



**RIGHT SKETCH:** Lakshmi collects information to make her works authentic

# Saying it through images

Lakshmi Devanath  
is working on  
pictorial biographies  
of Carnatic greats

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**I**t was not just music that kept M S Subbulakshmi busy while she was growing up. She also took time off to make snacks for her brother, like a lollipop fashioned out of carefully ground tamarind pulp. Anecdotes like these liven up the pictorial biographies of Carnatic musicians written by Lakshmi Devanath.

"I want to take the stories of musicians to young readers," says Devanath, whose biographies on M S and G N Balasubramaniam hit the stands a few months ago. Now, she is back to the drawing board and is working with artists to bring out three more pictorial biographies on Palghat Mani Iyer, Madurai Mani Iyer and T Brinda.

"It will take some time as the frames have to be accurate," says the 52-year-old. Meanwhile, she has finished work on a full-fledged biography

of violinist-composer Lalgudi Jayaraman, which is likely to be published in the next two months by Harper Collins.

"I spent nearly one-and-a-half years readying the material for Lalgudi's biography," she says. The work, which began in 2008, went on till Devanath collected material about the various aspects of Lalgudi's career. "He is a violinist, a path-breaking accompanying artiste, a composer who has created both music and dance pieces, a singer and a teacher who has guided many musicians," she says.

The author tried to capture not just the various facets of Jayaraman but also his family's association with the legendary composer Tyagaraja. "Jayaraman's great grandfather was a student of Tyagaraja," she says. Devanath spent months talking to the musician and his wife to get more details and interviewed 125 people.

The pictorial biographies are slim volumes but the amount of research is the same required for producing an erudite, academic paper, she says. "It is history and I have to collect tons of information to provide authentic stories of these artistes and their work," she says.

So, for every frame, detailed notes are sent to the artists. "They don't even know the name of the musicians so I describe how the traditional 'madisar' is tied by women and how to recreate a 1930s house," she says.

Devanath says she is planning to bring out more pictorial biographies. "I grew up reading Amar Chitra Katha. These books will encourage even those youngsters who take up music as a hobby to learn more about the art form," she says.