

I was born with one foot slightly deformed. Due to my strong desire to walk properly; with the support of an expert masseur, I volunteered to suffer excruciating pain. New but torn dhoti is symbolic of my similar childhood physique.

PARABLE DHOTI*

Edasseri

The new dhoti I got,
 Alas, was with a slight slit;
 Learned to pleat the corner
 To conceal the flaw in its folds.
 Surely, it shortened the drape, and lo!
 Viewers' lousy eyes lingered on that flaw!
 As if immersed in a horde of thoughts;
 Hence unconcerned; and at times fidgeting
 With fingers, the right corner of the dhoti,
 I deftly handled the situation,
 Elevating penury to the boundaries of fine art.

Even as my sense of honour,
 Due to the flaming inner pain,
 Frothed inside and brimmed;
 Sadly, Time didn't waver
 To rip my dhoti to pieces.
 Difficult to conceal any more
 Those many slits by pleating
 I tried wearing it upside down;
 Tried tucking it at knee level;
 Still those dirty stitches, Lo!
 Were clearly visible; no escape!

I may keep my head bowed down,
 An ill-fated request not to look at it;
 But then, won't that itself will be,
 A stern pictogram pointing at the torn cloth!

Good that my ceaseless witty talks,
 Started dressing up my exposed respectability.
 Those audiences whom I made laugh aloud,
 Thenceforth glanced no more at the torn cloth;
 I extended the dimensions of this artistic talent
 Up to my life itself!

By slowly pleating, fidgeting,
 Stitching together, extending and folding;
 Are you too my Being; like this torn Dhoti,
 Waiting to receive the ministrations
 Of the artistic grandeur!

Written in 1954 titled *Matte Mundu*.

Translated by Asokakumar Edasseri (September 2021)

* Dhoti (Mundu) is a lower garment, part of a costume for men, mainly in the Indian sub-continent and is made out of a rectangular piece of unstitched white cloth wrapped around the waist and legs of a male.

