Chapter – 6

An Optimistic Facet : Women

Protagonists : Friends Relationships
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6.1 Introduction :-

Shashi Deshpande is one of the wellknown novelist expert in dealing with various dimensions of human relationships. Up to this chapter the analyses of different relationships and their bonding with each other is done minutely. This chapter also delineates an important bonding explored through her novels; which gives an inevitable breathing space to her protagonists. This is a peculiar relationship depicted by Shashi Deshpande, where her protagonists need not to pretend what they are not. This is very nice bonding of two human being where her protagonists freely express themselves as they are. This is also one of those relationships which supports and provides her protagonists the confidence and strength to know and aware about themselves and accept their own selves as women as well as an independent human beings and to come to the terms with their lives and of course the stark realities of lives.

This chapter analyses in detail the Shashi Deshpande’s attempts to explore the various factors those are responsible for the mutual understanding which exists between the protagonists and their male friends. This mutual understanding is definitely lacking in between protagonists relationships with their husbands. It seems one of the optimistic facet in the various consequences those occurs in the married lives of protagonists. The analyses of those bondings are as follows-

6.2 Jaya –Kamat Friendship in That Long Silence :-
Shashi Deshpande portrayed the relationship of the protagonist Jaya with her friend Kamat, which is surely different from all other man-woman relationship in the novel *That Long Silence*. This particular relationship is different because other man-woman relationship depicted in this novel are burdened with the desire and expectations of the traditional and patriarchal role allotted to them; apart from that the various duties, responsibilities and expectations attached with these conventional roles which takes a toll on the related persons.

When Jaya lives in Dadar apartment, Kamat is her neighbor, who is middle-age, graying and bulky man. He is having greater participation in enables Jaya to aware about the connection between her neutrality and passivity as a writer and as a woman. The relationship between Jaya and Kamat is a unique relationship due to its without bindingness, expectations and liabilities. All these norms are not laid down in both of their relationships. This bonding is just allows to let oneself to go with one’s own sorrow, consequences and guilt. Jaya gives way to all her pain and agony that occurs in her previous life freely in front of Kamat. It means she shares everything that made her life disturbed. She can freely talk about her writing, its various issues and problems, her failure in writing her dejection, her anger and pain about the death of Appa and Aai and her feelings of aloofness and isolation to Kamat. Jaya can expose her innermost feelings that hide in her subconscious mind without any hesitation. Kamat also admits and tries to understand Jaya’s feelings better. There is a free sense of sharing and understanding without any longing and expectations in between Jaya and Kamat.

There is a rare openness and frankness between Jaya and Kamat. He is a very matter-of-fact and rational person, who is totally free from any male – dominated complex. When Jaya talks freely about the various issues related with her married life such as how her life has totally changed after being known as Mohan’s wife, how she spend her whole day only caring for the necessities
of her husband and other family members, how she has totally lost her identity as ‘Jaya’ and has admitted and accepted a secondary role in the whole household routine. After listening to Jaya bluntly Kamat answers that just don’t try to be act like the martyr because its only Jaya’s fault, actually she really enjoyed everything because to make others dependent on her, gives her one type of sense of power and dignity. This was her real desire, her tendency that is very much matched with other women.

While listening to Jaya, in such a way Kamat put forth his observations boldly and bluntly. Once Jaya wrote a story of a widow which is rejected by many magazines, then she comes to Kamat and shows her story, insists him to read it and asks his opinion about what lacks in it. He advises her that if she wants to become a good writer then she must work hard in case she is ready to take herself seriously. There is very frankness in between Kamat and Jaya’s friendship. He warns Jaya about the criteria to become as a writer-

_Spare me your complexes. And you’re a fool if you think I was joking. I’m warning you –beware of this “women are the victims” theory of yours. It’ll drag you down into a soft, squishy bog of self-pity. Take yourself seriously, woman….And work –work if you want others to take you seriously._

_Kamat is a real friend of Jaya because he is not only praises her forever but also makes her aware about her inner lacunas. He makes Jaya aware that she lacks the courage to accept her failure as a writer, lacks the courage to write about-

_Women…….(who) might resemble Mohan’s mother, or aunt, or……..(her) mother or aunt._
In the same way, Kamat enables to Jaya realizes that it is her fault that she has compromised her individuality and given it into the demand of Mohan. She write about only those subjects which are more admit able and acceptable in their social circle.

Jaya learns another most important thing from Kamat that a touch could be so casual and unintentional for the very first time in her whole life. Jaya mentions her surprised and shocked attitude at Kamat’s casual light touch about which he is totally unaware, as if it meant nothing to him. This touch is unintentional and does not have any importance for him. Jaya puts it thus,

*Physical touching is for me a momentous thing. It was only Appa who hugged me as a child, and after him there was Mohan….. But it was never a casual or light –hearted thing for either of us. And then this man ……..I can remember how his fit of casual, physical contact had amazed me. His unawareness on my shock the first time he did it had told me what touching meant to him. Nothing,(3)*

Kamat’s unforgettable gift of light, casual physical touch and contact had taught Jaya that not every physical touch between a man and woman is intentional and there could be a very special comfort, ease, tenderness and warmth in a relationship of man-woman, too.

Later, it is only Kamat who makes realizes Jaya about the resemblance between Jaya’s face and her name. He said that-

*‘Jaya – your name is like your face, ……. It’s small and sharp and clear like your face’, he had said. ‘Only your eyes’, he had said, and his voice has carried the impersonal regret of an artist, ‘only your eyes do not have this –this-exactitude…….. They’re too hesitant, wavering, uncertain…….* (4)
The bonding between Kamat and Jaya shows a new facet of a man-woman relationship, the existence of which is the necessity of society, yet that is seen and experience very scarcely. This is the pivotal relationship which a woman is always in search of and feels comfortable with it. This particular relationship is based on sharing and caring on the level of equality. This is a confirm and tight bonding of belief, sincerity and of course, understanding. It experienced when Jaya is expressing her anguish and pain about the death of Appa and Aai’s selling of the house after Appa’s death and Jaya’s feelings of homelessness. All these deep rooted emotions she has never expressed to anyone not even towards her husband, Mohan. Suddenly she burst out and start crying by realized that each and every moment.

*There was no more words and suddenly I had realized I was crying and he was holding me. But it had meant nothing. It had been warm and comforting, like wearing Appa’s coat on a chilly night. Like sitting before him on his bike.* (5)

In Kamat’s touch Jaya experience the warmth and understanding, which reminds her of Appa’s reassuring warmth protecting her from the world outside ‘like wearing Appa’s coat on a chilly night……’. Kamat tries to do so other Jaya by understanding Jaya’s pain and void within her. But at this particular moment Kamat is unable to hide his loneliness and isolation as a human being. At the time, when Kamat trying to soothe her giving relief to her, he calls her by name and Jaya finds something change in his behavior and experience as if a stranger is sitting beside her because for the first time, Jaya has seen him as a desolate middle-aged and graying man to whom she has never seen before. This is an entirely and totally different person and not the same to whom she
has always seen and known. At present she sees a man, who is nurturing an’ isolation and loneliness in him. In Jaya’s own words she expressed-

*I saw him as a man whose life was structured to loneliness.* (6)

Kamat explains Jaya in such an aloofness and isolated ness, how it is difficult to achieve happiness for a human being. He expressed his feelings in front of Jaya-

*Pursuit of happiness – it’s like that a meaninglessness, unending exercise like a puppy chasing its tail.* (7)

Both Kamat and Jaya shares their sorrow and grief with each other. Kamat understands well the sorrow of Jaya. At the same time he open ups his mind and allows himself to reveal his loneliness and share it with her, telling her how impossible it is to achieve happiness. He tries to give solace and comfort her with his palm. Jaya acknowledges her response to this touch thus-

*The body’s response is so much simpler, so much more direct; is it possible that it is therefore more likely to be right? Even now I have no answers to that. At that moment, however, I had instantaneously rejected the body’s response I had moved away from him, from that scarcely touching grasp. I had left him without a word. There had been no anger in me when I had done that; there had been no outrage either. There had been nothing but an overwhelming urge to respond to him with my body, the equally overwhelming certainty of my mind that I could not do so.* (8)
The society-bound woman and the wife existed in Jaya makes her to behave the way she does. When Kamat needed most of Jaya’s comforting words and her gestures of understanding his aloofness and loneliness. Jaya leaves him without saying a single word. It is for the very first time Kamat reveals his loneliness to her but Jaya fails to understand his necessity of a comforting companionship for that exact moment of pain and agony. Jaya breaks away from Kamat and rushes back to home in a confused state of mind by her own physical response to Kamat’s comforting touch. Shashi Deshpande uses this particular incident to emphasize on the fragile line that separates a friendship from sexual attraction and hints at the complexity of any man-woman relationship. When Jaya ventures again into his apartment after the few days she finds Kamat is dead and got shocked and totally disturbed. In such a state of mind Jaya rushes back to her house, picks up her bag and leaves for her home in Churchgate pretending as if she knew nothing because she afraid that her presence in his flat might cause a scandal. Apart from that Deshpande uses this peculiar incident to attack that social taboo in our society that inhabit a woman, unmarried or married, from frankly and openly having a male friend.

When Mukta asks Jaya’s longings and expectations after the death of Kamat, she asks Jaya that what was there between Kamat and Jaya. It means indirectly Mukta blames the relationship of Kamat and Jaya and gives its the name of affair. That time, Jaya thinks that-


Nothing between us. But after his death, nothing between me and Mohan either. We lived together but there had been only emptiness between us. (9)

Jaya tries to know about Kamat, his aloofness and the reasons behind his death in a new angle, when she knows about it from Mukta, because Mukta
narrates his readiness to face his death, his entire aloofness and isolation while doing this specific thing.

\[ \text{The loneliness of a man facing his death.........is there anything like it in this world? His pain filled this room and we could both of us feel it, Mukta and I.} \text{ (10)} \]

Mukta knows it very well that Jaya had gone upstairs to meet Kamat, but when she finds him dead. She came down frighten and went away. So Mukta is curious to know that why Jaya behaves like this? What was the causes that made Jaya to behave so cruelly and unnaturally?

\[ \text{He was frightened of dying, Jaya, he was afraid of being alone. And left him alone. You could have been with him, you could have stayed by his side but you didn’t you just walked away; he could have been lying there if he hadn’t given me the keys, if I hadn’t gone there that day. He was a very lonely man, Jaya, didn’t you ever think of that? He was terribly lonely, especially after his son went away.} \text{ (11)} \]

Yet now, Jaya grasp the meaning of behavior and treatment that gave by Kamat his looks and his touch of their last meeting His intense desire can’t understand by Jaya in their last meeting. Jaya express her feelings.

\[ \text{I know it now. ‘Jaya’, he had said, and I had run away. He tried to reach out to me in his loneliness and it had frightened me. I’m only Mohan’s wife and I had run away.} \text{ (12)} \]
At this right moment Jaya aware about the stark realism that it is only her marriage which held her back from Kamat real friendship and intense desire. It is only her womanhood with which she bounds herself with the help of Kamat’s friendship. Here reader experiences the woman bonding with womanhood. At this turning point Jaya confesses that-

\[ \text{Stumbling over the word, I suddenly realized it was not Mohan but marriage that had made me circumspect.} \] (13)

Thus, even after the death of Kamat, the understanding between the two true friends becomes increases. Jaya tries to contemplate over where and why she failed. After Kamat’s death, at one specific point, brooding over their friendship Jaya says-

\[ \text{It’s only with the dead that we can have a perfect relationship. There are no knots, no awkward tangles here. We can mould the dead to our desires, to suit our purposes. But this man he resisted all my attempts to manipulate him, to manipulate our relationship …… And yet I knew I had to puzzle it out, to put the bits and pieces together and see what form it took, my relationship with his man.} \] (14)

This specialty does happen in the writings of all good writers of any languages. This type of communication and understanding between the people who stays apart or the ones who have departed from this world have been delineated and analyzed in the writings of Gauri Deshpande and Sania who writes in the language of Marathi. Sometimes Shashi Deshpande’s novel- Goth and Sania’s novel- Awarta are the novels which deals with the human relationships and coming to the terms with the dead after their death, who are an
inseparable part of and contributed a lot to their lives. Apart from this Gauri Deshpande and Sania also writes about people and their contribution and interactions with each other. Basically human relationships and particularly the analyses of man-woman bonding form the core of their writings. Shashi Deshpande also one of the same female writers who also concentrates on this specific theme throughout her writing.

Thus, Shashi Deshpande’s delineation of the character- Kamat in the novel – *That Long Silence* furnished him as the most liberated and prejudice free person in all male characters. He shows the deep concern and understanding of a woman’s predicaments and likes to console her as per his level best. Thus, we experience a sanctity and purity in the friendship of Jaya and Kamat through the analyses of the novel- *That Long Silence*. 
6.3 Indu –Naren friendship in *Roots and Shadows* :-

Indu, the protagonist of *Roots and Shadows* and Naren, one of the male characters in the same novel both are childhood friends delineated by Shashi Deshpande. They have grown up together; Naren is the grandson of old uncle and Saroja’s only son. Naren’s mother, Saroja died very early by drowning along with her husband leaving alone her son Naren, a young child with her father, old uncle. Naren brought up with love and warmth by old uncle. But Akka’s family who had accepted old uncle denied accepting Naren as one of their family member. Akka’s family considers Naren as an outsider. This rejection left a scar on Naren’s mind forever. Obviously, Naren wished to leave the house and get out from there even as child. But Naren’s grandfather, old uncle insisted him to remain there. Naren expresses his emotions-

> At times I hated grandfather for staying here. “Let’s get out of here”, I uses to cry sometimes……. It seemed terrible then to be an outsider. Not to belong ………. It was a crime, a punishment. (15)

Naturally, since childhood, Naren wanted to prove himself exceptional and different from the rest of the people of the family of Akka. And therefore he used to think.

> And then I used to think ……. I’ll show them. I’ll show all of them. My triumphs always meant……. that I’ll show them. Now they all admire me, envy me, accept me. (16)

Later Naren got a job. He was the first young man of the Akka’s family and of his generation, who immediately received a job after he completed his M.A. first class in the subject Economics. Naturally Naren’s grandfather old uncle was happy. One type of triumph feeling Naren had in his mind.
Afterwards on one day he asked himself a question and about that he tells to his friend, Indu too:-

*And one day I asked myself, What am I trying to do? Why the hell should I do something I don’t like, to impress people I don’t care a hang about?” And that day, Indu, I knew I was free. I didn’t want to belong. I didn’t want to be envied. I didn’t want to be admired. I just wanted to live the way I felt like, the way I desired.* (17)

Naren is the person of rational youth, an educated and intelligent one, does not longs to succumb to the expectations of the world around. He has his own principles. Naren is an unpretentious, pragmatic, young man who loves people; yet gives an impression that he does not really notice and care for others. He expects to spend his life in his own way as he aware very well that people do not really care for him. He is only caring and worried about his grand father, old uncle. Naren knows very well about the expectations of old uncle, who wants him to settle down with a good, secured job and starts a lovable family. According to the opinion of old uncle, it is the continuation of life, through one’s own sons and grandsons which makes life meaningful. Naren reveals his concern about his grandfather, old uncle only towards his close friend Indu. He does not like to reveals his feelings to other family members. Naren tells Indu that-

*I don’t have any trouble getting jobs. But I don’t have any trouble losing them either, Nobody seems inclined to keep me for long.*

*His face was tranquil and unperturbed as he spoke. I could see that he was hedging.. levity, banter, but no revelation.* (18)
Naren, Indu, Hemant, Mini and Sumant both have grown up together. Afterwards Indu goes away for her education. Against the wishes of Akka, she gets married there and stays away from the family for near about twelve years. Later Indu returns to the family when Akka summons her due to her illness. After the death of Akka, she goes to old uncle’s room to be away from the suffocating crowd and there she meets Naren. Here at this peculiar point, Deshpande introduces Naren to the readers through the means of Indu. When Indu enters in the room Naren is sleeping in a chair with a newspaper on his face. Naren says something at which Indu startles and he smiles at that-

He smiled and at once the face was the face of an old friend.\(^{(19)}\)

Naren is the only person with whom Indu shares her dissatisfaction related with her job and her sense of failure, futility about her writing. Naren explains her that he has written and asks her the possibilities and reason of writing on these superficial issues and people.

‘The kind of writing you’ve been doing……
I’ve read most of the things you’ve written……what do you do that for?
‘Money, what else? It’s my job’
It was painful and I didn’t want to talk about it. I didn’t want to respond to his probing. But suddenly it was exciting. How long was it since someone had really talked to me? Talked about things as if he understood and cared? Reaching across the barriers I had built around myself?\(^{(20)}\)

Naren is the only person who can reach across the barriers which Indu had built around herself. It is for the first time that Indu talks about herself, her
job, the exceptional and different world they belong to, its hypocrisy, falseness, her unsatisfied state of mind for being a part of it, her anger and helplessness about the whole matter. On the contrary as per others opinion Indu is a successful woman but she keeps this belief intact. Indu’s disillusionment about her life is revealed only in the company of Naren. She is unable to hide the sense of futility which she experiences with her life from Naren. In Indu’s own words she says-

The sense of futility of utter vacuity that had often overcome me, now came back.. The real I was here, talking to Naren, telling him about it, sharing with him the sense of absurdity my words aroused. (21)

Indu, a sensitive person to the things around her, experience and feels strongly a sense of nothingness and emptiness due to the type of life they are leading and the distinctness between their words and their actions. Naren also encourages Indu to speak about her hatred of her body and at a later stage about her bonding with her womanhood. Naren clearly understands that Indu feels hedged in by her female body and nurtures hatred toward it, even though is not aware of this. Naren asks Indu about the various causes behind this unawareness. As per the response of Naren’s question Indu becomes aware of her feelings, emotions, her responses towards her body and the various causes behind this. Indu respond that-

But none of my feelings had been for display, certainly not to the family I had turned my back on.,(22)
Even though these feelings are revealed to Naren because his concern is revealed through his words. Indu experiences the loyalty and sincerity behind the words of Naren.

‘Anyway, it’s good to see you, Indu.’

*My heart turned over at the sincerity of his words. To belong, to be wanted, needed, loved, desired, admired …… how many traps there are! And I fall into all of them.*

Naren awares that Indu has some problem regarding her husband, Jayant. Therefore he asked Indu about her predicament. He enquires about her longings and expectations from Jayant. Indu burst out and reveals to Naren about the pain and agony, even a subtle shade of humiliation which she has experienced in her relationship with Jayant. Indu explains Naren that she truly loves her husband. But her husband is not comfortable with her. Due to these causes Indu hides her responses; her physical reactions even from her husband, Jayant and hate her own self for doing this peculiar thing. Indu talks with Naren about the intensity of her bodily reactions towards Jayant and the shameful and guilty feelings towards these aspects. Naren minutely understands each and every emotion and feeling of Indu. In a sense Naren provide solace to Indu’s predicaments, he is the only person with whom Indu shares her hurt which she has kept hidden from Jayant and all her other family members.

At this specific point Naren stands in sharp contrast with Jayant. Through the denial of Jayant, he denies towards Indu’s passion in a way he denies her womanhood. Therefore as a result of this, Indu nurtures a feeling of hatred towards her body and its various reactions. Naren experiences her feelings and makes aware of her negligence of womanhood and encourages her to accept her femininity without any inhibition and guilt.
Naren plays an important role on three levels in the Indu’s life. First role by making Indu aware about her own feelings, reactions and bringing her out of inner conflicts. Secondly by making her aware about her hatred towards her womanhood and femininity and preparing her to come to the terms with it. And third important role is played by making her aware about she is not able to go on with the kind of writing which Indu has done until now.

Apart from all these issues there is one more striking feature about the real friendship of Indu- Naren is experienced and that are the certain similarities in the characters of Indu and Naren. Both have lost their mothers. The absence which has created an emptiness and void in them. They ignore this still they are isolated and wonder in search of true bonding. The basic necessity for them is to be accepted. Even though Indu and Jayant aspires for a sense of detachment. Naren gives a feeling which he has attained it. While Indu longs for it but at the end of the novel reach to a stark realization that detachment cannot be achieved, Indu said-

*Detachment ..........it was for the dead, not the living.* (24)

Naren and Indu both have grown up together and knows each other very well obviously not the attraction but affection is the basis of this real friendship. By crossing all the inner boundaries and limits of Indu, Naren can reach out to her mind and enables her to reveal all the hidden predicaments. Most prominently Indu and Naren do not like to share their inner conflicts to others but with each other automatically they can talk of anything. There is no need to pretend for anything, one type of frankness in both of their relationship. At one specific turn, Indu expressed her true feelings-

*with Naren, I would never have to pretend.* (25)
Naren does not belong to anybody and Indu though truly loves Jayant feels rejected by him, basically both are experienced isolation and loneliness. Naturally they contribute and shares mutual respect and affection towards each other and strive for bringing smiles on the lips of each other. Although physically Indu comes close toward Naren, the comfort and ease remains the same even after this closeness in their friendship. Indu openly said that there was no awkwardness in between them.

As per all this analyses affection, understanding and caring are the essential aspects of Indu and Naren’s ever growing friendship. Looking towards each other as a sensitive human being with understanding and mutual respect are the pivotal features of both of their friendship. It is an optimistic facet in both of their pessimistic lives.

Being a male factor, Naren understands Indu’s predicaments and reveals his genuine concern for her. The comfort, ease and frankness are the unique dimensions of this relationship. They can be their own selves with each other without longings, pretences and expectations.

This delineation highlights that female relationship with male outside of the marriage is associated with providing solace from the moments of crisis and conflict in Shashi Deshpande’s novel *Roots and Shadows*. Regarding with this specific issue Jasbir Jain makes a perceptive comment-

“In *Roots and shadows* Indu and Naren have a relationship, willingly and with full knowledge of each other’s position, It fulfills a need in each one of the two. And Indu does not feel guilty about it. The sexual act is an act of communication….. Human touch and belonging can pull someone out of despair, the sexual act is also a release of tension and a restoration that is extended……” (26)

6.4 Urmi – Bhaskar friendship in *The Binding Vine* :-
The true friendship of Dr. Bhaskar and Urmi starts from the hospital, where Urmi has gone to see Vanaa. Dr. Bhaskar Jain and Vanaa both are colleagues of each other. Later Dr. Bhaskar becomes a very good friend of Urmi. Dr. Bhaskar meets Urmi, when she is striving to cope up with her daughter, Anu’s untimely death. From Anu’s death Urmi experiences a feeling of ‘being trapped in the present’. Past is a time of enjoyment and happiness; while future gives a feeling and sense of horror. In Urmi’s own words-

“As if the horror of the future is crouching somewhere in a dark corner.” (27)

Unlike Deshpande’s other protagonists Urmi is a self controlled person. She does not like to contribute her grief with others. And if other tries to console her through words it seem useless and nonsense thing for Urmi’s seek and she gets upset. Inni-her mother, Amrut Urmi’s younger brother; Vanaa- her friend and Kartik- Urmi’s son all these various people loves Urmi. Obviously all these people talk to Urmi to bring her out of her isolation As Amrut puts it,

“Most of us are incapable of dealing with something as big as death, and so we talk nonsense.” (28)

On the consoling words of Amrut Urmi snaps at him and says that –

“Keep quiet, then. I’m not asking anyone for consolation. I’m trying to deal with my grief myself. I don’t need anyone.” (29)

Everybody around Urmi is terrified by her intensity of grief and silence. They would like her to speak anything, which will provide her ease and makes comfortable. Vanaa enables Urmi to speak-
Anything Just speak. Don’t keep it bottled within you. Why don’t you cry, Urmi? It’s unnatural not to cry.(30)

When Urmi tries to bang her head on the wall to feel pain, everybody around her got terrified. But Urmi is strong minded and said that she is not broken.

At this specific sorrowful plight in Urmi’s life, Dr. Bhaskar comes as a mere acquaintance. Accidentally Bhaskar meets Urmi at a few places, and once he gave lift to her for dropping at home after a morning walk at the sea shore, where both of them had met unexpectedly. Dr. Bhaskar comes to Urmi’s home and for the first time he talks to Urmi about the death of Anu. He continues by explaining her about the death of his twin sisters, when they were thirteen years old and how their death brought change in him and his family. Dr. Bhaskar explains the sorrowful condition at that particular time about his family. He said –

It changed all of us – My father, me, my mother most of all. She seems an entirely different person now .......... I can imagine you thinking this is an impertinence, but what I’m trying to say is, I know how it is. And after everything passes ........grief, shock, anger, bitterness. I’ve known all of them ........this remains that life is worth living. Or else, why would death be so terrible? (31)

The words of Bhaskar, so matter-of-fact and sincerity speaks do make a difference for Urmi. Here at this peculiar turn Urmi gives way to her tears which rolling down from her cheeks. Now she is a person who bottles up her feelings similarly like Sumi in the Novel – A Matter of Time and does not gives consent for others to share her grief. But now Urmi allows her tears to roll down
after experiencing Bhaskar’s sincerity and straightforwardness. And its result it that Urmi unravel her heart in front of Bhaskar.

I can feel grief welling up in me. I must be calm, I must not give way. I remove my glasses, wipe them, nothing with detachment that my hands are trembling. I put them down gently on the table, as if the small click is a signal, my grief gushes out of me with a frightening violence. I slip down to the floor, put my head on the table and give way. In a while it is over........ He is neither awkward nor embarrassed about my breakdown; he behaves as if nothing has happened. There is a greater ease between us. (32)

This ‘greater ease’ is an important feature and basic pillar of the Urmi – Bhaskar friendship. Here mutual understanding sincerity and straightforwardness is noteworthy. Bhashkar does not believe in false words of consolation. It is possible for Bhaskar to reaches out to Urmi in her pain and agony only due to his own experience of loss and the sorrow of his sister’s death. Urmi open ups and allows herself to share her pain with Bhaskar. And he is not disturbed or uncomfortable due to Urmi’s breakdown. He shows his maturity and understanding in sharing this sorrowful moments with Urmi, which are remarkable and creates an ease in their bonding and becoming an important aspect of their beginning of friendship.

One evening Bhaskar takes Urmi to dine out because he thinks that the company of each other can decreases the burden of their lives and lighten the mood for both of them. Urmi explains the incident –

It is go down and join Bhaskar, my mood suddenly lighter. Bhaskar too is in lighten mood. He won’t tell me where we’re having dinner. He’s like a child with a secret. (33)
Bhaskar is a very simple and sincere person without any pretence. He is joyful and matter-of-fact person; as he tells Urmi that it is not he, but his father who has money. Dr. Bhaskar is a man of alive pleasure, which makes Urmi surprises that whether this is the first time Bhaskar has taken a woman out for dinner (*The Binding Vine. P.116*)

On that evening Urmi and Bhaskar share many things in between them. Bhaskar talks about Jyoti – his sister’s death.

*I’ve never spoken of this to anyone, but I knew it, the moment it happened that she was dead.* (34)

Dr. Bhaskar depicts about the moment of Jyoti’s death and his knowledge related with it, and the blankness, emptiness, nothingness and an isolatedness of that specific moment. He narrates all these to Urmi and she listens carefully and tries to understand. He also encourages Urmi to talk about her own past, her childhood, about her various moments of happiness, which spent in Ranidurg. Urmi also goes on talking about her past life which spent in Ranidurg, Balajji’s garden; the Jamun trees, the chirping of the birds above; her tongue is like indigo colored blotting paper; the naming ceremony of Amrut; special preparations for Balajji’s Chaitra Gouri Haldi-Kumkum; and also about the novel which she herself and Amrut had planned to write, with the various characters they invented for it. After a long span that Urmi has enthusiastically talks about her happy days in her childhood to somebody and also relived those moments. On the opposite Bhaskar has been an intent listener. Urmi asks meanwhile to Bhaskar –

‘*Bored? ’I ask him.*
'Bored?' He offers the word back to me as if he does not know what to do with it.

And only then I come out of it and realize how intently he has been listening to me; forgetting even to eat, as if this means something to him. And it occurs to me that I have never spoken of these things to anyone, because the only people I can talk to of myself- Kishore, Amrut and Vanaa- know all this anyway. But this man ..........(35)

All that is there inside Urmi which is knack to bring out by Bhaskar only. Due to that Urmi also feels ease and comfortableness and even enjoys and tries to relieve all those past moments. This peculiarity happens with almost all the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande. Those are Jaya in That Long Silence, Indu in Roots and Shadows, Manju in If I Die Today all these female characters reveals themselves and talk freely about their feelings and experiences with their male friends. Because these male friends have a rare instinct to understands them as an emotional and sensitive human beings. Therefore Urmi says honestly-

His look, as always, draws things out of me. (36)

Once Bhaskar takes Urmi at his home to meet his mother. While returning, he expresses his love to Urmi quite unexpectedly and automatically at the time they are discussing his marriage from the point of view of his mother.

So there are no problems.

None. Except that I’ve gone and fallen in love with a dark, sharp-tongued married woman. (37)

For the first time, at this peculiar moment Bhaskar gets really personal after expressing his love and tries to know more about Urmi’s married life and
her husband, Kishore. But on the contrary it affects on Urmi and she gets frightens due to the intensity of Bhaskar’s feelings.

......he learns forward and takes off my glasses.

What’s that for?’

‘I want to see your eyes. I want to see you without your shield’

He says this with such feeling, he looks at me with such intensity,..... For the first time, I’m frightened

..................

‘Tell me about your marriage.’ He sees that ‘Why?’ in my eyes perhaps, for he says, as if explaining, it’s the most important thing to me right now.......’

The silence stretches between us, becomes painful. His face is bleak.......’

‘You love him.’

I can feel myself blush. I can feel the heat move over my face as the blood courses through it. His eyes fastened on my face, seem to be following the trail of that flush. He waits for a while, then starts the car and drives me home in silence. (38)

After this unexpected revelation of Bhaskar’s feelings Urmi gets angry and feels cheated. She open ups her feelings-

I’m feeling cheated. Bhaskar has no business stepping outside the role I’ve allotted to him in my life. I don’t really know what his role is to be, but certainly it’s not this, not that of a lover. No, it’s not Bhaskar, it’s really myself I’m angry with. I have no excuse for not knowing. I tried to close my eyes.......(39)
About this Inni and Vanaa have cautioned Urmi. They had exposed their anxiety about her friendship with Bhaskar. Vanaa had said to Urmi that she should realize that Bhaskar is serious about her. And Urmi had laughed at that. Even though when Urmi recalls the moment when Bhaskar expressed his feelings surprisingly, she awares that she was tempted for a moment and her expressions are –

And yet for a moment I was tempted, I was perilously close to responding to Bhaskar, to giving him what he wanted. It was like the time in the hostel when they had dared me to get out on to the ledge outside my window to pick up a book I’d dropped. I’d jumped out, and to shock them even more, had walked along the narrow ledge and round the corner…..

And yet it seems to me that this, responding to Bhaskar is the only way of releasing the mushy adolescent with her dreams of ‘living happily ever after with Kishore’, who’s trapped inside me, of finding out what’s left when she’s gone.

And what about Bhaskar then? Oh, I don’t know. It’s so much easier, so much simpler to just think of virtue and chastity and being a good wife. I see the point of it now. (40)

After this specific incident it is very hard for both Urmi and Bhaskar to cross over and leave behind what they have gone through. For many days they do not meet with each other. But once they unexpectedly meet in the same hospital but not alone rather with Shakutai around. That time, Bhaskar says a mere ‘hello’ and Urmi is hurt by his neutral behavior. In her own words –
…….he turns to me and says ‘hello’ Just that, not even a smile. Nor does he say my name. There’s something cold and unbending about him. I wait a moment for him to say any more, but he doesn’t. He just swings around and walks away. It hurts and anger throbs in me. (41)

While going back to home latterly, in the bus Urmi thinks about Bhaskar’s cold behavior and remembers that how desolate he looked and naturally the anger drains out of her with full of tears in her eyes.

But suddenly thinking of how he looked as he walked away – how his back looked desolate…..tears well into my eyes, taking me unawares. (42)

This understanding between Urmi and Bhaskar is very much. At the end of this relationship trying to come away from the intensity of emotions and feelings which crossing over the road of anger and hurt, they strives to reach out of each other as two caring fellows. An optimistic approach is revealed through this friendship towards the end of the novel. This optimistic facet is always remarkable and reflected through the novels of Shashi Deshpande.

After returning to home Urmi has spent the whole night of Sulu’s death at the house of Shakutai. Rekha, Urmi’s maid gives message to her that there was a call for Urmi from Dr. Bhaskar and he has asked her to call him whenever she is free. One type of solace and comfortableness is provided to Urmi due to this message of Dr. Bhaskar.

Thus, the friendship of Urmi and Bhaskar is indomitable because it provides an ease, comfort and mutual understanding which both of them shares with each other. They can look at each other as two sensitive human beings. A
sense of understanding and sharing is a basic pillar of this friendship. This bonding also stands in a sharp contrast to Urmi and Kishore’s relationship. Though Kishore is Urmi’s husband, she could not even reveal her deep love and her anxieties towards him. It is only Dr. Bhaskar’s bonding which provides solace to Urmi’s sorrowful state of mind. The purity is experienced through both of their friendship.

6.5 Conclusion :-

Shashi Deshpande delineates very nice bonding in between her protagonists and their male friends. There is no any shade of illicitness or sexual attraction. Apart from all these discussed friendship in another novel- *If I Die Today* also she depicts similar type of friendship through the characters Manju and Guru. An uninhibited openness, concern and understanding make their friendship extraordinary.

Thus, all the male friends of the protagonists of Shashi Deshpande reveal certain qualities. These male friends consider a woman prominently as an individual and not merely as a female character but as a human being. These male characters are intelligent, sincere, straightforward matter of-fact and unpretentious one. They have genuine concern and affection towards their female friends. There is a comfortableness and understanding in this bonding. One type of frankness experienced and directly reaching towards the other by overcoming all the inner deliberate barriers. Apart from all these qualities due to only these male friends, the protagonists are aware about their bonding with their own womanhood. They become aware about their predicaments, conflicts and come to the terms with the realities and therefore play an instrumental role in women protagonist’s lives. These male friends stand in sharp contrast with the husband of women protagonists. They provide the solace to the disturbed mind of their friends. Thus Deshpande is became very skillfully portrayed this
lovely and tender bonding which is surely treated as an optimistic facet in the disturbed lives of women protagonists through her fiction.
References


2) Ibid., (p.no. 149)

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4) Ibid., (p.no. 14-15)

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7) Ibid., (p.no. 156)

8) Ibid., (p.no. 157)

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21) Ibid., (p.no. 25)

22) Ibid., (p.no. 29)

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33) Ibid., (p.no. 116)

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37) Ibid., (p.no. 160-161)

38) Ibid., (p.no. 161-162)

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40) Ibid., (p.no. 165-166)

41) Ibid., (p.no. 169-170)

42) Ibid., (p.no. 170)