**Who Am I? \***

Provide an answer to the above question in the form of an essay (do not write in bullet points). Recall some significant events from your life and explain how those events may have shaped you. (maximum 750 words).

* **Give insights into mind state at different stages.**
* **Form a narrative.**
* **Condense the matter – make it more precise.**

“What we call a being or an individual or I is only a combination of ever changing physical and mental forces or energies”

This is the Buddhist philosophy of “self” and in the essay I will exploring the question of “Who I am?” through this lens.

I grew up in a lower-middle class family with a sole earner being my father. I have seen him struggle between his intrinsic artistic desires and extrinsic familial duties. He is an artist who is exceptionally good at his craft. He worked as a government employee and did his best to educate me and my sibling with the best he could afford.

I showed interest in art and tried to gain his validation but he had already decided how he wanted me to grow. He wanted me to study and always told me “Art won’t lead to a good life.” I understand where he is coming from, he made a decision for himself based on his experience but I do strongly believe he was wrong to decide it for me. You cannot grow a tree how you want – it will grow how it has to. The analogy is reductive but I hope it conveys the idea.

I used to enjoy studying because there was no distraction in our house (no TV or internet till 18) – there was nothing better to do. Naturally, I got good at it. This led to my teachers, peers and parents labelling me gifted.

What happens when a child whose intrinsic desires were suppressed, labelled with expectation of being “gifted” goes out in the world by himself – He implodes because there was no sense of self. The implosion was not a failure but a reaction of the physical change and the mental energies within me. This sent me on arduous journey of struggling to do anything because according to the expectation of “gifted”, I failed.

For a long time that is from college till last year, I struggled to even be average at what I was doing. Be it college, the job or anything I tried to learn. I was depressed, I tried to seek answers outside but to no avail. I never gave up seeking – and then I found the answer. It was a one-month rigorous theatre workshop. I joined the workshop because I had interest in theatre which was planted within me during college.

The workshop showed me a mirror – I did not become a performer or got to work on a play but I understood myself. What I learnt was – self-acceptance, self-validation and self-criticism. Everything that I was seeking outside from others. When I started listening to the inner voice instead of doubting it every now and then – I found peace within me, sure it can be overly critical sometime and for that one should have good people for support around them.

Now, the mental energy of this being is in line with his intrinsic desires. I am not perfectly in line with it and I don’t have to be, all I have to be is persistent. There is a lot to learn and grow but going forward in life I am confident of the foundation that I have, that I built through lessons from some great teachers in my life.

**It's okay, isme se take who you are today, and condense the rest  
Then think about what are the things that you do that align with the idea of your identity  
And talk about the former to lead to the latter  
Or just write about it in detail and then condense it**

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No vague ideas

The idea of self is fluid, according to Buddhism – self is a combination of ever changing physical and mental energies.

Talking strictly in present then who is Vineet? Sure, this philosophical idea sounds great but it does not give any info of who is the person and what type of person Vineet is. I was given my name by my maternal grandmother – the meaning of which is humble. I try my best to live up to the name but after all I am a human and to err is to human.

I work at a Game Data company as a Video Game Analyst – my job entails breaking down a video game into understandable datapoints. This job was based on my interests in video games at that time. I graduated in Physics Honors from the University of Delhi, which is completely different from the job that I am doing.

How did I end up here? Well, the answer is complicated but I will try to keep it brief. As a kid, seeing my father I showed interest in arts who himself is an artist. My father discouraged this and wanted me to focus on studies since, “Art doesn’t make you successful”. He chose a path for me; I walked on it. I was good at studies not because I was a genius but because that was the only thing for me to do, there was no television, computer or smartphone. Being good at studies, I was labelled gifted by my teachers, peers and parents and the expectation that I will do something great. I failed to do something in Kota, I failed to get into an IIT. I chose the subject I was interested in. In college, yet again I failed.   
Why did this happen? The answer was simple, I never had a sense of self before going out in the world. I was always discouraged when I showed my interests, whatever idea of self I had was external. The idea of being labelled “gifted” and the expectations of living up to it. I have struggled with this for long – and I was seeking answers without. I found a job after college because I wanted to get away from home and figure out what I wanted to do.   
Having a job and managing my expenses in a meagre income taught me lessons about how I want to live and what I want with life. After working for 2 years, I was on the edge of “taking a leap of faith” to figure out what I want to do but I still had doubts and fears.

What freed me? Theatre. I was drawn to theatre since college. Here in Hyderabad, I found a theatre group whose work I loved. I did a workshop with them and that showed me a mirror and instilled qualities that I had been looking outside – self acceptance, self-validation and self-criticism.   
What happened in the workshop? The same, I picked up a thing and I failed at it but the instructor constantly asked me to question myself. He made me believe that sure you failed, now what you will do with it? This helped me to be – to be comfortable with who I am with all my flaws and imperfections.

So, what do we learn about Vineet? Vineet is an individual who has varied interests. He is curious about the world and how it functions. He is determined to find a way out of his predicaments. He is self-aware and understands that he has a lot to learn and the process is lifelong. He is open to new ideas and ways of thinking. He tries his best to be Vineet (humble).