



## Eternal Love And Transcending Age Constraints - That Summer In Paris By Abha Dawesar

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<i>Article History</i>	<i>Abstract</i>
<i>Received:</i> <i>Revised:</i> <i>Accepted</i>	Life history theory developed in 1950 explains that individuals have to divide energy and resources between activities which is shaped by natural selection. The theory correlates with Abha Dawesar's novel "That Summer in Paris" is woven around an intricate love relationship of an aging author with a budding young writer who share their passion for love as art and creativity. Prem Rustum is an Indian born Nobel laureate fictional author for whom Maya a twenty five year old young writer is quite passionate. She is a budding writer and wishes to earn a name in the field of writing and for her Prem Rustm is an epitome who she worships and adores no less than God. Maya had a disastrous past and had undergone break up in her former relationship. Her soul is restless and looks for completeness in herself and her relationships and in such moments the novels of Prem provide her emotional and mental support as if they truly understood what she underwent in her life. Maya finds reclusiveness in the works of Prem and is deeply obsessed with his writings. The scholarly works of Prem interwoven with a deep understanding of human behaviour and emotions provide a human company to lonely Maya who finds herself in the stories, plots and characters of Prem's novels. The relationship of Maya and Rustum is not of the bodies but beyond that it is a connection of two artistic souls who are dedicated to the art and creativity and thus for them age is just a number.
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Once again Abha Dawesar has worked upon the bizarre nature of human relationships where she portrays a love relationship beyond the age and time factor. Her writings reflect a strong sense of revolution against the set stereotypes in the society that reflect no admiration for the relationships to bloom across the narrow mindsets and established social norms. Prem Rustum is seventy five years old and has been leading a reclusive life entirely dedicated to his art of writing. After a certain time in his life he feels to lead his life in a different way and move away from the monotony that reached beyond saturation. An unusual dryness and confinement leads him to break the chains of the monotony and pine for a female companion. He allows his pen to rest for some time.

In the novel Prem Rustum is the protagonist plays a crucial role. In his earlier years he had been an imaginative passionate figure who was involved in love affairs with many women. This novel shows both his internal and external love. Literature has been a great inspiration for him that bagged him the great Nobel prize as an Indian  
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writer for the novel 'That Summer in Paris'. At the age of seventy-four, through online chatting he came in contact and involved in love affairs with a twenty-five-year-old girl; Maya. She was also aspiring to be a writer. Prem Rustum, who is now seventy-five years old remembers his past when in his teens he had love relationship with his cousin sister Meher and Vedika and with other too. Soon after the marriage of Meher, he came to know that she was pregnant. She gave birth to Homi, but she denied telling that her son Homi is not the son of Prem, but yet till the end, Prem could not believe. After her marriage with Meher died of cancer, leaving alone Prem. Slowly, Prem Rustam is engulfed in the monotony of his writings and was tired of writing books one after another. He wrote almost thirty books and moreover his physical conditions also restricted him to continue the writing work. His body was painful and he couldn't sit for long hours together, by which his writing flow become distorted and messed up. Therefore, he thought of returning India and live with his family Homi, his cousin's son and Ratan, Homi's son.

While spending online time on the internet Prem is fascinated by Maya's adoration for him and decides to meet her. Their close affinity and connection is instant and stimulating despite the fact that Prem is matured enough and Maya is nubile.

As per an article by Chad Hagy (November 17, 2017) in "Everyday Health" previously when older men were viewed as perverts or 'sugar daddies' for dating younger women, dating outside the range of age is becoming much more acceptable for both the parties.

". For younger women, dating an older man can be exciting and fulfilling if they can find one who is dating them for the right reasons. Many older men have the life experience that a mature, younger woman can appreciate, especially if she is ready to move beyond the games and pleasure-seeking attitudes of the younger men in her life."(Hagy, Chad, everyday Health)

Hagy has reflected several reasons behind older men dating and having relationships with younger women these days. The reasons may be superficial for some men as they enjoy beauty of a young woman and experience a more adventurous sex life. In terms of social stature also an old man shows up at a social function with a young woman in his arms reflecting a sense of pride and accomplishment. He boasts upon having a piece of 'eye candy' that other men do not have.

In the novel "That Summer in Paris" we observe Prem providing a sense of social and emotional security to Maya. As compared to Maya who is a budding writer, Prem is an established well known novelist with Nobel Prize as a feather on his hat. Another reason lying behind older men dating young women is to bring out a sense of youth in their personality. As one observes the character of Prem as a solemn and dedicated writer, within those years he seems to have lost his youthful pleasures and surrendered himself to the world of writing. He was away from the romance and love life and the epiphany is at the age of 75 when he looks back to his yester years and starts thinking that it has been enough now with the companionship of pen and paper and that his life now demands a true human companionship with a female. His life had been dry, uninteresting, solitary and devoid of pleasure which almost everyone enjoys. However it is a known concept that to earn something one has to lose something and so this parched life proves to be positive for him as it places him to the topmost level of Nobel Prize which is not a cup of tea for everyone, but at the same time his desire to lead the life at the fullest is sprouting in the later years of his life. In other words it can be said that it is the beginning of a new life for Prem when he begins his relationship with Maya. He is able to realize the other perspective of the life which he has been restraining himself in his lead towards name and fame.

The name " Maya" provided to the young bubbling writer floating with beauty to the brim also symbolically characterizes the story of Vishwamitra and Maenka in the Indian mythology. "Maya" is the denomination of the worldly materialistic pleasure who attracts the sage like character of Prem who has been meditating since years on his writing skill and has been polishing and perfecting it to the highest level of excellence. Prem's meditation is suddenly broken as he opens his eyes and looks at the world around to notice Maya's selfless adoration and obsession for his art and creativity. The feeling of love that had been lying dormant in his heart activates all of a sudden and makes Prem see so many other colours of life. For these many years Prem had been existing in two world's simultaneously, one of his imagination and creativity where he spends most of his times crafting characters and developing stories and the other is the real world where he hardly take scare to peep around. His epiphany brings him down from his world of imagination to the reality and shows the social aspect of human existence that cannot survive without relationships. Prem who was always surrounded by his imaginary characters in his artistic world when steps into the world of reality is shocked to see himself all alone and craves for a partner to lead his later years of life. His satisfaction level for money material and status reaches

a saturation level which seem to be useless and trivial when juxtaposed with the warmth and love of human emotions and relationships.

Prem brings out the sense of youth in his personality which was lost sometime somewhere in the due course of his writing career. While dating a younger woman he feels himself getting involved with youthful activities that help him to feel invigorated and young again in himself. Procreation plays a major role here in this instinctual feeling. He becomes a man who intuitively wishes to spread his seeds of experiences for future generation and in this context his association with Maya plays a significant role who is benefitted greatly to learn a lot from Prem.

Maya and Prem plan a trip to Paris where she is thrilled to spend whole lot of time with the person she always adored and admired the most. In their three months trip to Paris they indulge themselves in food, art, literature, love and sex. It is exciting and thrilling them to see getting turned on while passionately talking about literature and art. Even after meeting a young man her heart yearns for Prem who also sees himself falling in love for her but at the same time worried that he might affect their sentiment for each other. Maya is entranced when Prem touches her in front of Degas painting where he also reflects his desires, mortality, passions and his past reminiscences. Unfolding his past he talks about his first lady love Meher, his cousin sister and his affair at sixty five with two sixteen year old French girls. But his love for Maya engulfs him and renews his desires that were long forgotten in his due course of writing career.

The romantic destination has been chosen as Paris which is Abha Dawesar's favorite destination. The different facets of the human nature has been explored in Paris one of the most romantic cities of the world. Through her keen observation she has aptly portrayed the description of cafes, restaurants, people, food, museum art and paintings. The descriptions reveal not only the remarkable observation and grasping sense of the writer but also her brilliance in her deep knowledge on French culture and lifestyle. Paris has always been the fashion and cultural hub of the great artists and designers of the world. French art, architecture, cuisines and aesthetics have acclaimed worldly fame since centuries and the backdrop of Paris for two lovers who are also art lovers is the most appropriate destination.

Paris also serves as an ideal backdrop and contextual when there is discussion of art which shows Dawesar's strong base of knowledge. There is a description of Prem's progress through Orsay and the way the museum's floor plan influenced his perception and appreciation of paintings in such a way that "one painting led to the anticipation of another. Rousseau's magnificent blades of grass in the forest made him anticipate Gauguin....prepared him for Seurat's Cirque". Dawesar's Paris is a well observed beautiful city of parks, cafes and a cultural hub of French art. For the romance there would have been no place better than Paris with a meticulous description of the paintings and city streets romance heightens at its zenith. The description of French gastronomy and art galleries makes the readers travel into a world of romantic fantasy and showcases a meditation on passion, achievement, literature and art.

The dialogues between Prem and his friend Pascal has been beautifully penned by Dawesar. When Prem decides to give up writing after being too much fed up Pascal consoles him and persuades him to believe that he has no other option left in his life.

"Prem Rustum was tired. Seventy-five and tired. Thirty-odd books, countless awards, and a Nobel Prize later, he argued with Pascal over the phone that this was allowed. He regretted the conversation. Pascal hadn't won the prize yet, and it was not clear anymore that he would.

Pascal had taken the slight in his stride and pushed on. "It is the manner in which you write, my friend. You cannot stand at that tall table forever writing longhand. Move with the times, type on a computer, get online, buy your Viagra over the Internet. Prolong your youth. Learn to sit down."

Prem was already online; he just couldn't write fiction sitting down. He couldn't think of overarching themes and transcendental moments with his ass stuck to a seat, not with the same cleanliness as while standing up. He suspected that no one could. In fact, he was sure that his novels had an edge over Pascal's and Pedro's because he did it standing up. The foremost of the three Ps, he had been called." (9, TSIP)

The novel has been written in a third person narrative that raises intelligent questions on life sex and love. Dawesar's thoughtful imagination of old age and the physical limitations of Prem when he seems to be helpless facing his body failing to be in pace with his ever young imaginative and creative mind which is quite active and energetic. At this instant Dawesar highlights the idea that mental processes over rule physicality and that if the mind is young thoughtful and imaginative for accepting new adventures in life, the body has to cooperate and collaborate with it and the relationship of Prem and young Maya is a live example in the novel which

emphasizes the idea that for a young mind age is just a number. Having always imposed a physicality on his writings Prem feels that slowly and slowly his body is falling and preparing for a full stop :

"Prem's ankles were stiff. There was a time not so long ago when he could go until noon without a break. He walked over to his bulletin board, where he had pinned the acupuncture chart that Homi had sent him from India. Prem traced his index finger over the drawing of the foot and its pressure points. Homi had sent a box of presents along with a card signed by Ratan that read *I miss you, Grandpa*. Ratan had probably chosen none of the items in the box other than the small G.I. Joe figure.

If the chart were to be believed, the stomach and spine regions of Prem's foot were causing trouble. But his stomach and spine felt fine--only his feet hurt like mad. Prem lowered himself into the tan leather couch in the corner of his studio. For a few minutes he looked at nothing in particular. Then his eyes settled upon the stack of hardback books piled in the corner, their spines all blue, his own name in italicized yellow in a speedy font. This jacket cover was different from all the ones before. His publishers had called him to the office instead of sending him a mock-up by mail." (9, TSIP)

"That Summer in Paris" is a transgressive love finding its bright expression in the character of Prem Rustum who is a larger than life protagonist of Dawesar's novel. His previous love affair with his cousin Meher and the idea that he fathers her child haunts his last great affair with Maya with whom he hoped to escape literature into life. The work is a nuance narrative chronicling love, lust, longing and loss and raises a serious question on immortality of love. The idea of love is juxtaposed with the immortality of art which is ephemeral at the same time. The love between Rustum and Maya reflects the transcendental aspect of love which overlooks any discrimination.

The novel presents varying sketches of sexual love into many broad categories with lesbianism, incest and some hints of homosexuality. Prem's writing characterizes his reservations about writing sex in his novels and his conviction which says that sex only worked and was good only when it was fluid, but words are all about fixing. It also meant to say that sex, unmediated by language and the mortality necessarily innate in language was the only way to have it. Prem raises a provocative question: "Were words the opposite of sex?" At this instant the thoughts of Prem are closer to that of Dawesar.

There is a myth of Pygmalion and Galatea in the novel when Maya whispered moaning at the sensation of Prem's flesh everywhere against her own as "I feel like Galatea coming alive to Pygmalion's kiss. The myth of Pygmalion reflects the ancient view of idealistic relationship in which art and the artist are the two halves combining to one. The artist's love of his art and creation is heavenly and beyond all the worldly bondages. It is voiceless and its feeling cannot be expressed through words and that's why at an instant Prem provokes the question on fluidity of love when it is silent and wordless rather than being put in words. Pygmalion's Galatea on coming to life performs simple functions of a woman as a wife and as a mother, and here Maya performs the role of a selfless lover and idealistic woman to bed with her love. Though the Greek idealism was patriarchal in nature due to which Galatea has been reflected to perform simply the functions of an idealistic wife and motherhood. Maya herself is a creator and hence the role of Pygmalion seems to be ambiguous if Maya taken as Pygmalion and Prem impersonating Galatea who is the object of Pygmalion's veneration. The roles seem to have been interchanged in the modern perspective. On the other hand the myth is a celebration representing artistic achievement or the best reward that an artist can ever get in his life is only when his art becomes life like. Maya's art is writing and her adoration is Prem with whom she was quite distant before meeting him. She was just a struggling budding writer whereas Prem is an epitome of creative art with his perfection beyond the levels of comparison and which places him to the highest award; the Nobel, which is the dream of almost every creative writer to achieve in his life.

The celebration of the relationship and artistic perfection is here beautifully showcased when the relationship between both celebrates the artistic achievement and fulfilment of Maya's dream to become an integral part in the life of her venerated Prem and at the same time it is the artistic expression of vastness and selflessness of love crossing all boundaries for Prem who finds love satisfaction and security in the company of Maya. It is the artist Maya's love for her creation Prem who is an excellent and extended allocation of art and creativity in his field with his matchless skills. Her infatuation with Prem becomes larger than life when she truly enjoys his company and spends time with him in romantic atmosphere of Paris. It is like two excellent art pieces coming to life in a city which is capital of art, beauty and culture. The myth also chronicles the equation of physical beauty with perfection which showcases Prem's impersonation of Galatea as a perfectionist in his field of writing.

Dawesar's writing reflects an artist's thirst for love and worldly experiences. Maya lived in Manhattam, and wanted to become a writer. Her relationship with Tom turned into a disaster and he leaves her alone with a broken heart. When she was going through in pain, agony, and broken-heart and helpless, Mr Spinoza gave her a hardcover book named 'The Smell of Wet Mud' written by Prem Rustom. The book acts as a remedy for her aching heart and helps her to recover emotionally. Soon after this Prem Rustom becomes her favourite writer. At the same time as her introduction with Prem Rustam happened while she was reading his book. It was interesting and exciting that both of them met. The book changed Maya life, and then she started reading 'From Kerala to Kerala' and 'Dharma', and after reading 'Dharma' Maya had a strong desire to meet and talk to Prem Rustom as her favourite writer.

Rustom had been spending his life meditating deep upon his art and dedicating his life for it. He is a writer devoid of love and worldly relations and Dawesar has beautifully presented the masturbatory fantasies of a novelist in his seventies and his life and death struggles to achieve his final dream orgasm with his lady love. Maya wanted to write a book on India but in Paris she finds Prem, a man no less than a book full of life and love and her experiences with him behave as the warp and weft of Dawesar's novel set in a sensuous summer in Paris, a city where artists are so much respected and adored that even the streets and cafes are named after them which includes Freud, Sartre, Garcia Lorca etc. Through these names the streets of Paris sounded like the 'building blocks' of an epic love poem, the scriptures of the religion of art which makes two lovers old and young find ways to create and compose something exceptional.

Maya's distress towards the end of the novel is a true homage to Prem who is no more. For her he was an object of worship, a reclusive Indian born novelist. She confesses at the end :

" I saw the world through Prem's books. But then, most of all I saw everything this summer through his eyes, I want to keep seeing from his eyes. The eyes are immortal, aren't they?...I want a book choked with his presence, I want to write Prem, not about him, not about me, not about what could have been or was,....but Prem himself, I want to write a book of him...There is no proposition in the language for it" (350, TSIP)

The Novel also encompasses the political history of India that has also been discussed and depicted. The political backdrop is deeply concerned with Prem Rustom, an Indian origin, his reasons to settle in America and start living in New York long back because of his liberties and suspension of all civil rights in 1975. Prem established himself as a famous novelist. He would talk to Ratan and Homi every day over the telephone and during their telephonic conversation, they would discuss the results of the parliamentary election of India. It was interesting to note that they are so much interested in knowing the things happening around the world which we rarely find in us. Even, they were so much involved in the discussion, what happened after the 2004 election results, Sonia Gandhi was to become the prime minister of India, but it is criticized in the novel that Sonia was not an Indian born citizen. Even, Lalu Yadav a Political leader also considered a criminal and convicted of any unlawful activities.

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