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\(^1\) 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,\(^2\)
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,\(^3\) naked else and wild
Among the Trees on Isles and woody Shores.


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1 Malabar, Decan: regions in southwest India
2 targe: shield
3 cincture: belt