Man – Woman Relationship in ‘Snapshots’

The theme of man – woman relationship seems of particular interest to Shobha De. She writes on this theme. She concentrates on the predicament of modern woman in this male – dominated society and her destruction at the alter of marriage. Men are apt to be rational and matter of fact. Women are sentimental and emotional. Thus attitudes, their interests are different Naturally they look at things in different way and react to the same situation differently, Not only is the man himself differently, but as often happens in the society of changing values, his family ways, his surroundings to which she is expected to adjust herself are entirely different.
Shobha De shows the psychology of both man–woman in her novels. She shows her novels how men behave with women and women behave with men. Here we are dealing with Man – Woman Relationship in the novel, SNAPSHOTS (1995). We are dealing both relationships - Men's relation with women and Women's relation with men. It means how men behave with women and how women behave with men.

Let us now examine the raw material, the life spectacle, the plot – yarn, the characters and the vision of life enshrined in SNAPSHOTS in the foundation of man-woman relationships.

For knowing the man – woman relationship, it is essential to know the theme of this particular novel.
As a wine and conversation begin to flow at a reunion between six women, who were friends at school, memories start to surface – some happy, other bittersweet and a few that are downright poisonous... Forced to confront dark secrets that they thought lay buried deep in the past, the women begin to turn against one another and the mood of the party turns nightmarish......

The novel opens with Aparna succumbing to Prem, the employee – lover's conspiracy to ‘play mermaid’ in the ‘Perilous Sea’ at Goa. She wanted Prem with the sort of ferocious urgency she had never experienced. (4) Aparna’s original belief was that “Women need love. And caring. And tenderness.”(5) But Prem makes these ideas stand on
head. Prem liked to make love in public places. The first time he had suggested it to Aparna, they were weekending in Goa. He was very adventurous. He held Aparna’s wrist tightly and led her into the sea. ‘Prem’, she cautioned, ‘it’s dangerous. . . have you see the waves? Monstrous ones.’ (2) Prem said, ‘Dammit . . . I know it’s dangerous. That’s the way I like it.’ (2)

Aparna and Prem both of them had continued to make smooth conversation with a potential client from Delhi and Prem’s stardach dull-eyed wife, Renu. Prem wasn’t even her type. He was basic. With Prem Aparna experienced ‘lust’ – a new discovering not made with her ex-husband Rohit. She liked men with ‘high ideals and lofty ambitions’. Men like Rohit or like her father but as she looked back bitterly, It was Rohit who had let her down. Left her high and dry, but with Prem she ‘was only just beginning to
discover her sexual potential (7)’. Morality, Propriety and Dignity thrown to the dustbin, Aparna, Shobha De’s New Woman devotes herself to discover her sexual potential.

Aparna was badly in love with Rohit. She wanted a baby but not Rohit. He deserts her when one night she fails to bring wine from office. When Aparna asked for a baby, Rohit said, ‘Why do you want to spoil it all? This is perfect. I am enjoying life. I am busy. You are busy. Forget Kids’ (20). Rohit was a selfish man. Selfish and vain. Aparna believed all men to be the same. All the men she had known were both selfish and vain. It wasn’t Rohit self – absorption that bothered her as much as his ruthless streak. He had a grand design for his own life ----- people either fitted into it or did not. Aparna recalled with
some bitterness, 'the time they'd had his star clients over to dinner. She'd had a rough day at work, rushed home to get organized only to find she'd forgotten to pick up the wine form the club. Rohit said at this, 'When I tell you to make sure there's wine in the fridge, baby, you bloody well make sure there's wine in the fridge. Now, if you know what's good for you, you will get your ass out of here. Go to the club and pick the fucking bottle's up.' (21 – 22)

Aparna can not get over Rohit's desertion without rhyme or reason; "He erred – she forgave." (18) He walked out of her life without explanation or apology. She is a victim of Rohit's cruelty. But soon she takes her revenge and becomes a wolf herself and by her illegitimate love ruin Renu's (Prem's wife) happy married life. Swati seduced Rohit
and ruined the married life of Aparna who needed a warm, attentive companion.

Thus it is not only men who ruin women and destroy marriages, women do the same. So who is to be put in the dock for this ruination — —

The new woman or the new man?

The second friend Reema wearing a five carat ‘diamond ring’ given by her husband Ravi, looks very ‘Sexy’. As a school girl she slept ten–times with Raju, got pregnant and aborted of her pregnancy, and then fell in love with Randhir. Ravi’s younger brother and has had frequent sex with him.

When swati had taken charge over Raju. Raju had laughed heartlessly and said, “Forget it, I didn’t force her to do anything, She wanted so” (99). He
added, “And who knows who was responsible may be it was me. But may be it was not. Marriage? Are you crazy; I am not even eighteen. We’ll get arrested” (99). This type of Raju was. After some time Reema had actually confronted her unfulfilling relationship with her husband Ravi. Ravi could not fitted in the image of Reema. Ravi’s, younger brother Randhir fitted in the image of Reema that’s why she has crush on her brother – in –law.

The other woman introduced is Surekha, who had cordial relations with her husband Harsh, though always predated and watched by her mother in law and who steals a march over the latter’s clever watching by establishing and maintaining lesbian liaison with Dolly after dolly is rejected by Swati. The novelist explains the relations between Surekha and
Dolly: “Dolly and Surekha were like a well – adjusted, happily married couple. There was no passion to deal with any longer. Just enough physical familiarity to provide regular comfort” (159). Surekha said softly, “It is not what you people are thinking. Nobody will understand our relationship. It is ..... it ..... spiritual. We must have had some connection in our last lives’ (159). The depth of their relationship is further revealed when Noor informs that Surekha detained Dolly from going to join a German Bank in Singapore.

Rashmi is ambitious, adventuring into film land by wooing Parminder (Pips), the ‘Lover – Boy of filmland’. Who is a director and can giver her role. His entry and stay in Rashmi’s house for six months ‘Stunned’ the people of the film industry. He has piles of money but lives on the earnings of Rashmi and
deserts her when she whines for money, leaving the note: "Hotels don’t get pregnant. And they provide clean sheets" (47). He is a predator and victimizer and Rashmi’s ill treatment at his hands also makes a case for feminism. And the plight of Pips junior, Parminder’s son from Rashmi, humiliated in school because he is bastard makes a case for humanism. Rashmi is perfectly disillusioned with man, for ‘She hadn’t met one she genuinely felt like sharing her life with’ (49). Tolerating all these things she says, “Men did not like honest women; they like flirts and flatterers. Even manipulators” (49).

Noor forms the last of this circle. She is artistic and dreamy. She is a victim, predated by her own real brother Nawaz, who occasionally enter into her bed in the night stealthily. All seemed to suit Nawaz just
fine. "Almost every night he’d slide into Noor’s large and airy bedroom and get under the sheets with her."

Nawaz also seduced Swati once when Swati had stayed over one stormy monsoon night.

Swati, the organizer of this show, is a ‘classy’ whore, she is now Swati Bridges, the divorcée of an Englishman. As a girl she was embodiment of jealousy and as Aparna was declared the best girl of the year against Swati’s ambition, she takes — away Rohit, Aparna’s husband, to revenge the old defeat when Rashmi was declared the best ‘all — rounder’, Swati hated even that. She is the lady with artificial ‘boobs’ who can ‘screw’ and man, Indian or foreign.

Thus Man – Woman Relationship in the novel SNAPSHOTS is quite clear. Rohit, Pips, Mr. bridges,
Juan, Balbir's father are all presented as Tyrants. Aparna, Rashmi and Noor are all victims of male tyranny. The vision emanating from Rashmi's experience is that a woman must have a man: “Seal the exit. Block all escape routes. Hang on to the man.” It means man leaves woman brutally. This novel reflects the wisdom of the new, militant, aggressive woman of today.

*Not only women are victims of men, but also men are victims of woman.*

Swati is the appropriate example of this aspect. She seduced everyman of her life just because of her comfort and progress. Reema is another example of this type of woman. She is just not like Swati, but lesser than Swati. *In this novel woman gives vent to*
their grievances against man in general and husbands in particular. There is the male who shout, hurl, abuses, bully, reproach, criticize but there is some women who listen, tolerate and remain passive. Some of the woman in this novel was totally different. They becomes bitter an ironical and do the same with man.

Thus De’ novel SNAPSHOTS shows us that man – woman relationship is not good. They are just dragging their lives, their love, their marriage, their family etc. All involvement and attachments are disillusion; either it is the relationship of love or marriage. These two are not faithful and honest either they are parents, husband-wife, lover, sister or brother.

“There is no love, no caring,”
Betrayal is everywhere in both relationship. Man and woman both are responsible but Man gets the highest point in this rank. He is more responsible. Woman does the same just because of his betrayal, tryanny and conservativeness. This relationship portrays the reality of society now-a-days.