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The Woodcutter's wife



Geeta Dharmarajan

Art by Arvinder Chawla

This book belongs to

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About Katha

Katha, a nonprofit organization founded in 1988, works in the literacy to literature continuum. We work with slum communities and municipal corporation schools to ensure that every child learns to read for fun and at grade level. We also work with women and teachers so that all children achieve their potential.

Our books, workshops and learning centres strive to forge cross-cultural connections through story and Story Pedagogy®. As one of India's finest publishers, our initiative has been recognized as "a unique and special moment in Indian publishing history" by *The Economic Times*.

Katha's books have received global recognition, including the nomination by an international jury for the prestigious Astrid Lindgren Award, the world's biggest prize for children's literature.

We love to work with new and established writers, translators and illustrators.

Do you like writing, illustrating, translating for children? Write to us at editors@katha.org to become a cherished member of the Katha family!

"[Katha] ... an educational jewel in India's crown."

— Naoyuki Shinohara, Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund

"Katha stands as an exemplar for all the creative projects around the world that grapple with ordinary and dramatic misery in cities."

— Charles Landry, *The Art of City Making*

"Katha has a real soft corner for kids. Which is why it ... create[s] such gorgeous picture books for children."

— Time Out

"Katha's work is driven by the idea that children can bring change to their communities that is sustainable and real, just as the children do in [their books]."

— Papertigers





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There was once a poor woodcutter. He lived in the forest with his family.

One day his wife died and he married another woman to look after his son.

Every day, the new wife would cook for her husband and his son. But when they asked her to eat with them, she'd just shake her head. 'No, later,' she'd say.

And, every day, after they had left, she would sit in the back garden and sing a soft, little song.

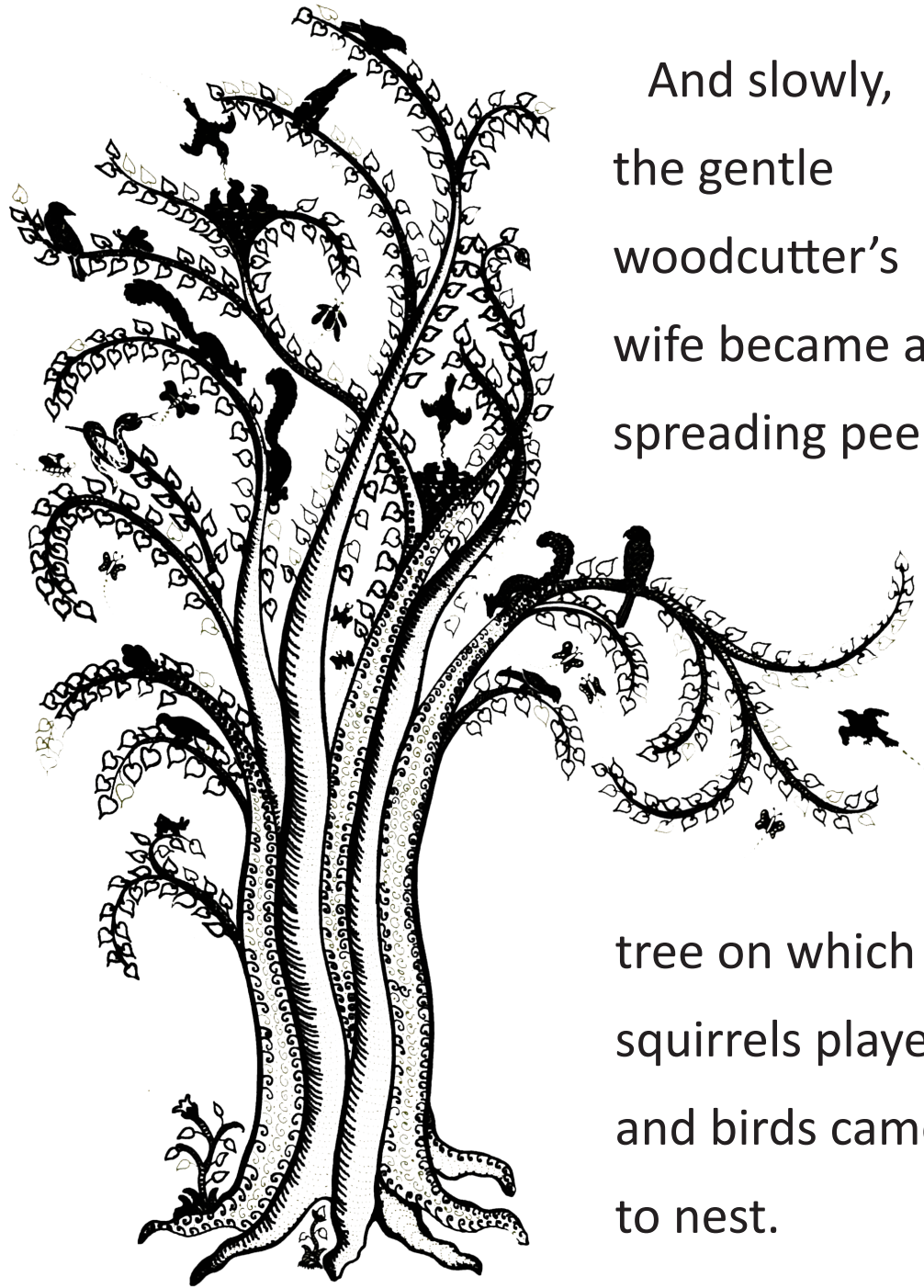
*'Roots, roots, where are you?
Grow back, please, and make me new.
Leaves, fruits, flowers blue
Come clothe me in your wondrous hue.'*



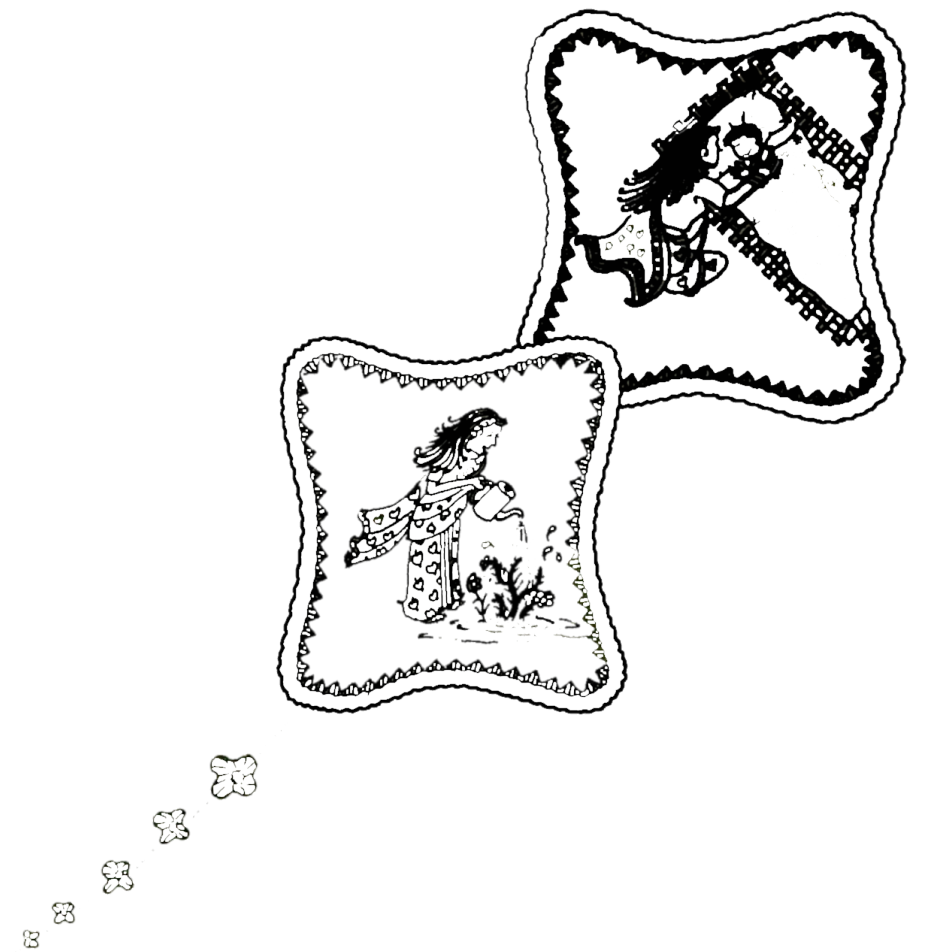
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And slowly,
the gentle
woodcutter's
wife became a
spreading peepal

tree on which
squirrels played
and birds came
to nest.

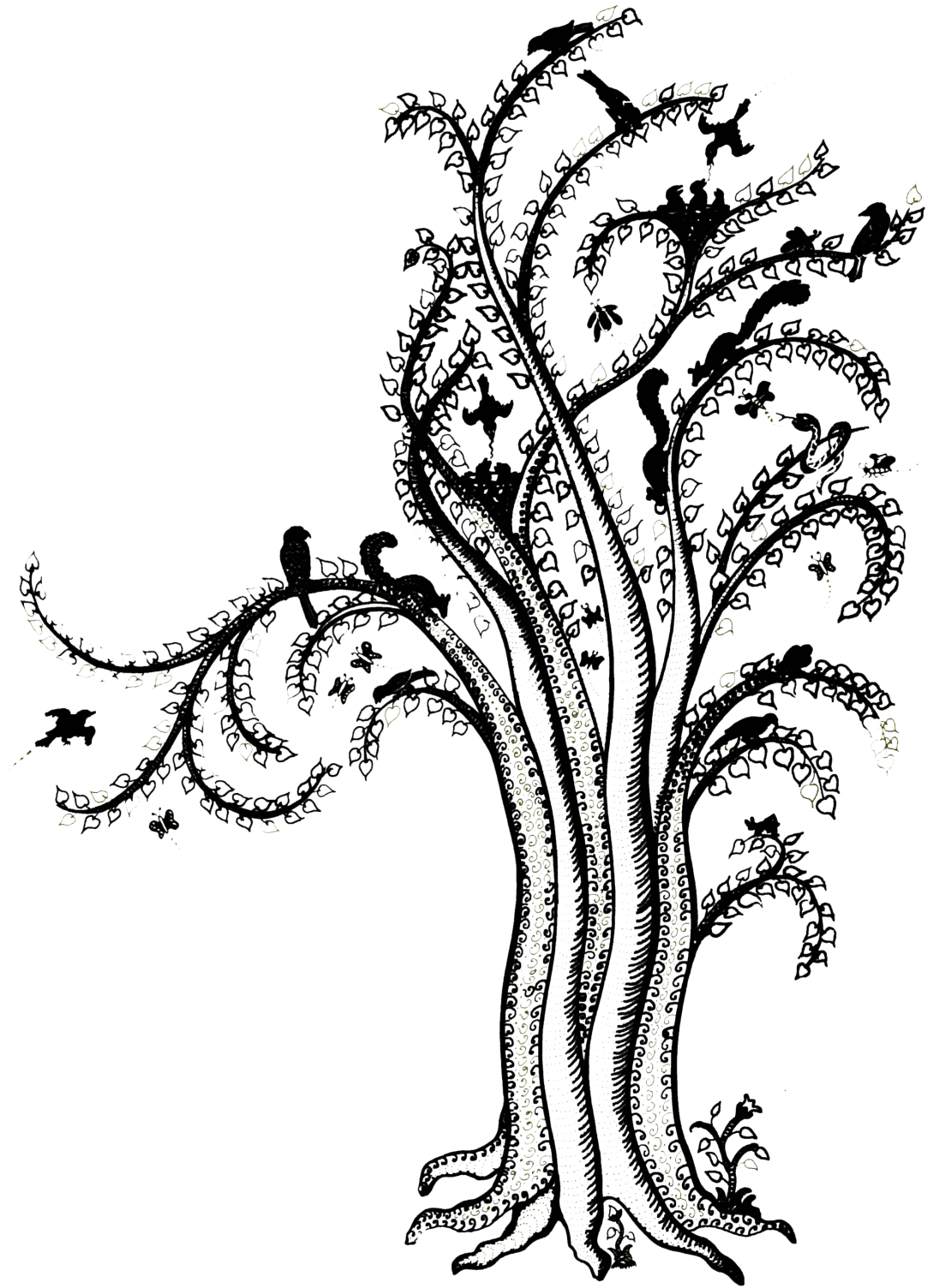


One day, the woodcutter's
son happened to see her
changing into a tree. He
ran to his father, shouting,
'Abba, Abba! Ammi's actually
a tree! If we chop her up,
we'll have enough food for
many, many days!'



The woodcutter liked the idea. But as they ran, he remembered the way his wife sang his son to sleep.

How she always had food for them, even when he came home empty-handed. How she made life possible for his family.



And his feet stopped running.
'Son,' he said, 'I'm a woodcutter.
But I'm also a father and a
husband. Your mother is a
woman but also a tree. So
what? She has the right to be
what she wants to be, no?'

The son didn't fully
understand what his father
said. But, as they walked home,
something inside him said that
Abba was probably right.





Geeta Dharmarajan loves writing stories for children. She was one of the editors of *Target*, a magazine for children, and *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, the magazine of the University of Pennsylvania. She was awarded the prestigious Padma Shri in 2012 for her distinguished service in the fields of literature and education.

Arvinder Chawla is an illustrator and has worked with Katha from 1993-1998. A Master of Fine Arts, she has also cleared UGC NET in Visual Arts. She has worked with *Children's Book Trust* and *National Book Trust*, India in the past. She is passionate about working in the field of children's publishing.

When the woodcutter's wife dies and he remarries, life takes a magical turn for him and his son. The new wife is no ordinary woman—she is actually a peepal tree! The woodcutter is tempted to chop her for his livelihood. So will his son become motherless again? This lyrical story will motivate young readers to think about the importance of nurturing and caring for one's family, even in the most trying of circumstances.

