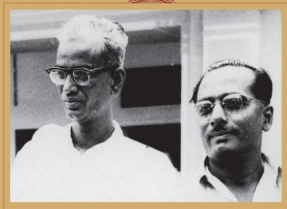




CHANDAMAMA

Celebrating 60 Wonderful Years

COLLECTOR'S EDITION



The Founders: Shri Chakrapani's vision coupled with Shri B. Nagi Reddi's mission to do something for the growing generation of free independent India led them to start a magazine for children.

Foreword

Whenever I recollect the beginnings of Chandamama, I feel I am reading a fairytale, as colourful as its content is.

It was early 1947. I suppose the young idealist that my father, Shri B. Nagi Reddi was, he could muster enough courage to translate his long-cherished dream into action. It was his friend Shri Chakrapani's vision, coupled with his own mission, to give a creative turn to their concern for the growing generation of free, independent India that led them to plan a magazine for children.

Chandamama was really an adventure to reckon with. The very concept of Chandamama was unique in that it was designed to be a magazine carrying short stories that reflect the spirit of India. These stories would aim to inspire the children to enjoy in the right way. Perhaps the two young volunteers of the freedom movement could feel the agony and pain of Mother India's heart and soul, for her children having been deprived of the essential touch and feel of our heritage and culture. They were inspired to take upon themselves the noble endeavour of taking India's hoary past closer to children through the medium of pleasant narratives.

With a printing press at his disposal and a friend, a multi-linguist and a talented writer who could wield the pen with power and ease, Shri B. Nagi Reddi was already publishing a socio-political periodical, *Andam byethi*, in Telugu. The two now decided to branch off into publishing for children, launching an illustrated magazine characterised by stories.

The printing press had only the bare minimum machinery and infrastructure. The first issue, mostly with 2-colour illustrations on 64 pages and priced 6 annas (37 paise) came out in June 1947. It was printed by letterpress with copper blocks for four colours and zinc blocks for two colours. The initial print run was 6,000 copies, mostly dispatched to towns that had post offices, as specimen copies to identify prospective distributors among dynamic, enterprising



B. Viswanatha Reddi
Editor/Publisher
since 1965

youngsters who could promote it. I remember some of the senior members of Father's staff recalling the struggle he went through in building up a network and distributing the magazine far and wide. The warm response he received from educationists and others who mattered from all over the country no doubt gave him a moral boost.

It is my firm conviction that any project with a noble cause will prove blessed. Perhaps that was the faith that helped my father and Shri Chakrapani to build up a team of committed writers and illustrators to supplement and complement each other's efforts to make *Chandamama* a vibrant voice of India's heritage.

Shri Chakrapani was the Controlling Editor of *Chandamama*. He was ably assisted by writers like Raja Rao, Mudita Venkatartham, Bhairagi, Dasari Subrahmanyam, and K. Kutumba Rao. Their main task was to retell stories from Indian mythology and the folklore prevailing in different regions of the country.

Right from the early days, the illustrations that accompanied the stories added a new dimension to the magazine's character.

They came from the brush of T. Veera Raghavan who signed as Chitra, M. Goldhale, Kesava Rao, K.C. Sivasankaran (Sankar), Vaddadi Papiah (Vapa) and MTV Acharya were past masters in drawing illustrations for

the cover pages. Their artworks have even today retained the brilliance of the colours they used.



Stacks of manually bound copies

Starting with two largely spoken languages in 1947 in the then Madras Presidency – Telugu and Tamil – *Chandamama* went on adding six languages in the next four years. Being a writer of repute in Telugu, Shri Chakrapani took the liberty of using the simple spoken language in that language for the first time, to make the narration child-friendly. That attracted even not-so-well literates among the elders.

Thus *Chandamama* brought about a revolution in the use of language which, in turn, earned for it wider popularity. The same trend was followed in other languages also.



The initial print run was 6,000 copies, mostly dispatched to towns that had post offices, as specimen copies to identify prospective distribution among dynamic, enterprising youngsters who could promote the magazine.

Vikram-Vetala Stories





The Prince and the Gundharvas

PUBLISHED
IN 2007

The cremation ground presented an eerie spectacle that dark night. The moon was hidden behind the clouds, and it was drizzling intermittently. The pitch darkness was relieved only by occasional flashes of lightning that lit up the sombre scene, causing an eerie dance of jerky shadows in the cremation ground. Occasionally, a jackal's spine-chilling howl or the blood-curdling laughter of some invisible evil spirit cut into the silence that hung like a shroud over the area. Altogether, it was a scene that would strike terror into the bravest heart. But nothing could daunt the intrepid King Vikram. Once again he made his way to the gnarled tree from which the ancient corpse was hanging. Bones crunched under his feet, and a screeching ghost rose from the dust in shuddering frenzy as he marched determinedly ahead.

Oblivious to everything but the mission at hand, he brought the hanging corpse down by cutting the rope with his

sword. Slinging it astride his shoulder, he had just begun his return journey when the vampire that possessed the corpse said, "O King! This is a very arduous task that you are performing. Perhaps you have taken it on yourself as a favour to someone else. But I hope that when that person offers to reciprocate by doing something that will benefit you, you won't rashly decline the offer in a fit of emotion, as Prince Vasant of Kartipur did. Listen to his story."

The tale the vampire narrated went as follows.

Shaktiteja, the King of Gundharvaloka (the domain of the gundharvas, or demi-gods), had a beautiful daughter named Swarnamanjari. However, the greatest beauty in the land was not she, but another nymph named Chitravarnika – a fact that caused Swarnamanjari much heartburn. She became bitterly jealous of Chitravarnika, and was forever looking for an opportunity to hurt her in some way.



Swarnamanjari's opportunity came when her father took her on a visit to earth. She was enraptured by the earth's beauty. Back home, she lost no time in boasting to all her friends about the marvellous sights she had seen. It was not long before her stories of the earth reached Chitravarnika's ears. The vivid description caught her fancy, and filled her with a longing to visit this new place and see its wonders with her own eyes. She told her friends that she had made up her mind to leave for earth forthwith.

When King Shaktiteja heard the news from his daughter, he summoned

Chitravarnika to his court and curtly announced, "Chitra, no denizen of Gundharvaloka may descend to earth without my permission. If you still insist on going, you shall forfeit all your celestial powers. However, if you are able to worship at a sacred pilgrim spot within fifteen days of reaching earth, you will regain your powers. Only then can you return to Gundharvaloka."

The king's warning did not daunt Chitravarnika; if anything, it only strengthened her determination to make the journey.

Floating through the air, she made her descent to earth. She landed beside a beautiful brook in the midst of a forest. The crystal clear water of the brook enticed her to take a dip.

She stepped into the water and had a refreshing bath. As she emerged out of the brook and tried to soar into the air, she realised that she had lost her power to fly. The gundharva king's words had come true.

At this juncture, a young man came riding a horse. On seeing Chitravarnika, he reined in his horse and asked in astonishment, "Young lady, may I know who you are and what you're doing at this lonely spot?

From your looks and bearing, it appears that you're no ordinary woman, but some celestial nymph."

With a sigh, Chitravarnika answered, "You're right. I'm a gundharva maiden. But I have lost my celestial powers, only because I committed the crime of visiting your land!" Seeing sympathy in the young man's eyes, she then told him the whole story.

The young man introduced himself. "I am Vasant, the crown-prince of Kirtipat. With a week left for my coronation, I'm currently out on a tour of my kingdom to get to know it better. I shall take you sightseeing and show you the most beautiful places on earth. In return, I'd like you to take me to Gundharvaloka. I wish to study the administrative policies there, so that I can implement them in my own kingdom when I become the ruler."

"Your aim is a lofty and commendable one indeed," praised Chitravarnika. "But O Prince, I myself have lost the power to fly back to Gundharvaloka. Unless I worship at the holiest pilgrim spot on earth within 15 days, I cannot get my power back. So how can I take you there – much as I would love to do so!"

"Why don't you try to regain your powers? I shall help you," assured Vasant.



"But which is the holiest spot on earth?" asked Chitravarnika

"The holiest destination that I can think of is Mount Kailas, the abode of Lord Siva and Goddess Parvati," answered Vasant. "I can take you there."

On hearing this, Chitravarnika's eyes lit up with fresh hope and she asked, "But would we be able to make it there in just 15 days?"

"Why not! It can be done, if we leave right away," he replied confidently.

The twosome set out on their journey to Mount Kailas. On the way, Prince Vasant pointed out many breathtakingly beautiful sights to Chitravarnika. On the tenth day, they reached Lake Manasarovar.

It was a full-moon night. The lake, dazzling in the moonlight, presented a vision of ethereal beauty. The prince pointed out the sacred mountain peak to the nymph. Praying to Siva and Parvati with all their hearts, both of them prostrated in the direction of the peak.

The next moment, Chitravarnika was enveloped in a flash of light. She realised that she had got back her lost powers. Elated, she turned to Vasant and said,

"Prince, I am eternally indebted to you for your kindness!"

At this juncture, the gundharva king Shaktiteja (who had been following Chitravarnika's progress through his spies) appeared there. Chitravarnika bowed to him and respectfully said, "Your Majesty, this is Prince Vasant of Kirtipur. It is he who helped me regain my powers. In return, I've promised to take him on a visit to Gundharvaloka. May I bring him along as my guest?"

But Shaktiteja glared at her furiously and demanded, "Have you forgotten that human beings are forbidden to enter our domain?" Without waiting for an answer, he then vanished from view.

Chitravarnika heaved a deep sigh. Turning to Vasant, she said, "O Prince! You heard what our king just said. But you needn't be disheartened; I can take you to my domain in defiance of his order. No doubt, I'll have to face some hardships – but that doesn't matter. I shall take you if you wish."

But Prince Vasant promptly retorted, "After what you've said, why would I wish to see your domain? Now, even if your king himself were to change his mind and return

here to personally invite me, I would decline the invitation. I'm not interested in visiting Gundharvaloka."

Chitravarnika smilingly bade him goodbye and disappeared.

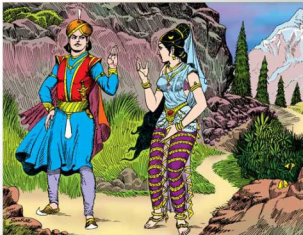
Concluding the story at this point, the vampire said, "O King! Prince Vasant took the trouble to escort Chitravarnika all the way to Kailas, as a result of which she was able to regain the powers she had lost. In return for this favour, he had requested a chance to visit Gundharvaloka – again, not for his personal enjoyment, but for the noble cause of studying the methods of administration used there, with the intention of implementing them in his own domain when he became the king. Then why did he change his mind and turn down Chitravarnika's offer of taking him there? Wasn't it the height of foolishness to turn down this golden opportunity? Why did he do it? Was it out of fear of the gundharva king's wrath? Or was it an impulsive decision spurred by hurt pride and anger? If you know the answer, speak out – otherwise, your head shall shatter into fragments!"

Calmly and unhesitatingly, King Vikram answered: "The reason Prince Vasant wished to study the administration of Gundharvaloka was because he had

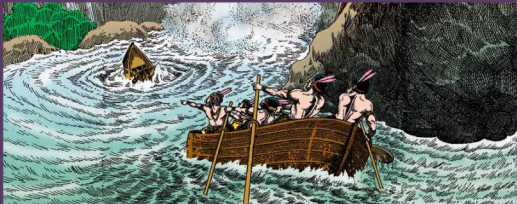
considered it an exemplary domain, inhabited by ideal beings. But the gundharva king Shaktiteja's unjust and unreasonable behaviour, goaded by his daughter's jealousy, which Vasant subsequently witnessed, made him understand the gundharvas were far from ideal. They too had the same weaknesses as human beings—perhaps to a worse degree! So, there was nothing to be learnt from their methods of administration. This, coupled with the thought that Chitravarnika would have to suffer her king's punishment for taking him to Gundharvaloka made him drop the idea of visiting that land. There is nothing foolish about his decision."

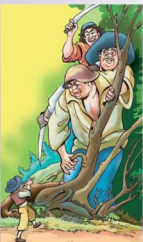
On hearing this, the vampire nodded in approval, before going off into peal after peal of thunderous laughter. The next moment, he, along with the corpse, moved off the king's shoulder with a jerk and flew back to the tree.

King Vikram gave a little sigh as he gazed upon the scene. Then, he squared his shoulders, drew his sword and retraced his steps towards the ancient tree.



Adventures and Explorations





The Blue Rose



Once upon a time there was a farmer who was very ill. He had an only son, called Colin, who had tried every cure possible to make him well again.

"Last night I had a dream," said the father one morning. "In this dream, a fairy came and told me that the only way I could be cured was to get hold of a blue rose, which grows in an ancient castle, close to the sea. Whoever gets possession of it will have perfect health and long life."

"If I have to cross all the lands and all the seas, I will find the blue rose for you, father," Colin promised him.

Pausing only to collect a little food, Colin set off on his journey.

When it was getting dark, he came to the edge of a forest, very tired and hungry. He stopped and took out of his pocket a small piece of meat and some dry bread.

As he was about to eat it, he noticed an old woman nearby, looking at him and licking her lips.

"Are you hungry, too?" he asked.

"Very much—it's two days since I tasted any food," she replied.

At once Colin divided the meat and bread and handed one half to her.

"Thank you," she sighed when she had eaten. "You are a good boy and I will reward you. Take this whistle. When blown it gives out a note so soft that only you will be able to hear it. If you blow one note, everything near to you will stand still like a statue for as long as you wish. If you blow two notes, persons around you will run and dance as though mad. If you blow three notes, then your table will be covered with good things to eat."

Thanking the old woman, Colin went to find a place to sleep for the night. He found a small cottage, the door of which was opened by a poor peasant.

"Come in, my boy," he smiled. "My wife and seven children are just sitting down to supper but we have nothing better to offer you than a little bread and dried fruit."

Colin turned his head and blew three silent notes on the whistle. Inside the cottage,

the table at once became loaded with food and drink.

"What was that you told me?" asked Colin, going inside. "This is not just bread and dried fruit."

Amazed, the peasant could not guess what had happened, but he and his family sat down to a meal such as they had never eaten before—and there was plenty left for later.

In the morning, when he was leaving, Colin asked if they knew anything of the blue rose.

"When I was at sea, I heard of many wonderful things," the peasant told him. "There is somewhere a magic castle, in which a beautiful princess is a prisoner. You must wake up this princess and ask her to give you the blue rose but, to get to the castle, you have to go through a thick forest full of giants and then make the keeper of the castle, who is an evil wizard, give you the golden key which opens the tower in which the princess is a prisoner. Take care, however, for the wizard makes everybody who enters his forest prisoners for the rest of their lives."



Colin thanked them and continued his journey. When he reached the magic forest, he heard angry voices like the rumbling of thunder and three great giants, with big knives in their hands, rushed at him. Anyone else would have tried to run away in fear but Colin secretly blew one note on the whistle and at once the giants became rooted to the spot like stone statues and he was able to walk past them without being harmed.

Thus he arrived safely at the magic castle. The door opened and the ugly face of the keeper glared out.

"Come in, come in," growled the keeper. "I suppose you, too, have come to collect the blue rose?"

"Yes, that's right," said Colin.

The keeper chuckled and slammed the door shut behind them. "You are my prisoner for ever," he said. "From now on you will be my slave. If you dare touch the golden key, or annoy me in the slightest way, I will chop your head off."

"Very well," nodded Colin, calmly.

He set about being a servant to the keeper and got him a meal, but when the magician was about to try the first mouthful, Colin blew on the whistle once and he

remained rigid, with the fork halfway to his mouth.

Colin laughed and laughed. When all the other servants came in, carrying trays of food, he blew the whistle twice and they began to run to and from the kitchen like mad, bringing more and more food, which they stuffed into the keeper's mouth, until he could take no more.

"That's enough," laughed Colin. "You can see that he is like a statue and cannot move. Now you can all escape from here."

When the servants had hurried away, delighted at their freedom, the boy took the golden key and went to the castle tower, where the princess was being kept prisoner.

She was fast asleep on a silver bed, but when Colin sounded the whistle twice, she jumped up and began to run and dance. Quickly, he changed the magic spell and explained to the girl the reason for his visit.

"Here is the blue rose," she said, offering it to him. "I was keeping it hidden in this tower and because I would never give it to him, the keeper put a spell upon me to remain asleep for the rest of my life."

"Now you are free, princess," said Colin. "As for the keeper—well, come and see for yourself."



The princess laughed when she saw him still sitting at the table like a statue, too full of food to be able to speak. "Let him remain there like that forever," she said. "It is what he deserves."

Happily, Colin and the princess went back to the father, and when he touched the blue rose he was at once made quite well again ... and his joy was complete when, later on, Colin and the princess were married.

Witty Tales



Witty Tales

Chandamama is equally famous for its stories of fun and humour, which are presented in a subtle manner that make them capable of being remembered beyond the time taken for reading them. Tales of men of wit, like Tenali Rama, Birbal, Gopal Bhand and others, have all enriched Indian literature. These stories look at the lighter side of life, revealing human weaknesses, vanities and foibles. If they evoke a smile while reading, they continue to remind the readers of the absurdities in life.



The Clever Parrot

There was a great merchant in Magadha who traded overseas.

Whenever he went abroad, he would call his family and ask each one, "What shall I bring for you?"

On one occasion, he asked his pet parrot too, "What shall I bring for you?"

"Do you remember the forest in which you caught me?" the parrot said. "In that forest there is a giant pipal tree. On it you will find numerous parrots like me. Tell them that I am with you and ask them for

a message for me. That is all I want from you."

The merchant started on a voyage, traded for a period of six months, and then went to the pipal tree to meet the parrots. He told them what his pet had said. When he asked for a message, one of the parrots became lifeless and fell down and the rest flew off without answering the merchant.

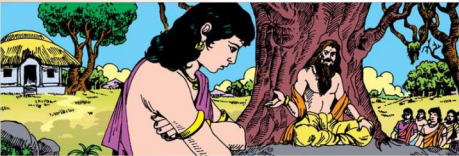
Surprised and disappointed, the merchant came home and told his parrot what had happened.

On hearing the merchant's narration, the parrot in the cage had a fit, at the end of which it too fell down lifeless. Shocked at this, the merchant opened the door of the cage. At once the parrot came back to life and flew away through the open cage, leaving the merchant shocked and dumbfounded.



Moral Stories





PUBLISHED
IN 1979

Subroto's Mission

A sage had his small Ashram near the forest of Vidyachala. Young men enrolled themselves as his students.

The sage always asked a newcomer, "Why do you want to learn?" The reply that he generally got was this: "We wish to earn a living."

Although the sage kept silent, it seemed that the reply did not quite please him.

One day, a young man named Subroto met the sage and desired to become his student. To the sage's question, he replied, "I wish to study for my own development. Secondly, I wish to use my education for the service of the people."

The sage looked happy. Subroto lived in the Ashram for five years. Then the sage told him, "Now I deem you learned. Go and devote yourself to the welfare of the people."

Subroto chose a small village for his field of work. He served the villagers in several ways and soon endeared himself to them.

But he was shocked to learn that every three months, a gang of dacoits raided the village and looted the houses. Whoever tried to check them was mercilessly beaten.

He further learnt that this had been going on for years. The villagers had reconciled to the situation. They sighed and lamented their plight, but did nothing more. The dacoits faced no resistance.

Subroto called a meeting of the village youth and said, "It is a shame to live in fear and bear the tyranny of the dacoits. How can we prosper if the dacoits plunder the village every now and then? We must unite and face them."

A dozen young men came forward to risk their lives. As soon as the dacoits entered the village, they offered stiff resistance. But the dacoits outnumbered them and, after a fight, took them prisoners.

"Who instigated you to resist us? Answer or die!" the dacoits demanded.

Sensing danger to his followers, Subroto stepped forward and said, "I mobilised them against you."

The dacoits beat up Subroto pitilessly. Subroto swooned. While leaving the village, the dacoits threatened the villagers, saying, "If you resist us again, we will set fire to the whole village! Also, you must drive this audacious young man away!"

There was no physician in the village. The villagers carried Subroto to a well-known physician who lived in another village. Once the physician took charge of him, they left for their homes, without waiting to see him recover.

The fact is, they did not want Subroto to return to their village. They were afraid of the havoc the dacoits would create if they saw Subroto still living in their village. They had decided to resign to their fate.

But Subroto returned a month later. The village-elders no doubt felt a bit awkward at his sight.

Subroto was followed by a gentleman. Said Subroto to the villagers, "People of this village suffer much because we do not have a physician here. On my request, this physician has agreed to live here till he has trained one or two of our own youths. Please cooperate with him."

The people felt overwhelmed with gratitude. Subroto, whose life was in danger

for their sake, still cared only for their welfare! They felt guilty that they were thinking of avoiding him.

All the villagers now decided to confront the dacoits under Subroto's leadership. They practised lathi-play and fencing. Divided into four batches, they secretly guarded the village at four different points.

When the dacoits came next, the villagers swooped down upon them with fury and captured them. They led the prisoners to the king's court in a procession. The king had been looking for that notorious gang for a long time. He was immensely pleased. He rewarded the villagers and appointed Subroto to a high position. It was Subroto's duty to look into the problems that the people of distant villages faced.



BY THE WAY

The Singapore edition of Chandamama, Ambulimama, was launched in 2003.



History in Pictures



This cottage in the Chandamama building at Vadapalani served as Mr. Nagi Reddi's office. It witnessed several historical moments in the history of Chandamama.

Art Gallery

f every magazine, it is the cover that attracts the eye first and creates an immediate impression. For children's magazines, this is doubly so. If Chandamama is known for the variety in its content, there is no doubt the pictures on its covers for the past sixty years had had a great impact on the readers. The four-colour paintings are an epitome of the objectives of the magazine and a showpiece of the high creative talent of the artists who made them. The following pages showcase paintings from the brushes of eight artists who were associated with Chandamama between 1947 and 2007. In a way, the paintings also signify the evolution of the magazine and the change of times. The more than 800 paintings that had appeared in Chandamama's thirteen editions are the quintessence of the Indian tradition, worth preserving for posterity's sake.



1961



1981

Vaddaadi Papaiah (Vapa)