

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a vibrant red sari with gold floral embroidery and jewelry, is seated in a red chair. She is smiling warmly at the camera while holding an open Bible on her lap. The background is dark and out of focus.

OPENING DOORS IN INDIA

By Richard M. Romney
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Gospel doors are always worth opening, because they lead to so much that is good.

It can be intimidating to open a door if you don't know who or what is on the other side, where the door leads, or even if it is safe to cross the threshold on your own. But opening a door can be exhilarating when you know that someone who loves you is already knocking, that inviting Him in will lead to great opportunities, and that once you open the door, you'll never feel alone again.

In Hyderabad, India, LDS youth are learning a lot about opening that second kind of door—the one that leads to faith in Jesus Christ—because they remember what the Savior said:

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20).

Because they are willing to open the door to Him, they are also learning to open gospel-related doors of many kinds.



Opening the Scriptures

Dressed in a bright red sari, 15-year-old Monica Mekala of the Hyderabad Fourth Branch sits near the back door of her family's home reading her scriptures. The light shining through the door, the light in her eyes, the bright smile on her face—all seem to say she is pleased with the wisdom she finds in the word of God.

“Right now I am reading Doctrine and Covenants 82:9–10,” she says. “In that scripture, the Lord says He will give us directions about how to act so that we can receive salvation and tells us that when we do what He says, He will keep His promises.” She says obedience opens many doors, because it leaves us free to pursue any righteous endeavor.



Developing Talents

Her brother, Melwin John Mekala, 17, agrees. He is quick to display sports trophies and other awards he's won—not to brag about his accomplishments, but to bear testimony of the Lord's blessings to him. "One of my favorite scriptures is Matthew 25:15–23," he says. "It explains that if you have talents, you should improve them." He says that developing talents opens doors by creating opportunities to bless others. "One of the great things about sports is teamwork. You learn to help each other, whether it's pushing each other during training or helping each other during a game. It's like being in a priesthood quorum—you help each other when you're studying and learning the gospel, and you support each other when you're giving service and helping other people."



Preparing with the Priesthood

Enoch Rahul Tallari, 14, of the Hyderabad Second Branch opens doors for people every week by helping with the sacrament. "The sacrament is a symbol of Jesus Christ's sacrifice for all of our sins," he says. As the Aaronic Priesthood prepares the bread and water, says the prayers, and distributes the sacrament to members of the congregation, "we are doing it so the people can get closer to the Savior and always remember Him," Enoch says. Providing a way for them to renew their covenants

helps them to remember that "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Matthew 7:14).



IN THE LIBRARY

Jayaprakash Gaddam, 14, of the Hyderabad Fourth Branch was excited to visit his family's ancestral village. "I have friends there, and I wanted to share the gospel with them," he explains. In particular, he wanted to give a Book of Mormon to one of his relatives who is also one of his best friends.

"When I gave it to him, he said, 'What is this book?' I explained that it is another testament of Jesus Christ and that it contains the fulness of the gospel. I told him that it came through a prophet of God, Joseph Smith. I bore my testimony that it is true, that it contains the words of Jesus Christ, and that it converts us to the true gospel."

"Then he surprised me. He explained that he goes to a Bible college and that the library there should have a copy of such an important book. So he took the book and donated it to the library. Later on, he told me that now everybody at the college knows they have that Book of Mormon."



A Door for Dad

The Domnic family of the Hyderabad Second Branch knows something about doors, too. The three daughters—Kavitha, 15; Hema, 16; and Smitha, 18—say education is a door to the future: “Whatever principle of intelligence we attain unto in this life, it will rise with us in the resurrection” (D&C 130:18). They talk about seminary as a part of their eternal education. It is a door that, through the scriptures, opens upon a path to the Savior. They also talk about how the Holy Ghost can open a door to the truth of all things (see Moroni 10:5).

But one of the most memorable doors for the Domnic daughters is the gospel door that opened eight years ago for their mother, Anu, and then, with patience and prayer, for their father, Julian Francis.

“When the missionaries taught me the gospel, I knew it was true,” Sister Domnic says. “I knew the Church was a place where I could bring my daughters to find safety from worldly things. I also had a strong feeling that



they would take so much trouble just for me, but I finally quit smoking and decided I should be baptized. From there on I have lived a righteous life, and my family and I have received more and more blessings.”

my husband would join and that our whole family we would be blessed.” But Julian Francis would have to stop some bad habits—smoking, drinking, and cheating people out of money as a rickshaw-taxi driver.

“I didn’t want my wife and daughters to learn about the gospel,” he says. “I told them that if they wanted to join a Christian church, just go to the one on our corner. Why did they want to go to the Mormon church all the way across town?” He also feared that if his wife and daughters changed religions, they would create ill will among the extended family.

But as the gospel door opened wide for his wife and daughters, he found his own questions becoming more and more sincere, and his own behavior improving. His wife and his two oldest daughters were baptized and confirmed, and he started taking missionary lessons seriously. He sold his rickshaw taxi and found other work. He quit drinking alcohol. But he struggled to stop smoking.

Then one day he found out the elders were fasting on his behalf. “I started crying. I couldn’t believe they thought it was worthwhile to fast for me. For me!” The missionaries challenged him to quit. “They gave me some gum and told me that when I felt like smoking, to chew gum instead. They said if I could be free for an hour, then I could go for another hour, then four hours, then eight. They kept coming each day, giving me gum and encouraging me. I kept wondering why

“I am so grateful for the missionaries who came to our door, and to my parents for walking through the door that led us all to Christ,” says Hema. “Now our family can walk through chapel doors, through temple doors, and someday through whatever entrance takes us back to our Heavenly Father.” Hema, like the other youth in Hyderabad, knows that such blessings start by opening the door where the Savior is knocking. **NE**



WORTH THE WALK

Smitha Domic, 18, of the Hyderabad Second Branch knows that choices are important. She made such a choice when it came to attending seminary.

“When I was in 10th standard [10th grade], seminary was quite far from my home, about three kilometers [1.8 miles]. There was no one to take me and one of my friends, and it was too expensive to pay for rickshaw-taxi rides. I wasn’t sure if we could get to seminary and also get to school, but I made a choice that seminary was important. So every morning we walked to get there. The teacher would wait to start class until we arrived.” From seminary, they found they could easily get to school.

So was it worth the walk? “Absolutely. We kept going to seminary, and this year I’ll be finishing as a four-year seminary graduate!”