

● ● ● BOOK REVIEW

Lalgudi days

BY VIJAYA PUSHKARNA

Fans of Carnatic music and of violin maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman will lap up every word Lakshmi Devnath has penned. The book includes anecdotes and sketches of four generations of Lalgudis. Every concert and lecture of Lalgudi, as he was affectionately and reverentially called, has been mentioned. One such is his maiden lecture in 1968. While reading up about the making of a perfect violin, believed to be a European string instrument, he stumbled upon French naturalist and explorer Pierre Sonnerat's writings. Lalgudi's research altered the story of the origin of the instrument. "The violin is

of Indian origin," Lalgudi maintained in the lecture on The Origin and the Evolution of the Violin. The Indian-made two-stringed *ravanastron*, which was played with a curved bow, left India and reached other shores. Over several centuries it became the violin of today, reintroduced in India by the British about 200 years ago. As evidence, he offered the 1,500-year-old statues in the Chidambaram temple, 235km from Chennai, and the Agastheswara temple near Mysore.

The story of Lalgudi's musical genius begins beautifully with his grandmother showing him the shawls her father-in-law, Lalgudi Rama Iyer, had received as gifts.

Devnath is clearly passionate and



An Incurable Romantic: The Musical Journey of Lalgudi Jayaraman
By Lakshmi Devnath
Published by Harper Collins
Pages 464
Price ₹599

honest in tracing the musical journey, bringing in almost every well-known name in Indian classical music. She describes how Indians in North America, dying to hear their favourite artistes, invited him to perform there in the early 1970s. Such "seasons" are routine now.

But Devnath's love compromises readability; she jumps timelines, often breaking continuity. But lovers of classical music will happily forgive her. The book also has a foreword by the late Pandit Ravi Shankar. ●