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**Holding On to What Truly Matters: The Significance of Cherishing
Relationships Before Time Slips Away in Preethi Shenoy's
The Hundred Little Flames.**

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Abstract

Family ties, intergenerational relationships, and finding love in unexpected places are all explored in the endearing modern novel *A Hundred Little Flames* (2017). After losing his job in Bengaluru, Ayan, a young guy, is forced to live with his 80-year-old grandfather, Gopal Shanker, in a small Keralan hamlet. At first, Ayan feels cut off from both the location and the person as he struggles with the rustic way of life and his grandfather's traditional traditions. But as time goes on, he and his grandfather grow close, learning about family secrets, old tales, and the value of friendship and perseverance. The novel's fundamental themes—love, grief, forgiveness, and the need to preserve relationships before it's too late—are encapsulated in Shenoy's signature mix of relatability and emotional depth.

Keywords: Gratitude, Forgiveness, Time, Family bonds, Friendship, Companionship, Regret and Memories.

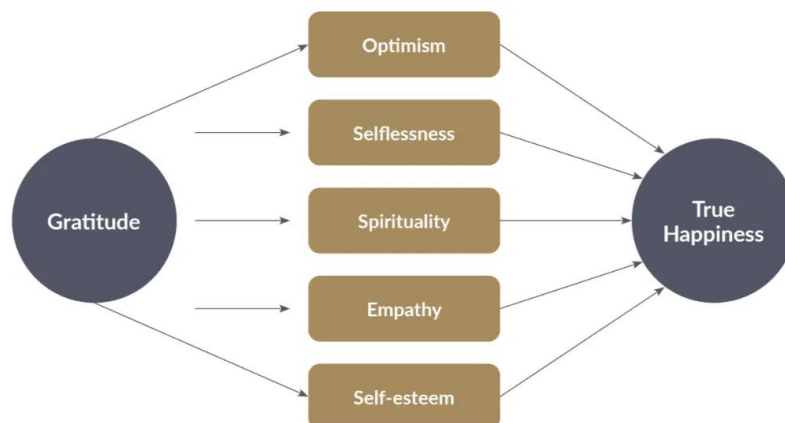
One of India's most well-known modern authors, Preeti Shenoy, is frequently included among the best-selling authors in the nation. She writes on subjects like love, relationships, self-discovery, and resilience and is well-known for her emotionally compelling storylines and sympathetic storytelling. Millions of readers have been impacted by the depth and simplicity of her writings, such as *It Happens for a Reason*, *The Secret Wish List*, and *Life is What You Make It*. She has authored non-fiction about motivation and relationships in addition to fiction. Shenoy is a favourite among contemporary Indian readers because of her ability to portray common human emotions in a way that appeals to readers of all ages.

The endearing works *A Hundred Little Flames*, which was published in 2017, examines the value of preserving ties and relationships between generations. The narrative centres on Ayan, a young man who lost his job in the city and was transferred to live with his 80-year-old grandfather, Gopal Shanker, in a small Keralan town. The work masterfully contrasts the fast-paced, modern life of youth with the wisdom and solitude of old age, highlighting themes of love, loss, forgiveness, and memories. At first,

Ayan struggles with the rural lifestyle and his grandfather's strict ways, but over time, he learns about family secrets, untold stories, and the true meaning of companionship. Through the story, Shenoy serves as a reminder to readers of the importance of relationships and the necessity of valuing those you love before it's too late.

Relationships Should Be Treasured Before It's Too Late: The people we love cannot always be around us forever because life goes quickly. All too frequently, it is only after time has passed that we truly appreciate a relationship. Being present with the people who are most important to us, expressing love, being thankful, and forgiving others swiftly are all ways to cherish relationships while we still have them. It serves as a reminder that while unspoken comments and unsolved disputes can turn into regrets that last a lifetime, tiny acts of kindness and care can build enduring memories. By cherishing our relationships now, we make sure that tomorrow we have serenity and warmth in our hearts instead of regret for things that were left spoken or undone.

Gratitude – Appreciating the presence, love, and support of people in our lives, Forgiveness – Letting go of grudges and healing emotional wounds to strengthen bonds, Time – Recognizing that moments are fleeting and must be valued before they pass, Family bonds – Nurturing the foundation of love and care that holds families together, Friendship – Treasuring the trust, loyalty, and joy friends bring into our lives, Companionship – Finding comfort and meaning in the presence of loved ones, Regret – The pain that comes when we fail to express love or mend broken ties in time, Memories – Lasting treasures of shared experiences that bring comfort when people are no longer with us.



The Neuroscience of Gratitude and Effects on the Mind (PositivePsychology.com. 2019, April))

Relationships are the foundation of our pleasure and mental health throughout life. Expressing thankfulness to those we care about not only improves relationships but also gives them a sense of worth and appreciation. However, because clinging to anger frequently results in strained relationships and long-lasting regret, forgiving is essential for mending injuries and resolving miscommunications. It is crucial to show love and kindness now rather than waiting for tomorrow because time does not wait for anyone. While friendship offers happiness, loyalty, and a sense of belonging, family ties give us unwavering support.

Companionship is equally vital since it offers us strength in both good and bad times and reassures us that we are not travelling through life alone. In the end, we are left with memories, which, when people are gone from our lives, turn into invaluable treasures. We can make sure that our lives are full of love, warmth, and meaningful connections rather than emptiness and regret by valuing relationships before it is too late. One of life's biggest facts is that nothing lasts forever, and human life is short. We frequently neglect the people who are most important in the midst of our daily obligations, forgetting that relationships require love and care. It is crucial to take the time to thank loved ones for being in our lives since doing so not only improves relationships but also reassures people of their

significance. Small acts of kindness or even the most basic expressions of gratitude can have a profound effect and enhance the meaning and fulfilment of relationships. The function of forgiveness in maintaining relationships is equally important. Although disagreements and miscommunications will inevitably arise, deciding to forgive and let go of past wrongs promotes recovery and development. Bitterness persists without forgiveness, causing a gap that could be challenging to heal in the future. We prevent anger from overshadowing ties by resolving problems with empathy and compassion, guaranteeing that love and understanding come before ego.

Time is another element that serves as a reminder of how brittle human connections are. Opportunities to show affection or make atonement can pass without being noticed, and time lost cannot be recovered. This reality highlights how crucial it is to value the present, spend time with our loved ones, and be present. Relationships ultimately flourish on persistent efforts – listening, caring, and being there when it counts most – rather than on extravagant displays. Family ties, the cornerstone of unconditional love and stability, are at the core of these ideals. Families serve as an anchor in our lives, providing support through difficult times and celebrating us when we are happy. In a similar vein, friendship reminds us that chosen ties can be just as powerful as blood ties and enhances our lives with trust, humour, and companionship. Companionship, whether from family or friends, adds significance to our trip by offering consolation, inspiration, and a feeling of inclusion.

In the end, we just have memories – pictures of genuine talks, moments of togetherness, and shared laughter. When folks are no longer with us, these memories turn into gems that bring comfort and serve as a reminder of the love we once had. We must learn to value these relationships while we can, putting people before things, to prevent a lifetime of regret. We leave a legacy of warmth that lasts long after we are gone when we invest in love, kindness, and caring.

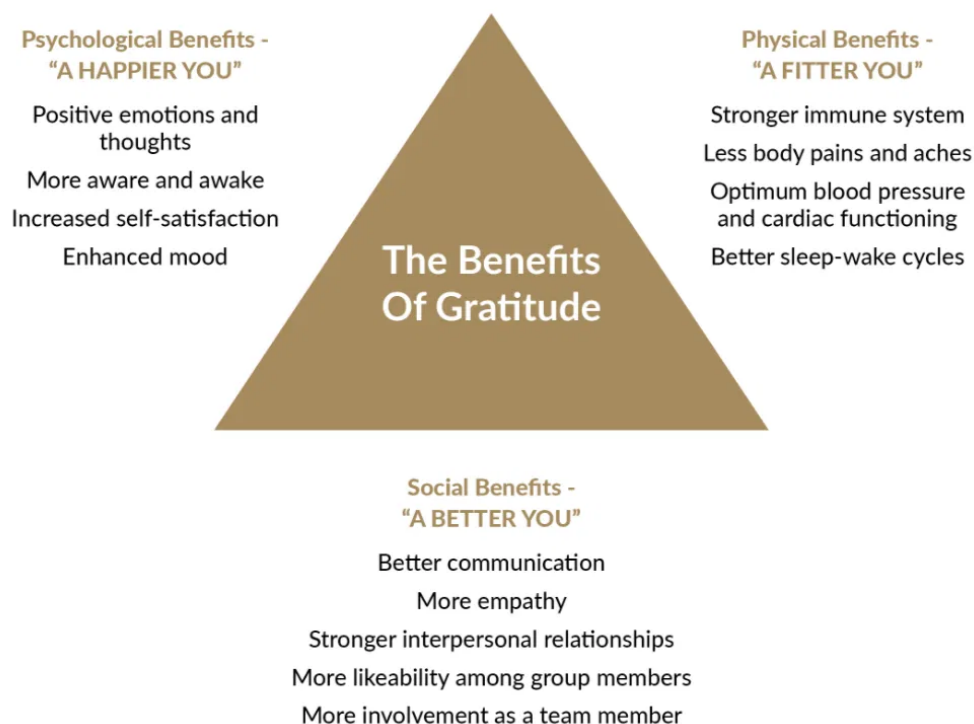


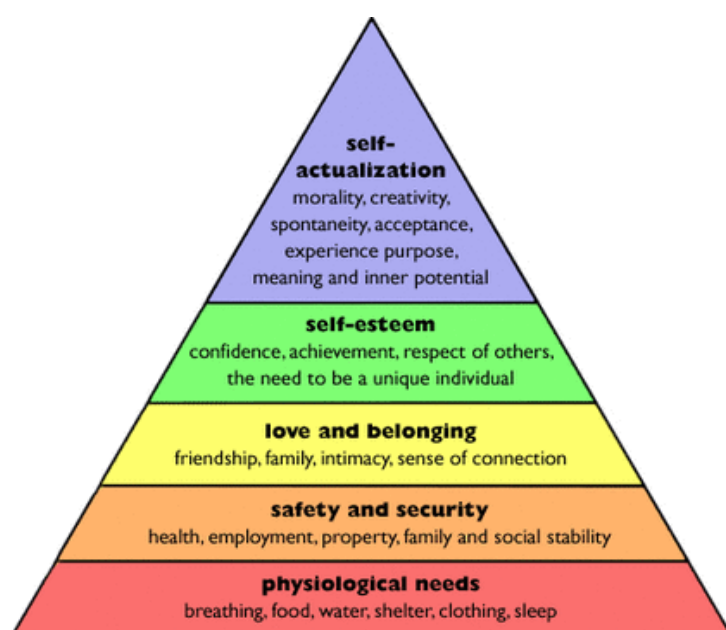
Image Source (PositivePsychology.com. 2019b, April).

One of the most effective yet straightforward habits that can change our lives is practising gratitude. By intentionally valuing the people, things, and benefits in our lives, we cultivate an optimistic outlook that enhances our mental and emotional health. It boosts happiness and contentment while lowering stress, anxiety, and negative emotions. Since showing gratitude to others makes them feel appreciated and strengthens ties of affection and trust, it also improves relationships. Physically, it

is associated with greater sleep, reduced blood pressure, and enhanced general wellness. Furthermore, by encouraging us to concentrate on our blessings rather than our shortcomings, thankfulness helps us become more resilient and meet obstacles head-on. Additionally, it boosts motivation and productivity, fostering a happy atmosphere at home, at work, or in the classroom. In the end, gratitude teaches us to live in the moment, substituting mindfulness and delight for comparison and dissatisfaction, which makes life happier, healthier, and more fulfilling.

The most important life lessons are frequently imparted to us after it is too late to take action. Assuming that our loved ones will always be there, we often take our relationships for granted in our quest for comfort, success, and personal objectives. In actuality, though, nothing in life is permanent, and the people who give our days purpose, happiness, and love could not always be there. This emphasises how crucial it is to take a moment to think, reflect, and value relationships while we still have them. Gratitude is one of the most effective strategies to strengthen relationships. A heartfelt thank you or other expression of gratitude can go a long way toward reminding people of their importance in our lives. People frequently want to be acknowledged and reassured that they are important, not large-scale displays of devotion. By expressing our thanks honestly and freely, we create love bridges that fortify and strengthen relationships over time. "Attitude is a choice. Happiness is a choice. Optimism is a choice. Kindness is a choice. Giving is a choice. Respect is a choice. Whatever choice you make makes you. Choose wisely." (Roy T. Bennett, *The Light in the Heart*)

Forgiveness is another essential component of solid relationships. Because people are fallible, miscommunications, conflicts, and errors are unavoidable. However, harbouring hatred only serves to widen gaps and foster bitterness. By extending forgiveness, we release ourselves from the burden of wrath as well as others from the burden of guilt. Unspoken grudges frequently become regrets as time runs out, yet forgiveness changes relationships and enables them to grow and heal. Perhaps the most important factor in comprehending the brittleness of human ties is time. Chances to show affection or make amends are fleeting, and time lost cannot be recovered. It is simple to put off visits, talks, or reconciliations in our hectic lives, but when things change, the postponement may become irreversible. An investment in emotional health that yields incalculable benefits is spending time with loved ones. The warmth of human connection, in contrast to material belongings, can only be fostered and not purchased.



Maslow's Theory and Gratitude - The Pharmacist's Guide (Source: Squarespace. (n.d.). *Gratitude animation* [GIF]. Squarespace)

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, human motivation starts with the satisfaction of fundamental needs like safety, sustenance, and belonging, and then progressively advances toward more advanced levels like self-actualisation and esteem. Because it enables people to stop and appreciate the demands that are already met rather than continuously aiming for more, gratitude is essential to this process. As noted in *The Pharmacist's Guide*, thankfulness promotes contentment and lessens harmful comparison, which makes it simpler to see where we are in Maslow's hierarchy. People are more likely to develop resilience and progress toward self-actualisation when they are grateful for their safety, connections, and individual accomplishments.

Gratitude not only improves interactions with patients but also fosters a sense of dignity and belonging, meeting psychological and social demands in the healthcare industry, particularly in pharmacy practice. In the end, thankfulness helps people—both professionals and individuals—experience greater fulfilment, peaks in their lives, and a more meaningful existence by bridging the gap between deficiency needs and growth requirements.

Family ties, which provide us with stability and unconditional love, are another source of strength for relationships. We are shaped throughout our lives by the sense of identity, belonging, and emotional stability that families give us. In addition, friendship offers companionship, laughter, and loyalty in both happy and sad times, adding depth and colour. Having a spouse, sibling, or close friend by our side lets us know that we are never really alone in our problems. These connections provide a network of support that keeps us going even during the most trying moments. When all is said and done, what's left are memories—those tiny shards of happiness, love, and community that endure long after people have passed away. We can revisit the cosiness of bygone eras by drawing comfort from our memories. However, they can also be depressing if they are accompanied by regret for things that were not stated or done. Regret serves as a sobering reminder that chances lost cannot be recovered. Living completely in our relationships now, demonstrating love and care while we still have the opportunity, is crucial to preventing such suffering.

Prioritising human connections over ego, diversions, or the appearance of permanency is ultimately what it means to treasure relationships before it's too late. It's about keeping in mind that the relationships we form determine our quality of life much more than any material accomplishment ever would. By cultivating thankfulness, accepting forgiveness, scheduling time, and appreciating our relationships, we not only build fulfilling relationships but also leave a loving legacy that lives on after us.

In the end, people will remember how much we loved them and how truly we made them feel valued, not the possessions we had or the titles we held. Life is too unpredictable to put off forgiveness, love, or thankfulness. The ultimate meaning of our lives is found in the relationships we have with our family, friends, and companions; these relationships help to shape who we are and provide us with strength in both happy and sad times. In addition to making wonderful experiences, we protect ourselves from the burden of regret in the future when we take the time to cultivate these relationships. Preserving relationships before it's too late is an investment in legacy, happiness, and peace, not just a gesture of goodwill. In the end, the love we offer and the relationships we maintain are our greatest assets, not material belongings.

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