Chap 4

POETRY I

TĒMBĀVANI
Summary of the Epic

Book I

Preface.

To sing of one who has continually growing in grace of the Almighty, called Susai by Westerners and one who may be called Vaḷan in Tamil - I go to the source of the revelations made by the Mother of God to the pious virgin Mary of Agreda - and I shall notwithstanding my poor Tamil, weave an unfading garland (Tēmbāvaṇi) at Ariyanallūr.

Ch.1.

The land of Judea was indeed the ornament of the earth and Jerusalem the jewel in that ornament.

Ch.2.

The beauty of the city of Jerusalem was the paragon of its temple lifting men's hearts to heaven and bringing down heaven's gifts to humanity.

Ch.3.

Of the line of David who of old had laid low the giant Goliath with a pebble and who had been the life and soul of the city of Jerusalem came Jacob who begot a son about whom his mother was told by God "This child will be a garland on my breast (Tēmbāvaṇi)."

Ch.4.

As a youth Vaḷan was of such comeliness that maidens'
eyes were drawn to him, but was of such purity that his
eyes were set and fixed on God alone.

Seeking contemplation and peace in solitude,
Valan was turned back by a sage to seek them indeed in the
service of men in the world.

Ch. 5.

God's inscrutable providence by wonderful ways and means
leads this saintly youth to wed the Virgin Mary.

Ch. 6.
The holy couple lead the twofold life of renunciation
and of household duties. They were spouses and lived as
virgins.

Ch. 7.
The Virgin is also a mother! The inscrutable mystery
fills the just man with anxiety.

Ch. 8.
Heaven interferes and clears the doubts of Valan.

Ch. 9.
Happy the life of this couple united with God in prayer
and exchanging sweet words of expectation for the coming
of the Redeemer.

Ch. 10.
And the divine child saw virgin birth in the manger of
Bethlehem the city of his forefather, David.

Ch. 11.
The divine Child reveals himself to men in ways he alone
could devise: to the simple shepherds and to the learned.
Ch. 12.

The holy couple offer this divine Child to his Father in the temple according to their law.

Book II.

Ch. 13.

A jealous tyrant, Herod, tries to liquidate this Child that has come to rule. Heaven orders his flight into Egypt.

Ch. 14.

On the way to Egypt, the Old Testament is being re-enacted.

Ch. 15.

Josua the leader of the people of God and his victory.

Ch. 16.

Gedeon and his great victory.

Ch. 17.

The Holy Family arrives at Kasai.

Ch. 18.

They see the site of the Ten Commandments.

Ch. 19.

They enter the desert.

Ch. 20.

The art gallery is exhibited to their gaze; Valan imparts instruction to the ascetics.

Ch. 21.

Heaven slakes their thirst.
Ch. 22.

At last they reach the land of their exile.

Ch. 23.

Hell goes into conspiracy.

Ch. 24.

——— but meets with its inevitable defeat.

Book III.

Ch. 25.

Meanwhile at home, innocent children have been massacred in a mad attempt to destroy the Messiah King.

Ch. 26.

The forerunner appears.

Ch. 27.

In Egypt the wisdom of Valan grows and spreads.

Ch. 28.

The sub plot of Vaman being conquered.

Ch. 29.

Where the Holy Family is, there the Kingdom of God spreads.

Ch. 30.

The exile ends and the Holy Family returns to Nazareth.

Ch. 31.

The mystery of losing and finding Jesus.

Ch. 32.

The meaning of life at Nazareth.
Ch. 33.
Valan must suffer in his body and understand the mystery of suffering.

Ch. 34.
Life is changed, not taken away. Happy death. Valan is sent as Messenger of God beyond the grave.

Ch. 35.
To suffer and die with Jesus is to rise and reign with Jesus.

Ch. 36.
And therefore Valan is crowned by God in heaven and honoured on earth.
THE BIBLE IN TÉMBÁVANI

Although it is not quite true that Témbávani "was intended to supply the place of the translation of the Scriptures" as Rev. Eliyah Hoole thought, it is true that the story of Témbávani is based on the Bible. Témbávani without the ideas and incidents of the Bible will be like a tree without its roots and leaves and flowers. It is on the Bible that it feeds, it is the fragrance of the Bible that it spreads.

Of the two classes, folk-epic and art-epic, Témbávani belongs to the latter class, like Paradise Lost, and like it centres round the message of the Bible. The essential message of the Bible is that God became man and Témbávani is the story of Joseph who protected the God-man, Jesus; this theme is universally known in the entire world. This is said unambiguously by Beschi in the Pāyiram.

There are about 150 references in Témbávani to Bible ideas and incidents. Some of these incidents are different from the Bible account and have become new short-stories of miniature epics in the hands of Beschi. There have been and there are men who object to such a development of the "simple truths of the Scripture narrative"; but they seem to forget the nature and requisites of an epic poem and the examples of epic writers like Dante and Milton.
The hero of the poem is Joseph, the foster father of Jesus. This name which in the West is said as Sūsai, can be said in Tamil, says Beschi, as Valan.6 This is the general trend in Beschi’s handling of Bible idea and episodes, to give them a new place, a new climate, a new happening in India, in Tamilnad. A few examples will bring this out.

The angel Gabriel coming as messenger to Mary falls at her feet and greets her. Mary, who was full of grace, was humbling herself like the branch that is loaded with fruits, was abashed at the salutation and resembled a picture drawn. As the mirror shows the image of the neighbouring objects, her face reflected her troubled mind.7 Seventy angels paid reverence to Mary. In the Old Testament, the seraphim, in presence of the Lord have each six wings; two to hide the face, two to hide the feet and two to fly with. The angels by the side of Mary are, in Īmbāvanām said to have six wings two to hide the face, two to hide the feet, and two to serve as ceremonial fans (evidently in keeping with the Indian ceremonial etiquette).8 When the three wise men from the East came to the house of Jesus, says Matthew, "falling down they adopted him." Beschi depicts this adoration in a truly Eastern manner: "With love in their heart, they drew the feet of Jesus, softer than the Anicham flower, close to their head; with desire they placed those feet on their eyes, with the pearls of their tear-drops they offered an anklet to those feet and pressed their lips to them, resembling a child at
the mother's breast; there they lived in boundless joy.9

The description of the deluge reminds one of the terrible destruction found in Pārāṇi literature, abounding in tragic events not without a touch of comedy. Umbrellas and the banners, cots and cushions, everything is washed away in the flood. A male elephant is swimming slowly protecting meanwhile the female elephant. Animals like the hare, the rabbit, the pig and the monkey, taking the elephant for a hill, climb on it and are safe; soon the elephant goes under water, and those animals too are drowned just as those men are let down, who seek the support of those who have no basic (moral) strength.10

The chapter on Joshua's victory is a miniature epic within an epic. According to the Bible account, the five kings who came to attack Josua were defeated; they fled and hid themselves in a cave of Maceda; Josua ordered great stones to be rolled to the mouth of the cave and guards to be set over them. After pursuing the enemies who fled, and killing them, as Josua wanted, the men of Israel opened the mouth of the cave, set their feet on the necks of the defeated kings; then they slew them, handed them upon five gibbets; in the evening they took down these bodies and cast them into the caves where they had laid hidden.11 The account of Joshua's battle in Tembāvani is more in detail and more in line with Indian warfare.
Seeing the ocean of the armies of the five kings, Josua, controlled his anger and sent Aben as messenger to those kings. Aben had to ask them why they hated the Gabonites who had sought the refuge of the true God, and to remind them that enmity with God was more harmful than that with soldiers. Here evidently Beschi is following the Tamil method of warfare which requires that a just war must be preceded by the sending of a messenger to the opponents. Relying on the strength of their vast army, the five kings derided the message of Aben, who, like a good messenger, tried to put fear into them, by reminding them of the terrible defeat God had inflicted on the enemies of Israel. It were better to submit to such a powerful God. But they did not.

Josua waged war with each of the five armies separately and defeated them. After the defeat of the second king, Josua saw that the day was coming to an end, and so he ordered the sun to stay on and it stood for the space of one day. It seemed, says Beschi in harmony with the battle scene, as if the sun was throwing arrows on the night which came as an enemy to Josua or as if the sun was beating the drum of the sea with the sticks of its rays to announce the news of this war. Collecting an army of 60,000 and dividing it into two wings, Atunitasan, the fifth king sent his men to attack Josua's army, while he himself fought Josua straight. In this fierce battle his crown with a moon crest was knocked down by Josua's arrow, even as (in the Indian story) the moon
was swallowed by the serpent. Angered by this, Atunītasan
intended throwing on Josua a very sharp and poisonous arrow,
when, lo, the next arrow of Josua fell on his head as a new
crown and split it and killed him.

The chief purpose of Beschi in narrating the victories
and defeat of Samson is to show how God manifests his greatness even through a trifle like the hair of a man and how man loses that greatness through lust. The whole story of Samson in the Old Testament sounds a bit similar to the story of Cīvakān in Cintāmanī, who goes from victory to victory and from woman to woman. Samson took to himself first a woman of Thammatha, later a harlot of Gaza and thirdly Dalila; it is by the last woman that he was betrayed. And so Beschi omitting Samson's love affair with the first two women describes only that with Dalila.\(^13\) The moral reflections he makes like - 'There is no greater source of shame and perdition than a woman', 'what will not a woman who has received money, do, even forgetting love and noble birth?' reflect the ideas of Nālādiyār.\(^14\) Beschi's sentence about Samson's death: "Having felled the enemy, he fell" reminds us of Milton's lines about the same:

"....... and now liest victorious
Among thy slain self-killed."\(^15\)

In the Bible God calls Moses to Mount Sinai, tells him how he had favoured the Israelites, how they should be
sanctified, and finally gives him the ten commandments. In Tēmbāvaṇi, God holds an intimate conversation with Moses, in which he mentions how he had made man the king of all creation with mental power to discern the good and the bad, and will power to follow the right and avoid the wrong; but with the increase of evil, the rule written by God in conscience begins to disappear; before the pull of the lightning-like life of this world, the will of God is forgotten even as the letter written on water; therefore he will write his will on stones.¹⁶ Here obviously Beschi not only marshals ideas released by centuries of Christian devotions but also refers to the idea in Vēkkundām that the help given to the good will stay like the inscription on stone, whereas the service done to those who have no affection will vanish like the writing on water.¹⁷

The description of Elias, in the Bible as a hairy man with a girdle of leather about his loins is rather repelling to Indian taste; but his description in Tēmbāvaṇi is attractive and in accordance with Indian ascetic life: Elias was an ascetic who had given up desire as the snake sheds its skin, who had with the sword of penance killed the five senses, who had lighted the lamp of righteousness in his heart, who had the power of the word that unfailingly indicated things to come, and who therefore was beyond all praise of poets.¹⁸ Elias, according to the Bible, was taken up in a fiery chariot; Beschi says that Elias was carried in a chariot which was as bright as the sun and as cool as the moon,
perhaps because of the fact Eliseus, the disciple of Elias was able to see Elias going up in the chariot. 19

In their journey through the desert Joseph and Mary come to a place whence three paths run in three different directions. The Archangel Michael explains to them that the path on the left though filled with shady trees will lead them to a desert, like the attractions of this world, that the one of the right which starts with a broad space will become narrower, like the friendship of the lowly, and then advises them to take to the middle path which turns neither to left nor right, like the just rule of a king. 20 In this we can see a reference to the Bible idea that a just man does right in the sight of the Lord, turning not aside to the right hand or to the left 21 and to the philosophical dictum: Virtus stat in medio, and to an incident in Cilapatikāram 22 where Kōvalan inquires from an ascetic the best route to Madurai and is told of the triple path after Kodumbālūr bank, of which the middle path is the best.

The substance of Chapter XX, Citirakkudappadalam, is the narration of the life of another Joseph, called by Beschi, Ḍānaran. Joseph after interpreting the dreams of Pharao advises him: O king, you are the life of the land; save during the years of plenty and distribute during the years of want." This advice echoes the idea of Tamil classics like Purānanūru - 'Neither paddy nor water, but the king is
is the life of vast world' — like Tirukkural.

To be able to increase wealth, to lay it up and guard,
And also well to distribute it, marks a royal lord. 23

Falsely accused of having stolen the cup from the palace, the elder brothers of Joseph confess that though this is a false charge, they deserve it as a punishment for their former guilt of cruelty to their innocent younger brother; the present accusation is the fruit of the former sin. In the Bible, Juda answers in the name of others: 'what shall we answer my lord? or what shall we say or be able justly to allege? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants.' Beschi's version brings out the idea of Tirukkural, 24 that the evil we do to others in the forenoon will visit us surely in the afternoon. 24 After this humble confession, Joseph could no longer hide the love of his heart, which betrayed itself through his tears. 25 In the Bible Joseph consoles them thus: "Be not afraid and let it not seem to you a hard case that you sold me into these countries: for God sent me before you into Egypt for your preservation." In Tēmbāvāni, Joseph's words to his brothers are more touching: "You sowed seeds of evil; the same field has brought forth a rich harvest of good. I shall not do harm to you who did harm to me. I shall protect you, do not fear, even as this tree protects those who are cutting it down." The Bible idea and the Tirukkural idea of doing good to those who did evil, are here adorned with an example from Vākkundām. 26
The massacre of the innocents by Herod, mentioned in three verses in the Bible is developed into a whole chapter, (Kulavikal Vataippadalum) by Besshi in truly human way that evokes our pity.\textsuperscript{27} Herod holds a consult with his learned men, ministers and the captain of the army. These men knowing the mind of the king advised him not to desist from killing some children in order to do away with the new born babe. As it is not known where the child is to be found, a certain Maiden suggested, all the children of the land should be killed, just as the whole jack fruit would be thrown away even if one part is said to be poisonous and it is not known which one it is. As for pleasing everyone by this decision, the king must know this cannot be done; the sun by its rising and dispelling darkness, pleases the lotus, but displeases the water lily. To these examples taken from the Indian environment Madian adds another taken from battle field, namely, that it is not unjust if a king were to send a particular soldier to the front in order that he may be killed in battle, perhaps referring to the historical incident of king David sending Urias to the battle field where the battle was strongest 'that he might be wounded and die.'\textsuperscript{28} One \textsuperscript{28}Elian opposes this suggestion; it is clear, he asserts, from the events connected with the birth of the child that God is born to save man, as Israel expected. But this statement is brushed aside by others. Not daunted, Elian continues his advice, at the risk of displeasing the
king's ears, and provoking him to anger. "If you listen", he tells the king, "to those whose principles change with the wind, you will perish even if you have no enemies." Then he narrates four incidents in Jewish history, in which God punished on the spot those who dishonoured him or his representatives. These four incidents did not please Herod as the four kinds of poems (in Tamil) do not please a donkey; the ocean of milk gave only poison to the snake; this precious advice makes the king only more furious and he orders the captain of the army to kill all the children of the land.

John in Hebrew means 'Jahweh is gracious', and is aptly translated as Karunaiyan. After learning of Elizabeth's confinement, the Bible says, "Mary rising up in those days went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda." It is not said here that Mary went with her husband Joseph. It is unimaginable in South India that a newly married young bride should go on a journey alone, without her husband. And so in Tēmēvānī Mary informs Joseph of Elizabeth's confinement and both Joseph and Mary go to visit Elizabeth. At Elizabeth's house, the men, (Joseph and Zacharias) embrace each other just as the body embraces life, and the women (Mary and Elizabeth) embrace each other just as a creeper embraces the branch of a tree.

About the childhood days of John, Luke has only this to say: "And the child grew and was strengthened in spirit;
and was in the desert until the day of his manifestation to
Israel." Beschi makes a short story out of this. After
the death of his father, Zachary, John is taken to the
desert by his mother. While living there a life close
to nature, John, not yet four years old, loses his mother.
Before her death, his mother reminds him of the special graces
he has received from God, exhorts him not to be saddened by
his loneliness but to find tongues in trees, sermons in
stones and books in the running brooks, and she adds, the
protection of Mary, who is physically far away, will not be
wanting. In fact Mary who is then travelling in the desert
to go to Egypt sees to it that John by the help of angels is
saved from the hands of Herod. After the death of Elizabeth,
Jesus sends heavenly messengers, with his message and that
of Joseph and Mary, to strengthen the young ascetic, John.
Mary, like the true mother she was, sends through the angels
a rich dinner prepared with sugar and honey and fruit and milk.
John listened with his ears to the consels sent by Jesus,
Mary and Joseph; then he took the food sent by Mary. One
is reminded of Tiruvalluvar's adgice that the food for the
ear makes the first place and that for the mouth comes next.

The elder Tobias learnt the truth that just as
sweet voice is the beauty of veenai, so is sweet word to
the tongue; that just as rain drop is the beauty of the
cloud, so is alms to riches; and that the beauty of the
eyes is to show kindness; having known this, he lived up
to it. Here we are reminded of Tamil literary ideas and Bible ideas. The young Tobias, in the Bible, after marrying Raguel's daughter, "remembering the angel's word, took out of his bag a portion of the liver, and laid it upon burning coals. Then the angel took the devil and bound him in the desert of upper Egypt." In Tēmbāvani the angel makes the young couple sit like sun and moon on the same seat, burns the liver and makes the smoke spread over them; the devil leaves of its own accord. As the young Tobias and his wife leave, Raguel, the father-in-law advises in the Bible "The holy angel of the Lord be with you in your journey, and bring you through safe and that you may find all things well about your parents and my eyes may see your children before I die." This ordinary advice has been, by the touch of the Tamil culture, changed into "Be you ever united like the bird and its shadow; never forget the poor even if you forget your kith and kin; show the poor greater kindness than even the kindly cow." In the Bible Anna, the mother of young Tobias watching out for her son daily, spots him out one day and informs her husband. In Tēmbāvani it is a messenger who reports his return of young Tobias. In the Bible the angel advises Tobias to kiss his father on meeting him; in Tēmbāvani the Tamil custom is observed. As the news reached, the elderly father and mother are getting up to go and meet the son, when the young couple come up saying "Here we are, adikal," and fall at their feet; their eyes offer their tears as flower offerings to their feet.
The few sentences given in the Bible about the return of Jesus, Mary and Joseph to Nazareth are elaborated by Beschi into a whole chapter. The holy family left Egypt without telling the people, who on noticing their absence, followed them, found their foot-prints and worshipped them by offering the three sorts of flowers - flowers of creepers, flowers of branches and flowers of water. The sight of Mount Moria gives an occasion to speak of the sacrifice of Isaac in the Old Testament. To those of the Bible account Beschi adds a few touching details. Abraham tells Isaac that God, who gives trials that are like fire proving gold, wants Isaac to be sacrificed and Isaac answers "My saddened father, God loves us, no matter whether he sends us good or evil; God gave me my life, why should I not give him my life?" With these words Isaac in order to prepare himself for the sacrifice, falls at his father's feet who is now weeping, offers flowers and asks pardon for his shortcomings, and then mounts the high altar and joins his innocent hands.

During the search for Jesus lost in Jerusalem Mary is asked by a woman the reason for her sadness; Mary tells her the reason, describes to her first the son's features from head to foot - without the defects common to Kāsitātipātam - then some of his qualities and ends: "What shall I say further? He is unequalled. If you see him once, you will recognise him." The woman acknowledges that she saw a boy of that description; and at dusk he came with a face bright like the
sun and stretching out his lotus-like hand and keeping his
star-like eyes fixed on the ground he was spreading grace
and asking for food. This detail not found in the Gospel
narrative may be objected to as being below God's dignity.
But it is not against the spirit of Christ's incarnation
through which he "took our infirmities and bore our diseases"
and "it behoved him in all things to be make like unto his
brethren that he might become a merciful and faithful high-
priest before God." It is also in line with Indian religious
tradition in which God lives the ordinary human life, asks
even food from men but gives more than he asks: "Ah, what a
kingly jest was it to open thy palm to a beggar to beg?"

In the midst of doctors, the twelve year old boy,
Jesus, proves to them that the Messiah is already born.
And, as is customary in India, the doctors ask him "who are
your parents? What is your caste or group?" Jesus answers:
"If I say I have father, then I have no mother. If I say
I have mother, then I have no father." Considering my
origin, I must say I have no native place. As I have in
me two natures, I belong to no caste or group." How apt
this apparent riddle is the unique position of Christ whose
figure Melchisedech was "without father, without mother,
without geneology.... but likened unto the Son of God".
Little wonder then that "all that heard him were astonished
at his wisdom and his answers."
Has such a treatment of Bible ideas and episodes vulgarised the Bible? It is a known fact that today the Bible is used everywhere - in politics, in radio-quiz, in newspaper serials and in movies - and the Bible is more the worse for it. "Indeed its own imperishability, its own absolute imperviousness to vulgarisation, is one of the incredible as well as the most constantly amazing miracles it continually performs." 47 Besides on the part of Christians it is their duty to think that the events of the Bible took place in their country, as it brings tidings of great joy to all the people; it is thus that the Irish believe that the emancipation took place in Eire that the Italians hold the house of Mary is in the heart of Italy, and the French cry, like Clovis when told first of the sufferings of Christ; 'Would I had been there with my Franks'. 48 And so the Tamils can and must think that Joseph lived and worked as foster-father of Jesus in Tamilnad. In this, the Tamil culture will bring its contribution to the Bible message as well as draw profit from it.
Notes.


2. Payiram 2:
   விளையாடையோ ஏன் கோரேற்றை பலிக்கு வைத்து
   விளையாடையோ என்று உரையாடல் முறையடை
   பலிக்கு தகை வைத்து என்று உரையாடல் முறை
   நகாம் வாழ்கை என்று உரையாடல் தொகுப்பு என்று

3. The student who has sung the epilogue to Tēmbāvāni speaks of 105 religious stories contained in it.

4. Anne Fremantle's Introduction to 'The Greatest Bible Stories', Stephen Daye Press, New York (1951): "The stories in the Bible... have since they first were written down, been matrix stories... For the power of the Bible is not only that it is literature, but that it makes literature."

6. Payiram of Tēmbāvānī 3.

7. Tēmbāvānī 7. 6-9
8. Isaias 6.2; Tēmbāvānī 8.61
9. Matthew 2.11; Tēmbāvānī 11. 116
10. Genesis Ch.6-7; Tēmbāvānī 14. 98-122
11. Josua X; Tēmbāvānī 15. 44-178
12. Kalai-k-kalanjiyam, Vol.6. 'Tūtu' (Published by Tamil Valarchi-k-kalākam, 1959)
13. Judges Ch. 14-16; Tēmbāvānī 17. 15-39
14. Nāladiār; 372, 378
16. Exodus Ch. 19-20; Tēmbāvānī 18, 13-23
17. Vākkundām 2.
18. IV Kings 2. 11-12; Tēmbāvānī 19. 32.
19. IV Kings 1.8; Tēmbāvānī 19.26; Tirukkural 28.
20. Tēmbāvānī 19, 37-41.
21. IV Kings 22.2
24. Tēmbāvānī 20, 113; Genesis 44.16; Tirukkural 319.
25. Tirukkural 71.
26. Matthew 5.44; Tirukkural 314; Vākkundām 30.
27. Matthew 2. 16-18; Tēmbāvānī 25.
28. II Kings, 11.15
29. Tirukkural, 389
32. Tēmbāvani
34. Tēmbāvani 26. 131
35. Tirukkural 412
37. Tobias 8. 2-3; Tēmbāvani 25, 55-56; there is a flavour of Cilappatikāram Maṇaiarān padutta kātai. 30.31.
38. Tobias 10-11; Tēmbāvani 27. 59; Tirukkural, 81.
39. Tobias 11. 5-6; Tēmbāvani 27, 65.
40. Tobias 11.7; Tēmbāvani 27, 65
41. Matthew 2.19-23; Tēmbāvani 30.
42. Matthew 1. 5. 23-24
43. Matthew 8.17; Hebrews 2.17
44. Gitanjali 50
45. "Cujus mater virgo est; cujus pater feminam nescit."
46. Hebrews 7.3; Luke 2.47
47. Anne Fremantlé's Introduction to 'The Greatest Bible Stories' Loc. cit.
48. Ibid.
Religion in Tēmbāvani

As Tēmbāvani is a religious epic on the story of a Catholic saint, it is to be expected that it contains truths of the Catholic religion. What is here attempted is to show that in treating of Catholic ideas here Beschi gives them an Indian, particularly a Tamil garb, so that Catholic principles are at home in Tamilnad, so that Catholic ideas truly become catholic (universal), not only preached to, but belonging to all countries and cultures.

God who creates (Deus Creator)

The one true God is incomprehensible and ineffable. His immeasurable attributes can be briefly summarized into six. Not knowing these attributes, people create gods of their own making, just as at the disappearance of the sun, men light lamps instead; else they attribute to God and heavenly beings ideas of their own experience as the blind men in the story gave false descriptions of the different parts of the elephant. God creates out of nothing without the help of instruments. He creates everything found in the five divisions of the land (Kurinji, Mullai, Marutam, Neital and Palai); the motive of creation is love; God is Love and could therefore be called lover.

God who elevates (Deus Elevator)

God created the first man and first woman in an
elevated state, i.e., beyond the reach of their natural powers and therefore supernatural state. This state was meant to be handed down to their progeny; but they fell from it, losing all its advantages both for themselves and other men. A telling example is given for this; as the poison that enters the body through the mouth spreads to every limb, so the poison of the first sin entering the body of human family through the first parents comes down to all men. The effects of all this fall affected man, body and soul, and man has since been in a state of unsteadiness like the moss in the water.5

God who redeems (Deus Redemptor)

God became man to redeem man; he united in himself the two natures, in which union the human and the divine remain distinct without the one being changed into the other. As in man, the Athanasian creed says, the body and soul form one man, so God and man form one Christ. Beschi admits that this union is unique, more intimate than the union of the thread and flower in a garland, of string and jewel in an ornaments, nay, than any union that this world can think of. He however gives an example to show the negative aspect of the union: as in the mixture of poison and nectar, the poison does not become nectar, as in the mixture of brass and gold, brass does not change into gold, so in the union of human and divine nature in Christ, the human nature does not become
divine, but is elevated by it. And God was born of a virgin. This is certainly out of the ordinary and impossible for man to effect, just as it is impossible that oyster (valamouri) which is born ordinarily in the sea be born in a tank, and that kuvalai flower which is ordinarily found in a tank be found on top of a tree. And still for this unique virgin-birth Beschi gives three comparisons: the bud that emits fragrance without flowering, the bud that becomes fruit without blossoming, and oyster that brings forth the pearl. To these he adds one more borrowed from the Fathers of the Church, as the ray of the sun enters the glass and comes out without breaking it, so the Lord entered and came out of the virgin-womb of Mary without spoiling her virginity.

Without a parallel in the three worlds
Without loss of virginity in the three periods
She brought forth brighter than the three lights
The Son who is the second of the three divine persons.

Though Mary was to bring forth Christ without the help of man, she was, in the Providence of God, married to Joseph. St. Jerome gives four reasons why it was better that Mary was married to Joseph: so that her origin could be traced through Joseph's generation, that she might not be stoned to death by the Jews (whose Mosaic law ordered that an adulterous married woman should be stoned to death), that while fleeing to Egypt she might have support and that as
pointed out by the martyr Ignatius, the birth of the Redeemer might be hidden from the devils who knew that a virgin, not a married person, would bring forth the Redeemer. Of these Beschi omits the first reason, but takes the three others and proves later that the last one, (the deception of the devils) came true, in the chapter on the consult of the devils.9

The purpose of Christ's coming was to show man the right path to heaven, for man was not clear about it, fearing to discern as it were, poison from nectar. Even as the three bears the heat of the sun and protects all with its cool shade, so did Christ take up the prison of humanity to impart to man the heavenly life.10 It was God's love that was the reason for Christ's coming. That love, adds St. Augustine, made him take up untold sufferings as a medicine, so that our pride, for instance, may be cured by the contrary medicine.11 Fr. Beschi develops this idea further in the context of Indian religious tradition. 'Man ate the (forbidden) fruit and its sweetness brought about sickness; God took the medicine for it. We took the poison; we should take the bitter medicine; but he took the medicine of suffering and has become our cure.' 'Thus the world gives him evil on earth, he gives the world the good of heaven.'12 The commandments of God written on men's mind were forgotten like the letter on water; then God wrote them on stones on Mount Sinai; they too being forgotten, now God, on another Mount, writes his love on the paper of his body, by the pen of iron nails, with the ink of
his own blood. What need is there for man to delve into many books. To study this one life (on the cross) is enough to acquire all knowledge. Here Beschi must have had in mind the examples of holy men who drew all their inspiration from the crucifix, particularly of Saint Bonaventure, one of the theologians of the Catholic Church, who pointing to the crucifix remarked to St. Thomas: "It is from this well-spring of light and love that I have drawn whatever is to be found in my lectures on writings."13

God who sanctifies (God sanctificator)

The fruits of Christ's redemption are distributed to man through the seven sacraments, which are spoken of, by spiritual writers, as channels of grace. Developing it further, Beschi says: "Christ is the dark cloud on mount Calvary, whence the rain of his blood falls on the earth and the rain water is taken to man through these seven rivers; as a result, the desert of this life is turned into a cool garden."14 The chief among the sacraments is the Holy Eucharist, the sign of God's love par excellence. This truth is expressed in Tēmbāvāṇi couched in the idea of Tirukkural: Those who love may cut their body and give (lifeless) flesh; but who can give the whole living body as food, except you, God, who give food to all and beg for your food from others.15

God sanctifies men through men; he chooses some to be his ministers, to be in his place in the work of
saintification and gives them the required strength for this work. Those who are chosen, on their part, must have a personal realisation of God's love for souls; before they teach others, they should have in themselves what they want to give others. A homely example familiar to art-loving Tamilnad brings this home. The ministers of God must not be like the king on the stage nor like the attractive but poisonous etti fruit, nor like the screw in the veenai, (which being in the musical instrument is itself unmusical), but like the sweet worded maiden who teaches the parrot her sweet words.¹⁶

But there will be opposition to their ministry from the adversary of human race, the devil. The work of the Christian ministers and that of the devil are compared to work in the field. The ministers, after God has removed the thorns, will plough the field with sound knowledge, sow the seed of virtuous living; God will give the (traditional) triple rain to cool and enlighten souls; and thus will grow a rich harvest for heaven. The devil, on the other hand, will plough the field with covetousness, destroy true knowledge, produce mire of confusion, sow seeds of vice in the midst of much noise, will show even gold as the first shoot and finally make the people reap fire of hell.¹⁷

God who finishes (Deus consummator)

God who creates, elevates and redeems, brings the world to an end. At the last judgment he will receive the good
men with a pleasing look, the bad with an angry look; in the light of this very look all their sins will be made manifest; and they will be thrown into hell. Joseph in Tēmbāvāṇi depicts, in his discourse with Vāman, the horrors of hell so well that Vāman who was leading a loose life confesses: “you clearly declared that hell is a place of burning fire; but has it not been a cool tank that put out the fire of my lust? You said that hell is a place of thick smoke and dense darkness; but has it not become a sacred lamp to illumine my mind?”

Thus the Catholic ideas and Indian culture form the warp and woof of Beschi’s epic.

**The language:**

The language used in the treatment of the religious ideas affords apt words and phrases towards forming a pure Catholic-Tamil terminology. A look at the present day Catholic terms in Tamil and their equivalents found in Tēmbāvāṇi may be interesting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>The present Catholic-Tamil Terminology</th>
<th>Beschi’s Terminology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The one God</td>
<td>அன்னை மன்னர்</td>
<td>அன்னை மன்னர்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The triune God</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father, Son</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Angels</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
<td>பார்த்து ஒரு பேர்</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Original sin  அடித்தளம்
4. The Redeemer  திரும்புன்னி
The redemption  திரும்புன்னி
5. Commandments  (of God)  தெய்விகள்
6. Inspired writers  பெரும் புன்னி பாலிகள்
7. Ark of the covenant (in which the two tables of the law were kept.)  அருகாவிழா காவிடம்
8. Purgatory  பரம்புள் ஓலம்
9. Hell  ஹேல்

Dialoge with Hinduism

The time of Fr. Beschi was a time of conflicts and clashes between different religious groups. He was considered to be the chief opponent of Lutheran Protestantism (as referred to in an earlier section). Traditional stories abound about Beschi's debates with Hindu sannyasis and his composing a poem to fool Vaitheesvaran of Velur temple.
Inspite of it all, Beschi was not blind to the wealth of goodness in Hinduism which should be appreciated and used by Christians.

The word 'archanai' (offering) and 'curutu (book) with all their rich meaning generally used by only by Hindus, are found abundantly used in Tēmbāvani. The term 'vinai' popularly used to mean action (good or bad) of a person in a previous birth, is used to mean action (as it is not infrequently understood by Hindus themselves in popular usage), in the present life, at times it is made to denote the sufferings of the present moment, and even the act of God's will, made known here and now.

Some terms and phrases used of God, like: mānī 31, māntēvatā, ma mātānā, 32 ma mātānā 33, cāmātālakā
māntēvatā cāmātā, 34 mātālakāmātā cāmātā, 35 ma mānī ma mātānā mātānā, 36, mānīmātācāmātā cāmātā cāmātā 37, mā
mānī mātānā cāmātā 38 are all borrowed from Hindu religious usage.

Speaking of the Christian belief that Christ drank the bitter chalice of suffering on account of the sins of men, Beschi writes: 'Yamūṭṭa nōysi-p-pitir cāyu marunta kikkum pīṇiyūnt-t-talaiyi vantān'. In the fact that God changed the evil caused in the massacre of children by Herod into eternal glory for them, remarks Beschi, poison was changed into nectar. This is a reference to the Saivaite belief that Siva took poison to save the world.
'Nāyakā' is one of the names of the consort of Siva; and it is applied to Mary; it corresponds to the word Maria in Hebrew, Domina in Latin and Lady in English. The first church that Beschi built was in Āryaṇūr (alias Kōṅāṅkuppam) and was dedicated to Mary under the title of Periya Nāyakā ammai, in whose honour Tēmbāvani was composed, as Beschi implicitly says in his payiram and the local tradition around Kōṅāṅkuppam asserts.

In the ecstatic outbursts of Joseph to God like: "I do not seek good things in the wrong way; I do not seek sceptre and power; I do not seek kith and kin; I do not seek gold that pricks the conscience, I do not seek anything on earth that men trust; I seek only your grace." or "Shall I have the privilege of kissing your sacred feet, softer than anicham flower, and of washing it with my tears?" - the tender devotion of Kulasekara Alwar is reflected. At the thought of the glory of Mary, Joseph surpassed himself, his eyelids not closing and the flower of his miraculous rod not fading; and so he resembled celestial beings. It is the Hindu tradition that the inhabitants of heaven do not close their eyes and the flowers on their person do not fade. Joseph is said to stand in deep meditation before the Infant Jesus like the staff in the place of sacrifice. The face of John the Baptist shone bright like the sacrificial fire. These are gifts taken by Beschi from the Hindu sacrificial ceremony.
Vētiar, Vētiōr meaning priests are also borrowed from Hindu usage. Moral caution with regard to dealings with women is decorated with two Hindu mythological stories: "We have heard, not seen that the sea when churned brought forth nectar and poison; but the woman's words do bring forth nectar and poison." "The mind that is swallowed up by lust will lose all its former riches of various kinds in the same way as the moon that is swallowed up by the snake disappears." This story of the snake and the moon is used twice more in the narration of the events in the battle field.

Transmigration is an accepted belief in the Hindu religion, according to which one's karma or personal action in a former life is the cause of one's present happiness; the terms murpirappu and ūlvinai are used in connection with this belief. According to the Christian belief the miseries of this life originate from the sin of our first parents. The life of the first parents, therefore, says Beschi, can be called murpirappu, and their sin, ūlvinai. This is a typical form of assimilation as of the Greek usages like 'logos' into the Christian usages like "word".

Behind and beyond these borrowings, there is evident in Beschi a real love for the other man's view and to think, as St. Paul wanted, on those things which are true, modest, just, holy, lovely and of good fame. It is on account of
this love for the religion and culture of Tamil India that Beschi holds a prominent place in the line of those who were responsible for a dialogue with Hinduism. If de Nobili started the dialogue\textsuperscript{53} with Hindu religion in India, Beschi may be said to have continued that dialogue, directing particular attention to religion in Tamilnad.
NOTES

1. Denzinger, Enchiridion Symbolorum: 254, 428; Tēmbāvāṇi 37, 156-165.
2. Tēmbāvāṇi, Ibid. 176; Raguvaṃsa IV. 7.
3. Tēmbāvāṇi, 35. 270
4. Tēmbāvāṇi, 27. 163; 14. 93; 32. 48; Denzinger, 706.
5. Denzinger, 766, 793
   Tēmbāvāṇi 3.49; 5.2; 27. 121.
7. Denzinger 993.
   Tēmbāvāṇi 22. 75; 7.26, 41; 8.75; 10.110; 26.12, 31; 15.7
8. Tēmbāvāṇi 10.94
   Tēmbāvāṇi 3.30; 23. 77-78
10. Denzinger 286; Tēmbāvāṇi 18.50; 22.33
11. I. John, 3, 16; St. Augustine, De Catechizandis rudibus 400, c.4. n.7
12. Tēmbāvāṇi 9.122; 11.57; 10. 118
14. Denzinger 844, 847, 849, Tēmbāvāṇi 32.46
15. Tēmbāvāṇi 32. 49; Tirukkuṟṟaḻa 72.
16. Denzinger 2300; Tēmbāvāṇi 16.14; 27.17
17. I. Peter 5, 8. Tēmbāvāṇi 17. 10-11; 27.12
18. The way Beschi has handled the subject of the devils - their appearance, their reaction to God’s ways, their intrigues to enslave men, - is worth a separate study.
19. Denzinger 994. 531; Matthew 25, 31-46
   Tēmbāvāṇi Pāyiram I: 27, 163; 11, 46; 28, 132.
19. The present Catholic-Tamil terminology is said to have originated from the time of Fr. De Nobili, when the use of Sanskrit terms was in vogue.
Tēmbāvāṇi 14, 140; 26, 29-30; 8, 79.

20. Tēmbāvāṇi, 28, 64.

21. Tēmbāvāṇi 3, 49; 7.49; 9, 110

22. Tēmbāvāṇi 9, 93

23. Tēmbāvāṇi, 13, 10; 15. 22.

24. Tēmbāvāṇi 14.82

25. Tēmbāvāṇi 14.11; 14.16

26. Tēmbāvāṇi 27.88

27. Tēmbāvāṇi, 28.55; 28.56.


29. Tēmbāvāṇi for Dhi 27: 2.49; 7.53; 8.95;
11.113; 12.84; 14.22; 23.38; 23.112; 27.145; 36.43
For Dhi 27: 8.70; 9.81; 11.39; 11.49; 12.71; 13.9;
13.22; 14.19; 14. 85; 15.45; 16.6; 18.43; 20.52; 20.39 etc.

30. Tēmbāvāṇi for vina: good or bad action - 25,49; 25.50;
25.54; 25.68; 25.82; 25.90 etc.
Suffering: 27,42; 27.77
Act of God's will - 26,2

31. Tēmbāvāṇi, 11.118; 12,3; 14,66; 14,86; 15,19; 20,13

32. Tēmbāvāṇi, 26,170; 12.80

33. Tēmbāvāṇi, 15.185

34. Tēmbāvāṇi, 32.16 28

35. Tēmbāvāṇi 32.14

36. Tēmbāvāṇi 33.37
37. Tēmbāvāṇi, 38, 105
38. Tēmbāvāṇi, 36, 2
39. Tēmbāvāṇi, 9, 122
40. Tēmbāvāṇi, 25, 91
41. Tēmbāvāṇi 8, 74; 8, 76; 6, 80; etc.
42. Tēmbāvāṇi, Payiram 13
43. Tēmbāvāṇi, 9, 68
44. Tēmbāvāṇi, 9, 101; Nālāyira-t-tivya-p-pirapantam, No. 677, 678.
45. Tēmbāvāṇi, 9, 90; Nālavenba
46. Tēmbāvāṇi 10, 122; 26, 151
47. Tēmbāvāṇi, 3, 25; 4, 61.
48. Tēmbāvāṇi, 28, 29; 20, 23
49. Tēmbāvāṇi, 15, 116; 15, 163.
50. Tēmbāvāṇi, 27, 122.
51. Simon绿色通道. Poems Dānṣṭhāntha,
Vol. 2. p. 265
52. Philippians, 4, 8
53. Jacques Albert Cattat, 'The Spiritual Dialogue of East
and West', p. 38, Max Muller Ravan Publications,
New Delhi, 1961.
Tēmbāvanī and the Original

The story of Tēmbāvanī is taken, as Beschi avows in the preface (Pāyiram), from the revelations of Mary, the Mother of Jesus to a nun of Agreda, called also Mary. Born on April 2, 1602, in the small town of Agreda, near Tarazona in Spain, Mary entered the congregation of the discalced Franciscan Nuns in the convent of the Immaculate Conception in Agreda in 1617. Chosen as abbess in 1625, she governed so well that, except for a short intermission, she was re-elected as abbess every three years, till her death in 1665. Famous for her prudence and foresight in matters of government and council, she was no less famous for her singular virtues of humility, unselfish love of God and men.

Notwithstanding her administrative and practical talents, she was a deeply mystical soul and was the recipient of extraordinary experiences. She is believed to have received from the Mother of Jesus intimate communications about her own life and that of her divine Son on earth. The humble recipient of these intimate communications was unwilling to disclose them to others, but the strict command of her religious superior made her write them down, which work started in 1655, was over in 1665 and is still preserved in the convent of Agreda. It is known as the 'City of God'.¹
Catholics are not required to place their faith in any revelation said to have been made to any private individual, however holy he or she might have been. But if and when such communications are published, the religious authorities scrutinise them and satisfy themselves that there is nothing contained in them which is contrary to truth or good morals. When the private revelations are thus certified the faithful are allowed to accept them for their pious devotions. Mary Agreda’s writings were thus approved. For although the French translation of the 'City of God' made in 1678 served as the basis of virulent attacks from Jansenistic and Gallican quarters, the positive decree of Pope Innocent XI on November 1661 allowed the 'City of God' to be freely spread among the clergy and the laity.

That it was spread freely is seen from the fact that it had over 60 additions in Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese, German, Latin, Arabic, Greek and Polish. It is certain that its excellence was personally experienced and appreciated by Fr. Beschi who was then in Italy. It is but natural therefore that the 'City of God' and its traditional story of St. Joseph came to Beschi’s mind when he thought of writing a Christian epic in Tamil.

That the story of the life of Joseph in Tembavani follows in general the details as found in the original is borne out by the explicit avowal of Beschi himself first in the preface and later at the beginning in the description.
of Joseph's departure from the country of Judea. Even in certain details there is agreement between the original and Tamil. According to both the Holy Family sojourned in Egypt for seven years, Mary during her search for Jesus who was lost at 12, met a woman who after hearing the description of the boy Jesus said she found a boy of that description asking for alms; her heart was ravished by his beauty and graces. According to both Joseph suffered from physical illness for eight years before his death. St. Joseph is appointed as messenger to go to Limbo.

In spite of such agreements Tamil is not just a literal repetition of what is found in the original. It differs from the original in many points; in some at least of these points of difference one can see the Tamil tradition reflected. According to the original Joseph was 33 years old when he married Mary but Beschi says that he was 32 years old. After their marriage Mary and Joseph divided their property that they inherited from Joachim and Anne into three parts: one to be given to the temple where Mary had served, another to the poor, the third to be left in the hands of Joseph; but in Tamil they divide the property into two portions and give one to the temple and the other to the poor. They want to work and feed the world by their work. Here is brought out the spirit of self-sacrifice of the couple. They are willing to give even their lives to others, and so they resemble the rain that gives food and becomes
food. Here Beschi refers to two Kural ideas. 10

Beschi's development of Joseph's character emphasizes the qualities that are in tune with Tamil or Indian traditions. Whereas in the original during the doubtful anxiety of Joseph concerning the pregnancy of Mary, the thought that she might be the mother of Messiah did not occur to him, in Tembavani Joseph recollects the old prophecy that God's mother would be a virgin, but wonders, in his humility, how that exalted virgin could be his spouse. 11 To think lowly of oneself, is according to Tirukkural a sign of true greatness. 12 When the doubt regarding Mary's pregnancy was cleared, Joseph, we read in the 'City of God', waited till Mary would finish her morning contemplation and at the hour when he knew she would finish the contemplation he opened the door of the apartment. But the Eastern tradition would require greater reserve and respect to the Mother of God; and so, in Tembavani we find Joseph, anxious to see Mary, waiting for her to open the door of her apartment and when she did so, he falls at her feet. 13 When Mary began to do the humble works at home, Joseph stopped her and wanted to do those works himself. An angel came, says the original, and instructed him: "Do not frustrate the humble desires of her who is supreme of all the creatures of heaven and earth...... In some of the works thou canst assist her......." In Beschi's epic the instruction of the angel echoes the akam-puram division in Tamil life. Says the Angel: "Allow her to perform the humble duties at home; your
duty will be to take up exterior works for the support of the Mother and the Child. 13

The visit of the shepherds and the three kings to the newly born Jesus breathes the Indian spirit in Tēmbāvāṇi which is not in the original. According to the latter the shepherds came to Bethlehem and remained half-a-day, listened to the instructions of Mary and having understood many mysteries, departed in the afternoon. In Tēmbāvāṇi we see them, not departing in such a hurry (though they came in a hurry), but remaining some days in Bethlehem and coming again and again to see Baby Jesus. The woman feels in India, at home with woman. It is the shepherdesses who talk freely to Mary and put her interesting questions like: "Why should God be born to suffer?" "why has he no army, no palace?" 15 The original says that the three kings wished before their departure from Bethlehem to kiss the hands of Mary as they had been accustomed to do to their queen in their country; but the prudent Mary withdrew her hand and offered instead her son. And they offered, besides the three gifts to Jesus, precious gems to Mary which she declined. Beschi knew well the Tamil tradition which would never allow even the desire in man either to touch a lady other than his partner or to present her directly with any gift. And he has judiciously omitted this desire of the kings to kiss Mary's hands and offered her gifts. 17

Here one is reminded of Rāvana's abduction of Sītā, differently
described in Vālmīki and in Kambār. But Beschi adds, what is not found in the original but is in keeping with the spirit of Tamil hospitality, that the kings invite Joseph to come to their land of plenty and that the gold given by the kings is divided into three parts: one for the priests, one for the temple and one for the poor. 17

After the ceremony of the presentation of Jesus in the temple, Mary, according to the original, kissed the hands of the priest and asked for his blessing; the same she did to Anne, her former teacher; "for her dignity as the Mother of God..... did not prevent her from these acts of deepest humility." Beschi omits these acts, as in India these will not be rightly understood. He says that Joseph and Mary return home with Jesus while Simeon and other priests were blessing them and angels accompany them. 18 After the presentation Mary decided to remain in Jerusalem for nine days more and to go to the temple and make offering. She had a special memory of the nine months she bore Jesus in her womb; but on the fifth day they were ordered to go to Egypt. For some reason or other Beschi says that Mary intended to remain in Jerusalem for eight days. 19 During the journey to Egypt the Holy Family is said, in the original, to have stayed in the city of Gaza for two days; Mary performed miraculous acts of kindness to others like saving two sick persons from danger of death, and restoring a cripple woman to health. Beschi says they remained two days in Gaza, that Jesus on the request of Joseph brought back
the dead mother of five daughters. They were living on alms in those days. A paralytic woman gave them alms, and Joseph cured her.

It is said in the original that the Holy family stayed in Egypt, for seven years. On their entering the land the idols in the temples fell down. When common people spoke to Mary and Joseph about the events, Mary instructed them on the nature of the one true God. Her sweet manners and kind words attracted many. When they settled down in the City of Heliopolis, Mary took to manual labours in order to help in the support of the family, and joined in serving the people. At a time when pestilence devastated the city and its surroundings, great multitudes went to Mary and returned cured in body and soul. When her works of mercy increased, she prayed to the Lord and obtained that Joseph should be given special powers to help her in these kind deeds and so, from the third year on, she had the help of St. Joseph, who would look to the men while she helped the women.棠 محمود، being the story of St. Joseph, stresses the service of Joseph, passing by Mary's. For Mary's helping Joseph by doing manual work as found in the original, so much as even to postpone some of her special exercises of piety to the night, will not appeal to the Indian mind; and so Beschi has omitted it. It is Joseph who instructs people and strengthens them in the path of virtue.
According to the original, when holy family left Egypt, their acquaintances and friends in Egypt were very sad; they sighed and wept and complained as they saw them leave. If the divine power had not interfered, it could have been impossible for the holy family to quit Heliopolis. But Beschi devises a means of solving this difficulty. He makes the three leave the city, without informing anyone, at midnight. Though Joseph did not tell them of their departure, he gave them a last general advice to be firm in adversity, to be attached to God, to avoid evil, to see life as a foam on the waves and press on to their goal. When in the morning the citizens learnt of their departure, they began to lament, and search for them; not finding them, and finding only their foot-prints, the people threw three sorts of flowers and paid their respects to these. Probably Beschi is reminded of the departure of Rāman to the forest and the respect his brother showed to Rāmā's sandals.

During the three days' search for Jesus who was lost at the age of twelve, Mary, according to the original, thought of going to the desert where John the Baptist was and to Bethlehem to the cave of his nativity, for she surmised Jesus might have gone there; but the accompanying angels informed her that he had not gone so far. After learning from a woman that Jesus came for alms, she went to the hospital of the City where she was told that a child of her description visited the inmates, giving some alms and speaking words of consolation.
In Tēmbāvani there is no mention of Mary's desire to go to the desert of Bethelhem. Mary and Joseph think that Jesus who has spoken to them of his death during their return from Egypt must have gone to meet death for man's redemption. Then the angels console both assuring them that Jesus is not dead.

When Joseph had been ill for eight years, Mary, says the 'City of God' saw by intuition that Joseph's death was near, and prayed to her son to assist Joseph so that he might depart in peace to his eternal reward. Jesus answered that he would not only assist Joseph, but assign him a place among the princes in heaven even to the admiration of the angels. And one day before his death, the Blessed Trinity appointed Joseph as the messenger of the Saviour to the holy men in Limbo. In Tēmbāvani, Mary prays frequently to Jesus to remove the illness of Joseph, else to allow her to suffer with him which is much more natural for a wife to wish. But Jesus tells her what suffering she will have to accept. It is the portion of Joseph to suffer physically; it is his own portion to be put to death; it is in her lot to suffer seeing these sufferings. And Joseph is told he was the messenger to Limbo only after his death, when his pure soul appears before God.

Dr. Beschi has thus adopted the story of St. Joseph as found in the 'City of God' by Mary of Agrēda, keeping some details, omitting others and adding some others inspired by
the requisites of Tamil culture and the nature of his epic. This is in harmony with the requirements of Tamil grammars for an adaptation. 25

TES

1. 'City of God' - The divine history and life of the Virgin Mother of God, manifested to Mary of Agruda, ............
   translated from the original Spanish by Fiscar Marison,

2. Páyiram 12

3. Tēmbāvāṇi 13.1

4. 'City of God', p. 387; Tēmbāvāṇi 30.1.

5. City of God, p. 391; Tēmbāvāṇi 31. 64-79

6. City of God, p. 413; Tēmbāvāṇi 34.1.

7. City of God, p. 414; Tēmbāvāṇi 34.10

8. City of God, p. 189; Tēmbāvāṇi 5.


10. Kūṟāl 72

12.

11. 'City of God', p. 268; Tēmbāvāṇi 7.72

12. Kūṟāl, NN. 978, 979

13. 'City of God', p. 278; Tēmbāvāṇi 8. 28
14. 'City of God', p.287-88; Tēmbāvaṇī, 9, 29
15. 'City of God', p.321; Tēmbāvaṇī, 9, 16-57
16. 'City of God', p.336, 339
17. Tēmbāvaṇī, 11, 117, 121
18. 'City of God', p.348; Tēmbāvaṇī 12, 100
19. 'City of God', p.349; Tēmbāvaṇī 13, 2
20. 'City of God', p.357; Tēmbāvaṇī 17, 43-49
22. 'City of God', p.376; Tēmbāvaṇī 30, 7-41
23. 'City of God', p.382-392; Tēmbāvaṇī 30, 28-35.
24. 'City of God', p.413-414; Tēmbāvaṇī 30, 20-22; 31, 10
JOSEPH, THE EPIC HERO

Joseph is the foster father of Jesus; very little is said of him in the Gospels. What we know of him from the Gospels is too meagre to make him the subject of an epic according to the classical traditions of epic poetry both in India and outside. Joseph was not a warrior like Achilles or Aeneas nor an adventurous leader like Vasco de Gama nor a crusader like Goffredo or Rinaldo. He does the unattractive work of an ordinary carpenter. Kovalan, the hero of Cilappatikāram, too was of the rank and file, but his untimely death due to the play of unexpected circumstances made the Epic poet entwine the mysterious theory of fate into his life and into the history of the three Tamil kingdoms and work upon an epic theme. But Joseph is a villager at Nazareth considered even by the Jews a good for nothing place. He leads the life of a common place village carpenter. His death too is uneventful. How to strike the sparks of episodes from this silent, obscure life to make an epic poem?

What the historic records fail to give us, Roman Catholic piety and mysticism conspired to supply to the poetic imagination of Father Beschi. The personality of the humble silent carpenter of Nazareth came to the forefront of Christian consciousness after the ancient belief in the Virgin Birth of Christ became clear as a dogma.
And devotion to St. Joseph steadily gained momentum among the Catholics. In the beginning of the 15th century, Gerson, a brilliant scholar and orator gave impetus to this devotion. Early in the 16th century an Italian Capuchin monk, John of Fano preached the devotion of the Seven Sorrows of St. Joseph. After the council of Trent (1543 – 1563) Religious orders vied with one another in placing themselves under the protection of St. Joseph, thus spreading Joseph’s name and fame. A preacher of the 16th century, Isidore of L’Isle, lifted up his voice in praise of St. Joseph and added, "His glory is far from being at its height." In the next century Fr. Jacquinot, S.J., prophesied that besides the honour from private individuals and congregations, the public honour from the whole Catholic Church to St. Joseph would be decreed by Popes.2

It was at this time on the 9th of November 1681 - Beschi was a year old - that Pope Innocent XI decreed positively allowing free circulation to the book 'City of God' of Maria of Agreda, which contained the detailed life of St. Joseph. As mentioned earlier, this book had seen at the beginning of the 18th century 60 editions in different languages. Thus the attachment of the general Catholic public in Europe to St. Joseph was assuming proportions till then unknown. In Tamilnad this devotion had already been sown and nurtured by the early Jesuit Missionaries, as evidenced by the existence of a Tamil book by Fr. Roship, containing
52 sermons on St. Joseph, to be read on every Wednesday. And Beschi, whose Christian name was Joseph (Giuseppe), must have had a deep personal devotion to the saint. It is not therefore surprising to see Beschi taking up the life of such a popular saint as a subject of his epic poem.

Nor was this popularity of St. Joseph a mere passing mood of the crowd. It was an outcome of the Counter-Reformation movement and founded on theological grounds. It was the spirit of the Counter Reformation which throwing away the slavery of the easy-going attitude and pleasure-loving nature of the Renaissance, was drawing Catholics towards the freedom of the children of God, who offer themselves freely to the service of God in the Catholic Church. This surrender is exemplified in Joseph's life which is nothing but a selfless surrender to God's service. The life of this saint underlined at this time the Catholics principle that to serve God and to serve man in the name of God constantly and in the face of adversities is indeed heroism, pleasing to God and beneficial to men.

At the time of Joseph's birth elders come and bless the child: "May he become a garland in the feet of God". When Joseph's mother prays to God for His blessing, the divine voice is heard: "This son of undying grace shall be to my person an unfading garland." Here the idea of
Joseph belonging to God in pleasing service is already hinted at. As a young man Joseph filled with an intense desire to serve God, but frightened at the many dangers to his inner life retreats to a forest to serve God in solitary asceticism. There he is advised by an angel about a better form of God's service which is asceticism in the midst of the world. If asceticism in the forest offers God the tree with all its fruits, asceticism in the world besides offering God the tree with all its fruits, draws others to the same service of God. There are certainly dangers to one's better moral life; but these will be found in the forest as well as in the society; better life depends on one's will power and not on the locality. Joseph is thus purified of his youthful enthusiasm and from now on he is ready for a generous service of God even in the midst of adversities and dangers.

Chosen in a miraculous manner to be the husband of Mary and to lead with her a unique family life, Joseph meets his first trial. He sees that his wife Mary was to be a mother. Not knowing that this conception has taken place by a special power of God, he is filled with anxiety. He knows Mary's virtues and still her condition makes him anxious about her promise of virginity. He remembers that according to the Scriptures a virgin will be the mother of the Redeemer; but his humility is too great to allow him to think that such a unique virgin could be his wife. He is torn between his love and reverence for Mary and obedience to the Mosaic
Law which enjoined that a virgin who having been espoused to a man should lose her virginity shall be stoned to death. Being a just man, Joseph wants to safeguard both the obedience to the God’s law and the honour and life of Mary; he decides to leave her privately not willing to expose her publicity, when an angel reveals to him the mystery of Mary’s conception and thus removes his mental agony. In this Joseph proves his characteristic quality of being just. If Aeneas was ‘pious’ (devoted to his gods), Joseph is ‘justus’ and justice in this Biblical context means perfect possession of all virtues, according to St. Jerome and other Fathers of the Church.

Aeneas’ piety was shown not only in his attachment to gods through the performance of religious duties but in his devotion to his near and dear ones and to his followers and to his country, above all in the performance of his many duties and the special task imposed on him by the gods. Joseph’s righteousness is shown not only in being just in his dealings with others but in keeping the right relation to God and to man, in performing all his duties and the special task of protecting God and God’s mother perfectly.

After the mental storm Joseph offers gladly his service to the God-Man and his mother. He only wonders how he has been chosen as the father of Jesus, for the angel said Joseph would have to give the child, to be born of Mary, the name of Jesus and it was the father of the child who,
according to law, had to impose the name. Lowly though he
is, Joseph is ready to render his humble services of a workman.
He reflects: "Of old, work was imposed as a punishment;
but if God were to be fed by this work, does not work itself
become a sacred service to me?" His affectionate longings
to see the God-Man to prostrate before him, to kiss him, to
see his smile, etc., stand comparison to the tender musings
of Kulasékara-p-Perumāl about Tirumāl of Tiruvēnkadām.

Another and greater trial was the flight into Egypt.
In the midst of the joy and consolation that the birth of
Jesus brought to Joseph and Mary they are told to flee to
Egypt, a far away, unknown country and remain there till
further orders. Thrown into this suffering like a flower
into fire, or a lamp in the midst of a storm, Joseph finds
his only source of strength in God's will; strengthened
by this Joseph enters upon the dreary journey through a cruel
desert. The burning desert would burn the glowing finger that
pointed to it, the eyes that saw it, the mouth that spoke of
it and the very mind that dwelt on it.

On the journey
Joseph meets a group of ascetics; forgetting his own flight
he instructs them on the Bible lessons depicted on the walls;
the message of that instruction is that righteous men are
shielded from evil by God's grace. Before departing
from them, Joseph reminds them of some practical norms of
a true ascetical life that lays stress on inner purification
and not on external appearance. Here one is reminded of the
advice of Śivakan to the ascetics in Citirakkūtām. In his
difficult journey to Egypt and in the kindness he shows to
people, Joseph manifests the qualities of Vasco de Gama during
his adventurous voyage to India. Without knowing the exact
route to India, Gama undertook the voyage in a daring spirit;
during his journey and after he carried himself nobly when
in the presence of strangers and adversaries in Mozambique and
Mombasa and Calicut. In everything Gama is a great noble
man and a worthy ambassador of the Portuguese king in foreign
lands. On entering the city of Helipolis (near Cairo)
Joseph sees that the evil spirits worshipped there, are thrown
headlong into hell. He is then attacked by them in different
ingenious ways. A less courageous person would have lost his
spirits; but Joseph stood unmoved. In this he is an example
for other men who are tempted by devils; of such men he thinks
with kindness and pity.

When a message is sent by Jesus and Mary to the lonely
young ascetic John the Baptist, Joseph adds his, which is
a message of hope and strength in the Lord raises up by his
grace people even as low as the earth. In the land of
exile Joseph's is not a life of disgruntled self-pity but
a life of selfless and generous service to God and men. The
three long chapters Beschi devotes to the activities of
Joseph in Egypt are a masterpiece of Christian Apostolate
in enlightening minds, in setting right moral disorders and
handing on the message of Christ to others. In all this
Joseph is the labourer of Christ, ploughing the field with
truth, sowing the seed of virtue, so that all may reap a
heavenly harvest. And the Lord is giving the traditional
"triple shower" of grace. 19

Joseph and Mary lost Jesus for three days. Unlike
Adam and Eve who on losing God's friendship threw the blame
on others, Joseph and Mary take the blame on themselves and
search for him. In this search there is abundant evidence
of the passionate love of Joseph for the Lord; thinking that
Jesus has left them in order to die on the cross, Joseph
complains lovingly why he was not taken to be crucified close
to Jesus. 20 It is easy to submit to martyrdom that ends
life immediately; it is difficult to suffer physically for
long dying in a daily martyrdom. The latter kind was the
portion of Joseph. He suffers physically for eight years.
"Jesus, my son" prays Mary, "grant physical cure to Joseph,
or let me have the same suffering as he." Mary is told by
Jesus of the three kinds of sufferings: to suffer physical
illness like Joseph, to suffer in the hands of others as
Jesus himself will, and to suffer mentally by being present
at the sufferings of others, which will be the lot of Mary. 21
This will of God is again joyfully embraced by Joseph even in
death.

But this death is not an extinction of life, is only
the beginning of a new life. Passing through the gate of
death Joseph goes as ambassador of God to announce to the holy
souls in Limbo that the Redeemer will soon accomplish his work.
The patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament are informed of the exact fulfillment of the prophesies concerning the Redeemer. Anne, the mother-in-law of Joseph is told in detail of the humble birth, the simple life and the noble work of her grandson, Jesus. And all the souls in Limbo sing the praise of God, the Redeemer. Thus during life and after death Joseph is working for God.

Such a devoted life of continual service is rewarded by the Redeemer. Joseph is given the privilege of rising bodily with Jesus; he also ascends to heaven with Jesus and is crowned there by the holy Trinity, while on earth in the kingdom of Leopold of Italy, who was devoted to St. Joseph, the image of the saint is crowned in a solemn function. This recalls to mind the closing scene of Gilappatikaram, in which the hero and the heroine ascend to heaven and the men on earth pay their respects to the heroine. Joseph’s being honoured in heaven and on earth is the translation of the catholic doctrine of the communion of saints. According to this, those in heaven are intimately connected with and interested in those on earth; and a saint in heaven is not just selfishly enjoying the celestial pleasures, but as while on earth so now in heaven he is doing God’s will and serving men on earth in God’s name. It is in this spirit that a recent saint who died in 1897 said before her death: “I wish to spend my heaven in doing good on earth.”22 In the context of this Catholic belief, it is easy to understand
the crowning ceremony of St. Joseph in heaven in which God confers on him the gift of helping people on earth in seven ways: to guard the virtue of chastity, to prevent and remove sin, to be devoted to Mary, to be safe against the attack of the devil, to be blessed with children, to be consoled in affliction and to have a happy death.

The hero of Tōmbāvani is thus not a warrior, nor a leader, nor a commander of the ordinary kind, who elicits our admiration for his human achievements, but a spiritual warrior in God's army, a spiritual leader to lead men to heaven and a spiritual commander to oppose evil spirits. His spiritual work started on earth and continues in heaven; by his spiritual position and the qualities of service, courage and kindness he shows in it, he wins our affection as well as our admiration. In this way, Joseph is truly an unparalleled leader (tannikarillā-t-talaivan). 23

Into the life of Joseph Beschi has poured his own life and that of the Catholic missionaries of the 18th century. These like Joseph became ascetics in their youth, offered themselves to serve God in the way and works he wanted; like him they had to be active in contemplation and contemplatives in action. The foreign missionaries in India resembled Joseph also with regard to his sojourn in Egypt; in the midst of unknown people they were at home in their labour for God and Man. Just as Joseph was exiled by the cruel king Herod,
the Catholic missionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries were persecuted in Marava country under the rule of Sethāpati, were expelled from the kingdom of Tanjore in the reign of Shahji and harassed by the Muslim invasions around Tanjore and Tiruchirapalli. They were real soldiers and leaders in the spiritual warfare; like Joseph they withstood the attacks of the devil or his messengers, of which oral tradition is rich concerning Beschi; had to face the opposition of the other religions and were consoled by the good results with which God blessed their efforts as Joseph too had the consolation of enlightening and strengthening the people and spreading his religion. In the midst of his labours a Catholic missionary is ordered from one station to another as Joseph was ordered to leave Egypt for Nazareth. In life or in death the attitude of a Catholic missionary is the same as that of Joseph, that God be glorified in men. After his death a catholic missionary continues from heaven, his interests in Christians like Joseph, as the prevalent custom of Catholics to pray to the missionaries after their death testifies. Thus, true to the nature of an epic hero, Joseph is a type linked with the larger movement of the Catholic faith, particularly in the Tamilnad of the 18th century and sums up the life and sentiments of Catholic missionaries.
Notes.
1. John, 1.46 "Can anything of good come from Nazareth?"
3. Tēmbāvaṇi, 3. 54-57
4. Tēmbāvaṇi, 4.38
5. Ibid. 7,72
6. Deuteronomy, 22. 23-24
10. Tēmbāvaṇi, 9, 110
11. Nālāyira-t-tivya-p-prabantam, No.677-687
12. Tēmbāvaṇi, 13.1
13. Ibid. 19.7
14. Ibid. 19.7
15. Ibid. 20.55
17. Tēmbāvaṇi, 26.133
18. Ibid. Chaps. 27, 28, 29
19. Ibid. 27. 10-11
20. Ibid. 31.30
21. Ibid. 33.22
23. Tandialankāram, 8
Influence of other Literatures in Tēmbāvanī

Of the two kinds of epics, the folk epic and the art epic, the latter is bound to show the influence of other literatures as it is composed by a writer with particular likes and dislikes and with a planned purpose. If this is true of all epics, it is doubly so of Tēmbāvanī whose author had lived in two centuries, in Italy where he had his early classical training in Greek and Latin and Italian, and in South India where he had his methodical study of Tamil and Sanskrit. There is hardly a page in Tēmbāvanī which does not have an echo of either a phrase or an idea or a rhythm or a technique of classical authors.

In the West epic poems start without any long formal prologue, plunge the reader in 'in medias res'. But in Tamil a formal prologue is needed; in it the author invoking God's blessing mentions the source of his story and speaking modestly of his talents craves the pardon of others for his great undertaking (Avaiyadakkam). Beschi's prologue is mostly after the fashion of Kambar's prologue, uses even his comparison of a cat trying to drink the whole sea.¹ According to the Tamil tradition the description of the country and the city where the chief events take place must be first described. Beschi follows that tradition and borrows very many ideas and phrases from Tēvar and Kambar.²

Rājamāpuram, the city of the epic story of Cintāmani is, according to Tēvar, like the abode of the gods because of
harmonious life of men and women and the enjoyment of domestic life, because of the shower of gold in the city, and because of the harmony of the different musical instruments and finally because of the fact that when the fragrant smokes used by ladies were so vast and so thick as to darken the city in daytime the shining jewels of ladies brightened the atmosphere and gave an unending daytime. Kambar had a greater reason to compare Ayōti to heaven, because there Rāmā who was, in his belief, an incarnation of God, was born and lived long. The world of gods (pulavar vāṇam) got its name of golden world (ponnulaku) only from the reflection of the gold in Ayōti.

Borrowing the last idea of Kambar, Beschi asserts that Jerusalem, the centre of Joseph’s activities resembles heaven in its pleasures, nay heaven resembles in Jerusalem. This corresponds to the Bible usage of calling heaven the new Jerusalem or the holy Jerusalem. Following Tevar, Beschi compares Jerusalem to heaven because of the celestial music and dance it provides. Whereas the citizens of Rājamāpuram resembled the citizens of heaven in their enjoyment of domestic life, those of Jerusalem were like those of heaven in the way they spend the day in exterior works of virtue and the night in discussions on intellectual matters. The city of Ayōti, says Kambar, invites the earthly men to do penance and thus reach heaven, and invites the celestial beings to come down because of Rāmā’s incarnation. Beschi uses this idea and connects it with a Bible incident. The temple of Jerusalem,
he says, is a meeting place of heavenly and earthly beings, similar to the ladder that appeared to the Jewish patriarch Jacob in his sleep and on which the angels of God were ascending and descending.10

There is much resemblance, not without some difference, in the way Tēvar, Kambar and Beschi describe the ditches of the city,11 the way the citizens spend their leisure,12 and the creepers on high buildings.13

Going the traditional way of Nāttu and Ṇkara-p-padalam, Beschi has not hesitated to add new features. In Nakara-p-padalam there is the description of the temple of Jerusalem; in it there are beautiful images and life-like paintings on the walls.14 It is doubtful whether this was historically true of the temple of Jerusalem. But it is true of many a Catholic church of his time. And in this there is an obvious reference to the contemporary difference of opinion between Catholics and protestants, which concerned the use of images in the churches. Hence it is that Beschi takes care to add the usefulness of these paintings and images, namely, to explain Bible to the eyes of men through beautiful images, since the eye drinks in beauty that is seen. He has also introduced, in Nāttuppadalam, the song of maidens, somewhat in the form of Tiruchālāl. In it the first two lines contain the praise of Judea, the next two the praise of heaven.15 This is not found in the Nāttupadalam of any Tamil epic, but it underlines the spiritual purpose of Tēmbāvānī, which is to make men live on earth for heaven.
After the stage is set in a prosperous country and in famous city, the hero of the epic must be introduced in the geological line to show he is an unparalleled leader. It is the custom of Indian epics to make the hero live even before his birth, in his ancestors. Following this tradition Beschi presents Joseph, the hero of Tēmbāvaṇi as coming from the line of David, the King of Israel as indeed is attested by the New Testament records. In the narration of David's glorious deeds his victory over Goliath deserves mention. None saw David fitting the pebble to the sling, nor swinging it nor the stone flying towards Goliath. But all saw the pebble striking the forehead of Goliath and him falling down like darkness before sun. This certainly reflects Kambār's description of how Rāmar broke the bow. After the birth of Cīvakān a voice was heard blessing him; "May you live." After the birth of Joseph, at the prayer of his mother, God's answer is heard: "This son with unfading grace will stand firm in virtue and shine as an unfading garland (tēmbāvaṇi) on my breast." and all the bystanders called him by that name.

Cilappatikāram:

Beschi's personal attachment to Cilappatikāram can be seen in the quotations he gives from it in his grammars, and particularly in the remark he makes about it in his dictionary of Common Tamil, under the word 'Cilambu': "It is a hook of erudite language, explained by a few; it is, however,
deservedly praised by all." No wonder then that the linking of Cilambu is heard in many a page of Tēmbāvani.

Vaılan as a youth is admired for his comeliness by the maids; Kövalan too was admired and praised by maids who compare him to Sevvēl. But there is an additional point for Vaılan. When the eyes of the maids were turned towards him like the lotus towards the sun, or like the bees towards the lotus, Vaılan shuts his eyes on them like the lotus closing itself at the appearance of the moon. During the journey of Kövalan and Kannaki to Madurai, they were subjected to ridicule by another couple of ill-repute; upon which their ascetic guide cursed this couple into becoming jackawls. Kövalan and Kannaki saw this, pitied them and requested the ascetic to make the punishment temporary; it was then made to last for a year. There is a parallel to this incident in Tēmbāvani though with a slight difference. Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem meet a woman of ill-repute, whose heart is filled with evil desires. Joseph asks Mary to use her power to drive out the devil, the source of those evil desires and Mary does so. After passing Uraiyyur, Kövalan and Kannaki met another ascetic who described to them the triple way leading to Madurai. In their journey to Egypt through the desert Joseph and Mary come to a spot where three paths are seen branching out. Whereas the ascetic of Cilappatikāram described all the three routes as leading to Madurai but prefers the middle path, here in Tēmbāvani
the Archangel Michael tells Joseph and Mary of the dangers that lie in the route to the left and to the right and the safety of the middle one.\textsuperscript{23}

The rhythm of some stanzas of kāṇalvari in Cilappatikāram is repeated in Tāmbāvani, in the sweet song of praise that Mary uttered after bearing the narration of Jesua’s victory.\textsuperscript{24} In the return journey from Egypt the Holy Family are met by the inhabitants of Mount Moria, who greet them with the delicious fruits of their land. This resembles the meeting of hill tribes by Cenkuttuvan in Cilappatikāram.\textsuperscript{25} And the closing scenes of Tāmbāvani in which Joseph is taken up to heaven and is honoured on earth have a vestige of the last scenes of Cilappatikāram, Katturai Kōtai where Kōvalan and Kannaki ascend to heaven and Kannaki is paid special honours on earth. Before departing from Egypt Joseph gives a last piece of general advice to all his neighbours which echoes the last advice of the author of Cilappatikāram to all readers; “Be firm in adversity, move towards God as the river moves towards the sea; shun evil like fire; know this earthly life is a bubble .... long for the shore of your final goal”.\textsuperscript{26}

Cilappatikāram:

\texttt{தில்வூது எருமை பால்வூது திற்கு}
\texttt{வானை மோழு வேறும் திவப்பா வானை வேறும்}

Tāmbāvani:

\texttt{மத்தியா மாற்று கால்கள், போர்வன் புனித கால்}
\texttt{மத்தியா லெவு வானை, கால் லெவு வானை}
The Miraculous:

The epic poets in the West make use of divine personages and marvellous or magic events in order to give an air of importance to the subject. Virgil makes Juno and Venus take an active part in the life of Aeneas. Camoës makes Venus and Bacchus help and oppose Gama. Beschi does not give such an important part to immortals but following Tasso makes use of angels and archangels to announce God’s will, or to relate past events like companions in a journey or to sing in praise of God. In the journey of Joseph through the desert it is Michael who relates to Joseph the war and the victory of Josua and Gabriel the war and victory of Gideon. The opposition to Joseph’s stay and work in Egypt comes from the devils. Their plan to launch new attack on men in spite of the arrival of the “new three” (Jesus, Mary and Joseph) and their final failure to defeat Joseph are interestingly depicted in two chapters.29

Besides the use of angels and devils magic events too create the impression of the marvellous. Some miracles like the crossing of the Israelites through the Red Sea and stopping of the sun by Joshua are found in the Bible.30 Others like the healing power of the stream by which the Holy Family rested and in which the shirt of the Infant Jesus was washed are found in the original of Mary of Agreda.31 Another incident in Tembavañi is borrowed from Tasso.
In Cittirakkūtām, the abode of ascetics, a king called Nīpakan had depicted on the walls the life of Joseph of the Old Testament. This Nīpakan had first led a dissolute life, later gave it up and retired to forest to do penance. Before he entered the forest a river suddenly appeared in swelling flood; an elephant seemed ready to carry him across; he got on it, crossed the river and reached the bank and saw the elephant swallowed by a dog. He went into the grove where he was greeted with celestial music. He saw an open space surrounded by trees, and in the middle a huge sandal tree. Out of these trees came out lovely ladies singing welcome to Nīpakan in the name of his former beloved Kāsaṇāi who had come there earlier and prepared the place for him. Out of the sandal tree came out Kāsaṇāi herself, showed all her enticing beauty to him and entreated his love again through smiles and tears. Unmoved by this trick of the devils, Nīpakan drew out his sword to cut the tree. Kāsaṇāi caught hold of the tree, changed her lovely form into a frightful exterior with hundred hands holding spears and shields. Her companions too took the form of demons and shrieked thunders. Undaunted Nīpakan felled the sandal tree; with the fall of the tree these tempting figures disappeared. This very same incident is narrated by Tasso in his epic Jerusaleme Liberata. Rinaldo, one of the warriors of the crusade had lived illegally with the lady called Armida and later gave up that relationship. When he went into a wood to cut trees, the devils began to work on his former weakness and tried the same tricks as
narrated in Tembāvāni. In place of the elephant carrying Nipakan in Tembāvāni, a golden bridge suddenly appeared by which Rinaldo crossed the river. In place of the sandal wood tree in Tembāvāni, we find the myrtle in Tasso.32

The smile of the Child:

The smile of a babe is always a charming thing. The smile of the Divine Babe Jesus cannot but have charmed the poet Beschi. The very thought of the Divine child to be born brings to Joseph’s mind a crowd of pleasant expectations. "Shall I see the Lord of lords", he muses, "smile brightly like the flower that brightens the garden? Oh, if I see him smile, filled with joy, I will melt and thrive." When Mary speaks to the New born child, that the earth will give him sufferings more than desired, whereas he will give the earth heavenly benefits, Jesus drinking in these honeyed words of His mother smiles. When Joseph fondles the child affectionately and with awe Jesus smiles and through that smile joy flowed and filled the earth and the heaven. In the temple of Jerusalem the prophecy of Simon about the Infant’s adversities to come cleft the ears of Mary and Joseph like a harsh word and drowned them in a sea of sorrow. Then Jesus who hears the prophecy smiles sweetly and bows his head in consent. The original of Maria d' Agraeda mentions only that Jesus bowed His head. But Beschi brightens the bow with a smile, for God loves a cheerful giver. During their return journey from Egypt Mary
and Joseph are told by Jesus about his future sacrifice on Mount Calvary; they are saddened and it is the smile of Jesus that wipes their tears.

These instances of the smile of the child rejoicing the parents must have been prompted by the famous lines of Virgil:

"Incipe parve puer, risu cognoscere matrem

Incipe, parve puer: qui non risere parenti

Nec deus hunc mense, dea nec dignata cubili est." 33

and these lines have been commented upon as prophetically referring to the Messiah.

Simile:

The simile has always an important place in the epic; it breaks the monotony of the narrative and makes the mind think there is more in what happens than is narrated. 38

The similies used by Besschi in the description of Kantari, a woman of ill-repute show traces of Western and Eastern influence in the same stanza.

"With her poisonous face she blazed like a comete
With the sword of Death, her eyes cleft lives and swallowed them."

The first comparison is from Tasso who likens Armida to a comete. When she went parading her beauty

"Gazed each soldier, gazed every knight;
As when a comet doth in skies appear,
The people stand and amazed at the light.

So wondered they............"

The other comparison is from the tradition of Tamil Literature which compares the eyes of women to those of Death (Yaman). Tiruvalluvar's ideas "I do not know Yaman before, but now I see his form which has two big battling eyes". "Her eyes seemed to swallow lives....." - come handy to Beschi's description of Kāntāri.

The snake's slough has been used in Sankam Literature to describe the brightness of the cloth of fine texture, of the mountain stream; the snake throwing off its skin and going forward is compared to a person marching onward alone. In Cintāmani ascetics are said to give up worldly desires like the snake sloughing off its skin. Beschi who should have known all these authors must have remembered also Tasso's use of it to express the new enthusiasm that descended on Raimond; after the lot fell on him to go and fight the enemy,

"It seem'd he now resum'd his youthful days;
Like a snake whose slough new changed is,
That shines like gold against the sunny rays;"

Viramamunivar prefers to follow Tevar, the ascetic and employs the comparison for the life of Elias and ascetics in general who put off the old man and put on the new.

Virgil compares the death of the young boy Suryalus ṇa to a flower weighed down by rain or cut down in cornfield.
This comparison is said to have borrowed from Homer by way of Catullus. Camoes uses this comparison for the death of Inez de Castro:

Like to a daisy-flower with colours fair,
By virgin's hand beheaded in the bud
To play withal, or prick into her hair,
When sever'd from the stalk on which it stood,
Both scent and beauty vanish into air
So lies the damsel without breath or blood.

The poppy or field-flower in Virgil has changed into daisy in Camoes and become lotus in Besch. During the massacre of the children by Herod some children hold on to their mothers' breasts and the soldiers cut their hands or their head or their body as one tears to pieces a lotus flower. At times the mother does not give up the child; the soldier falls in one stroke the mother and the child as one cuts down the creeper with its bud. This addition of creeper in the comparison give us the notion that the support and the supported, the cause and the effect are done away with.

Argantes fighting against the Christians in the First Crusade sends a taunting message through the Christian soldiers that his sword is thirsting for the blood of their leader:

"If further proof he long to see,
Say it still thirsts, and world his heart-blood drink;"
Josua and the five pagan kings, Beschi must have remembered this metaphor of Tasso. He narrates a similar incident in a similar manner but adapted to the custom of Tamilnad. Tabiran, one of the five kings opposing Jousa, aiming a weapon called cakkarāyutam at Josua, shouts:

Hungry has this weapon been for long;
It hates to feed on other lives than yours;
Deign to offer it food.

At these words Josua threw a sharp arrow, replying: "If it is hungry, here is some old rice for the beggar." The word 'parukkai' meaning rice (in the dictionary), has a connotation of contempt, and is used to denote the rice that is thrown to beggars or loafers.

Description of nature:

In connection with the natural prosperity of Emānkatam, Tiruttakka Tēvar enumerates various fruits which in their abundance fall one on another and mix into a delicious juice. The coconut falls on the kamuga which falls on the honey-comb which again falls on the jackfruit, which in turn comes down and crushes the mango and the plantain. Having tested the sweetness of such lines, Fr. Beschi says that in Judea when the coconut fell on the plantain and the mango and the two kinds of jack-fruits, these fruits rolled down in a river of sweet juice; and every spot they touched was in sweetness soaked.
This last line may mean: every spot they touched was soaked in sweetness or every mouth they touched was filled with sweetness.

Thévar speaks of the streaks of rain that looked like white silver sticks on the mountain top reaching to the skies. Kambar adding a human feeling says that the sky felt it good to rain on a golden mountain and taking the mountains of Kosala country for golden mountains, it poured all its rain on them. Fr. Beschi adds to the thought of the sky, the thought of the earth and creates a tug of war between the two. The sky wants to carry up the mountain and so lets down ropes of rain streaks to lift it up; but the earth also wants the mountain and so tries to chain the mountain to the earth by means of silver wires of streams. Thus Thévar mentions the silvery appearance of the rainshower and Kambar adds to this silvery appearance the attribution of a human feeling to the sky and Fr. Beschi attributes two feelings, one to the sky, the other to the earth.

Thévar says in stanza 65 that the peacock was dancing on the flowery branches while the bright swan served as light, and the kull having a harsh voice in winter served as the drum. In the next stanza the poet speaks of a particular kind of dance, called Āryakkūtu. In the tank there was the creeper called vallai; there were sticks for this creeper to climb; the fish called vālai jumped on this creeper; the crane on the shore watched the scene. This was like the performance
of Āryakkūṭṭu: the sticks were the poles for the dance, the creeper was the rope, the fish was the lady dancer and the crane on the shore was the audience. 39

Kambar does not mention the Āryakkūṭṭu, but gives a pleasant detailed account of nature's musical performance in the land of marutam. The clear waves of the tank formed the screen for the stage, the lotus flowers were the lights, the clouds produced the instrumental music of drums, the swan sang sweeter than veena with 19 strings. With this background, the peacock danced while the kuvalai looked on. 40

Fr. Beschi describes in three stanzas 41 the ordinary dance and the special dance of Āryakkūṭṭu and finally adds some human and humorous details. The gardens of Palestine were the theatre hall; the flowery expanse was the screen or the stage; the bees played on the veena; the kuil sang; the peacock danced on the stage while the other birds formed the audience.

The peacocks were performing different kinds of dances; now stepping forward, now backward; at one time facing one another, at another spreading their long tails. While these things happened on the floor, the black monkeys on the branches were performing the Āryākkūṭṭu. 47

After this Fr. Beschi adds some more interesting details. While the dances were being witnessed and enjoyed by birds and flowers, the tank also wanted to participate;
and so it eagerly opened its eye of Kuvalai; to get a closer view it crawled on its wave-hands beating on the shore. But the theatre was already house-full and seeing this vain and belated attempt of the tank the flower mullai laughed in its flowering. Meanwhile as the performance was rather long, the kānthal flower felt bored and began to yawn in flowering. Thus we see Fr. Beschi taking in what Thevar and Kambar give and adding his own details like the details of European group-dancing and his own source of humour.

In these instances it is seen that Tēmbavaṇi is a like into which Western and Eastern rivers flow and mingle. And Beschi's mind has been truly catholic, accepting from other sources whatever is good and true and beautiful and working on these accepted gifts to increase them two-fold or five-fold.
Notes.
1. Kambarāmāyaṇam, Pāyiram 4; Tēmbāvaṇi, Pāyiram 4.
3. Cintāmaṇi No. 90, 135, 106, 110, 111
4. Kambarāmāyaṇam, 112, 146
5. Tēmbāvaṇi, 2.6
6. Apocalypse 3.12; 21.2; 2.10
7. Tēmbāvaṇi, 2.55
8. Ibid. 2.55
9. Kambarāmāyaṇam 107
10. Tēmbāvaṇi 2.42; Genesis 28.12
11. Cintāmaṇi 94-99: Kambarāmāyaṇam 120-127; Tēmbāvaṇi 2.7-10
12. Cintāmaṇi, 151; Kambarāmāyaṇam 172-175; Tēmbāvaṇi 2.51, 52, 54.
13. Cintāmaṇi 88; Tēmbāvaṇi 2.10
14. Tēmbāvaṇi 2.44
15. Ibid. 1.58-63
17. Tēmbāvaṇi, 3.29
18. Kambarāmāyaṇam, Kārmuka-p-ṣaṭalam, 34.
19. Cintāmaṇi, 323
20. Tēmbāvaṇi, 3.57, 59
21. Ibid. 4.18.19
22. Cilapatikāram, Nādukaṇ kātai, 235-246; Tēmbāvaṇi 10.27-29
23. Cilapatikāram, Kādukan kātai, 58-149; Tēmbāvaṇi, 19.37-41
24. Cilapatikāram, Kāṇal vari, 14-17; Tēmbāvaṇi 15, 183-185
25. Cilapatikāram, NaCohi kātai
26. Cilapatikāram, Varantaru kātai, 185-200; Tēmbāvāṇi 30.8
27. Tēmbāvāṇi 15
28. Ibid. 16
29. Ibid. 23 & 24.
31. Tēmbāvāṇi 20.30-54; Tasso, Jerusalem Delivered, 18.18-37
32. Tēmbāvāṇi 10.119; 10.129; 12.95; 30.122;
   Virgil, Æneid IV. 60-64
33. Bowra, from Virgil to Milton, p. 107
34. Virgil, Æneid IX, 433-437
35. Camoes, Os Lusiadas, III. 134 - 1-6.
36. Tēmbāvāṇi, 25.76-77
36a. Tasso, 'Jerusalem Delivered', 3.48; Tēmbāvāṇi 15.75
37. Cintāmaṇi, 311; Tēmbāvāṇi, 1.33
38. Cintāmaṇi, 33; Kambarāmāyaṇam 1.29; Tēmbāvāṇi 1.5
40. Kambarāmāyaṇam, 1.49
41. Tēmbāvāṇi, 1.46-48
42. Rev. Fr. Xavier S. Thaninayagam', Tamil-T-Eda p. 84