

Bose, Kheroda (c. 1870–1948)

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Kheroda Bose was the first person to be baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist in India.

Early Life (1870–1895)

Kheroda was born about 1870 in a village not far from Calcutta. Like most Indian girls at that time, Kheroda was married as a child. She returned to live with her parents until about the age of 12 and then moved into the home of her in-laws.¹ Thereafter she was not to leave the house except to go to the river with the other women of the house to bathe. There at the river, Kheroda first learned of Jesus from a European Christian lady who witnessed to them from a boat. Though against learning about Jesus, Kheroda's mother-in-law invited the lady home on condition that she also teach them to sew. Kheroda's father-in-law, returning to the home unexpectedly one day, caught them studying the Bible. He flew into a violent rage and banned the missionary lady from coming again. However, young Kheroda had learned to love Jesus and attempted to discuss Christianity with her husband. He warned her to forget it. One day her husband failed to return from school and was never found. Kheroda, now 14 years old, was naturally blamed. Though Kheroda's parents offered to take her back, her in-laws refused to part with her because she was contributing to the workload in their home. Her life as a widow was miserable, and only her scant knowledge of Jesus kept her going.²



Kheroda Bose

From *Kheroda* by Gentry G. Lowry.

Escape from Home and Education

Several years later, the whole family moved from Calcutta to Benaras so that the aged grandfather might be healed from some infirmity. One day the same missionary lady who used to study with them in Calcutta appeared at their door in Benaras, distributing literature. The women recognized each other, and the missionary lady ministered to the discouraged Kheroda and helped her give her heart to Jesus. One afternoon, when the household was asleep, Kheroda bribed a servant girl to look the other way while she fled from the house. She boarded a carriage that was mysteriously waiting nearby and somehow providentially happened to encounter the missionary lady, who was still distributing tracts by the roadside. After a brief stay at the mission, Kheroda was moved to a remote location. A mob descended upon the mission compound, and eventually the police had to intervene. The matter went to court, where the magistrate threw out the charge of kidnapping and allowed Kheroda, who by now was about 21 years old, to live with the missionaries at the Baptist mission. Her own parents accepted her decision to become a Christian, recognizing that it was for her happiness, but they declared they would have to abandon her forever.³

The Baptists put her in a school for widows of all ages, and eventually, Kheroda was educated enough to teach the lower classes. Kheroda then sought to open her own school so that she could earn her own keep.⁴

As an Adventist (1896–1948)

In 1896 when the Adventist missionary D. A. Robinson advertised his meetings in a nearby hall, Kheroda and a few other girls were allowed to attend but were warned against imbibing Adventist doctrines. Kheroda thrilled to hear about the Second Advent and absorbed all the teachings from the Bible. When she asked the Adventists whether they had any work for her, she was welcomed to teach at the school they were opening. The Baptists were reluctant to let Kheroda go, but eventually, they accompanied her to the Adventists and gave a “recommendation.” Thus, Kheroda joined Georgia Burrus in teaching at the first Adventist school. Elder Robinson continued to teach her about the Sabbath, the judgment, and many other truths from the Bible, and soon she was baptized into the Adventist Church.⁵

When Dr. O. G. Place opened his treatment rooms, Kheroda trained as a nurse and joined the sanitarium at Esplanade Street in Calcutta. She continued working with Drs. Robert and Olive Ingersoll. When the sanitarium closed, she worked with Mrs. J. H. Reagan at the treatment rooms at 50 Park Street. After her retirement, she went house to house, visiting women shut in zenanas (zenana in India is part of a house for the seclusion of women). She attended the church in Calcutta as long as she could. Kheroda Bose passed away on February 22, 1948. A love for Jesus and a personal relationship with Him marked her witness throughout her life of service.⁶

Contribution and Legacy

Ms. Kheroda Bose will be remembered as the first convert to join the Adventists in India.⁷ Her strength of character can be seen in her leaving the security of home to reach out to search for the missionary who introduced Jesus to her. Again, when she first came in contact with Adventists, she left all and cast her lot with the small group of missionaries. Kheroda also served as the first Indian to teach at the first school established in Calcutta (now Kolkata) alongside Georgia Burrus, who had nurtured her faith.

In the final years of her life, the retired teacher and nurse faithfully carried on the work that Georgia Burrus had begun, that of visiting shut-in women and girls of the zenanas.

SOURCES

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Mookerjee, L. G. "Kheroda Bose obituary." *Eastern Tidings*, March 15, 1948.

Spicer, William A. "Our First Seed Sowing in India." *ARH*, February 9, 1950.

NOTES

1. Gentry G Lowry, *Korada: A Child Widow of India* (Atlanta, Ga.: Southern Publishing Association, 1931), 21–38. The book is written in the first person as told by Kheroda to Elder Lowry. The different spelling in the book of Kheroda's name reflects Bengali pronunciation.
2. *Ibid.*, 111–114.
3. *Ibid.*, 204–226.
4. *Ibid.*, 212.
5. Kheroda Bose, "I Was the First Indian Convert," Pioneer number extra, *Eastern Tidings*, May 2, 1941, 14. Cf. Lowry, *Korada*, 222.
6. L. G. Mookerjee, "Kheroda Bose obituary," *Eastern Tidings*, March 15, 1948, 7.
7. W. A. Spicer, "Our First Seed Sowing in India," *ARH*, February 9, 1950, 13.

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