

Novel pays graphic tribute to doyenne

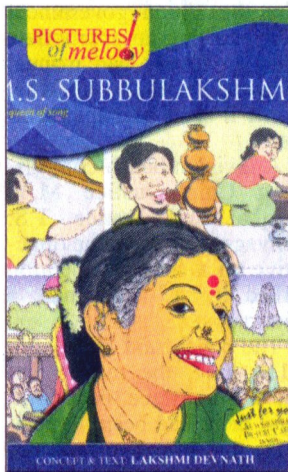
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June 16: Chennai prides itself on being the cultural capital of the country. As the organizer of the world's longest music and art festival, such a title is well earned. But how do people help sustain such a hoary tradition of the performing arts and how does a city pass on this aesthetic legacy of appreciation?

A lifelong student of music, Lakshmi Devnath, hit upon a novel idea. To propagate the legendary figures of the Carnatic music world, she sat down to put together a graphic novel that would tell the tales of the greats to everyone, most of all children. Her first effort – M.S. Subbulakshmi (Heritage Publishing House, Rs 125) – has come out splendidly.

The art by G. Sekar in this 'Pictures of melody' series captivates even as the text carries the readers through the life and times of the doyenne of Carnatic music who started out in life as 'Kunja'. Recaptured in simple words, the life of MS, from her youth to a remarkable highlight of Mahatma



Graphic novel tells the life story of M.S. Subbulakshmi.

Her mellifluous voice brought a tear to many an eye, be it that of the mighty Gandhi and Nehru or ordinary mortals.

Gandhi saying "I would rather hear Subbulakshmi speak the bhajan than anyone else sing it", is told in an inspiring way.

Somewhat flummoxed by the labyrinths of book publishing and selling, Lakshmi decided to do it herself as an independent publisher and take her chance with book sellers. The mechanics apart, the first of a series will serve eminently the purpose of keeping a culture alive. Lakshmi plans to release the next graphic novel in the series on G.N. Balasubramaniam soon. Apart from this, she is also writing the definitive biography of the violin maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman.

Radha Viswanathan, the daughter of MS, says in her appraisal of the book, which 'encapsulates almost all major events in Amma's life. It is important that young minds are acquainted with and understand the lives of great maestros of the past...'

The episode in which Jawaharlal Nehru asked, "Who am I, a mere Prime Minister before the Queen of Song?" is one of the many touching incidents in the life of one of the greatest exponents of her art whose mellifluous voice brought a tear to many an eye, be it that of the mighty or the ordinary mortal.