Abha Dawesar’s third novel, ‘That Summer in Paris’ is contemplative and sensual, first published by Anchor Books Edition, America in 2007. It is an utterly seductive tale of an again writer whose involvement with a young woman forces him to face the eternal question of love.

The Novel has American and France for its milieu or background. Therefore, after his award-winning novel ‘Babyji’ with its Indian background, it is refreshingly fresh in the background of American and French culture and how it affects the Indian-origin American people like Prem Rustum and Maya. The main theme of the novel is the musing on the eternal question of love, and how true love inspired by art results into literature, How love, art, and literature are intermingled obliterating the hurdles of age and others.

The gist of the story is, Prem Rustum, an Indian-American famous but reclusive author has spent most of his life consumed with writing. Feeling the weight of seventy-five years, he resolves to put down his pen and live a little. He ventures online where he finds Maya, an aspiring young novelist who has boldly posted her admiration for Prem’s work. Captivated by her charms Prem decides on impulse to join her in the City of Light (Paris). During the summer that follows, Maya brings Prem into direct confrontation with his mortality and his desires through the awakening of new longings and the rekindling of old ones. Thus, ‘That Summer in Paris’ reflects on how art informs love, and love, literature.

The novel is written in Third person narrative, employing the ‘Stream of Consciousness’ technique at various places. Accordingly, the action of the novel takes us backwards and forwards on many occasions. Prem Rustum, who is seventy five years of age in the present goes back in the distant past memory when he was just a teenager – his relations with his cousin, Meher; his love and last with her. Then, Meher’s marriage and her death due to cancer.
Then, on his visit to Paris in the present with Maya, is contrasted with his visit to France ten years ago; and how he came into contact with two young girls there. But, the novelist has used the stream of consciousness technique so cleverly that the reader does feel a chaos in the flow of the story of the novel.

The plot of the novel is simple, but has the architectonic quality in spite of the occasional musings into the past. The flash-back technique is artistically employed, without hindering the flow of the main story. The current matters of the U.S. and France are kept out, so that the reader finds no digressions or sub-plots.

The characters are few-say, half a dozen in the main, but they are well drawn. Each character leaves an indelible mark on the mind of the reader.

The novel begins in the present life of the main character of the novel, Prem Rustum, a tired writer, seventy five years old, having written thirty - odd books, and winning countless awards, including the Nobel Prize, to his credit. He was, by a majority consensus, the greatest writer of the ‘three P’s’. The other two being Pascal and Pedro. But Prem’s weak point, as the French and American critics pointed out, “of the three P’s Prem Rustum is by Far the least articulate about sex. That Rustum’s words ring hollow when he attempts any description of sexual activity” (1) P.06

On this account the critics found the second ‘P’ Pascal Boutin was Rustum’s superior. But, Prem experienced deep satisfaction from finding out that the majority of Pascal’s compatriots thought that Prem Rustum was definitely the greatest of the three P’s even if he wasn’t French.

Prem was tired of writing. He felt his body getting slower and slower each day as if he were preparing for the full stop. He also thought of returning to India and lives with his family Homi, his cousin’s son and Ratan, Homi’s son. Pascal advised him at this time of his stupor,

“Move with the times, type on a computer, gets online; buy your Viagra over the Internet. Prolong Youth. Learn to sit down”. (2) P.03.
Thus, Prem’s computer instructor helped him to be online. In the meantime his house-keeper Mrs. Smith informed him that he was supposed to go to Eddy Parma of Patriots Publishing for dinner party. The drive from Prem’s mansion in New Jersey to Eddy Parma’s was an hour long. He passed the time wrapped up in the past, musing between his books and memories of his past love – Meher and Vedika.

In the party, on Prem’s left side was seated Eddy’s wife, Sebi, and to his right Roger Johnson, a young, fresh struggling writer. He informed Prem that he was a great fan of him and did his Ph.D. on him. He also told him that he had written a couple of stories. – The latest one is about online dating. Prem asked him to send the story online to read and comment.

Another important character is introduced in the novel - MAYA. She lived in Manhattam, and wanted to be a writer. Prem Rustum was her favourite writer. At the time of her introduction also she was reading Prem’s book ‘Meher’ quite curiously.

Just a little before that Maya’s friend, Tom had ditched her, and left her with a broken heart. Since then, she had been living a lovely life, jesting just truffles, and spending her free winter nights yawningly chatting with one, Mr. Spinoza, a Francophile who talked a lot about French literature and the literature of Pascal Boutin. It was Mr. Spinoza who handed Maya a hardcover book by Prem Rustum, ‘The Smell of wet Mud’. That book changed Maya life, although Maya never met Mr. Spinoza after that.

Maya’s empty heart and soul were filled, though temporarily, by a visit to India. In India Maya’s financial requirements were provided by her father. He had presented her two more Rustum books, ‘Form Kerala to Kerala’ and ‘Dharma’, his own favourite. Maya visited Pondicherry, with its French colonial heritage and Ashram. After reading ‘Dharma’ Maya had a strong desire to meet and talk to Prem Rustum. In Pondicherry Maya had written and re-written a letter in her mind, and decided that as soon as she went back to New York, she would interview him and meet his beautiful head. Though, Maya had been studying Pascal for over a year for her thesis on him, she never had the same feeling for Pascal, as just two books by Prem had impressed upon Maya. She felt that the restrained and unapproachable way in which he talked about love, it was obvious that his heart was
the ultimate prize of a woman. Pascal’s books were clever, but Prem’s were in altogether another league; the words themselves felt as if they were no longer the words of human beings but something more, words from prophets or gods.

By the time she left India, Maya had read fifteen of Prem’s books. She read the remainder in New York, steadily modulating the inflow of youthful contemporary literature by her cohort group with Rustum’s masterworks. She re-read a stray one now and then. She had saved ‘Meher’ for the last because after ‘Meher’ there would be no more books to read. Therefore, she would not finish ‘Meher’ until she got a real-life companion. For this she wrote up a new personal and online:-

“Spiritual twenty- something aspiring novelist with hot buns and Yoga body seeks another: - write like Prem Rustum, think like Prem Rustum, speak like Prem Rustum, be Prem Rustum. Worship at his altar as I do”. (3) P.15

Within minutes Maya’s laptop sounded a binge. Screen name Plume Flashed. Thus, Maya and Plume (Roger – Johnson) chatted online and befriended. He informed her that he was Prem’s great admirer and fulfilled all the qualities that she expected from her online friend. Johnson informed about Prem that he met him at a dinner party. He did his Ph.D. on him. He e-mailed his to story to him for his comment. Maya asked him about Homi, and Ratan in ‘Meher’, Johnson told her that Homi was Meher’s son, Ratan was Homi’s son. He also assured her to introduce her to Prem.

In the meantime, Prem was also curious to have a woman-friend through online dating. He contacted Pascal by phone-call, who advised him to have a young friend of thirty or even twenty five, by simply putting his name on screen and search for all the women’s profiles. It would bring up the women who would list for Prem as his favourite author, and then he could send them a message.

On the other hand, Prem invited Johnson for lunch to discuss about his story. When they met Prem asked him about his characters who net and loved through online dating. Johnson told him that it was true. Only the other day he met a friend online after the dinner at Eddy Parma’s. He was going to meet her that day.
The cause for hasty friendship was as Johnson told Prem:-

“We have a lot in common. We’re both huge fans of yours, to begin with” (4) P.21

Prem went to meet Maya. Actually, he wondered, Maya had agreed to meet him after just one chatting online, usually it took weeks to convince a girl to meet for real.

Prem’s search for an online chatting partner ended on a girl called Dogpose i.e. Maya’s ad on website – ‘Write like Prem, be Prem Rustum. Worship at his altar like I do’. Prem found that he found the right partner. Prem lost himself in the past memories – of Meher, Angie and Vedika. Meher was the sole recipient of his adolescent longing, sibling love, devotion, and in some of their moments together, the teacher, the adult, the protective older sister social distinctions as other people taught him – admiration and last, platonic love and filial, teacher and student older and younger friend and sister, had not existed for Prem.

After Meher’s marriage Prem found Angie, the anger monger, as he called her in his own mind. Prem fancied that he had fallen in love and grown up too. Prem dragged out their relationship for six years out of sheer fear of her temper. With Angie, Prem learned what lust and excitement meant when divorced from brotherly affection and awe. Angie riding him, spreading her cheeks for him, acting obscene, never failed to agitate Prem’s biology as if he were being slashed by a thunder storm.

Then, Prem met Vadika. Prem and Angie had met the handsome Bedi couple at a party when Prem was writing ‘Raga’. There was an easy and instant bond between Harry – as Bedi was known to his friends – and Prem. Prem just as easily adored Harry’s wife and referred only ‘Bhabhi’, or brother’s wife. After he successfully disentangled himself from Angie’s grip, the Bedis became some of the few people he frequented.

Prem told Mrs. Bedi that he would call her Vedika, who know Vedas. With Prem what had started as admiration and adoration for Vedika turned soon into an anxious longing. In his quest to understand the hollowness of his being when he did not see Vedika on a given day. Prem asked himself the obvious question.-
‘Do I want to sleep with her?’

He was unable to imagine Vedika exhibiting desire, wanting to be penetrated. Prem thought,

“The change in his sentiments for Vedika was like the change in the texture of egg white into meringue”. (5) P.25

The constant hollowness he had been feeling then turned into a searing physical pain. To drain out some of the misery, he let it leak on paper. He decided, ‘I will make love to Vedika in my writing’. The act of writing became the sex he had. Thus, he wrote ‘Meher’, and handed it to Vedika. On reading ‘Meher’, Vedika saw herself changed. She longed for the intensity of Prem’s love to be directed to her. She felt a physical hunger that could be satisfied by only one person, the author.

The action in the novel is drifted towards a brief meeting of Maya and Roger Johnson. Maya was curious to know more about Prem Rustum. Maya told him that Prem’s prose was electric – a current running through his sentences, page after page. She asked Johnson questions related to Prem – if he lived up to his expectations in person; and ‘does he smell like an old geezer’, After passing the night with Johnson, Maya found a new message from someone called ‘Indian Man of Letters’. Thus, the online names Dogpose and Indian Man of Letters introduced with each other.

The next morning Prem was in Great Spirit. He decided to take lunch out. He phoned his agent and friend Edward to join him on lunch. He told Edward, “I found a fan online. I can feel spring. I am revitalized”. (6) P.33

Then, their talk drifted towards Roger Johnson’s story with favourable comment by Prem. Prem got annoyed that Johnson had misused his comment. He said about it,

“His (Johnson’s) character - development is flawed. The reader is left wondering if Milli is gold –digger or an idealist, if she’s bold or just insane. His narrative is fraught with substandard sentences”. (7) P.35
But Edward held a favourable impression of Johnson’s story and was bent upon going to print it. For a brief period Prem lost himself into a reverie. His past life in India before Independence. Meher had died of cancer, and Meher was lodged inside him – all over body and soul. He could puncture himself anywhere, and she would flow out and appear on paper. He wrote wonderful books. He wandered from place to place and then to New York. He produced an extra-ordinary tableau of India, as she gained confidence in herself in her post-independence years. He wrote great books about India, and later about United State, as India manipulated and demeaned, her democratic institutions ridiculed. Then came the Emergency, a suspension of all civil rights and personal liberties.

The creative force of Prem in his forties was the force that water would have had if the floodgates had been lifted. Edward had seen all that power of Prem’s creative art. Prem resumed his discussion on Johnson that Prem had personal reasons for his antagonism of his story that he was trying to get a date with the same girl that Johnson fellow went on date with.

In the meanwhile Maya was awarded the Paris Fiction Fellowship for three months in Paris to write. She was preparing to go to France. Maya and Prem Rustum’s online chatting continued. She was still not sure that seventy-five year old online chatting man and her idol Prem were the same. Maya invited Johnson for dinner, and their meetings and intimacy went on increasing.

Johnson was very good and brilliant in his college days. He had been the only member of the freshman class to be accepted on the board of ‘The Advocate’, Harvard’s literary Magazine. His writing talent was praised by his professor. It was no wonder then that at literary parties on campus Johnson was a regular invitee. Thus, he had friends, acquaintances who were familiar with the galaxy of literary stars. At one of such parties Johnson sat with three other women, one in particular, at a table. After the usual drinks and talking asked that woman to fondle her breast in public, and continued to insist on it. The next day the board took a serious view of Johnson’s behaviour and he was told:-
“‘The Advocate’ is having a board meeting to discuss this impropriety – that’s what it’s been deemed to be – and to decide if you get to stay on the board” (8) P.46

Maya got Prem’s message that he was Prem Rustum, and the only way to testify it was at their meeting at museum on Monday when it was closed from public. Maya just wondered that a Nobel laureate novelist was surfing the internet to find a date. Maya answered back that she could meet only at a public place just like a book store.

On the night just before their meeting at a book, both Maya and Prem Rustum were in a state of confusion and suspense. As Prem shunned publicity, so there were very few speeches recorded, tapes, CDs etc available to Maya. Rustum’s only other celluloid appearance was in a French documentary about Pascal Boutin, where he had been interviewed along with Pedro Nicolas about Pascal’s work.

Prem was also in suspense, thinking whether he had relied on Johnson’s information too much. After all, they met, and after the formalities of introduction they went to a café for a cup of coffee. Maya told him that very shortly she was going to France for a period of three months as she won the Paris Fiction Fellowship. Prem replied quite excitedly that it was a coincident that he was also going to Paris during the summer. Prem was quite charmed by her beauty and loveliness – her mouth, the smile, the eye etc. On the other hand Maya’s hands were shaking with nervousness. She told Prem that in Paris she would try to write a story about India, if it is possible. She also told him that it was in Madurai (India) that a soothsayer told her that she was going to get rich within the month.

That provided Rustum an opportunity to go closer to her. He took out his glasses and took Maya’s palm into his hands. Prem had learnt that it was the quickest, least sleazy, and most sensuous way of establishing body contact with a female without fear of recrimination. Prem uttered some jargon from palmistry – ‘Mount of Venus’, ‘Peacock’s eye on Mercury’ etc. Prem thought,

“Flirting with this girl was coming so naturally to Prem, he wondered if he’d really been in hibernation for a decade” (9) P.56.
Maya was quite enamoured by Prem. She just kept on as if she was in a trance, having no idea that Prem was holding her hand for such a long time. She told him that his hands look more beautiful in real life than on T.V. She also told him that she was a great admirer of him. Then, they just bantered about their favourite haunts in Paris, the Maillol and Rodin museums etc.

Then, they talked about the details of staying and phone numbers. Finally Rustum took a promise from Maya that she would not reveal about their meeting and Rustum’s visit to Paris. Thus, they parted to meet again in Paris.

Maya was so excited that she started to dance around her apartment. At dinner with Johnson at his place, Johnson told her that while she was in Paris, he would like to pay her a visit for a week. Maya was so excited that she was on the verge of telling him that she met Prem Rustum, but remembering Prem’s words, she desisted. Then, they both went to sleep together.

Prem reached Paris, along with the past memories, especially of Vedika. The past was like a load that got heavier with each year. The burden of Meher, Angie and Vedika had not reduced, but new weights had been added.

The first thing that Prem did in Paris was the phone call to Pascal and arranged a meeting. After the friendly greetings Prem told Pascal that he had followed his advice, with the internet and found a twenty five year old girl and he followed her to Paris. Pascal informed Prem that his first wife, Irene was suffering from cancer. Prem told him that he wanted honest love without calculation, and without his fame playing a role. He expected from Maya that her beauty and young age should not be a hurdle, because, he says:-

“The beauty and the youth are a hurdle to knowing the interior, just as fame is a hurdle”. (10) P.66.

Maya met a young, handsome man, Jean Pierre on her arrival in Paris. They became friends over a cup of coffee. Pierre told her that he was a screen-play writer writing for a French film. They befriended with each other and exchanged phone-numbers.
After a week of Prem’s arrival in Paris Prem contacted Maya on phone and arranged a programme with her to attend a concert of Indian Music on the Saturday. In the meanwhile Maya found an apartment in Montmartre and shifted there. Prem met Maya on Saturday and they went together to the venue of the musical concert in a cab.

They reached there, and removed their shoes because they were told that inside the hall sitting arrangement was in Indian style.

The music programme started at half past eight; and three musicians walked into the room, and wished ‘Namaste’ to the audience and bowed their heads. The musicians wore stiffly starched, impeccably white Dhotis and silk Kurtas. After touching the base of the platform with their right hands and bringing those hands to their heads in a respectful gesture in Indian style, they sat down cross-legged on the stage.

The vocalist was the first to notice Prem, and signed other musicians towards Prem. They all folded their hands in ‘Namaste’ and smiled at Prem. Then the vocalist announced that the first piece of music was in Raga Bhairavi. The vocalist slapped his right hand on his thigh to keep his beat. The music began to flow as a river flowing in a rush as it curved along its course. At other times the music was like a kite flying over a large green meadow. For over an hour the chanter vocalized the syllables ‘Da da da ni dani da’. They stretched like elastic bands into unthinkable shapes and forms. They transformed into fluids of different viscosity, one moment as thick as honey, and then bubbly like champagne.

Prem’s thoughts took a digression and he began to think about the opposite of music a long time ago when he had written his music book. What was the opposite of music? Silence, Noise, disharmony, cacophony, and people talked about how music was like Mathematics. Music was the opposite of all these things, and yet it was other things, positive things.

Prem wrote small, almost minute variations around each thing that was and was not like music, and then he enlarged these variations. When he worked on ‘Raga’, he had charted every single beat in his paragraphs with such detail in visual map that the blueprint
itself was as thick as the manuscript. Thereafter, every page of every book Prem had ever written was produced that way. Laboriously, with weeks of thought behind each idea. He chiselled individual sentences until they were fifty-seven facet diamonds. The end goal was simple, even simplistic; hide the labour. The musical tempos – largo, adagio, andante, allegretto, presto – disguised, the reader slid along the pages as if he were listening to Mozart and gliding on a well polished wooden floor.

After this reverie, Prem had fallen to another digression about his friend from Oxford (England) Krishnan, a Mathematician. Soon after Prem had moved to the U.S.A. from England, he caught up with Krishnan. Prem visited the up and coming science department at stand ford, where Krishnan invited Prem to sit on a lecture.

The music concert was over and Prem returned in the Present, as if with a shock. Suddenly Prem was mobbed without warning after the concert. When the three-minute-long applause for the musicians came to a stop, various people arose and moved towards Prem to shake his hand. As if expecting just that to happen, Prem stood up and put forth his hand. ‘Thank you…. That’s so kind of you…. No, sorry, I’m not at all available these days. – It’s pleasure to be in Paris as usual.

After that Prem commented that the concert was heavily classical and asked Maya:-

“Were you able to endure the evening?”

Maya replied, “Yes, I loved it. It reminded me of ‘Rage’. I felt I was inside the book and here at the same time.” (12) P.84

Prem again fell into a reverie. He began to think about his process of creating some of the women characters:-

“Sometimes he took the initial sense he had of a woman and found himself investing similar or related characteristics to a woman in his fiction. Then he would fall in love with the woman in his fiction and transfer backs some of his sentiments for the fictional character to the one in real life.” (13) P.85
Maya and Jean Pierre met and went out to a cafe, Jean asked about Maya’s past, and especially about her boyfriend’s. Maya told him,

“The last time I was in love was more than a year ago. And he left me because my mother was diagnosed an illness that could be genetic. He said, ‘with the medical history in your family, who knows?’” (14) P.89

Jean Pierre and Maya went to see a little museum nearby. It was in an old building. There was hung a painting of 1920. They went upstairs of the building from where they could locate their own apartments. They discussed about their work. Maya told him that she found it difficult to write when she thought of all the great novels that had been written. Maya’s difficulty was that:-

“I think I’m marked by his work. I feel like one of those cattle on a farm with a big number branded on the side. I don’t know how to even think about writing without reference to his (Prem’s) work”. (15) P.91.

Jean Pierre replied for the solution of it:-

“It’s just like love. To get over it you have to get into it fully”. (16) P.91.

Maya felt that her personality as a writer was completely captured by Prem Rustum’s writing. Going over her India notes, she could conjure up no descriptions of the country that had not already been mined, illuminated, exhausted, illustrated and exploded by Prem’s Pen.

The detailed episode describes the visit to a painting museum by Prem and Maya. Maya is young, curious having an artistic eye, and her reaction towards real life artist that Prem was. Prem was watching the paintings as well as the real life, painting-like Maya.

The novel delineates beautifully the relationship of art, beauty and creative art through love. While watching Degas’ pastels, while Maya was staring at the pastels, Prem was watching Maya. But at the same time in his mind’s eye saw the pastel in its altered imaginary form. He thought,
“It’s the same problem when I create a character inspired by someone and then want the real-life person to be the character just as much as the other way round”. (17) P.97.

Thus, Maya and Prem loitered at different places and museums of Prem. While watching the different places, the writer takes opportunity to let us peep into their past through a short reverie or employing stream of consciousness technique to the maximum.

While watching a hundred year old chamber Maya fell into a reverie, how Thomas or tom had dumped her, and Maya had seen her life end up, alone and loveless. Maya recollects,

“For several might’s after the end of the relationship, Maya suffered from insomnia. She was no longer used to sleeping alone. She would come home as late as possible and fall asleep finally at four in the morning”. (18) P.99.

After Maya, the writer takes the reader into Prem’s past – sometimes ten years back when he was in Paris with Pascal and two teenage girls, Valerie and Julie; and sometimes Prem goes further in the past when he was a teenager with his cousin, Meher.

While watching one of the Maillol’s bathers he had lost in the memory of the past, ten years.

When he had visited Maillol. He had paid a visit to Pascal’s friend, cavalier and his two god-daughters, Jullie and Valerie. Soon the two girls started flirting with sixty-five year old Prem. After passing a day at their sea –side resort Prem wanted to pay a visit to museum at Maillol. The two girls where very eager to keep company, so they were also invited at Maillol.

Prem and Pascal were invited by Cavalier to pass a few days at his villa near Saint Tropez. They met the girls hear the swimming pool. The host Cavalier was to join Prem and Pascal, the next day, with his family. Watching the two girls, Valerie and Julie, Swimming with bare breasts, Prem was reminded of Meher at eleven years having that body before she got her period. When Meher had her first period there was a hush-hush
discussion about it between Meher and her mother. When asked about it, Meher accepted
the fact and started changing her pad in front of Prem.

Suddenly Prem’s memory returned to the two girls swimming. Both the girls
continued to swim till lunch time. The lunch was arranged at the Gazebo. After the lunch
the girls spent most of the afternoon in the swimming pool. Then, in a flash, Julie pushed
Prem into the pool. Then, she did an unexpected thing with Prem.

“She said her palm all the way to his crotch and touched the enormous snake
threatening to unleash itself from his trunks”. (19) P.109

After the dinner when Prem went to his bed to sleep, very soon the two girls went
up to him, and told him to make space for them. Then, one to his left and the other to his
right, slept. Prem was shuddered and told them, “Look I really don’t think this is a good
idea. I am old enough to be your grandfather”. (20) P.112.

The two girls’ sexual gestures put Prem into the memory lane when he had his first
sexual act with Meher:-

“Weeks before Meher’s marriage, tasting her, penetrating her, making love
to her against the wall, in the bed, in the bathroom”. (21) P.113.

In the morning, Cavalier, his wife and two kids reached there. Cavalier showed his
hospitality and prepared coffee for Prem. Prem took up Cavalier’s offer to go to the
farmer’s market with him in the next village. On the way he discussed Prem’s books with
him.

In the afternoon Prem retired for a short sleep in his cottage. First Julie went up
into his cottage to love with him. Then, Valerie entered with a cup of afternoon tea. She
also started making love with Prem. Prem also felt excited, and they enjoyed sex with door
closed.

Thus, after Meher, angle and Vedika, Prem’s important love affairs were with those
two girls – Valerie and Julie. Willingly or unwillingly but Prem was enjoying with both
the girls – Valeri and Julie. After some nights of pleasant fondling, caressing, kissing and
indulging in sexual acts, the visit of Cavalier’s villa was over. Valerie and Julie took the train with Prem while the Cavaliers drove back.

The president of France awarded a medal at Paris. It was a grand function. Both the girls, Valerie and Julie, were present. The media photographed then along with Prem.

After he returned to New York, Prem received a note from Valerie saying she would visit him some day. Prem told her that he would visit Paris again to complete his book, ‘Paris, a halfway House’. Valerie sent a twenty page story written on Prem, called ‘Raj’. Valerie and Julie met Prem for the last time. There were tears in their eyes. While parting, Julie said to Prem.

“I’ll keep some beautiful memories”. (22) P.129.

The scene is beautifully described by the novelist – love of two girls for an aged man that Prem was. Prem was also overwhelmed by the sentiments of the two girls. He tugged ferociously at the table cloth till it all came crashing down. Precious crockery was broken. A few minutes later he called the house keeper for the building, saying he probably owed her thousand francs for some damage in the dining room. Then, he went to Pascal and told him:-

“I’m broken-hearted I’m broken-hearted. My heart is broken”. (23) P.130.

Pascal reminded Prem that he had come to Paris when he had broken with Vedika. Prem added to it that he was leaving Paris to escape Julie and Valerie. Prem thought the love that women gave was there in art. But that of friendship was only in Pascal. A hundred visits to the Maillol Museum could not replace his friend.

Later, Prem received a letter from Valerie when his book ‘Paris a Halfway House’ was released. She had liked the book. A year later he received an invitation of Julie’s marriage. When his book, ‘Sisters in the Loure’ came out, Cavalier told him that Valerie too was married. Pascal informed Prem on phone that he had seen Julie; her skin looked worse.
Suddenly, Prem’s long stream of consciousness returned to the present as if with a thud. Maya came up to him and commented that he looked troubled. Then, they both went to see the painting Manet’s painting of Zola, the French writer, of 1868, hung beside a Manet From 1863, ‘Olympia’, which featured a black woman holding an bouquet for her naked mistress on the bed. Watching these painting, Maya returned to Prem. Maya told about paintings:

“You have to see one thing here; Manet paints Zola looking at Manet, and in front of a book titled ‘Manet’. Manet as a painter of writers and of paintings within paintings”. (24) P.132.

Maya told Prem that when she was passing through a very excruciating period after the Tom episode, it was his books that helped her tide over the crisis. She told Prem,

“After it ended with Tom. I discovered that as long as I was reading your books, I didn’t miss other human contact; life felt complete”. (25) P.134.

Maya told Prem that she was there in Paris on a scholarship for writing, but she was unable to write because Prem’s books and personality over shadowed her writing was quite impossible because she had read so much of Prem to the exclusion of all else that his influence was showing up. She explained her difficulty:

“Then, there’s so much larger problem that I’m trying to write about India without any connection to the country, my efforts are doomed. But worse still, my last trip to India, my notes, my memories, the details – that excruciating simple details that breathe life into a novel – are completely overrun with memories of your books”. (26) P. 135.

Prem suggested Maya that for an artist impersonality is a great quality. Zola said that when he posed for the portrait he had the sense that Manet no longer knew that Zola was there; he drew him like he would have any other human being. Prem said to Maya:

“Once you put yourself to work, Maya, even my presence will not get in your work”. (27) P.136.
Maya narrated her problem of inability to write in Paris because it was not only his personality as writer, but his own presence that was creating difficulty for her. She told him:-

“The real problem is that I know you now. I haven’t adjusted to that. I wonder sometimes if it’s not your writing that is threatening to eclipse my style but that you are threatening to eclipse your writing in my mind.”  

P.136.

Thus, continued Maya’s discussion about writing something like novel and the difficulty of the influence of a great writer – more so, when the writer is present.

The story in the novel further developed. One the one hand she was hypnotized by Prem, and she was very happy, she was also charmed by the city of Paris. On the other hand, her friendship with Jean Pierre was also getting intimate. They started going on picnic and watching movies. Physically also the were coming closer. The novelist describes:-

“Maya and Jean Pierre saw each other every night for the next few nights. And each night he made his way closer to her. The very next day he spent the night in her flat. The one after that he spent the night again with her”.

(29) P.142.

Maya’s closeness with Prem was also developing. Maya called Prem one day over dinner. With great pleasure Maya cooked asparagus and risotto. While Maya was speaking, Prem was listening and concentrating on the aesthetic spectacle of Maya speaks, trying not to hear the actual words. Maya was also charmed by Prem. She told Prem:-

“I remember how famous you are, and it feels strange, I haven’t told anyone about you, but I know that Jean Pierre would love to meet you”.

(30) P.144.

Maya gave a brief introduction of Jean and it was decided that three of them would go to attend a music concert.
The concert was at café de la Danse, and as the musicians went to the stage the hall resumed with applause. V.Guru was the vocalist having covered in a long shining ‘dupatta’ in Hindi films style. The music was too loud, rhythmic and unintelligible to May. Maya was sitting between Prem and Jean Pierre. Prem was listening to the Bangladeshi singer onstage, at the same time Prem could feel movement in the corner without having to turn. Jean Pierre was banging his fingers on Maya’s knees to keep the beat Prem Felt jealous, but then he considered his own age and that of Jean – just twenty five years. After the concert, Prem invited then both for dinner, with a jealous feeling to prolong the moments with her and to reduce the amount of time Jean – Pierre would have to get up to mischief with Maya. Anyway, after the dinner Jean took Maya to his home and they spent the night together.

After that incident, Prem was mentally very agitated. He met Pascal and told him,

“Jean Pierre, Jean Pierre, so ordinary. I can’t believe I’m forced to spend time thinking of him! A rival, a rival goddammit.” (31) P.151.

Then he narrated the previous night’s experience and told him that it was because he was turning old and father–figure. Pascal suggested that Prem should not indulge in intellectual talks with Maya, rather he should comment on her looks, dress and beauty. Pascal told Prem,

“Do you think this girl (Maya) will actually choose some Jean Pierre who works in a ‘bureau’ over a Nobel Prize winner if she had a choice”. (32) P.151.

Pascal suggested him to stop calling her, meeting her. She would get the idea. While Prem and Rustum were talking, a lady in her late forties came and told Rustum that her friend, Judith Q. Had introduced his books to her and she read them all and she was a great fan of him.

Judith Q. was reported to be a great admirer of Prem Rustum. She had tattooed the names of Rustum's books on her body. Judith Q. had been reported to be trying unsuccessfully to stark Prem since she had read 'Dharma', 'Raga' and 'Grinding India' in the
course of a month. ‘I have to meet this man. I have to have this man’. Such thoughts were fired in her brain from the moment she woke up to the time she slept.

When somebody told Judith Q that Prem spent the winters in India, so she went to India one winter in the hope of finding him. When someone reported that Prem spent the part of summer in Paris, she went to Paris for a weekend or two each summer.

Her obsession for Prem grew and grew until it became the back-bone of Judith’s identity. She told her friends,

“My sexuality is Rustumanian, my nationality, my religion is Rustumania, and my identity is Rustumanian”. (33) P.155.

Once, Judith imagined that she had seen Rustum going in a cab; she immediately called another cab to follow Rustum’s cab, in vain. It was six years into the obsession that she thought she saw him. She had been Prem’s biggest advocate for years, gifting her colleagues, her clients, and her friends with his books, speaking freely of his genius, but she was rewarded with neglect, nonchalance, without ever having met her or replying to her letters for a full year, Judith kept a low profile then, she returned to work one November morning, sombre and business like.

Her office secretary, Cheever once visited her at her house when she was down with flu. Cheever approximated that in her house there were easily eighty photographs of Rustum, and dozens of copies of every book he had ever written. Cheever reported back to the office that she was totally insane. He told the office assembly:-

“The cushions o the sofa had imprints of Rustum’s face. She must have paid a fortune to have the photographs transferred to fabric and then stitched into cushion covers”. (34) P.158.

There were two kinds of people - her sympathisers and those who called her mad from the beginning. The CEO had to intervene, and Judith's letters were called to be brought to the office. After the study of letters the CEO told the office people:-
“People As her manager, I can say that she's never shown any signs of insanity since she got back to work. And it's my duty to protect her from this kind of talks.... we own Judith the same privacy we all feel we are entitled to.” (35)P.158

For some time the routine things happened with Prem and Maya. One day in the morning she happened to see the neighbour girl, Nadine who lived in the flat below Maya. They met for a short time. She told that she lived with white women but they were not lesbians. Nadine was a contemporary dance, sometimes worked in clubs as a hostess. Nadine also talked about two women who wrote a book together. She gave the name of the book to Maya.

Maya and Prem strolled through the streets and talked. Maya went in to a book-shop with Prem to buy the book Nadine had suggested. By chance Pascal met them. He told Prem that Irene's tests are showing worse results. Pascal was introduced to Maya and he invited them to have a drink, but Maya refused politely the offer. Maya and Jean were to go together to a show at a theatre so Maya took leave of Prem and Pascal. Prem discussed with Pascal about his relations with Maya Prem exposed his hopelessness to develop intimacy with Maya because Jena Pierre was with her.

There is a brief description of the hopeless and friendless, Roger Johnson INS U.S. still struggling to write. There were some giving and receiving emails between Maya and him but he needed her body and mind.

Unintentionally, Political discussion and politics with a bias also creeps in the novel. India's Parliamentary election results were also discussed during a telephonic talk between Prem, Momi and Ratan. After the election- results of 2004, Sonia Gandhi was to become the Prime minister of India, but in the Novel it is criticised on the basis that Sonia was not an Indian Born citizen. Ratan asked Prem if an Indian born citizen of America become the President of America or of England, Germany, France and Ireland. There is an adverse criticism by Indian. Political leader, Ladu Yadav. He is labelled as a criminal and a convict.
The reader gets the clear idea that the novelist's view are coloured with anti congress, ideology. In a mood of frustration Homi wanted to shift out of India to America, because of the prospects of congress forming the Government in India. Thus, some of the current topics are also discussed in the novel, which have no direct relevance with the novel.

In the end of telephonic talk, Prem invited Homi and Ratan to pay a visit to France. They would all, including Homi's wife Deepika would fall in love with the city - Paris.

Prem and Maya went out to see some of the worth seeing places of Paris - 17th, 19th and 20th century places of sightseeing. Prem told Maya that as an old man he did not have the stamina to line up with tourists to see something, so he suggested that they would take a cab and visit 19th century things and walk ground for half an hour, and they take a cup of coffee somewhere and return.

While discussing Prem's novels and his art of characterisation, Maya's comments hurt Prem's feelings. He felt let down and displeased with Maya. They returned without much talking on the way.

After reaching home Maya felt some sort of emptiness in her soul. She was greatly agitated. She wanted to call Prem and apologise, but she was afraid that it would cause him angry further. Out of her nervousness she phoned for her father in India, but the call was responded by her mother, who was emotion less and cryptic in her replies.

The phone call was brief and put Maya in the memory lane of her earlier days in India with her parents and brother. She remembered how her mother became mentally weak and rather abnormal. Maya's attitude towards her mother was like that of her father and brother - doing every effort to keep her - spirits and there, but when it became obvious that nothing was going to change in her mother's condition then she suggested to her father to hospitalise the mother and set himself free.

But her father refused to do so, and told her:-
"I can't do it because she wouldn't have done it if it happened to me". (36) P.182

Her father also told Maya that he could go on serving her forever. Thus, Maya's father continued. In the meanwhile Maya visited two or three times a year and did her best in front of her mother but the things did not improve for her mother.

She never remembered the phone calls. Maya pitied her father, who had withdrawn into himself and diminished after her mother's illness.

In the state of nervousness Maya wrote a letter to her friend in U.S.A. Roger Johnson. She wrote that she was in the state of sorrow and thought that she could share it with him. She wrote,

"Only a writer can understand another writer’s loneliness" (37) P.184.

Prem was also undergoing a feeling of nervousness and repentance. He questioned himself as to why he had expected Meher-like love of teenager, from Maya, when he himself, "I was foolish to try to re-create his first love". (38) P.184

He called Pascal on phone and told him that he wanted to advance his tickets for U.S. All was over with that (i.e. May) girl. Pascal invited him to restaurant. Prem told him that due to the vast gap in age there was a break with Maya. Prem told him that Maya accused his creative work resulted from his angst, i.e. anxiety about life. He Said.

"What does she know about my angst? What does she know about losing love when you are a teenager, just when you should be beginning? (39) P.186.

Pascal also blamed Prem that wanted the Meher-like recreation of love with Maya. That was the problem.

Pascal suggested a change of place for some days as a remedy. The Programme was fixed that they both would start in a car at eleven for normally or Brittany.
Mentally disturbed Prem reached his apartment and took two sleeping pills that knocked him out. The novelist has used, once again, the dream analysis and Stream of Consciousness technique to explore Prem's Mental Condition on one hand, and the character analysis of Angie, Vedika and Meher.

Prem dreamt of his former love, Angie the sexy beast as he called her. In these dreams, as the narration goes:

"She found him (Prem) naked in a prison cell and got on all fours over him, her heavy breasts hanging over his mouth, her crotch gyrating over his penis. She took him till she fulfilled herself and then disappeared through the grilled entrance just as mysteriously as she had entered." (40) P.190.

After the dream, Prem wondered why she was haunting him after fifty years. Prem felt stuck in a permanent time machine where his age advanced but his feelings remained static. It was exactly the same in the case of Meher and Vedika also. Frequently he was lost in the past memories. Women hung heavily on his conscience.

He touched women the way Meher had taught him to touch. But he did not feel for them the way he had felt when he touched Meher. The women therefore mistook that for an unsuitable greed for their bodies and therefore their souls. If there was ever any doubt in their mind, it was banished by the gentle postcoital caresses that Prem showered them by habit.

Due to that, for the first earlier months Prem had been in love with Angie. But Later their sexual life, rooted no longer in love but in habit, after four years Prem unilaterally made the decision that he would not have sex with her again. Finally, they split.

Vedika revived Prem's hope in life, in love, and in women. Where the relationship with Angie had filled him with disgust and the one with Meher with incredible loss, the one with Vedika had reinvented the very idea of Eros. After their first six Months together, for spring to late autumn, Prem decided it was time to ask her to marry him. Vedika told Prem in response:-
"I want to be with you forever." (41) P.193.

She decided that she would go to India for a month and announced her decision just before her return. But, three weeks after her departure Prem received a letter telling him that:

"He had to forget her and move on. She knew he would never betray her by telling harry or any other their friends about what had happened between them." (42) P.193.

Being in India has convinced her that the right lay in fulfilling the promise she had already made to see her husband through his life, to be by his side. Prem left for Paris and he let his writing drown him. Since then, writing had been primary o him, he himself secondary.

Next Morning Pascal and Prem started for the Journey, with Pascal driving. On the way Prem was ruminating about his long trip. It was twenty years ago with Lalia, the singer, Prem had felt that it was time for him to write about America – a big American Saga. The Emergency in India was over, and Prem felt finished with American Politics. But America was huge and unknown, even though he had been living in New York for Several Years. Lilia had suggested a cross-country drive. Lilia beside him as he drove, choosing the radio, Fighting over Music, and then Lilia Sitting on the face, Sometime Lilia having sex with him, and he having sex with her – at night before sleeping and in the morning while getting up.. Without love but with understanding, she’d let him be. She was the only person who never assumed he loved her.

At a motel where they took shelter for the might, Prem told Pascal thoughtfully: –

“I was thinking about Lilia earlier, The Sex with her was so uncomplicated.”
(43)P.200

Pascal suggested that he still could do it, and he could introduce to women, but Prem replied that he could not do it, while driving for Mont- Saint- Michel, their journey
was hindered due to rains and Pascal halted the car, telling Prem that he did not want to old
Prem to die. Prem felt that apart from his women, he loved Pascal the Most.

They reached Normandy finally, and stayed at a hotel, booked y Pascal for them. It
was decided that after an hour’s rest they would meet again. Prem went to the bed for a
Short Siesta. He started thinking about Maya. He could not find reason as to why he had
been so upset by Maya’s remark. It didn’t seem to him all that bad in retrospect. He
thought:—

“Maya made him feel young even though he was never as aware of his age as
when he was around her. For example, they he had little doubt that he had
she come with them on this trip; both Pascal and he would have been more
enthusiastic.” (44) P.203

After an hour, they left the hotel and took the main path that led up to the steps of
Monastery. Prem found difficult to climb, and he envied Pascal’s Sixty Five years. On the
sight and scene Prem commented about Maya:—

She’s right, everything is beautiful, Maya loves France in the way American girls
often do.” (45) P.205

They felt hungry, and on the descent the difference of ten years between them were
more obvious. The reached a seafood restaurant that Pascal had chosen for them. There
Pascal invited Prem to women, Cary, an American. After dinner Pascal Took carry to his
room, and Prem back in his hotel room, called Maya. Maya told him that she had been
upset, and then made several calls and there was no response. Prem told her:—

“I’m in Mount- Saint- Michel with Pascal, who’s trying to put the make on a
lady in the bar. You would like it here. The colours of the sky are muted, a
bit pastel, but extreme.”(46)P.207

Thus, they befriended again. Maya told him that after the tiff she learnt her mistake
that Prem was a big man, and it was foolish of her to talk with him as if she were his equal.
Prem consoled her that they were friends, and he missed her, and wished she were there.
Maya told him that during their separation, she cried and wanted to talk to her father on phone, but got her mother who looked crazy and depressed. She felt lonely and the whole world seemed so far without him. Prem felt touched. Prem’s mental predicament is described by the Writer. :-

“Usually at the First Sign that a women was opening up to him, Prem made for the exit, but with Maya he felt a desperate desire to grab her tight and hang on for dear life. To ask her woes and share his.” (47) P. 208

Prem fixed to dine with Maya when he reached Paris. The load of Maya’s mind felt lightened after her talk with Prem. The next morning, Jen Pierre called Maya for a visit to some place, and they went together. But Maya refused to go for dinner with him.

Prem and Pascal met in the morning and greeted each other. Prem commented on Pascal’s might with Carey. Pascal replied:-

“Don’t disdain a fuck, in the end that’s what makes life real. You think a book is real? Sure it’s real, but t never, never as real as flesh. The humid, of woman’s cunt, that’s what’s real.” (48) P.211.

During the day they went to nearby ramparts where there was a long line of tourists for getting tickets. Someone recognized Pascal and a guard with a badge led them through a said entrance, and handed them two tickets when Pascal tried to pay, the guard replied.

“No, the city of Mont- Saint- Mischel is honoured to have you. (49) P.212

Famous people thus honoured everywhere. When they sat at a hotel, table Pascal discussed with Prem’s neglect of women who loved and took care of him, but Prem showed no feelings for them. Pascal reminded him:-

“I’m talking about the real women, the ones you almost lived with. The Ones who where around when you had the Fluor had your surgery or needed physical therapy. The ones who drove you around and cooked dinner for your twenty friends, the ones who washed your socks and filed your fan letters.” (50) P.213.
Those, the two friends started discussing their art of writing. Pascal was of the view that he wrote as well as Prem, but that he was as well as Prem, but that he was unable to get a Noble Prize. Pascal told Prem:

“Do you really think your writing is better than mine?” (51) P.215

Prem pointed out the fact that he lacked the perseverance and depth for the inner should Prem said about Pascal’s Writing:

“I see that your talent has never been applied to it. You’ve written from the surface, from where it’s pleasant. You’re challenged yourself intellectually, no one can deny it. But you haven’t let the beast inside go encaged. If even a fraction of that primordial fuel were harnessed in to your writing, you would stun yourself with the result.” (52) P. 216.

Then, the three- Prem, Pascal and Carey went to see the chateau in nearby area. They all returned to Mont- Saint- Michel for dinner. The next morning they were to return to Paris. Pascal told Prem that Carey was not going with them as she wanted to stay on. Prem was relived. He had fears that they would end up driving rest of their trip with her. In another day and age he would not have minded. But time with Pascal was precious Prem thought,

“Who know when they would have this time together? One slip in the bathroom, and he could be bedridden for months, or something could happen to Pascal.” (53) P.217

Prem’s view shows how deep and intimate feelings he had for Pascal. His friendship with Pascal is previous.

One the way back, they noticed a flower show in the nearby area and they halted for it. Prem and Pascal observed the flowers minutely from the Botanical point of view- Pascal showed Prem the flowers’ different parts like that of man and woman. Thus, visiting the different places they drove all the way to Paris, listening t the music of Beethoven.
Prem Rustum reached Paris, and Maya went to meet him at the restaurant and taking meals with him. After the tiff and Prem’s trip to Normandy, Maya and Prem met for the first time. During the period of separation both, Maya and Prem had realized that Prem had taken Maya’s words too seriously, and Maya had realized that it was serious fault on her part to behave and talk in an unbecoming manner with such a big and famous person like Prem. They met with mutual love and affection.

The chief of the restaurant recommended a plate of Corsican cheese with Corsican wine to them. As they started talking Prem asked Maya why she wanted to cook for him. He said,

“Why do you want to share this kind of intimacy with me? After all; we’re not lovers.” (54) P.224.

Maya replied:-

“Intimacy isn’t merely about romantic love. I feel close to you and I wanted to implicate myself with you in some way.” (55) P.224.

Prem asked her what would happen when he died. Maya replied that before she met him, when she thought about his death, she felt sad that one day there would be no new books to anticipate. After meeting him and having his friendship, Maya said:-

“But now you, Prem are much more important to me than the writer Prem Rustum. Paris without you is unthinkable.”(58) P. 225.

Prem felt such a brutal desire for living that it made him feel young. During their further talks, Maya indirectly made it clear that she loved him and she would like that Prem should love her. Prem felt elated. He found a cause to live.

After dinner they walked out of the restaurant, they called a taxi, but before entering in to the taxi Maya asked Prem if she could if she could hug him. Pre said, “Sure of Course” and he hugged her a little awkwardly but squeezed her tightly. That night, more restless and sleepless, reflecting on conversation with Maya, Prem got out of bed and
looked out of his window. Pre loosened the tie of his pyjamas and pulled out his member. It was turgid, strong and hot. He imagined it with Maya.

Thus, Prem and Maya’s romantic love started.

One again, the Writer takes us deep in to the memory-lanes of Prem, using the Stream of Consciousness technique. The reader is taken to long past, nearly sixty years back, Prem’s teenage life with his parents, uncles, aunts and cousins especially with Meher. Ever since Prem had finished writing the last paragraph of his last book, By the Thread”, he had an idea that he would make a list of the people to see and talk to before he died.

On the top of that list it was Maher Prem’s cousin. Usually Meher and Prem passed their vacations with the Cousins. Every two years they visited their cousins in Delhi, and their cousins went to Bombay for a return visit. Prem and Meher liked each other from their early childhood. But Prem vividly remembered the summer that changed all. They took the journey by train. For thirty-six hours journey they could not have any physical contact, because they had separate berths. They were separated by metal-sheet, barbed they continued to touch each other’s two fingers through the barbed holes. They stayed at their uncle’s place. Prem and Maher were allotted separate room. Prem with Sattu and Meher with Rinku. There was no chance of meeting alone. One day, as their aunt went out to visit a relative, Prem and Meher met in the kitchen like long separated lovers. Both started touching the private parts of each other. The Writer described Meher:-

“She unzipped his pants and took his adolescent anatomy in the soothing skins of her hands. (51) P.235.

That night Prem risked going to Meher’s room and went up to her:-

“He pulled up her nightie and stroked the skin of her shoulder, her breasts, and her sex.” (58) P.236.

The separation was unbearable to them, and they denied going back Bombay. At home in Bombay their intimacy- physical and emotional deepened. What they had done
only with their hands, they now started to do routinely with their lips and their tongues, and they hollows of their months.

Thus, their love developed all through up to their reaching young-age. When Meher was doing pre-medical, her parents revealed that they had received proposal for her. All objections against her marriage, and continuing her studies by Prem were refuted by Meher’s parents. All arguments of Prem proved baseless when Meher’s mother said about Meher’s would be husband.

“He wants Meher to study further. He promises she can study as long as she likes.” (59) P.238.

For the next few weeks the parents worked on Prem and Meher relentlessly. Prem & Meher were told:-

“Life has to go on. You can’t just live here forever with your parents and brother. Why don’t you want what’s best for your sister? You will be off in another year or two to pursue your own dreams and then what will happen to her.” (60). P. 238.

Prem was hurt but angry that Meher really wanted to go off with this eligible bachelor their parents had chosen. Meher told herself that it would be best for Prem if she went away. She thought:-

“Why should I be a burden on him when he has his full life ahead of him?” (61) P.238.

As the date of marriage was approaching their longing for meeting and physical contact increased uncontrollably. As they got an opportunity,

“They would be in each other’s arms, kissing and clinging. As the date of the marriage got closer, this happened with increasing frequency. Their physical appetite was like burning fire. It spread Prem’s Heart to his groin; Meher felt his insides turn hollow. They had Sex.” (62) P. 239.
After the several Months of marriage, while Prem was studying at oxford, Prem was informed that Meher was expecting, when Prem wrote about it to Meher, She told Prem that the unborn child was not his surely. Much later, when Meher was dying, he had asked again, repeatedly but the answer was still no. Prem thought in the present about the mystery of Meher’s child, Homi, whether he was his son. Then he consoled himself that already he loved him as much as much as his own son. He loved him as Meher’s son-Meher, Meher, and Meher; At least he can join when he died.

Prem’s mind was full of such memories he got out of bed. He thought whether the early morning reminiscences were a sign of death to be closer. From Meher’s sexual acts he thought of Maya- her lips, breasts, everything. At the sometime he thought of Vedika, Angie, Valerie and Julie.

The reader is brought back in present. Maya got u in the Morning, did her yoga for an hour and then she took two of her notebooks, from her trip to India, to find a way of weaving a story around the pages, and went to a café, very shortly her neighbour, Nadine joined her. Nadine took Maya’s notebook in her hands and began to read. She was surprised at one place and asked Maya what the problem she was facing in writing. Maya told her. :-

“The Influence problem, I saw my trip to India through the lens of the old writer’s writing” (63) P. 242.

Nadine gave to suggestion to overcome the problem:-

“Keep his lance; use it like a filter as you would while taking photos. I promise it will free you.” (64) P. 242.

Maya told her that her suggestion had a paradox- to get free by putting the self in chains. Maya told her that she loved the seventy five year old writer. Nadine told her about her love – affair with an old man. A Sixty Year Old man a choreographer. He did not keep good health, then, one day she come to know that he got AIDS, as he was a gay.
Maya returned to her apartment and started editing and re-writing her India notes. By the afternoon she did ten pages. Then the atmosphere outside became cloudy and it started raining.

Experiencing the rains outside Maya was reminded of a particular day in India, when she stayed with friend for a week; the two of them had been drenched in a thunderstorm. When they got home her friend’s mother had greeted them with some “Fresh, hot Pakoras and some strong tea. The two friends sat in the covered front, after getting dried, watching the rain fall as they ate hot Pakoras and drank tea.

The rain that day in Paris reminded Maya of the rain in India. Without Pakoras Maya got restless, she wanted munching something salty. She wished she were sitting in Prem’s apartment sipping a cup of hot Indian tea. Maya called Prem and put the idea of hot tea and Pakoras. Prem invited her and assured her a cup of hot tea, and some French ‘croquets’ in place of Pakoras. He told Maya that the hotels normally do not make home delivery, but because he was old and a regular customer they would oblige him once a while.

On reaching there, Maya told Prem that she wanted to see rains with him, and took his hand in hers. The ‘Croquets’ were delivered by the hotel-boy, and they both want into the kitchen. Prem put the tea-kettle on to boil. Maya kept on munching, and then they went to the living room with cup of tea.

From the stake of CDs Maya pickup A.R. Rehman and pushed in to the CD player. Maya and Prem began to dance on the Music. Prem became quite romantic and sexual. He thought while dancing –

“Think Valerie, Think Julie, You could do it then, you can do it now, It’s just a dance.” (65) P. 246.

Maya was mouthing the song. “Mustafa, Mustafa.” Prem and Maya become physically closer- Prem held Maya and swayed with her. Maya rested her head comfortably on his shoulder and touched his arms with her hand. Their dance continued with second and third song. She grabbed Prem this time and spun him, till he got tired.
The rains had stopped, and the afternoon sun was drowning the city in its glow. Maya suggested going for a walk, Prem agreed for a short walk. But, before going out, both wanted to give something to each other. Prem gave her a flat shell from Etretat, and Maya gave him and envelop. Maya looked very happy and kissed Prem before walking to the metro and Prem took a cab and went to Pascal’s House.

Pascal Found Prem in a happy mood. Pascal was listening to the music of Ella Fitzgerald on the stereo in the living room. Prem grabbed Pascal’s hand and danced, crooning ‘I’m the happiest.’ When Pascal asked him why he was so happy, Prem reminded Pascal that he had once suggested that to be happy one should love somebody. Pascal Agreed and told him that he was happy because of Iren’s love. Although she has left only a few month’s life but she was the only woman who really loved, not for his fame, but for him only. Pascal’s words put Prem into a reverie that when doctors had declared Meher one month’s life left. Prem had discounted the hours she would spend sleeping, and counted that less than five hundred hours were left. He thought in his mind:

“I counted every second of the five hundred hours. I still remember that is one point-eight Million Seconds.” (66) P.251.

The two friends discussed the true nature of love, about Valerie having two kids in the present. Prem told him that much against his usual writing, he was writing on sex - pure on sex. He said, “It’s not for publication. It’s my journal. After fifty years of writing I ‘am finally keeping a journal writing only for myself.” (67) P. 253.

Prem explained about his Idea:

“I want something with Maya that is beyond all my past experiences with love, beyond my fame and success. Just pure feelings, I want us to be pure stomachs eating cheese.” (68) P. 254.

When Prem reached his apartment and opened the envelope Maya had given. There was a rough sketch of two people kissing. Maya wrote a note below it that she saw those two figures placed on an island; she had decided that she wanted to see it with Prem.
When Maya alighted from the metro she had a message on her cell – phone from Jean – Pierre inviting her at his apartment. Pierre was cooking something. They ate and watched a film on video than they want to bed and had sex. Maya thought that her relations with Prem were intellectual and with Jean Pierre she was only flesh. They had sex, and he discharged, and turned away his head. Jean Pierre seemed to Maya burden. Pierre’s conversations with her were turning tedious and his phone-calls were a terrible chore.

Maya was truly in love with Prem, not physically, but with all her heart and soul. Maya got a phone call from Prem, inviting her to accompany him to visit the Rodin museum. Maya went to the Museum within half an hour. Prem was waiting, having a red Scarf around his neck. Maya commented that Prem was looking handsome. Maya was wearing a male cargo pants. They started watching in the rooms on the ground floor. Prem thought of touching Maya at various Places, and wondered if Maya also had the same tactile feeling and need. In the next room, at the first glimpse of the naked woman, Prem’s sex in his pants had aroused. In the meanwhile Maya’s hand was moving and rested on Prem’s shoulders. He stepped aside and thought if she touched him, he was sure he would come in his pants. He kept distance, as he was having the maximum erection. He wanted to go to bathroom. He was sure everyone could see his erection through his pants, everyone but Maya as he kept himself away from her. Luckily the sun disappeared behind clouds, and it got cold. They both decided to return to Prem’s Place to have hot tea.

In the apartment, the first thing he did was he went to the bathroom and pulled down his pants. He then thought of Maya and many other women to get ejaculation and be relieved. Finally he felt relieved, and then he washed his face and joined Maya in the living room. When he asked Maya what she wanted to do Maya told him with some hesitation that she wanted to hug him. Prem oblige and they hugged while sitting. He stroked her hair. They were not comfortable, so Maya suggested they should go to bed. The writer narrated she scene. Thus:-

“He led on her to his room, He held her tightly at first, but then his grip released and they lay side by side, his left arm booked under the neck and his hand gently caressing the top of her arm.” (69) P. 260
Maya was totally carried away, emotionally as well as sexually. She told Prem –

“We have crossed the ocean and time zones. We’ve climbed over the mountain of time, over weeks and months.”(70) P.261.

Maya told Prem that after a few weeks she would return to America. She also told him that very soon she’s going to break away from Jean Pierre.

Maya left and Prem felt consulting a Physician to find out if it was normal for a septuagenarian to turn into an erotomaniac.

When Maya reached her apartment, she called Nadine, as she wanted to hear her story. Nadine went up to Maya’s apartment dressed for a ballet programme. Before and Nadine could talk, Jean Pierre rang for Maya and he suspected that Maya was having lesbian relationship with a female friend. Jean wanted to confirm the fact by paying a visit to Maya. Maya agitated, and divided to break with him. Nadine took leave saying to Maya to visit her after Jean Pierre was gone.

Jean Pierre’s first question to Maya on his visit was whether Maya was sleeping with her female friend. Maya felt bad and angry. She immediately told him that she could not be with anymore. Moreover she told him that she was in love with Prem. Jean just laughed and told her that he did not mind Prem, and they could still continue their relationship. When Maya firmly told him that she did not want to have any relationship with him; he then got up and left the apartment, letting the door slam.

After that, Maya went to Nadine’s apartment and told her:-

“I broke up. I was mean, but I don’t know how I could have done it better. There is no right way. I guess.” (71) P. 264.

Then, Maya asked Nadine whether she met her lover, the old choreographer. She replied that she had once paid him a visit after he had been admitted in the hospital. Nadine further told her that she did not say anything to him, but instead she danced before him. Watching hi choreographing the dances on the stages, earlier, Nadine wanted to her dance to be choreographed by him. But that did not happen. Nadine praised his art of
choreography and showed Maya some of his choreographed dances with the projector. Then Nadine wanted to show her dance, Parallel to the dancing of a couple on the screen. Then, she danced and Maya noticed the couple on the screen behind and Nadine’s own body juxtaposed against the screen. Nadine further told about her meeting with old choreographer:-

“He was entirely bedridden in the hospital when I asked him if I could dance for him. I danced and he watched, and I knew that he understood that I had done for me it was like showing the baby to the further.” (P.72) P. 265.

During her last visit, after her dance she eats besides him and they looked at each other. He was quite weak. She said that he used to be handsome when he was young. In his time he had slept with every beautiful dancer in the world. But AIDS had entirely ravaged his body. Maya asked about his last words to Nadine and She said:-

He said “I was never so beautiful in my life. Thank You.” (73) P. 266.

Prem and Maya were neck-deep in love, and there was perfect understanding between them. After Maya’s breakup with Jean Pierre, Prem was the only idol of her soul – sleeping or waking; there was only Prem and Prem. It was the love, like between god and devotee, artist and art lover; it was the love between beauty and artist.

In a casual incident in the novel, Pascal hosted a party inviting prem and Valerie. Pascal’s wife, Irene was also present. Prem under want various kind medical check-up tests; everything was normal. Prem met Valerie after a lot of time. In reply to Prem’s question about her life and work. Valerie replied:-

“I’ve got two kids. My husband is doing a building project with an American Company, so he was away frequently. I don’t work, I’m just raising children.” (74) P.271-72.

Prem received a phone call from Homi and Ratan from India informing him they are visiting Paris for ten days, in the middle of the next week. Pre was very happy.
There is an intense love-scene between Prem and Maya – a perfect love scene, where age and any other kinds of differences do not matter. Maya visited Prem at his apartment. Both of them involved in full blooded kissing. The scene is described thus:-

“When he turned his face down to kiss her forehead, she lifted her face up and received his lips on hers. The first lips in ten years, the first lips since Valerie’s ten years ago. The exploration of her tongue, her lips, her gums come naturally to Prem.” (75) P. 273.

Afterwards, they went together to the place called Bois de Boulogne to see the statues that were a man and a woman, kissing each other. Maya had earlier sent a sketch of those statues in the island. It was a very romantic and sexy experience for both of them. During the whole period of that visit Maya and Prem kept holding their hands. Afterwards they went to a restaurant for dinner. Prem asked Maya about her family and Maya replied

“My father is coping. He is duty bound to her, and I should admire him for it. But I want him to have joy. If he goes away even for a week-end, she stops eating. I can’t help thinking that she’s punishing him, but he accepts all the punishment. He smiles through it.” (78) P. 275.

Maya told him that she had invited her father to New York around her birthday – as a birthday present. After dinner they returned back to Prem’s flat. Prem gave her the extra Pyjama and then they went to bed. Prem told her about sex that since he had not done it for ten years, so needed some time. Maya whispered into his ears:-

“We can give it as much time as we want, then she slid her hand inside his pyjama top and caressed chest as he fell asleep.” (77) P. 277

The next morning while taking coffee at café, Pre told her:-

“My family is showing up. I need to organize the flat. They’ll take the so-called office room.” (78) P. 277.

Maya assured him her help. At a Men’s shop Maya helped Prem pick out a soft flannel set in a shade of blue that went well with his silver hair. Maya took stock of all the
swishes’ in the kitchen cabinets and made sure there were enough glasses, plates, soup bowls, and side plates for a family of three to eat.

Prem’s family arrived – his nephew Homi, his wife Deepika and Prem grandson, Ratan. Home and his wife took the guest room, but Ratan insisted on that he would sleep in grandpa’s room. At night when grandpa got into his bed, Ratan stealthily made his way up to grandpa’s bed. Prem lifted his quite to let the Boy jump in. After Ratan went to sleep, Prem kept awake in bed speaking to his dead sister’s Meher:

“Meher, I want to die, if it weren’t for the fact the it would traumatize him to find me dead, I can think of no moment happier than the moments with him.”
(79) P. 278.

Prem’s inner most emotions reveal his deep-rooted love for Meher, and that had turned towards Homi and Ratan. In the morning, Ratan told Prem that he loved him more than his father loved him, because a grandfather is closer than an uncle. During the day Home and Deepika went for sightseeing, and Ratan remained with Prem. Prem arranged to have his lunch with Pascal (and Irene). Ratan talked a lot about Prem’s relations with Meher that Prem loved Meher more than even her husband loved her.

Prem took Ratan for sightseeing. They took a cab and reached at place du Pantheon. Prem told about the Place. :-

“Some of France’s greatest writers and thinkers are buried here. We’re going down to see them.” (80) P.280.

Prem briefly introduced Rousseau, Voltaire Marie- Curie and her husband. Than Late 20th Century Writers like Dumas, Hago and Emile Zola.

Pascal and Irene joined them; both of them were very much interested in Ratan. They went to visit victor Hugo’s House.

While returning, Ratan talked a lot about Meher’s Death, that affected Prem intensely and he went in to reverie. That might again rattan Slept with Prem and very emotionally, he told Prem:-
“Grandpa, I promise I’ll take care of you, when you get old, I’ll make you laugh a lot.” (81) P.286.

Love generally makes people distracted and dreamy, but Maya experienced a sense of discipline. She felt emotional stability after Prem’s lips kissed her. In the few weeks that were left of the Paris fiction fellowship, a lot of work was still remaining, but for Maya it was easy. Walking at seven in the morning, she worked from eight to noon and then again from one to six. Maya had not met or seen Prem for three days. One day Maya met her neighbour Nadine and her lesbian friend Clara.

The next morning, unable to control her, she called him and told him that she was badly missing him. Prem invited her to join them at a restaurant for dinner.

In the meantime, it became a routine that Deepika and Homi Left Ratan with Prem so that they could explore Paris. One afternoon Prem invited Valerie with her kids to meet at some Place, so that Ratan would get company of kids. While the kids were given sheets and colours for drawing, Prem and Valerie went to the garden. Prem told her about his love with Maya. Valerie appreciated Prem’s Body and commented that he could put a person of sixty to shame. They remembered ten year old days of romance.

Prem, Pascal, Maya and Ratan were seated at the appointed restaurant for dinner, Homi and Deepika also joined them. They both told that they liked Paris immensely. Maya informed Deepika that she was writing a novel with the seating of India. While they all were sitting and chatting, Prem’s hand was running along Maya’s thigh under her skirt. Ratan amused everyone by a question to Maya that she was twenty five, how could she be a friend of her grandfather who was seventy five. After the dinner they all separated Prem told Maya in whispering tone that Home and family were leaving for India, and he was impatient to have Maya in his arms.

Prem invited Pascal and Irene at his house the night before his family was to fly back to India. Before the guests arrived, Prem took home and Ratan to take a walk in the garden and visit the statue. As soon as Prem and Homi were alone, Homi starting asking various question about his dead mother-Meher- how she died, was he there, How she look?
Prem replied that as the tragic last scene of Meher’s husband and Homi as a Child were sent away elsewhere Meher and Prem were alone, with Prem Holding Her hand, when she died. Homi Informed Prem that recently he comes across some old Papers, he opened them and come to know that Prem had paid for his education. Even the money, he inherited from the trust, after his father’s death, was Prem’s Money. Homi then asked a very pointed question, as to why he did that much for him. Prem got suspicious that Homi’s next question could be whether he was Prem’s son. Prem replied in a controlled manner that Homi’s question was out of place, as he was the only person surviving whom Prem could say ‘his’. He never married nor had children, so it was all natural.

It was time for their dinner, so they all returned. Pascal and Irene had a good time with Ratan. The next day Prem’s guests left for India, and Prem met Maya in the afternoon, taking tea together. They were sitting very close and caressing, and later, after dinner, as they lay in bed, Maya removed Prem’s shirt only after the room was dark. Maya was excited. Prem could only kiss her, and he felt helpless that he could not do much. Maya told Prem “Prem, I’m happy.” Thus for Maya it was the perfect bliss to be near to Prem in bed, making love. Sexual Satisfaction did not matter.

The next might when Maya visited Prem, She told him that she was leaving shortly for America and then what would happen to their relationship. Prem told her very seriously:-

“Ridiculous as it is a man of seventy five to say this, I’ve been thinking about the future. At my age you don’t think of ‘forever and ever.’ You think of today, tomorrow, day after, and in my case, I don’t think a young woman like you should have to worry about wheeling around an eighty year old man.” (82) P.308.

Prem further explained about their relationship in America that the two would live together in Prem’s House:-

“Ideally I’d like you to feel you have your own room in my house. You can come and go as you like. May be spending the week-end or a few – days in a
week…. Maya, there is no minimum or maximum. I don’t want you get sick of me. I’ve got a very quiet life, and I’m too old to be going out all the time and doing the kinds of energetic things you young people do.” (83) P.309-310.

Maya agreed about the proposal. Prem also told her very frankly that he went to Paris only because Maya told him that she was going to Paris on a fellowship. After that both realized that they had pure love for each other almost platonic. Prem followed her to Paris, not for sex; and Maya loved him for his sake, not for sex. That Might Maya told Prem:-

“I feel like Galatea coming alive to Pygmalion’s Kiss” (84) P.311.

She was moaning at the sensation of his flesh everywhere her own.

At the time of their last meeting in Paris, Prem handed Maya a note-book with something written about Maya, with a condition that she would not read that before boarding the plane for U.S.

Maya started reading Prem’s notebook on her. Once she started reading it, she was not longer aware of the wailing babies or the unpleasant smell of mass quantities of packaged food being heated up Maya read that:-

“Prem had missed nothing about her, the small mole on the tip of her right ear, the configuration of her teeth, her habit of walking with her right foot angled open.” (85) P. 313.

Thus, Prem had drank deep Maya- her body, Manners, behaviour, everything. On her second reading of the notebook Maya understood more, and on her third reading, things were clearer.

Prem Rustum reached the U.S. home Prem’s Love-story with Maya was heading towards the extreme of love, bliss and final end. Prem told Mrs Smith that some guest would be visiting at dinner and she would be staying Maya also reached her home and after a brief meeting with Roger Johnson, she reached Prem’s house, with two bags. Prem
introduced Mrs Smith to Maya. After tea Prem took Maya for a tour of the House. They reached Prem’s bedroom. Maya kicked off her sandals and sat on the bed cross legged. After dinner they sent away Mrs Smith for the might, and went to the bedroom, where after some casual talks Maya went to her room for unpacking her luggage, to be back with Prem shortly.

That is all we are given about the life of Prem and Maya, living together, art Prem’s apartment. We are left to imagine the perfect bliss of love of them. In the last few pages of the novel the readers are given the brief details of things that happened after Prem’s death.

Edward, the publishing agents of Prem, visited Maya after a few hours, of Prem’s death. He told her that he had already spoken to Pascal and Prem’s nephew in India, Homi about the sad demise of prem. They were both trying to get on the nest plane for the United States, but he intended to go ahead and cremate the body that very day. It was Prem’s wish. They would have the asks for the service, but that would be finalized after information about Pascal and Homi’s reaching there.

Edward also spoke to Maya that while in Paris Prem had informed him that he was going to write a book for one person, not meant for publishing. Prem had also told him that it was an erotic prival journal, and he had already given her the first chapter, when Edward asked how did he happen to meet her, Prem named Roger Johnson, Then, Prem had told Edward that he call him for a special purpose, that he wanted to change his will and wanted the attorney. He told him that he wanted his notebooks and fan mail to go to her, i.e. Maya-May Stevenson. He also recommended that Johnson’s stories may be published. Thus, Edward had to execute the changes in the will after Prem’s arrival in U.S. Thus Maya would have all the original notebooks, the long hand drafts of every book he ever wrote and the private notes that go with them- some fifty cartons.

After the body was cremated, Edward drove Maya back to the city with few boxes of Prem’s letter and note books on Maya’s floor. He asked Maya:-
“He rejected literature. He used to say his immortality lay in his work. And then he made you his immortality. He wrote for you. Do you know why he rejected literature?” (86) P. 324.

Maya replied to Edward’s queries:-

“I don’t think he rejected literature. You’re misunderstanding everything. We talked about books and art all summer, the possibility of creation, of art engendering art. He went to Normandy with Pascal and said to me that it was crucial for a writer to tack to other writers.” (87) P. 325.

But Edward was not convinced. He believed somehow Maya was responsible for Prem’s Death:-

He thought: - “If only she had not written that letter and they had not made love they did. Two times if only she hadn’t strained him, been so greedy to be close to him, he might still be alive.” (88) P. 326.

Edward called Maya early in the morning to inform her that a car would pick her up for the service scheduled later that day. Both Pascal and he would speak at the service along with a scientist called Krishnan. He asked for if she wanted say anything Maya declined.

Edward went to the airport to receive Pascal on the way home he asked Pascal if Prem Less than normal that summer, Pascal replied.

“On the contrary, I’ve never seen him better. He had his ups and downs, but he had many, many bursts of energy, Brilliant energy. Joy Explosions.”(89) P. 328.

To another question by Edward as to why he had stopped writing and writing only for the girl, Pascal answered.

“On that! It was fantastic I think he loved the idea, and loved doing it” (86) P.328.
But some questions were still puzzling Edward Pascal Explained further at Length:-

“Prem held he back all these years. He never made the final plunge with any of his girlfriends in the past thirty five years. He had options, real choices with devoted women, but he always held back that Kernel of himself to save it for his writing... We reversed it in the summer. He chose to live.... He needed to know he was now in it with Maya, only with Maya, not with books.” (90) P. 328

Pascal and Edward’s car reached up to the chapel where the funeral service was to be held. Within minutes Maya joined them. Edward told them, that the ashes from the crematorium were inside, and they would carry the URN after the service was over. Pascal asked Maya a brief question if she was with him, and if he did suffer at the time of death. Maya answered him that she was with him and that Prem died in sleep, she was also asleep.

A brief description Prem’s last hours and moments is given from Maya’s point of view. They were sleeping embracing each other, but in the middle of night Prem told her they he was feeling cold; Maya’s warm body reached it and folded him in her arms. Prem muttered about extending the period of their contract. Then they both went into deep sleep. Suddenly Maya awoke finding something wrong. With a loud cry of ‘Prem’ she s he shook him, she knew something was wrong. She put the light on and cried, ‘Prem say something’. He was light on and cried, ‘Prem say something’. He was still warm but no longer breathing. Maya could other the words – “No, you can’t, Prem Oh God!” Maya assured Pascal and Edward they he was not in pain Homi also reached at the place of service. He told them they he did not tell Ratan anything about the tragedy.

A brief description of the funeral service is given:-

“By eleven, when the service was scheduled, the hall was full, and the people crowded the aisles, Maya sat in front flanked by Pascal and Edward. They both gave their eulogies. Homi twisted and untwisted his hands. Maya felt as if she were not present. It was hard to focus on what was happening.” (92)P.331
The service was over and Edward handed the urn, to Homi and he was holding that close to himself. Suddenly, an unknown lady reached there and just spoke a sentence and took out a spoonful of ashes from the Urn and put it into her jar. Before Homi could utter anything, she told him:-

“He wanted it so badly. You’ll find it in his will.” (93) P. 332

Maya, having seen the woman and the ashes in the Urn Uttered, ‘is that all that’s left of him; and she fainted.

That woman was Judith a great admirer fan and lover of Prem. After Meher and Maya, if anybody loved Prem boundlessly, it was Judith Q, but she was unfortunate that she could not have Prem even for a brief period.

Having taken two spoons of ashes, she immediately wants away, in the commotion that resulted due to Maya’s having fallen to the floor. Judith took a taxi and reached her home, and placed the ashes-jar on a side table in front of her largest Rustum Photo. She becomes thoughtful:-

“All her life she had wanted Prem to complete her. Through his books he had owned her and now finally she could put him inside her where he belonged to. Own him.” (94) P. 332.

“He (Prem) Stayed with her in the west includes when he wrote his book ‘cricket in the colonies.” (95) P. 332.

On the day of Maya’s entry into Prem’s house Maya handed Prem a note, before going for unpacking the Note that Prem gave to her before boarding the plane for U.S. and Maya’s that note to Prem were exactly alike. Thus, Maya was totally overwhelmed by Prem. Maya’s note had created a magical effect on Prem after reading her and seeing her. They immediately went to bed and started sex without exchanging words.

In the last scene with Johnson Maya almost turned to stone, when she said:-
“I want to 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.” (96) P. 338.

Thus, ended the Saga of immortal love and art. True love knows no barrier of age, time, place or anything else. Truly the novel ‘That summer in Paris’ reflects on how art informs love and love, literature.
REFERENCES:

Page – 85

Page – 89

Page – 91

Page – 91

Page – 97

Page – 99

Page – 109

Page – 112

Page – 113

Page – 129

Page – 130

Page – 132


