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## Analysis Of My Family History To Define My Identity

There are approximately 7.7 billion human beings around the world. So what sets me apart from others? It is my identity that sets me apart from others. I think of it as singular (male) and multifaceted (family identity). To me family identity means a socially and historically constructed concept and it is important because it makes me feel part of a constellation of people who identify themselves the same as I do. Keeping this in mind I think of my family identity is that I am Pakistani-Sindhi-Hindu-Maheshwari human whose ancestors have been living in fertile deserts of Tharparker for more than one millennium. At a closer look many cultural, traditional and religious identities come together to form my family history which sometimes becomes complex for me to understand. However, I find it easy to define my identity by relating it to the structure of a tree. To start from the roots of the tree, my family is a follower of Sanatana Dharma which is considered the oldest culture and religious tradition in the world. Its followers use term Dharma because it is broader than the western term religion. It is about the basic virtues of human existence. Therefore my family instilled in me teachings of Sanatana Dharma from the very beginning because they considered it a more basic pathway (lifestyle) than religion for human beings. As roots of a tree are not visible but they strongly hold the tree, Dharma values hold the basis of a person like me in this world. They might not be visible at the time, but these roots of values are something that give me an understanding of the world.

When I proceed to trunk from roots, I become a Hindu. Because whenever someone hears my name the first thing they say about me is 'You are Hindu. Right?' However, as a follower of Sanatana Dharma, I prefer to call myself a Sanatani but the term Hindu became apparent when the British colonized the Asian subcontinent. So in the modern world, based on religion I identify myself as Hindu. As I go into details and talk about the texture of trunk i.e. individuality within Hinduism, my family then belongs to Maheshwari samaj. Maheshwari is a caste that emerged in the 8th century when groups from Kshatriya Varna (caste for warriors) changed to Vaishya Varna (caste for businessmen). They originated in Rajasthan and the Thar Desert. Their main occupation was trade and commerce. This identity is intact from more than one millennium and it creates a sense of unity in Maheshwaris. Being Maheshwari in Tharparker has its perks in the sense that the dignity and authority that come with it is intriguing. This is how simple texture on the trunk of the tree makes it unique and more noticeable.

The trunk then splits into two strong branches. First and the oldest branch of my identity is Sindhi identity. This identity connects me to one of the oldest civilizations of the world i.e. Indus valley civilization. Being a part of the massive Sindhi culture and tradition that incorporates folklore, music and certain customs, makes me feel connected to its roots that have been laid down during Indus Valley Civilization. However, my ancestors have been between the areas of

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Sindh and Rajasthan. So I enjoy a blend of Sindhi and Rajasthani culture. This blend of culture which exists in Thar makes my Sindhi identity more diverse and colorful. The second and most prominent branch of my identity is Pakistani identity. This is the most prominent identity for two reasons. One reason is that of religion that is according to Hinduism one of my prime duty is toward goodwill of my country therefore from beginning my family enrooted in me a sense of patriotism. And I feel proud to respect and own this identity of being a Pakistani. The other reason that makes this branch more pronounced is the recognition I get from the world. I am proud of what distinguishes me as a Pakistani for its glorious past and the hard-earned efforts of those who have protected it, and this is how people all around the world recognize me.

My structure of the tree (identity) is ready to be presented but something imperative is missing from the structure. When I think of the missing part I get to know that I am missing out leaves of my tree. Leaves in my tree represent humanity. When I ask myself where these leaves of humanity get their energy from, then I get to know that the roots of Dharma and values provide the necessary energy. Most people in today's world have an incomplete structure that varies from roots to branches (differences in cultural, tradition, and religion) and does not have leaves of humanity. These differences are abstract to me. Because these differences create segmentation in society rather than the cultivation of strong ties in society. It is by the leaves of humanity these differences can be reduced. Therefore, for me most of my tree is covered by leaves of humanity that is I identify myself as a human being on a universal level whose prime function is to help other humans despite their cultural, traditional, and religious differences. Family identity is important because it gives uniqueness to us but the very purpose of identification in today's world is not fulfilled rather it creates discrimination in the society. This discrimination based on culture, gender, and religion can be removed by bringing in humanity. We are not defined by our names, by lines on a map or by societal divisions. We are defined by our hearts that makes us all human and yet sets us apart as individuals. To conclude, I am Pakistani-Sindhi-Hindu-Maheshwari .But above all, I am a human whose culture, custom, tradition, and religion is humanity.

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