

Once when I went to my native place, I saw the decrepit foundation of the house of good old Kunjhoosa.

TILLING & SOWING

EDASSERI

Long legs, a head load of fish
On the ovate head atop a stuck-out neck
Like a camel walking on two-legs
Do you recall seeing our old Kunjhoosa?
He is lying now on the bed built for the final rest
Under a laterite stone ceiling in the masjid ground.
Lying still; maybe awaiting a reckoning aloud
Where he can account for his actions in this life!
Hardly did he risk being called up ever; as,
He didn't owe any paisa to anyone in his dealings!

Let's not disrupt the serenity; let's move away,
For the built-up turmoil of thoughts to surge.
Karma is a seed with thousand sprouts,
Good seed begets good crop only!

Learned this doctrine; continue teaching it,
Raise our fist on those who question it.
Why, none of the seeds sown by him sprouted;
How come Karma, chaff infested your fruits?

Not a day had sprouted without exhaustion;
Until, tap root of that mortal's life was axed.
Don't you recall those days! We friends
waited each day at the 'porter's rest' *
For Kunjhoosa to arrive from the city
Of the roaring sea; a good ten miles afar.
Hadn't that old man reached every evening
Wearing a thin chappal of areca palm spathe **
Walking hastily with long strides.
Off-loading the round basket of fresh fish
Shining like silver in the setting sun's rays
The old man rested his back against the 'porter's rest'
To bring under control his heaving chest.
Even as the 'porter's rest' was worn supporting that giant figure
Fervour for karma didn't wear out until his last breath.
Load was placed on his head before the tender age of ten
Old man laid up, hardly ten feet short of his centenary.
That illiterate continued pushing his own life
Along the sweltered lengthy path of Karma.

Karma is a seed with thousand sprouts,
Good seed begets good crop only!

Why none of the seeds sown by him sprouted;
How come Karma, chaff infested your fruits?
We learned a lot without any realisation
We taught a lot; not for any realisation
This lesson extended life of carrying basket load of fish
Through thousands of years, unto the grave.

The seed will sprout, the sprout will yield fruits; but,
Aren't we to till & level the ground, before sowing?
Let anyone scold calling us sceptics; but raise the question
Which is more important; tilling or sowing?
In a society with inequities, only poisonous plants take root.

Published in Navasahithi - 1950 January 1.

Translated by Asokakumar Edasseri - 12.08.2022

**Porter's rest*



***Areca palm spathe*

