

THE FINGER PUPPET (Saga)

Anu Jayanth / Harper Collins / Paperback / Rs 295

Faced with a childhood speech impediment, an abusive father and two sisters whose beauty and articulation outshine hers, Tara has only her thumb to talk to... Set in a wistfully remembered and charmingly evoked Trichy of the 1960s, it describes the special girlhood years—of jasmine in the hair and *bindis* on the brow—that 11-year-old Tara, from a rich upper-class Brahman family shares with her sisters—the beautiful, gentle Padmini and the eccentric, sharp-tongued Cordelia. It is a girlhood enriched by her mother's passion for Carnatic music and Vedic stories but made sordid by her father's abuse. As she watches her mother and sisters roughed up time and again, Tara retreats into a fantasy world, choosing to cope with her ankyloglossia by talking to her thumb.

But her tiny alter-ego isn't as forgiving. Can Tara outgrow her physical disability and nurture the strength of her soul?

HOT Tip:

Disturbs the still waters of nostalgia—a good debut, sensitively written, rich in mythical imagery.

