**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.

**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**

**What is my idea of my identity?  
How would you say who you are?**