



# Unnikatha

Mukundan

Art by Atanu Roy



a 300m thinkbook from Katha 

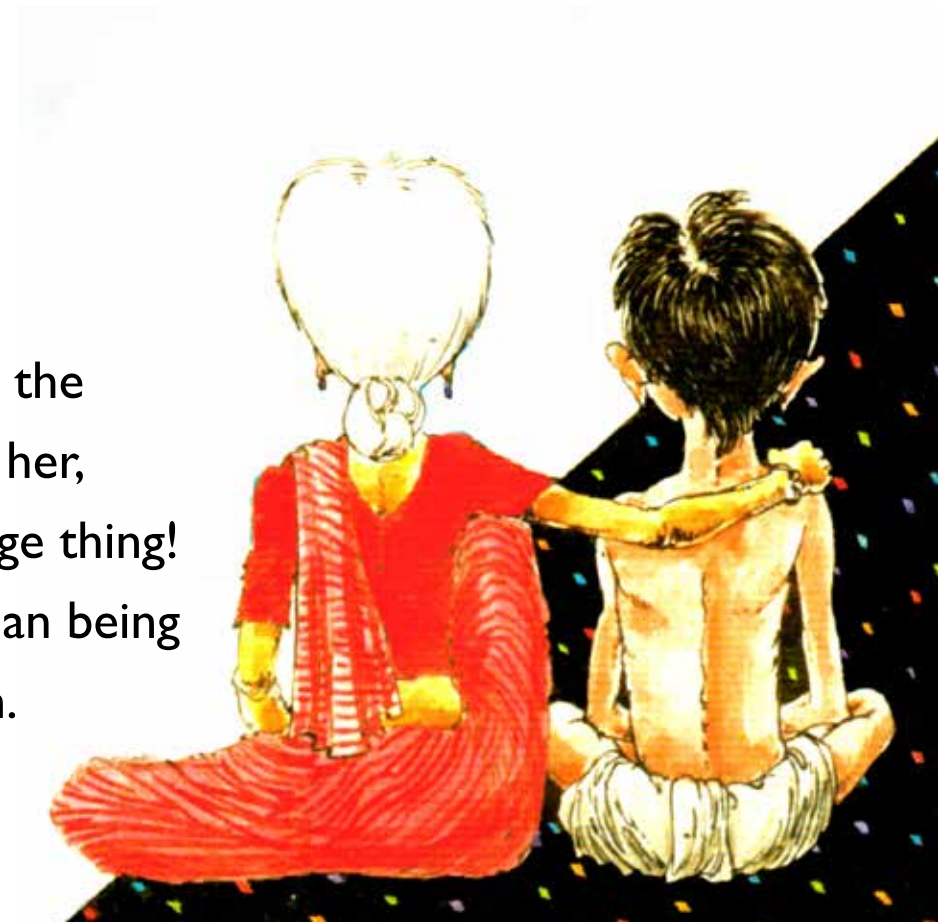




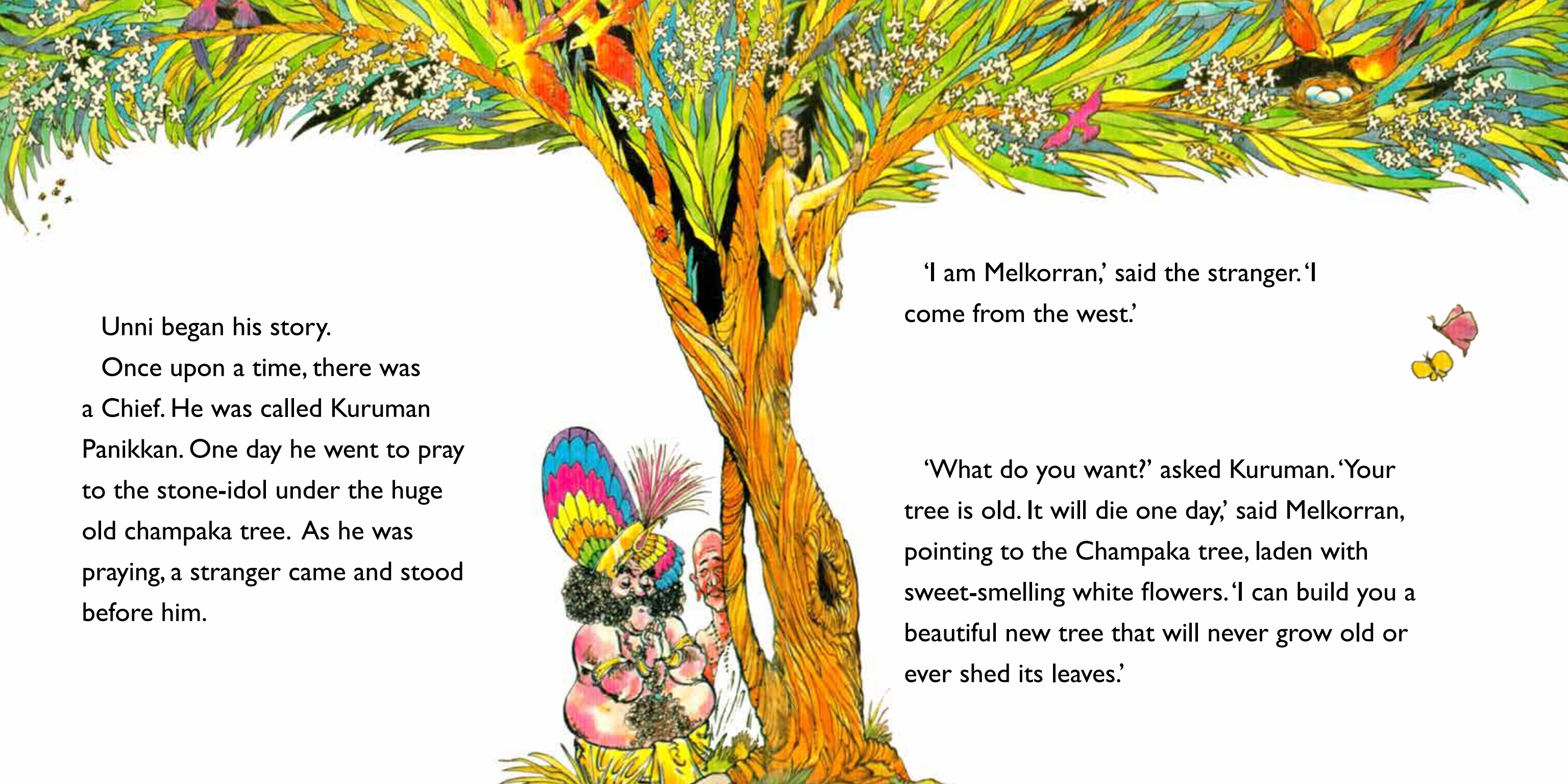
Unni,' said his grandmother 'tell me a story.'

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.

## ☛ KATHA

Katha is a globally recognised non-profit organization ([www.katha.org](http://www.katha.org)) that has been working in the literacy to literature continuum since 1988. Our nearly 30 years of experience is in publishing and education for children in poverty.

"An educational jewel in India's crown."

— **Naoyuki Shinohara, Deputy Managing Director, IMF**

"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**



This edition first published 2021

Copyright © Katha, 1995, 2021

Text copyright © M Mukundan

Photographs copyright © Katha

A3, Sarvodaya Enclave, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 017

Phone: 91-11 4141 6600 . 4141 6610

E-mail: [editors@katha.org](mailto:editors@katha.org), Website: [www.katha.org](http://www.katha.org)

ISBN 978-93-82454-65-6

**Our Mission:** Every child reading well and for fun!

KATHA is a registered nonprofit organization started in 1988. We work in the literacy to literature continuum.

Devoted to enhancing the joys of reading amongst children and adults, we work with more than 1,00,000 children in poverty, to bring them to grade-level reading through quality books and interventions.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form without the prior written permission of the publisher.

10% of the net proceeds from the sale of these books goes to support reading and life long learning programmes for underprivileged children.





