

*‘What a wonderful story of Bhaskar, a devout and dedicated Hindu, who spent years searching for the meaning of life. Finally, he met a Christian who was instrumental in leading him to Jesus Christ – the one who is “the way, the truth and the life”. How many of us would be willing to give up friends and family to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, as Bhaskar did? It is my great pleasure to recommend this touching and powerful book. You will be inspired and challenged as you read it.’*

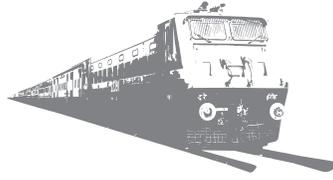
**Maud Kells OBE**, WEC International missionary in DR Congo for 50 years and author of *An Open Door*

*‘A fascinating insight into a very different world and world view and a wonderful reminder of the power of the gospel to transform the lives of people from any background. After reading this book I felt better informed about Hinduism and more motivated to share the gospel in my multi-cultural community.’*

**Clare Heath-Whyte**, St Lawrence, Morden,  
writer and speaker

*‘In Brahmin Reborn, Esther Sandys gives us a fascinating window into the inner workings of Hinduism. Through the story of her father-in-law, Bhaskar, she paints a clear picture of the difference between Hinduism and Christianity and of one man’s transition from one to the other. A gripping story, engagingly written, this book will increase your understanding and encourage your faith.’*

**Jean Gibson MBE**, author of *An Open Door*



# BRAHMIN REBORN

**BHASKAR SREERANGAM**

WITH ESTHER SANDYS

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First published in Great Britain in 2019

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-913278-04-5

Designed and typeset by Pete Barnsley (CreativeHoot.com)

Printed in Denmark by Nørhaven

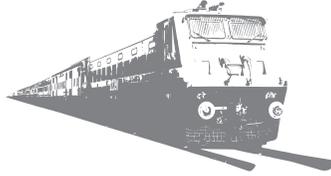
10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com

Unit C, Tomlinson Road, Leyland, PR25 2DY, England

Email: [info@10ofthose.com](mailto:info@10ofthose.com)

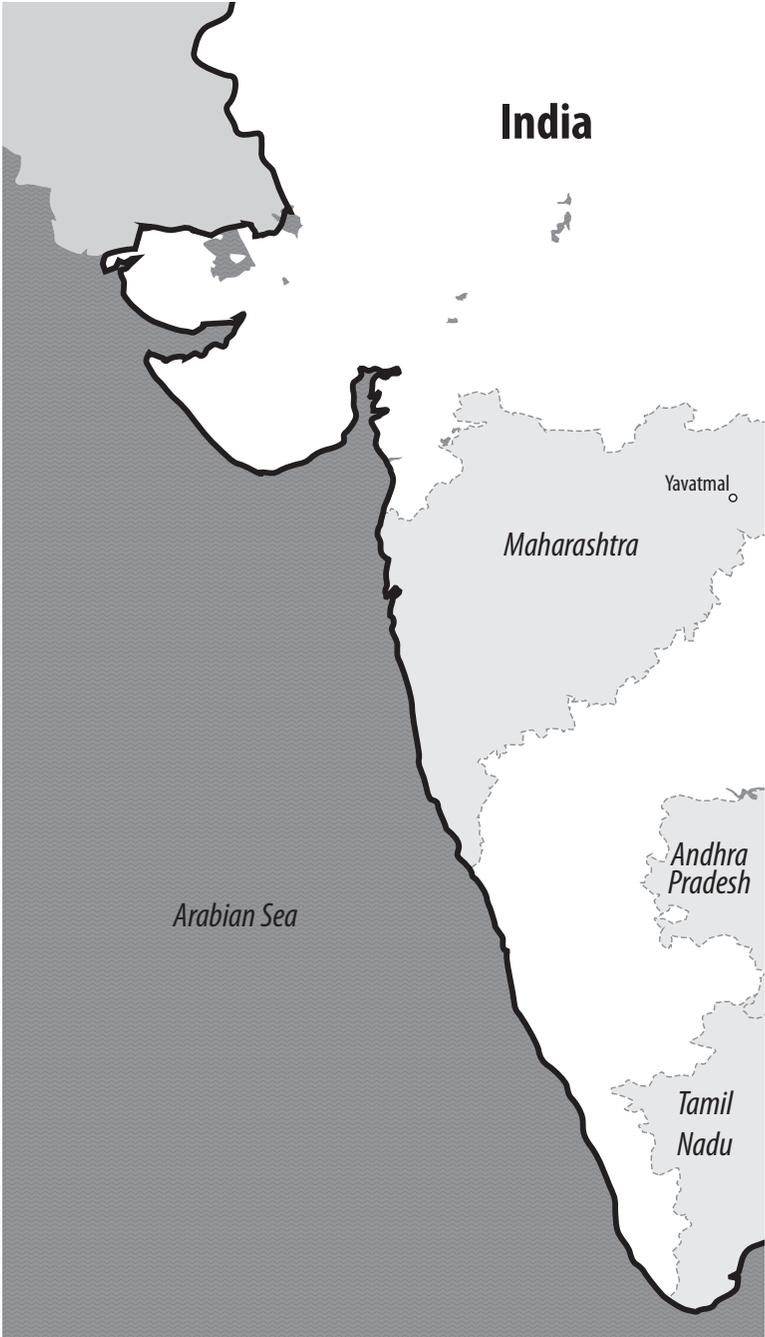
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*Now this is eternal life: that  
they know you, the only true  
God, and Jesus Christ, whom  
you have sent.*

*(John 17:3)*



**India**

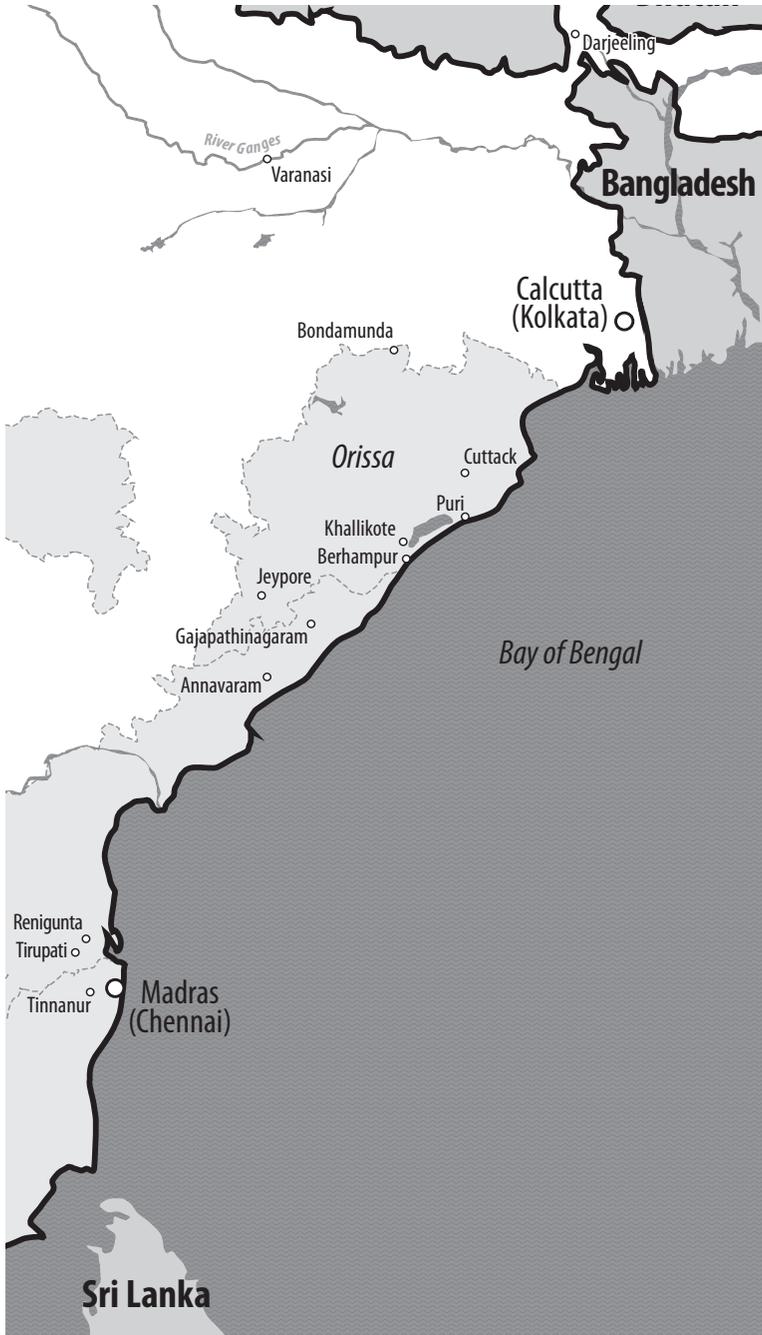
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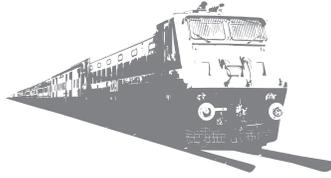
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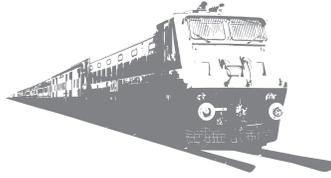
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# PROLOGUE

*... ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*(Luke 11:9–10)*

Everything else had failed. All my efforts to find the answer to my agonising question had come to nothing. It was time to give the Hindu gods an ultimatum: ‘If you don’t tell me tonight how I can come to you in heaven when I die, tomorrow I will kill myself.’ I wholeheartedly addressed this passionate plea to whichever of my gods were listening. I was deadly serious.

To be honest, I wasn’t the slightest bit keen on the prospect. But neither could I keep going with the desperate hunger for answers that had been eating away at me for over half my life. I wanted to know how to avoid being born again and again in cycles of reincarnation. I didn’t want to keep coming back to this earth, time after time,

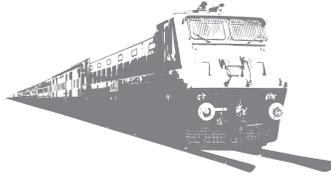
never reaching paradise with Brahman, the ‘supreme (or ultimate) reality’. Having interrogated family members, priests and the gods themselves, I was at my wits’ end at how I could receive release from these dreaded multiple lives. I could no longer conceive of carrying on my life without the guarantee that all my religious devotion would pay off. Where was the hope that I longed for? Where was the peace that I craved?

I believed the deities would be profoundly upset when they saw that a follower as great as me was going to die. I thought that they would do something out of desperation to save me from the slow and painful death I’d planned. Surely they would provide the answer I so needed? I wasn’t asking for fame and fortune, or a golden ticket to heaven. I was just asking for information. Having been used to supernatural happenings throughout my life, I fully expected a prompt, dramatic reply. I believed that it was entirely possible that one of the thousands – no, millions – of gods I followed as a Hindu might be able to respond to my cry.

So, having made my suicidal ultimatum, I waited patiently. All night, I waited with bated breath.

But by the break of dawn, to my dismay and despite my expectations, nothing at all had happened.

Conditioned by years of religious practices, still I waited, with an unshakeable belief that I’d be answered: maybe with a light; possibly with a voice; perhaps by an appearance. I would even have been satisfied with a fellow human being delivering a personal message to me.



1

# MY FAMILY

My story really begins – as most people’s do – even before I was born, in the 1910s. Hope and excitement were brewing for a priestly Hindu family on the south-east coast of India. Suryanaraya Rambhatla (my grandfather) had had two unsuccessful marriages: both his first and second wives had died. While this is tragic for any husband, it was disastrous for him: as a Hindu man, he had been taught that his entire eternity depended on having children. Yet Suryanaraya made a subsequent match with a girl from the well-reputed Sreerangam family. Everyone expected it to be ‘third time lucky’. Both families had a similar education, wealth and conservative attitude. In time, this couple were indeed blessed with four children. But while awaiting the birth of their fifth child, Suryanaraya unexpectedly died. This left his wife, who I would later call Ammamma, a widow at the age of thirty, with four children to care for and a baby on the way.

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## The hunt for husbands

The years went by and Ammamma needed to find good husbands for her three daughters. For Hindus, the first criterion for a good husband is that he must come from a 'good' family, that is a respectable one. Conveniently, this can be learnt largely by their surname, which implies not only that the person is a Hindu, but also which caste (section of society) and sub-caste they are from and their geographical place of origin.

To properly understand Hinduism and the way it affects people's day-to-day lives, you need to understand this caste system and the inflexible influence it brings to all relationships, especially marriages. The concept comes from the Hindu scriptures known as the *Laws of Manu*. All human beings are divided into four hierarchical groups at birth, called castes. These four divisions, from top to bottom, are: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (royals or warriors), Vaishyas (professionals) and Sudras (servants). Sudras can be subdivided into two further classes, servants and untouchables, though this distinction is a grey area. The untouchables are also referred to as Dalits.

The caste system is completely rigid: a person is born into a caste, and there is absolutely nothing she or he can do to change that in this present life. That caste is both determined by someone's good or bad actions in their previous incarnation and governed by the caste of their parents, particularly their father. The caste system then determines a person's entire social structure: identity,