



## TARA DESHPANDE'S *FIFTY AND DONE*: AN APPRAISAL

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### ABSTRACT

*Experimentation with the form of short fiction is a common trend in post-independence Indian English short fiction by women writers and Tara Deshpande is not an exception in this context. Her collection of short stories, Fifty and Done, shows this element of experimentation. On the one hand, writers like Githa Hariharan whose collection of short stories is preoccupied with the theme of death. On the other hand, writers like Tara Deshpande whose collection of short stories deals with the values of life, emotions and joys. Her short stories can be compared to Shalan Savur and Prema Ramkrishnan. Tara Deshpande's short stories deal with contemporary Indian life and they reveal her multi faceted personality. Variety of themes present in her short stories and her collection is divided into five sections. Each section consists of short stories and verse and each section has a title and a couple of themes.*

### INTRODUCTION

The first section 'Secrets' deals with the secrets of life revealed to children who are in their innocence of childhood. In "Wicked" children fail to realise cause of harsh behaviour and bitterness of a woman who's longing for love and emotional support results into alienation and loneliness that made her harsh and bitter.

In "The Miracle" hard core realities of life revealed. A small boy, Ravi after his mother's death exposed to harsh realities of life and that make him mature at an early age. She is suggesting that innocence of childhood vanished when harshness of life is revealed and understood.

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The second section, 'Portrait of a Woman' deals with the picture of a modern woman who is strong but constantly craving for love and care. She portrays woman as a sensitive creature who wants attention, love and care and cannot tolerate negligence of husband as in "Merry Christmas, Mrs. Banerjee". The protagonist becomes a murderess because of constant negligence by her husband although she was good and caring house wife. In "To Get Away From You", a very successful actress commits suicide because of her husband's frailty.

The section titled "Everything for Sale" contains only one short story with the same title. This story highlights the pathetic condition of an old man and his family. Tara Deshpande has presented a sympathetic portrayal of an old man and his condition and shows the bitterness of society where everything is valued in terms of money.

The section titled "Remembering" deals with the poignant memories of the protagonists. Miss Mona protagonist in "Miss Mona Goes to Movies" can never forget the young man with whom she enters in physicality for only one time. In "Helen Eleven" Seema cannot forget her illicit relationship with Rafiq although he is no more. She misses his touch habits and emotional appeal. Thus, short stories in this collection deal with love and loss like "Fifty and Done" depicts Tara Deshpande's attachment to her father and her sudden demise at the age of fifty.

The preceding analysis shows that her short stories highlight the real picture of contemporary Indian society and its complexities. In her short stories she has depicted emotion of love, element of loss, success and failure of life and peculiar feelings of women. So like other feminist writers, she is aware of emotional, psychological and social status of women. Certain short stories of Tara Deshpande come under the heading of female phase of writing although stories on varied themes, also present in them.

She has portrayed her characters, particularly women characters, in such a way that they present deep emotions of women, and she presents psyche of women through the stream-of-consciousness technique. She has portrayed peculiar emotions and sensations of women in a very minute way. Her women characters show women's understanding of life. She has also a deep understanding of child psychology and her creative sharpness penetrates into the surface behaviour of people and society and can decipher the psychological forces behind it.

In the third person, omniscient, authorial narration, she has presented the picture of society in general and woman in particular. She has exploited similes, metaphors and the element of personification to get the desired effect. She peeps into the conscious and sub-conscious



minds of her characters and presents their inner and outer reality. In her specific style, which is also sometimes marked by humour and shock she has presented her point of view.

She is providing the changing patterns of female psyche, instead of being perverted and distorted personality, presents the real awareness of the female's surroundings. The socio-cultural conditioning of woman, the victimised status of woman and the taboos of society are now replaced by boldness and authentic representation of women in short stories. The socio-cultural changes that have occurred in society have been registered by her in her short stories.

The short stories by Deshpande blend compassion and humanism with feminist consciousness and challenge the societal precincts. Her short stories contain the crux of Indian condition, the local colour, the everyday experiences, articulating silence against marginalization, negotiation with power and challenges deep-rooted androcentricism. Through her short stories she is fighting against customs and a convention pronounced or unpronounced, and she also offers bold account of self and voice recovered by women successfully.

Her short stories reflect the Kaleidoscope of urban life, a blend of 'self' and society and contain element of social documentation. As a social historian she presents inner and outer picture (self and society) in a very artistic way. Her short stories deal with complex themes which are manifested through her characters. In order to present the complexities of life and characters the style that she has adopted directly delves deep into the mind of characters and through this style she has presented the hidden world which is one-tenth visible and nine-tenth submerged in the water of mystery.

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