



Unnikatha

Mukundan

Art by Atanu Roy



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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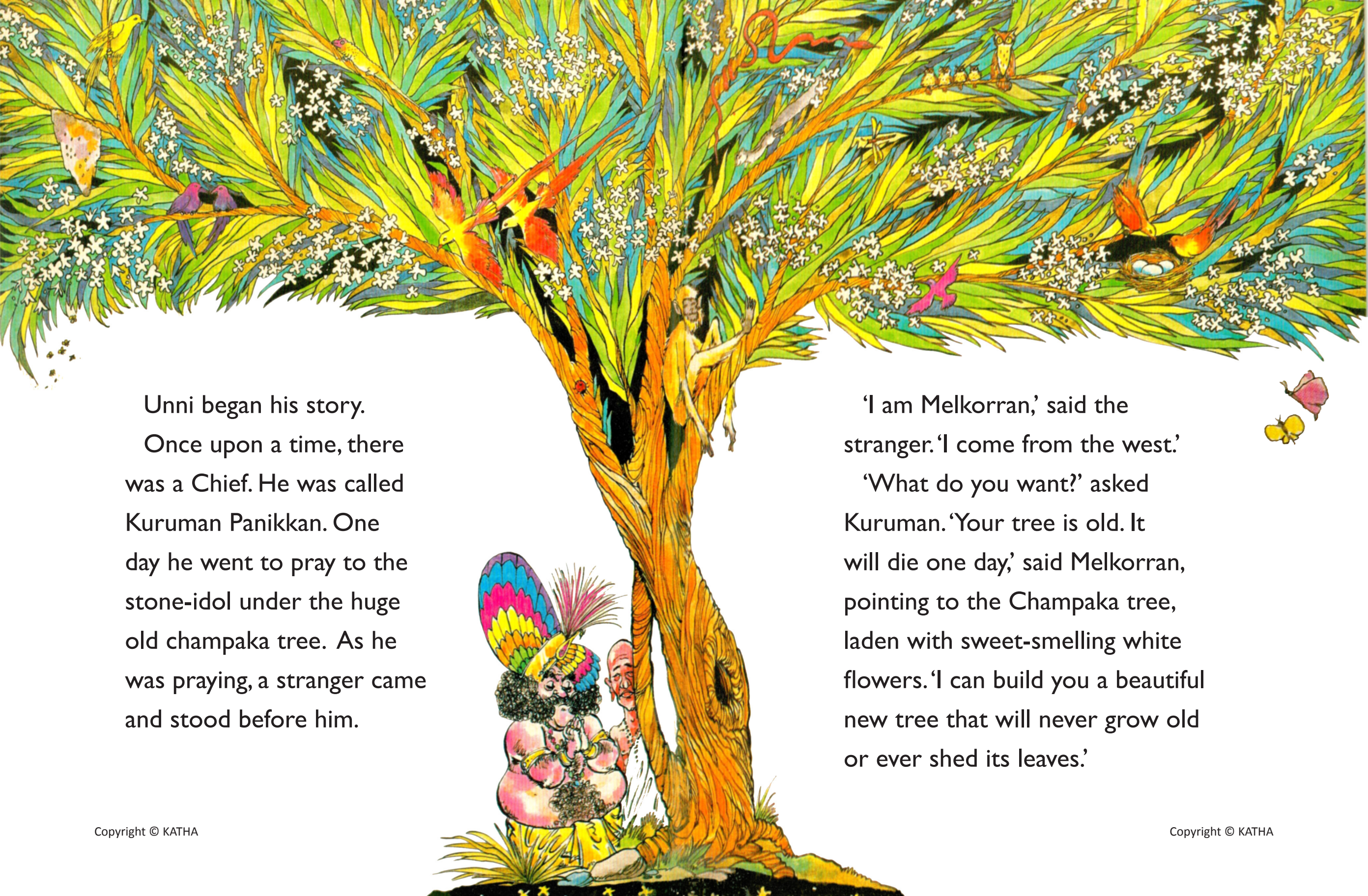
KATHA

Unni,' said his grandmother 'tell me a story.'

Unni quickly put away his books. He came and cuddled up close to his grandmother. 'Muthashi,' he said softly, 'listen. This is a small story about a glass tree. Look!'

As Unni pointed to the blank wall in front of her, Muthashi saw a strange thing! She saw a king-like man being carried in a palanquin.





Unni began his story.

Once upon a time, there was a Chief. He was called Kuruman Panikkan. One day he went to pray to the stone-idol under the huge old champaka tree. As he was praying, a stranger came and stood before him.

‘I am Melkorran,’ said the stranger. ‘I come from the west.’

‘What do you want?’ asked Kuruman. ‘Your tree is old. It will die one day,’ said Melkorran, pointing to the Champaka tree, laden with sweet-smelling white flowers. ‘I can build you a beautiful new tree that will never grow old or ever shed its leaves.’



‘Really?’ asked Kuruman Panikkan, fascinated by the idea of a tree that would never die. ‘All right,’ he said, with a wave of his hand, ‘ build me such a tree.’

Melkorran brought his axe. Soon, the old tree which had stood there for many years, came crashing down.

Nests with eggs and little chicks tumbled down. Father and mother birds rose squawking into the air.



Melkorran began work on his tree. He brought many, many pieces of coloured glass.

Gently, with great care, he shaped the roots and the trunk. The branches came next. For the leaves and flowers he used green and white glass. Every vein and stem he carved with love.





One and a half years went by. The tree glittered and shone in the sun. The colours of sunrise and sunset filtered through the glass leaves. People came from far and near to see this fantastic tree. Panikkan too was very happy.





But the glass tree was only beautiful. Its flowers had no smell.



Although its branches held glittering glass nests, no birds rested there. No child climbed its branches...

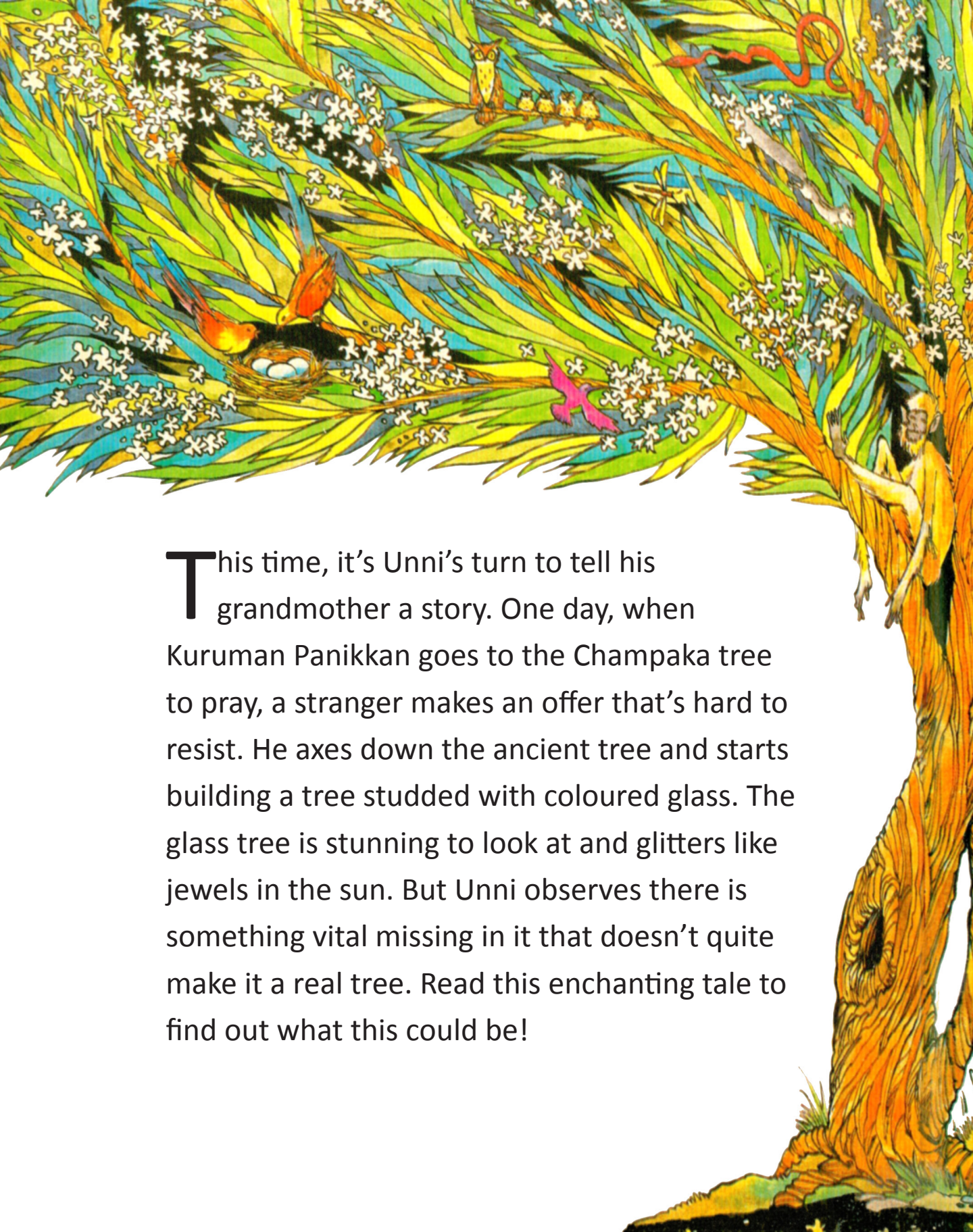
‘Can a glass tree ever be a real tree?’ wondered Unni as his story came to an end.

As the pictures faded from the wall, Unni turned to his grandmother. But she was fast asleep.



M Mukundan was born in Mahe, Kerala, and wrote his first story in 1961. He has 26 published works to his credit. He was conferred the Chevalier Award by the French Government in 1998 for his contributions in the field of Literature. He received the Katha Award for his story *Unnikatha*.

With over a hundred children's books under his belt, **Atanu Roy** has devoted much of his creative prowess to children's literature. It's no surprise then that Roy, who once worked as a political cartoonist for *India Today*, has won awards like the Children's Choice Award for Book Illustrations and the IBBY Certificate of Honour for Illustrations.



This time, it's Unni's turn to tell his grandmother a story. One day, when Kuruman Panikkan goes to the Champaka tree to pray, a stranger makes an offer that's hard to resist. He axes down the ancient tree and starts building a tree studded with coloured glass. The glass tree is stunning to look at and glitters like jewels in the sun. But Unni observes there is something vital missing in it that doesn't quite make it a real tree. Read this enchanting tale to find out what this could be!