

Last, John (c. 1852–1911)

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John Last was the first Seventh-day Adventist to be martyred for his faith in India. John Last was born a Hindu around 1852. His Hindu name given to him by his family is not known to us today. At the age of forty he was converted to Christianity and joined the Presbyterian Mission. He then assumed the name “John,” to honor the apostle beloved by Jesus, and “Last,” because the Apostle John was the last of Jesus’ twelve disciples to die. ¹

Conversion

The Adventist missionaries Luther and Georgia Burgess had settled in Dehradun in 1906 after a break of two years in America, which they used to raise funds to pioneer the Adventist mission work in

North India. In 1907 John Last came to Dehradun to attend a conference of the local Presbyterian Mission, of which he had been a member for fifteen years.² He was among those who stopped by the home of Luther and Georgia Burgess to enquire about differences in matters of beliefs. Convinced that Adventists had the truth, John Last continued to come to the Burgesses’ home for Bible studies instead of attending meetings at his Presbyterian Mission conference. On the last day of the conference he kept the Sabbath with the Burgesses. Upon his return to his home in Patiala he resigned from his former mission.³



John Last.

From *Bible Training School*, February 1911, page 163.

John Last was baptized on June 3, 1907 in Mussoorie,⁴ thus becoming the second Adventist convert among the Hindustani speaking people (after Amarnath), and he then joined the veteran W. A. Barlow in colporteur work, starting with sales of *Sanatan Susamachar*, a Hindustani booklet which had just been produced by the Burgesses.⁵ He also sold copies of the Adventist magazine *The Oriental Watchman* and books.⁶ Within a few months he had two of his relatives ready for baptism.⁷

Martyrdom

John Last moved around Punjab (referred to as Patiala State at that time), at his own expense. On fire for the Adventist message, he worked untiringly among Hindus and Moslems⁸ in crowded bazaars, in railway stations, and even on trains till he was arrested and put in prison on a charge raised by a Moslem that he was disturbing the peace. The charges were not proved, and the preacher was released. However, soon another Moslem accused John Last falsely. A mob gathered and tied his hands, stripped off his clothes, and led him to prison. His wife visited him in prison and noted wounds and bruise marks on his body. Five days later, on July 10, 1911, John Last died.⁹ For four years he labored, sowing the seed of the gospel in Punjab and laying the foundation for others to build on.

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NOTES

1. "Annfield Notes," *Eastern Tidings*, June 1907, 5.

2. Ibid.
 3. L. J. and G. A. Burgess, "Dehradun," *Eastern Tidings*, May 20, 1907, 3-4.
 4. Editors, "Garwhal Industrial School," *Bible Training School*, February 1, 1911, 163-165.
 5. John Last, "News from Hindustani Workers – Allahbad," *Eastern Tidings*, February 1908, 3-4.
 6. "News Note," *Eastern Tidings*, June 1907, 6.
 7. Georgie [*sic.*] Burgess, "An Interesting Letter," *Bible Training School*, June 1, 1908, 15, 16.
 8. Luther Burgess, "Dehradun," *Eastern Tidings*, October 1907, 3.
 9. Luther Burgess, "Faithful Unto Death – Obituary," *Eastern Tidings*, June 1911, 4; Georgia Burgess, "Report From India," *Bible Training School*, August 1, 1911, 71.
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