

Blood isn't Always Thicker than Water

- Harshwardhan Prasad

Almost everyone uses “blood is thicker than water” to justify choosing family bonds over the bonds we have made. However, the actual quote is -

“The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb.”

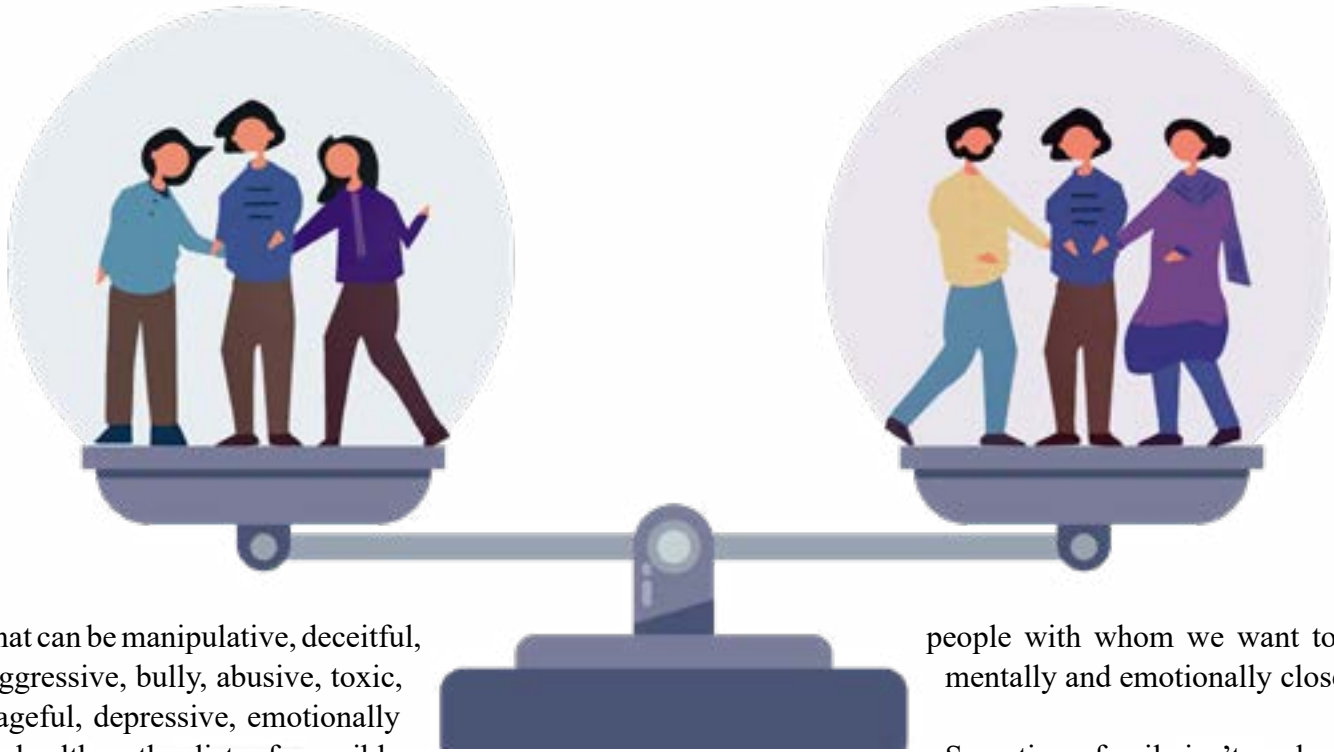
The original meaning of the phrase is that bloodshed on the battlefield creates a stronger bond between soldiers than simple familial or genetic ties. In principle, it reflects that the bonds you choose for yourself can mean much more than the ones you are born with.

Most of us have been told that family ties are highly revered and prized, and they should come above anyone else in one’s life regardless of the character or emotional health of the person or how they treat us. Instead of such a blanket statement, I’d

like to say that it depends on many factors. Most dictionaries define family as a group of people who are descended from a common ancestor, basically bounded by blood, and live together in a household. However, I choose to believe in Urban Dictionary, clearly a far superior source, that family is a group of people who genuinely love, trust and care about each other, regardless of whether they share blood or are forced to spend holidays pretending they like each other.

We live in a culture where if someone is a parent, sibling, or any blood relative then it is considered inconceivable to not have that person in life. Doing so is deemed an abnormality and is said to indicate a major “flaw” within the person. This is a wrong mindset and, at worst, a damaging one. There may be people in our lives who are family- a parent, sibling, cousin, other relatives, you name it, who are outrightly bad for us. While some family members are kind-hearted people who treat their loved ones with respect, genuine love, and support, there are a wide-sweeping number of people who have family





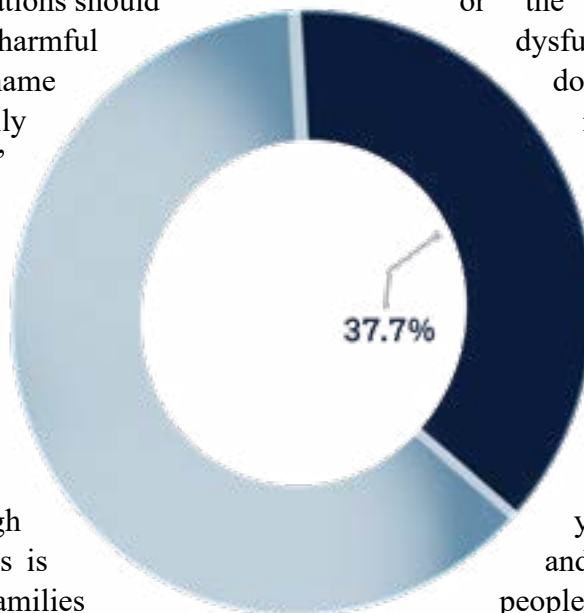
that can be manipulative, deceitful, aggressive, bully, abusive, toxic, rageful, depressive, emotionally unhealthy -the list of possible harmful traits just goes on and on. Take, for example, Katy Perry, who's parents never supported her music career and criticized the songs that she wrote and sang. But that didn't stop her from following her passion and reaching great heights in her career.

An abusive family member is no way different than a random cruel person who's abusive. To maintain mental along with emotional integrity and well-being, these kinds of toxic relations should not be held close. To stay in a harmful relationship out of guilt or shame just because that person is family and that's what one "should" do is a very unhealthy thing. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), 37.7% of the suicides in India are because of non-marriage related family problems. It is important to understand that everyone has downfalls and goes through periods of hardships, and this is normal and healthy for all families to endure. But, this doesn't apply to the family members that are abusive and an overall detriment to the family's wellbeing. Unfortunately, we can't choose our blood but we can choose the

people with whom we want to be mentally and emotionally close.

Sometimes family isn't so abusive but they just fail to understand you.

Let us take a trip down the memory lane and recall Farhan from the movie '3 Idiots'. He wanted to pursue a career in photography but his Dad wanted him to become an engineer. It was his friends, Raju and Rancho, who supported him throughout and in the end he became a successful photographer and they acted more as a family, by being supportive and having his back, than his parents. If anyone in your life is the detriment to your mental health or the reason behind unnecessary dysfunctionality, including family, you don't need them in your life. Family is not just the blood that runs in the veins but more so, family are the people who help you feel loved regularly and truly support you. They genuinely wish the best for you and are your greatest cheerleaders and riveted listeners. They are fun to be around and are the ones who are actually there for you and uplift you emotionally and literally, in times of need. These people are family and all of them need not be blood relations. The title of 'father', 'aunt,' 'sibling' is just a hollow word if they are dubious, deceptive, and untrustworthy.



The title in itself does not denote the emotions that is expected of a family member. For many, close friends or a romantic partner is 'more family' than several of their blood relations and this chosen family is more loving, supportive, and better than their blood relations. This should be considered a beautiful happening and a cause for celebration that someone is gifted with friends and romantic partners who make up for the deficit of kind and loving family members. George Clooney, the famous American actor, and producer, said that during his hard times his close friends loaned him money and gave him shelter and he even has their names in his will.

But just because someone is bad for you does not necessarily mean you cannot have them in your life. You can tackle them with a clear sense of awareness and putting strong boundaries and mental protections in place. Many times family can also be positive, supportive, heartwarming, and life-affirming. A

significant number of people have family members that are kind-hearted and fantastic characters. Then there are some people who have a mix of kind and not so great family members. And then there are a good number of people for whom their family members are downright awful. This is an extremely sad event but the only way for one to pursue and create healthy relationships in their life is to face this difficult truth and then to adjust their life and relations with this person accordingly.

Family isn't "everything" when one's family is not good to them and they are better off, happier, healthier, and safer, without these family members in their lives. We need to understand that for many, blood is not thicker than water. And that the people who acknowledge that and act accordingly with this reality are courageous and emotionally healthy. It is absolutely okay to cut out toxic family members out of your life, blood ain't thicker than peace of mind. ■

