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Khudiram Bose: India’s Youngest Executed Martyr

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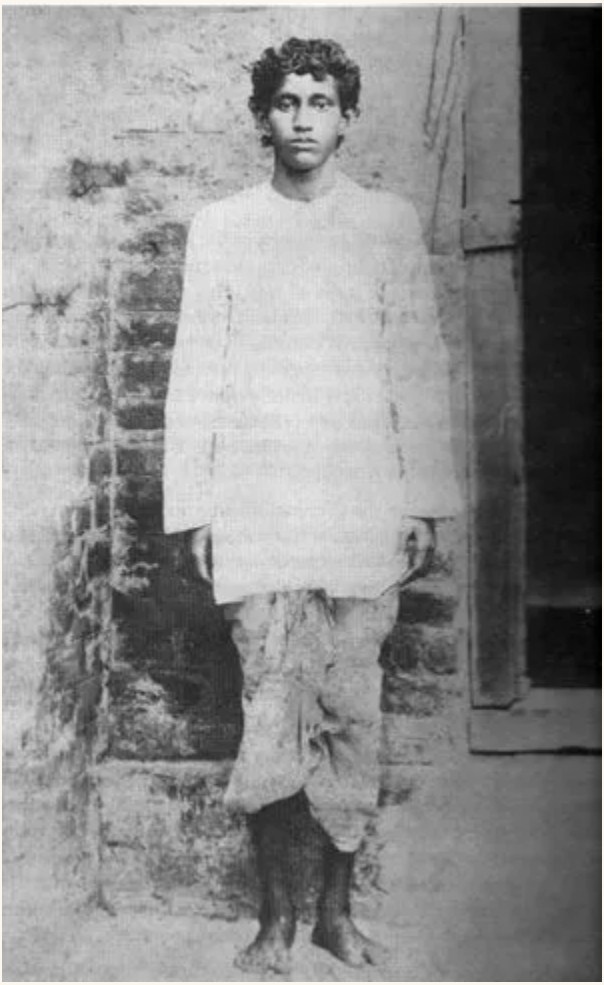
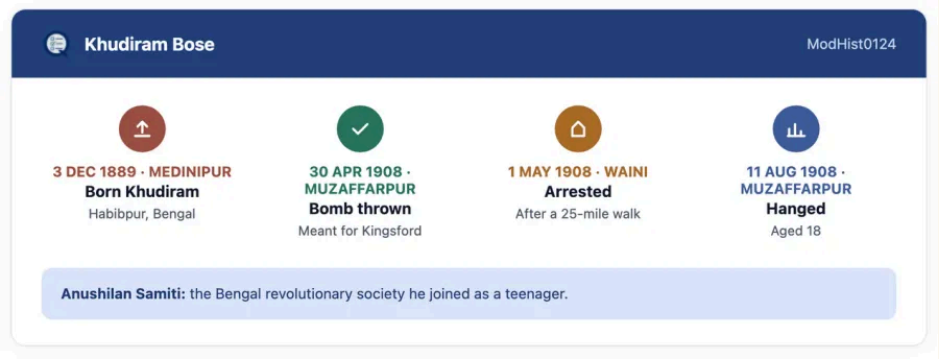
Khudiram Bose: India’s Youngest Executed Martyr

Khudiram Bose was 18 when the British hanged him for the Muzaffarpur bombing.

His bomb missed its target and killed two women. Even so, he became one of the best-loved martyrs of Bengal. This lesson covers his life, the bombing, his arrest, the trial and the exam traps.



Khudiram Bose, photographed in 1905. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.



Four dates in the life of Khudiram Bose.

> **Born.** 3 December 1889, Habibpur, Medinipur district.
> **Group.** Anushilan Samiti, a Bengal revolutionary society.
> **30 April 1908.** Throws the Muzaffarpur bomb.
> **1 May 1908.** Arrested at Waini station.
> **13 June 1908.** Sentenced to death.
> **11 August 1908.** Hanged at Muzaffarpur, aged 18.

Anushilan Samiti: a Bengal society that trained young men for revolutionary work.

Muzaffarpur Conspiracy Case: the 1908 trial over the bombing of a carriage at Muzaffarpur.

Tehsildar: a local revenue officer in British India.

1 Who was Khudiram Bose?

He was an orphan from Medinipur who joined the revolutionaries as a boy.

- He was born on **3 December 1889** at Habibpur in Medinipur district.
- His father, Trailokyanath Bose, was a tehsildar.

- His two older brothers had died as babies.
- By local custom, his sister symbolically bought him for three handfuls of grain.
- The grain is called *khud*. That is how he got the name Khudiram.
- His mother, Lakshmipriya Devi, died when he was five.
- His father died a year later.
- His elder sister, Aparupa Roy, then raised him.
- He went to Hamilton High School in Tamluk.
- In 1902 and 1903, Sri Aurobindo and Sister Nivedita visited Medinipur.
- Their talks stirred young men like him.
- He joined the **Anushilan Samiti** and became a volunteer at 15.
- He was once arrested for handing out anti-British pamphlets.
- The barrister Birendranath Sasmal defended him, and he was acquitted.

> **Quick check 1.** Khudiram Bose was arrested at Waini railway station on 1 May 1908. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 How did the plan begin?

The target was a judge the revolutionaries hated.

- The target was **Douglas Kingsford**.
- He was known for harsh sentences on young nationalists.
- The revolutionaries first sent him a book hollowed out to hold a bomb.
- Kingsford left the parcel unopened on a shelf.

- By March 1908, fearing for his safety, the government moved him to Muzaffarpur.
- Hemchandra Kanungo, a Medinipur leader, is said to have recruited Khudiram.
- Kanungo is also said to have supplied the bomb.
- Prafulla Chaki returned to Muzaffarpur with Khudiram. See Prafulla Chaki.
- Khudiram used the name **Haren Sarkar**.
- Chaki used the name Dinesh Chandra Roy.
- They stayed at an inn and watched Kingsford's daily routine.

3 What happened on 30 April 1908?

The bomb hit the wrong carriage, and he was caught the next morning.

- On the evening of **30 April 1908**, Kingsford left the European Club.
- He and his wife rode in a carriage.

- An identical carriage carried the wife and daughter of the barrister Pringle Kennedy.
- Khudiram and Chaki threw a bomb into the Kennedy carriage.
- Miss Kennedy died within the hour.
- Mrs Kennedy died of her injuries on 2 May.
- The two bombers fled in different directions.
- Khudiram walked about **25 miles** through the night.
- At **Waini** station he asked for water at a tea stall.
- Two constables grew suspicious of his dusty feet and tired look.
- They seized him. Police found 37 rounds and a railway map on him.
- Waini station is now named Khudiram Bose Pusa.
- Chaki shot himself at Mokama.

4 What happened at his trial?

The case went from trial to appeal in about two months.

- Police took him to Muzaffarpur on 1 May.
- Crowds gathered to see the teenage prisoner.
- He is reported to have cried *Vande Mataram* as he arrived.
- He first took the blame himself. Chaki's body then arrived, and he identified it.
- The trial began on **21 May 1908**.
- Six lawyers defended him without taking any fee.
- On 13 June the judge sentenced him to **death**.
- He is reported to have smiled as the sentence was read.
- He appealed to the Calcutta High Court. The hearing was on 8 July.

- The lawyer Narendrakumar Basu argued that his statement was recorded wrongly.
- The court still dismissed the appeal.
- He was hanged at about 6 a.m. on **11 August 1908**.
- Newspapers reported that he walked to the gallows firmly and cheerfully.

5 Why is he remembered?

His youth made him a symbol across Bengal.

- He was only **18** when he died.
- Huge crowds followed his funeral procession.
- Bengali songs and poems remembered him as a symbol of youthful sacrifice.
- Waini station now carries his name.
- Kolkata has a metro station named after him.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak defended the young men in *Kesari*. See Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
- The police raid that followed led to the Alipore Bomb Case. See Barindra Kumar Ghosh.

6 What are the exam traps?

Exams swap the fates of the two bombers.

- Khudiram was **captured, tried and hanged**.
- Chaki shot himself at Mokama before any trial.
- The target was Kingsford. He survived.
- The victims were Mrs Kennedy and her daughter.

- Khudiram was arrested at Waini. Chaki died at Mokama.
- He was hanged in August 1908, not in May.
- Muzaffarpur is in Bihar, not Bengal.
- Do not mix him up with the Alipore Bomb Case accused. That trial came after.
- Do not confuse the 1908 case with the 1925 Kakori case. See Ashfaqulla Khan.

> **Quick check 2.** Khudiram Bose was hanged for killing the magistrate Douglas Kingsford. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Remember: Born 1889, Medinipur. Anushilan Samiti. Bomb thrown 30 April 1908. Arrested at Waini, 1 May. Sentenced 13 June. Hanged 11 August 1908, aged 18.

> **Think it through:** Why did a failed attack make Khudiram a hero?
>
> He was only 18, and he faced death calmly. Many Bengalis saw his courage as proof of the nation's anger at British rule.

> **Quick check 3.** Khudiram Bose was 18 years old when he was hanged on 11 August 1908. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Practice MCQs

1. Who actually died in the 1908 Muzaffarpur bombing carried out by Prafulla Chaki and Khudiram Bose?

A. A police escort travelling with Kingsford

B. Magistrate Douglas Kingsford

C. Two British women, not the intended target

D. No one; the bomb failed to explode

See answer ↓

2. The Muzaffarpur bombing missed its intended target. Who was actually killed instead?

A. A police constable

B. The wife and daughter of a barrister

C. Kingsford's own driver

D. Two British soldiers

See answer ↓

3. Khudiram Bose's fellow bomber, Prafulla Chaki, avoided capture in which way?

A. He was pardoned

B. He escaped abroad

C. He took his own life rather than be caught

D. He was acquitted at trial

See answer ↓

4. Khudiram Bose was executed on 11 August 1908. At what age, making him one of the youngest Indian revolutionaries hanged by the British?

A. 16

B. 18

C. 21

D. 24

See answer ↓

5. Where was Khudiram Bose arrested on 1 May 1908, after walking about 25 miles from Muzaffarpur?

A. Samastipur railway station

B. Mokama railway station

C. Waini railway station

D. Howrah railway station

See answer ↓

6. In which district of Bengal was Khudiram Bose born?

A. Nadia

B. Dacca

C. Bogra

D. Medinipur (Midnapore)

See answer ↓

7. At which place was Khudiram Bose hanged on 11 August 1908?

A. Faizabad Jail

B. Alipore Jail, Calcutta

C. Muzaffarpur

D. Cellular Jail, Andamans

See answer ↓

8. While staying at Muzaffarpur before the 1908 bombing, Khudiram Bose used which assumed name?

A. Hemchandra Das

B. Durgadas Sen

C. Haren Sarkar

D. Dinesh Chandra Roy

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **C.** The bomb hit the wrong carriage. It killed the wife and daughter of a local barrister, while Kingsford was not in the vehicle. ↑ Q1
2. **B.** The bomb hit the wrong carriage, killing the wife and daughter of barrister Pringle Kennedy; Kingsford was elsewhere. ↑ Q2
3. **C.** Prafulla Chaki took his own life when cornered by police, rather than be captured alive. ↑ Q3
4. **B.** He was executed at Muzaffarpur Jail at age 18, reportedly walking to the gallows firmly and smiling. ↑ Q4
5. **C.** Khudiram walked about 25 miles and was held by two constables at Waini railway station. Waini is now called Khudiram Bose Pusa. ↑ Q5
6. **D.** Khudiram Bose was born on 3 December 1889 at Habibpur, in Medinipur district. Bogra was the home district of his partner Prafulla Chaki. ↑ Q6
7. **C.** Khudiram Bose was tried at Muzaffarpur and hanged there at about 6 a.m. on 11 August 1908. ↑ Q7
8. **C.** Khudiram Bose used the name Haren Sarkar at Muzaffarpur. His partner Prafulla Chaki used the name Dinesh Chandra Roy. ↑ Q8

Quick-check answers

1. **True.** ↑ 1
2. **False.** ↑ 2
3. **True.** ↑ 3

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