

Relationships

By - Asha Deshpande

We all have different relationships in our lives. This article ponders on the basis of human relationships.

I often wonder about relationships. Is it just the ties of blood, friendship, familiarity, or is it something else? What forms the bonds?



I saw my orthopedic physician recently. I am a previous patient of his, but thankfully had not had the need to see him in the past few years.

He walked into the exam room, greeted me with a hug and said, “I am not seeing a new patient, but an old friend”. I suppose that is what happens when one lives in a small town. In spite of his busy schedule, he chatted a bit, inquired of my family and then proceeded with the medical exam.

A few months ago, I needed to do something with my lawn. When I started explaining to my lawn maintenance man, he waved me away, saying “I know what you want done. I know what you like. Hey, I have been maintaining lawns in this neighborhood for so long, I can tell you what people are having for supper!”

I remember an incident that happened a long time ago in my home town. We used to get our fresh ground coffee from the corner store. Once, an out of town cousin was visiting us. He was a city dweller and his shopping habits were different. He walked up to the store to buy coffee. This was in the good old days where one bought customized grinds of coffee beans.

“What type do you want?” asked the shop keeper. “Which mix? “How much chicory”?”

My cousin looked perplexed. The shopkeeper said, “I don’t recall seeing you before. Are you new to this area?”

“Oh, I am just visiting” replied my cousin.

“Whom are you visiting?” the shopkeeper asked. My cousin gave our family name. “Oh, them, I know exactly what to give you” he said, and gave him the ground coffee to bring home. Such were the days! The shopkeeper knew what kind of “usual” coffee his regular customers took, even when they were not present in front of him.

One of my most tender memories.

I am originally from India. After getting married, I moved to the U.S., where I have been for many years. I do visit the hometown occasionally, and see how things have changed over there. On one such visit, I stopped by at a small shop to get some cold fruit juice. The shopkeeper looked at me strangely, and then gave me a big smile of recognition. I too, recognized him. He used to own a big store in the main bazaar. He told me that the large supermarkets in the main bazar had driven him out of business and he had been forced to set up a small shop in a residential area, selling grocery items. We chatted a bit and as I about to leave, he handed me a dozen yellow bananas, a symbolic gesture of respect in Indian culture. I went to pay for them, but he folded his hands and said, “You have come from another country now. It is like the return of our daughter to her ‘*Maika*.’” (women’s parents’ home after marriage) Please accept this from me”

I had to turn and walk away fast, hoping he did not see the gush of tears in my eyes, but when I looked back, I saw him wiping his eyes. A poor vendor found room in his heart to part with something he could have charged for! It is not an exaggeration to say that those were the tastiest bananas that I have ever had!

The wonder of relationships! Is it just the ties of blood, friendship, familiarity or something else!