

*These lines are from the end of Book 9 of John Milton's epic poem, Paradise Lost (1674). Adam is speaking to Eve, after their fall, about their discovery of shame and the need to hide their nakedness. In this passage, Milton (1608-74) draws on his reading of works about both East India and West India.*

O might I here  
In solitude live savage, in some glade  
Obscur'd, where highest Woods impenetrable  
To Star or Sun-light, spread thir umbrage broad,  
And brown as Evening: Cover me ye Pines,  
Ye Cedars, with innumerable boughs  
Hide me, where I may never see them more.  
But let us now, as in bad plight, devise  
What best may for the present serve to hide  
The Parts of each from other, that seem most  
To shame obnoxious, and unseemliest seen,  
Some Tree whose broad smooth Leaves together sew'd,  
And girded on our loins, may cover round  
Those middle parts, that this new comer, Shame,  
There sit not, and reproach us as unclean.

So counsell'd hee, and both together went  
Into the thickest Wood, there soon they chose  
The Figtree, not that kind for Fruit renown'd,  
But such as at this day to *Indians* known  
In *Malabar* or *Decan*<sup>1</sup> spreads her Arms  
Branching so broad and long, that in the ground  
The bended Twigs take root, and Daughters grow  
About the Mother Tree, a Pillar'd shade  
High overarch't, and echoing Walks between;  
There oft the *Indian* Herdsman shunning heat  
Shelters in cool, and tends his pasturing Herds  
At Loopholes cut through thickest shade: Those Leaves  
They gather'd, broad as *Amazonian* Targe,<sup>2</sup>  
And with what skill they had, together sew'd,  
To gird thir waist, vain Covering if to hide  
Thir guilt and dreaded shame; O how unlike  
To that first naked Glory. Such of late  
*Columbus* found th' *American* so girt  
With feather'd Cincture,<sup>3</sup> naked else and wild  
Among the Trees on Isles and woody Shores.

text from: John Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes  
(Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), 403-404

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<sup>1</sup> Malabar, Decan: regions in southwest India

<sup>2</sup> targe: shield

<sup>3</sup> cincture: belt