

**THE ADVENTURES OF  
GOOROO  
PARAMARTAN: A TALE  
IN THE TAMUL LANGUAGE**

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The adventures of Gooroo Paramartan: a tale in the Tamul language by Benjamin Babington

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**BENJAMIN BABINGTON**

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பரமாமதகுருவன்  
கதை.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE  
**GOOROO PARAMARTAN:**  
*by Costantino G. Beschi*  
A TALE IN THE TAMUL LANGUAGE: ACCOMPANIED  
BY A TRANSLATION AND VOCABULARY,  
TOGETHER WITH AN ANALYSIS OF  
THE FIRST STORY.

BY BENJAMIN BABINGTON,  
OF THE MADRAS CIVIL SERVICE.

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TO THE  
HONOURABLE THE COURT OF DIRECTORS

FOR  
MANAGING THE AFFAIRS

OF THE  
UNITED EAST INDIA COMPANY,

**This Translation,**

IS  
RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY

**DEDICATED,**

By their most obedient

and most humble Servant,

B. G. BABINGTON.

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## PREFACE.



**T**HE Tamul language is spoken by a population of more than five millions; being current in the Southern portion of the Peninsula of India, throughout the Jaghire, the districts of South Arcot, Salem, Coimbatore, Combaconum, Tanjour, Trichinopoly, Madura, Dindigul, and Tinnivelly, as well as in many parts of the extensive kingdom of Mysore.

It is not derived from any language at present in existence, and is either itself the parent of the Teloogoo, Malayālam and Canarese languages, or, what is more probable, has its origin in common with these in some ancient tongue which is now lost, or only partially preserved in its offspring.

In its more primitive words, such as the names of natural objects, the verbs expressive of physical action or passion, the numerals, &c. it is quite unconnected with the Sanskrit, and what it thence so largely borrowed, when the Tamuls, by intercourse with the more enlightened people of the North, began to emerge from barbarity, has reference to the expression of moral sentiments and abstract metaphysical notions, and is chiefly to be found in the colloquial idiom. In this remarkable circumstance, and also in the construction of its alphabet, the Tamul differs much from the other languages of the South, which are found to admit the Sanskrit more largely in literary and poetical

compositions than in the ordinary dialect of conversation, and which adopt the arrangement of the Sanskrit alphabet with scarcely any variation. The higher dialect of the Tamul, on the contrary, is almost entirely free from Sanskrit words and idioms, and the language retains an alphabet which tradition affirms to have heretofore consisted of but sixteen letters, and which, so far from resembling the very perfect alphabet of the Sanskrit, wants nearly half its characters, and has several letters of peculiar powers.

Since, therefore, as might have been expected from its geographical situation, the Tamul language has stronger traces of originality than any of the cognate dialects of Southern India, it is, with propriety, taken first in the order of study, and he who adds a knowledge of this Southern tongue to the more polished language of the North,\* has more than half accomplished the acquisition of all the Hindoo languages of India.

It is unnecessary to enlarge upon the utility of the Oriental languages to those who are destined to the conduct of public affairs in India; since the advantage of an immediate intercourse between the mass of the people and those who are intrusted with their government, is now not only generally acknowledged, but also earnestly sought, in the measures which have been adopted, both at home and abroad, for the education of the Honourable Company's Servants.

It is the object of the following pages, to furnish materials for commencing, in this country, the study of the Tamul language, and for this purpose a Tamul Tale has been selected, of which a Translation, Vocabulary and Analysis have been furnished.

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\* The *Sanskrit* is thus designated in the Tamul countries.



The Story of the Gooroo Paramārtan, is one of the lighter productions of that profound scholar and rare genius, father Beschi;\* and, if it had any higher aim than the mere amusement which its author might derive from thus satirizing the

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\* The few following particulars, of one whose fame is so well established in the South of India, may not be unacceptable to those whose views are directed to that country. They are taken from a Tamul MS. in my possession.

Vīramāmōoni or the great Champion Devotee, as Beschi is surnamed by the Tamuls, was a native of Italy, and one of the religious order of Jesuits. Having been appointed by the Pope to the East India Mission, he arrived, in 1700, at the city of Goa, on the Western coast. He thence proceeded to Avoor, in the district of Trichinopoly, where he studied the Tamul language in both its dialects, as well as the Sanskrit and Teloogoo; and with a view to public employment, which it was ever the Jesuit policy to seek in order to promote their religious views, he made himself master of the Hindostanee and Persian. It is probable that he held political offices in the earlier part of his life, for we can hardly suppose him to have risen at once to the appointment of Divan, which he held under the celebrated Chunda Saheb, during his rule as Nabob of Trichinopoly, especially as Chunda Saheb did not assume the government of that place until the death of the Rajah, which happened in the year 1736.

From the moment of his arrival in India, he, in conformity with Hindoo custom, abandoned the use of animal food, and employed Brahmans to prepare his meals. He adopted the habit of a religious devotee, and on his visitations to his flock assumed all the pomp and pageantry with which Hindoo Gooroos usually travel. He founded a church at Konāngooppam Ariyanoor, in the district of Baroor, and my MS. notices particularly a picture of the Madonna and the child Jesus, which he caused to be painted at Manilla and set up in that church. It was in honour of this Madonna, of her husband Joseph and the Lord Jesus, that he composed the Sacred Poem called Tēmbāvani: which, vying in length with the Iliad itself, is by far the most celebrated and most voluminous of his works. It contains 3615 tetrasticks, each of which is furnished with a prose interpretation; and, to judge from the only Padalam or Canto which I have had an opportunity of reading, where the murder of the innocents is described, its merits are not over-rated. Vīramāmōoni also founded a church at Tirookāvaloor,

Indian Priesthood, it was probably intended as a pleasant vehicle of instruction to those Jesuits whose labours required a knowledge of the Tamul language. Its grammatical accuracy, the variety of idiomatical expressions and constructions which it contains,

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a name which he gave to the town of Vadoogapet, in the district of Ariyaloor, and on the Madonna there he composed three Poems: Tirookāvaloor Kalambagam, Anneiyajoongal Andādi, and Adeikala Mālei.—The following are the most important of the remaining works of this author; which, with exceptions that will be noticed, are extant only in MS.

Kitēri Ammāl Ammānei, a poem. Vēdiyarōjookkam, a work in prose; where, as the name implies, the duties of one who has devoted his life to religion are laid down. Vēda Vilakkam, also in prose; which, from the title (the light of the gospel), I presume to contain some doctrinal exposition of the Roman Catholic Faith. A Dictionary, Tamul and French; another Tamul and Portuguese; a third Tamul and Latin (see Note to page 67). Sadoor Agharādi, or the Four Dictionaries; a Tamul work relating to the higher dialect. Of philological works he has furnished Tonnool Vilakkam; a Tamul Grammar of the higher dialect, written in Latin. Of this I made a Translation in 1814; which, having become the property of the Madras Government, is now, as I learn, under course of publication at their College Press. The Clavis Humaniorum Tamulici Idiomatis; a second Grammatical Treatise in Latin, relating to the higher dialect. A Latin Grammar of the common dialect; which has been published at the College Press at Madras; and of which a faulty and vulgar translation has long been before the public.

Such were the literary labours of Beschi, and he was distinguished as much for his piety and benevolence as for his learning. To the conversion of idolators his principal efforts were of course directed, and they are said to have been uncommonly successful. Perfect master of Hindoo science, opinions and prejudices, he was eminently qualified to expose the fallacies of their doctrine, and the absurdities of their religious practices; and, accordingly, he is much extolled for the triumphs which he obtained, in those controversial disputations which are so frequent among the learned in India, and for the almost miraculous skill which he displayed, in solving various enigmatical questions which his adversaries propounded for his embarrassment.

It remains a subject of regret, that talents so rare, should have been devoted to

and the apparently studied manner in which a great number of words are brought together in so small a compass, seem to justify this supposition; but, whatever may have been its first design, if these advantages be considered, and we further add that the incidents, though by no means devoid of humour, occasionally somewhat coarse, yet owe no part of their interest to those immoral allusions so frequent in Hindoo compositions, it will, I think, be admitted, that it is not ill suited to the object to which it is here appropriated.

In the Translation, it has been my endeavour rather to adhere to the literal meaning of words, than to attempt, by indulging in latitude of expression, to give the force and spirit of the original. In languages so widely differing in idiom, as the Tamul and English, it became necessary to adopt decisively one or other of these methods of translation; and though I am aware, that where the sole aim is to convey the force and style of an Author, this is far from being accomplished by a servile adherence to his diction, yet where instruction is the object, and the interpretation

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the promotion of a religion scarcely less replete with error, than that which it supplanted: but we may draw this practical conclusion from Beschi's success, that a thorough acquaintance with Hindoo learning and a ready compliance, in matters of indifference, with Hindoo customs, are powerful human means, to which the Jesuits owed much of their success, and which should not, as is too much the case, be despised by those who undertake the task of conversion in a better cause. Vīramāmooni continued to hold the office of Divan, in Trichinopoly, until the year 1740; when that city being besieged by the Mahratta army, under Morary Rao, and Chunda Saheb being taken prisoner, he contrived to effect his escape, and fled to the city of Gāyal Patanam, then belonging to the Dutch. He there remained, in the service of the church, until 1742, when he was carried off by an illness, the particulars of which are not stated. His name is still remembered in Gāyal Patanam, and masses continue to be offered up for the salvation of his soul, in that city and its neighbourhood.