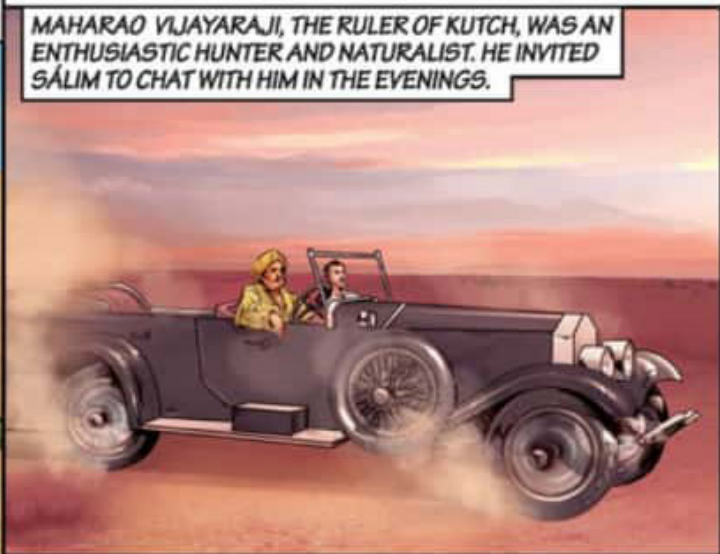
WHILE IN BOMBAY, SÁLIM MET LOKE WAN THO, A CHINESE BUSINESSMAN, WHO HAD TO FLEE SINGAPORE WHEN THE JAPANESE TOOK IT IN 1942.



SÁLIM INVITED LOKE WAN THO FOR A KUTCH SURVEY IN 1943. IT WAS HARD WORK. WORLD WAR II WAS ON AND PETROL WAS RATIONED.



MAHARAO VIJAYARAJI, THE RULER OF KUTCH, WAS AN ENTHUSIASTIC HUNTER AND NATURALIST. HE INVITED SÁLIM TO CHAT WITH HIM IN THE EVENINGS.



YOU MUST SEE THE FLAMINGOS THE NEXT TIME THEY GATHER HERE.

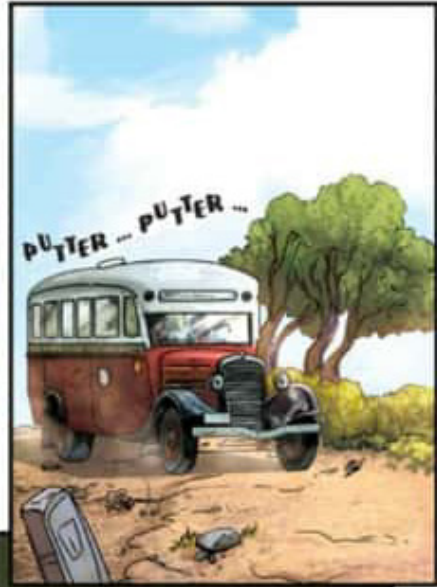


YES, I SEEM TO HAVE MISSED THE BREEDING SEASON THIS YEAR.

LOKE WAN THO WAS SÁLIM'S COMPANION ON MANY UNCOMFORTABLE TRIPS. SÁLIM USUALLY HIRED PRIVATE LOCAL VEHICLES.



IT'S PROBABLY RUNNING ON CHARCOAL GAS OR SOME OTHER CHEAP FUEL, BECAUSE OF THE PETROL RATIONING.



SÁLIM, YOU SHOULD REALLY... PUFF... HAVE A STATION WAGON OF YOUR OWN FOR THIS SORT OF WORK.

IF ONLY I COULD AFFORD ONE.

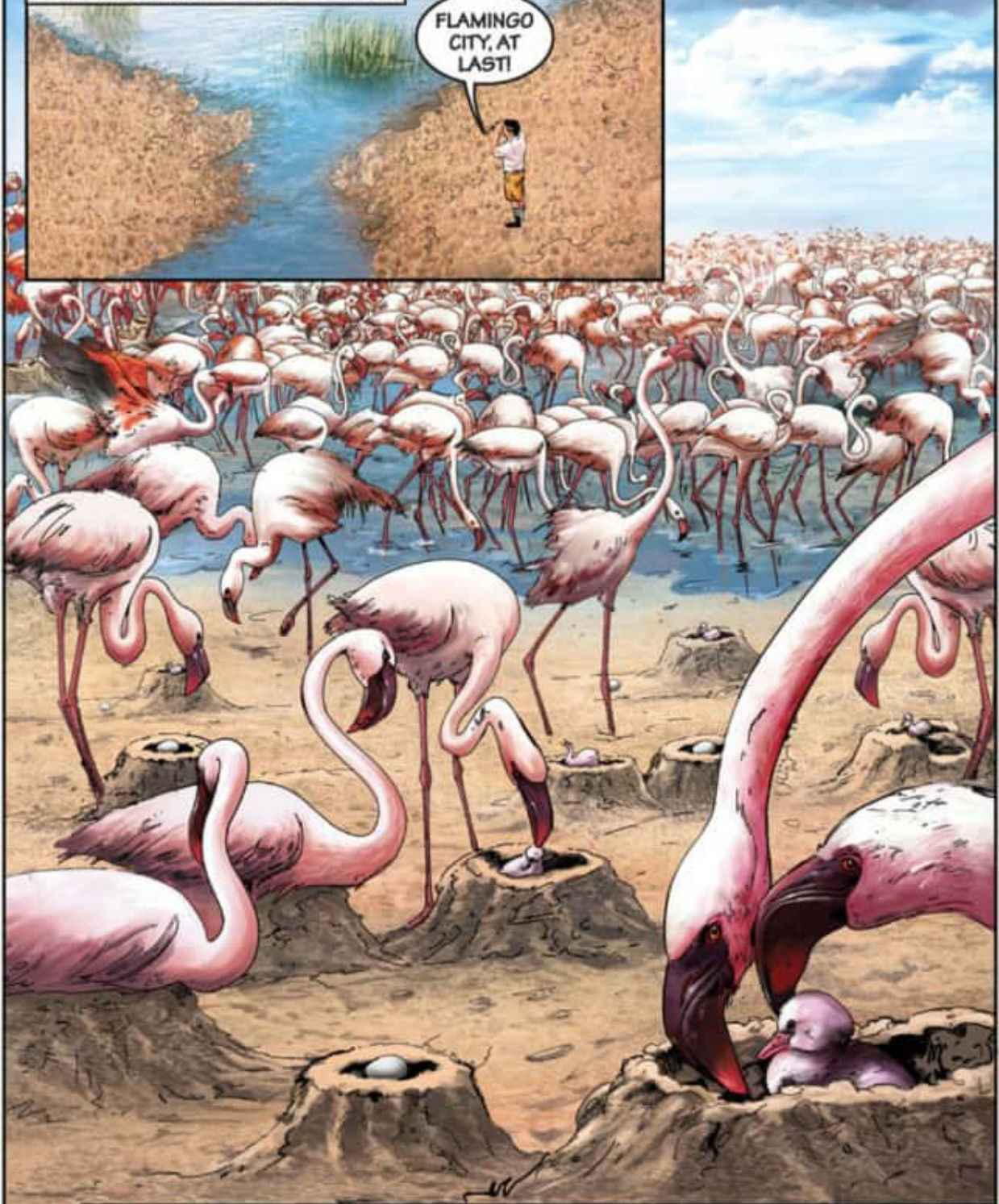
IN 1945, THE WAR ENDED. LOKE WAN THO RETURNED HOME. HE WROTE TO SÁLIM.

HA HAI HE SAYS HE ENCLOSES A CHEQUE FOR ME TO BUY MYSELF A STATION WAGON.



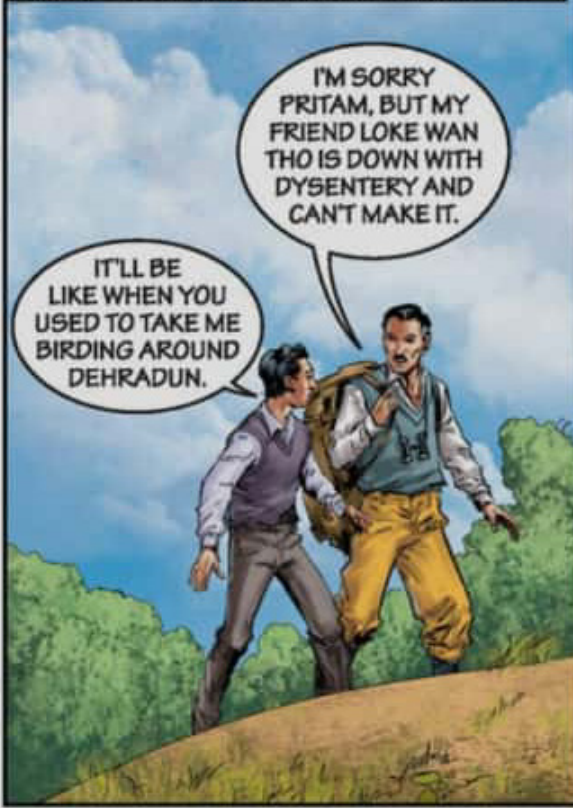
IT WAS ALSO IN 1945, WHEN HE WAS MAKING PLANS FOR A TRIP TO TIBET, THAT SÁLIM GOT A VERY IMPORTANT TELEGRAM. IT WAS FROM THE MAHARAO OF KUTCH SAYING THAT HUGE DROVES OF FLAMINGOS WERE GATHERING. SÁLIM RUSHED THERE.

FLAMINGO CITY, AT LAST!



KUTCH IS A VERY DRY AREA AND FLAMINGOS NEED BETWEEN SIX AND EIGHT INCHES OF WATER TO BREED. IF THERE IS TOO MUCH OR TOO LITTLE RAIN, IT IS HARD TO PREDICT WHEN THEY WILL BREED. THAT YEAR, SÁLIM ESTIMATED THAT THERE WERE 5 LAKH FLAMINGOS NESTING IN FLAMINGO CITY IN KUTCH.

LATER THAT YEAR, SÁLIM TREKKED TO TIBET, TO MOUNT KAILASH AND LAKE MANASAROVAR. WITH HIM WAS PRITAM, THE SON OF A FAMILY FRIEND.



IT'LL BE LIKE WHEN YOU USED TO TAKE ME BIRDING AROUND DEHRADUN.

I'M SORRY PRITAM, BUT MY FRIEND LOKE WAN THO IS DOWN WITH DYSENTERY AND CAN'T MAKE IT.

AS THE WEEKS WENT BY, PRITAM BECAME QUIET AND WITHDRAWN.



I THINK THE HIGH ALTITUDE IS MAKING YOU ILL, PRITAM. PERHAPS YOU SHOULD TURN BACK?

OF COURSE NOT! I'M FINE.

PRITAM INSISTED, BUT HE WAS SO SILENT THAT SÁLIM CUT THE TRIP SHORT, TURNING BACK AT LAKE MANASAROVAR.

SÁLIM SUFFERED FROM VERTIGO - SOMETIMES HEIGHTS MADE HIM DIZZY - BUT HE WAS SO ENTHRALLED BY THE BIRD LIFE HE HARDLY NOTICED. ON ONE OCCASION -



WHAT A LOVELY YELLOW-NAPED YUHINAI



SÁLIM TURNED...



OHI

... AND REALISED THAT HE WAS MERE INCHES FROM FALLING DOWN.

NEAR MANASAROVAR, THEY STOPPED AT A LAKE CALLED DING TSO.



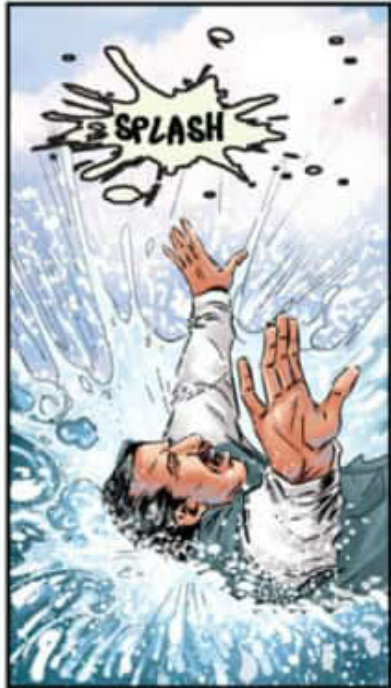
SÁLIM'S GUIDE, GELONG, WAS LESS ENTHRALLED.



OH, GELONG! YOU PANICKED ABOUT BANDITS ALL THE WAY, AND NOW YOU THINK I'LL DROWN.

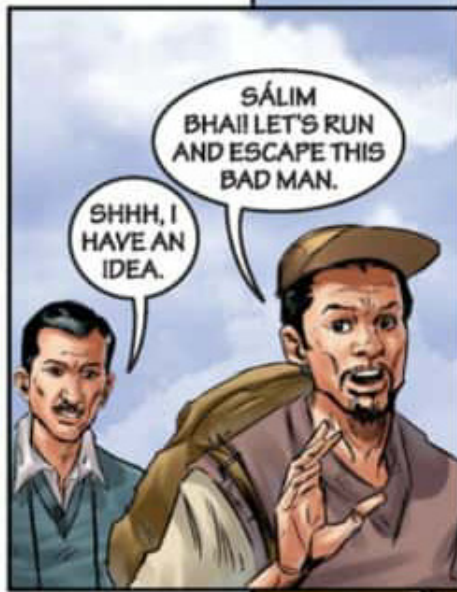


SUDDENLY, SÁLIM FOUND THAT THE MOUND HE WAS STANDING ON WAS NOT AS STABLE AS HE'D THOUGHT -





IT WAS A BANDIT. AT THAT TIME, THE MANASAROVAR AREA WAS FULL OF BANDITS WAITING TO ROB PILGRIMS.



SÁLIM'S SHOOTING STICK WAS ACTUALLY A FOLDING CHAIR.

GELONG OBEYED.



SÁLIM TOOK A CARTRIDGE FROM HIS POCKET ...



... AND LOADED HIS PRETEND GUN.



THE BANDIT TURNED AND WALKED AWAY.



BACK IN BOMBAY, SÁLIM WAS VERY ACTIVE IN THE BNHS.

50-

I REMEMBER HOW MUCH TROUBLE I HAD WHEN I WANTED TO STUDY BIRDS AS A BOY.

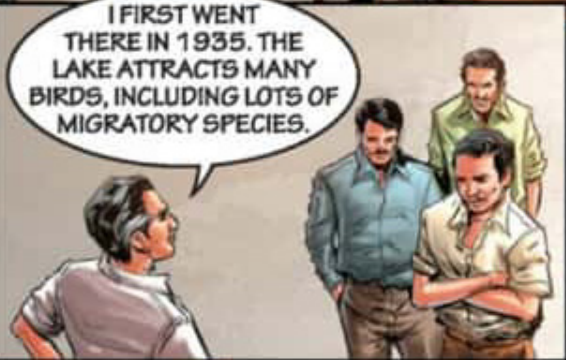


WE'VE GOT RECOGNITION FROM BOMBAY UNIVERSITY. EACH OF US CAN START TAKING PHD STUDENTS.



SÁLIM AND HIS STUDENTS RANGED ACROSS THE COUNTRY. ONE OF SÁLIM'S FAVOURITE PLACES WAS THE KEOLADEO GHANA LAKE AT BHARATPUR*. IT USED TO BE THE HUNTING GROUND OF RAJAS.

I FIRST WENT THERE IN 1935. THE LAKE ATTRACTS MANY BIRDS, INCLUDING LOTS OF MIGRATORY SPECIES.



I'D LIKE TO CONDUCT A LARGE-SCALE RINGING OF BIRDS IN BHARATPUR, LIKE IN HELIGOLAND.



THE PROBLEM, AS OFTEN, WAS ONE OF MONEY.

IN 1957, A TYPE OF ENCEPHALITIS BROKE OUT IN KARNATAKA. THE WHO^ FOUND THAT IT WAS ODDLY SIMILAR TO A DISEASE IN RUSSIA.

THE WHO SUSPECTS THAT THE DISEASE IS BEING CARRIED BY MIGRATORY BIRDS. THEY WILL HELP FINANCE OUR BIRD-RINGING TO STUDY MIGRATION PATTERNS. WE CAN START WITH BHARATPUR.



* IT IS NOW A BIRD SANCTUARY.
^ WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

BHARATPUR'S NESTING SEASON BEGINS IN AUGUST WITH THE MONSOON. ALL KINDS OF WATER BIRDS GATHER THERE - STORKS, HERONS, EGRETS, CORMORANTS, IBISES, SPOONBILLS.

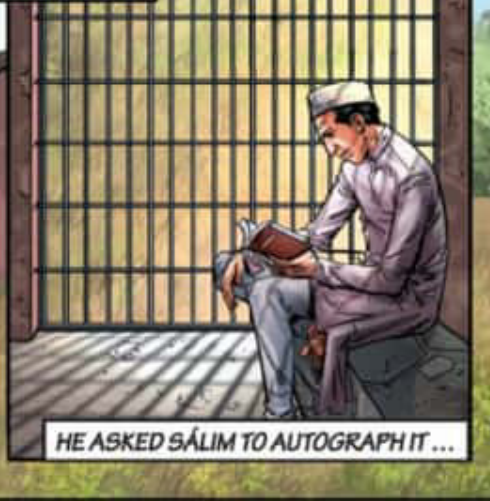
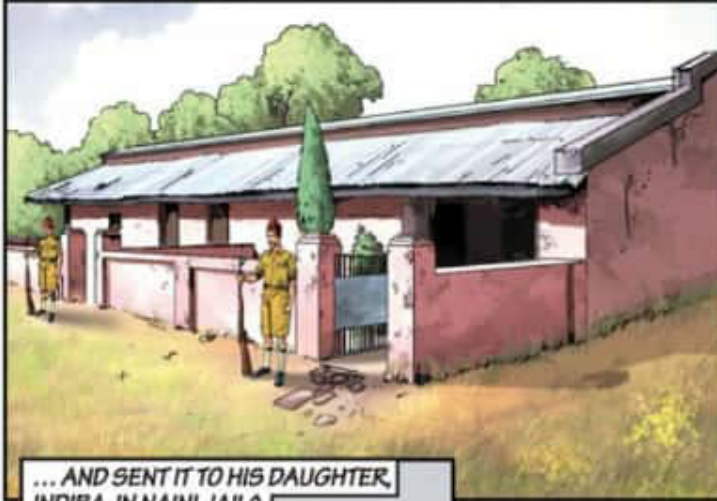


IN NOVEMBER, NEW VISITORS ARRIVE FROM COLD CLIMATES TO SPEND THE WINTER THERE.



THE RINGING SHOWED SÁLIM AND HIS TEAM WHERE THESE BIRDS CAME FROM. AMONG THEM WERE RARE WHITE SIBERIAN CRANES WHICH FLEW 6000 KMS, ALL THE WAY FROM RUSSIA.

QUIETLY, SÁLIM ALI HAD BECOME FAMOUS. THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE READ HIS 'BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS', AND WERE INSPIRED BY HIS LOVE FOR NATURE. AMONG THEM WAS JAWAHARLAL NEHRU* WHO READ IT IN DEHRADUN JAIL IN 1942.



HE ASKED SÁLIM TO AUTOGRAPH IT ...

... AND SENT IT TO HIS DAUGHTER, INDIRA, IN NAINI JAIL ^.

I HAVE ALWAYS LOVED ANIMALS, BUT I KNOW LITTLE ABOUT BIRDS. NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME, I'M PAYING ATTENTION TO THEIR SONGS!

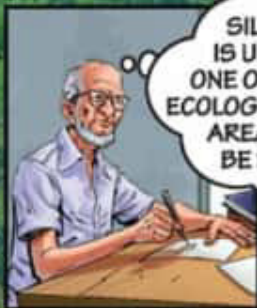


SÁLIM WROTE MANY BOOKS AND BEGAN TO GET RECOGNITION. IN 1967, HE GOT THE J PAUL GETTY WILDLIFE CONSERVATION PRIZE OF \$ 100,000. HE USED IT TO FORM THE SÁLIM ALI CONSERVATION FUND.



THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT GAVE HIM THE PADMA BHUSHAN IN 1958, AND IN 1976, HE WAS AWARDED THE PADMA VIBHUSHAN.

IN THE 1970S, WHEN INDIRA GANDHI WAS PRIME MINISTER, THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSED A DAM IN SILENT VALLEY, KERALA, THAT WOULD SUBMERGE THE RAINFOREST. PROTESTS BROKE OUT. SÁLIM WAS A PART OF THEM.



SILENT VALLEY IS UNDOUBTEDLY ONE OF INDIA'S MOST ECOLOGICALLY VALUABLE AREAS AND MUST BE PRESERVED.



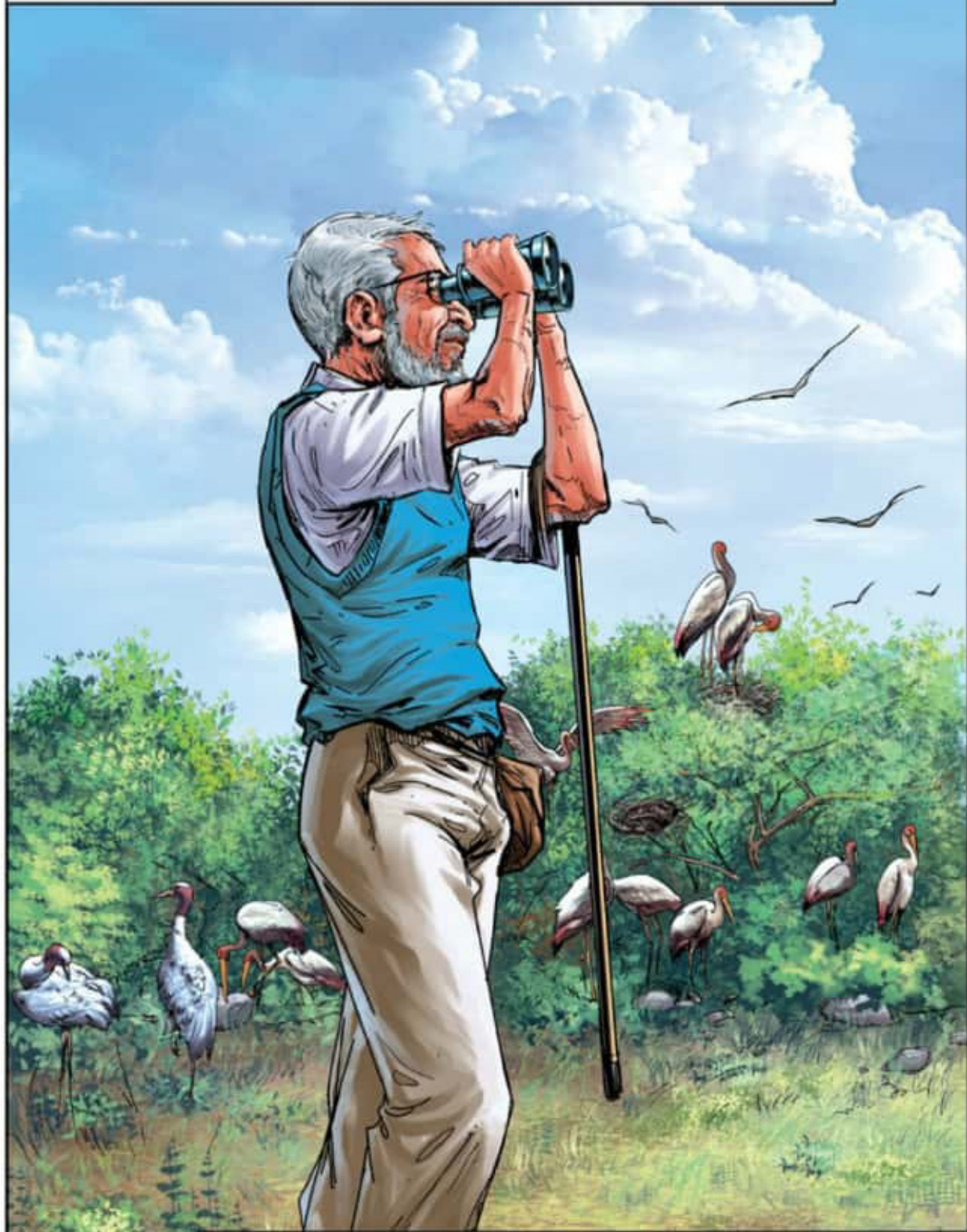
THE PROTESTS WORKED AND SILENT VALLEY IS NOW A NATIONAL PARK.

* IN 1947 HE WOULD BECOME INDIA'S FIRST PRIME MINISTER.

^ IN ALLAHABAD, UTTAR PRADESH

SÁLIM ALI

FAME MADE VERY LITTLE DIFFERENCE TO SÁLIM. EVEN AT 90, THOUGH INCREASINGLY SUFFERING FROM DEAFNESS, THE 'OLD MAN', AS HIS STUDENTS FONDLY CALLED HIM, CONTINUED TO WALK ACROSS THE ROUGHEST AND LONELIEST TERRAIN, WATCHING THE BIRDS HE ADORED SO MUCH.



SÁLIM ALI DIED IN 1987, AT THE AGE OF 91. HE LEFT BEHIND HIM A LEGACY OF READERS AND STUDENTS, OF PEOPLE WHO VALUED, STUDIED AND PROTECTED THE NATURAL WORLD.