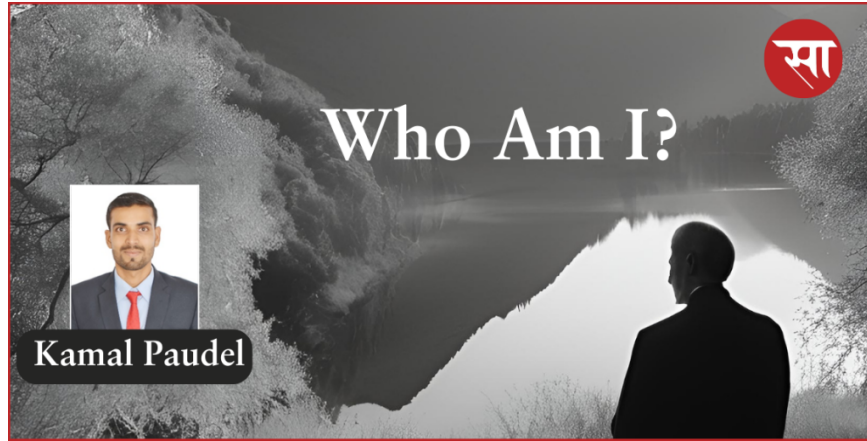


Who Am I?



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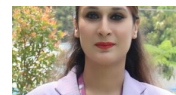
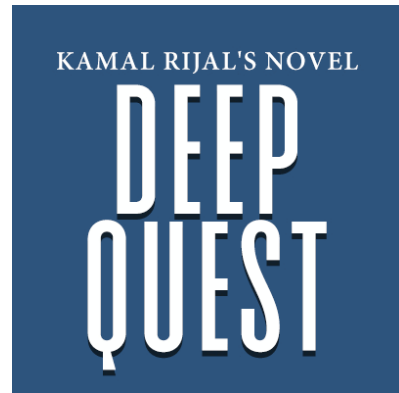
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Kamal Paudel

My name is Kamal Paudel, and I am a Nepali citizen, born in the 1990s in the Bardiya district of Nepal. But such an introduction may not be enough to satisfy a scholar, philosopher, or any spiritual seeker. When I look at the question “Who am I?” from a critical perspective, I find another question cropping up: Is Kamal Paudel just my name, or is it really me? For me, the question “Who am I?” is difficult to answer since it presumes profound insight into the self and an overall understanding and wisdom about oneself from every possible angle, which I have not achieved so far in my life. When reflecting on this question, I feel that I am living in several realities and moods while my own personality and views often mislead even the essence of such a strong question.

When I think about the philosophical perspective on the pursuit of the answer to “Who am I?”, I also find it reminiscent of the timeless pursuit of self-awareness and meaning. Similarly, philosophers have long debated the nature of identity, pondering whether identity is defined by external attributes or internal consciousness. In that aspect, my search for self-identity requires the philosophical questions of existence and essence. Is identity something stationary, or is it dynamic-it keeps changing with experiences and self-reflection?

Each time I engage myself in critical reflection on this question, it opens me up to the dispositions of identity construction and who Kamal Paudel actually is. Similarly, the imposition of various labels and roles assigned by society also baffles and obscures my vision to find out my or someone else's actual self. Because society views me as the son of my parents, brother of my siblings, clerk of my respective institution, and so on. I have many varieties of tags with which I am being addressed. I am a student to my teachers, a teacher to my students, and a Nepali citizen to the government. Besides, my existence also holds multiple identities with my family, friends, and relatives. I carry the individualities of son, brother, nephew, friend, uncle, senior, junior, etc. based



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upon my association with a particular human existence in society. Again and again, the question, "Who am I?" is incomplete to satiate my thirst regarding its true pursuit. My assumption of the reality of pluralities and moods underlines identity in that respect as something fluid: it is not a mere abstract but a dynamic dance interrelating the person with his social atmosphere. The critical view, moreover, challenges us all to reassess beyond the surface of definitions into the deeper and often contradictory selves.

Our process of self-discovery is socially influenced through interactions and relationships with different people within societies. This factor seems overemphasized in me when I reflect on how I am a product of my parents and how those parents endowed me with abilities to navigate right and wrong. I believe this is the truth about everyone. Our relations with others form a mirror wherein possibly the best way to gain insight into ourselves may be found through shared values, cultural norms, and communal expectations. Through such interactions, identity is cemented-piece by piece, one that is both specific and intertwined within our broad social lives.

From a humanistic perspective, the journey of self-discovery is one of actualizing one's potential to embrace one's humanness. In that way, my search to understand myself better also coincides with the humanistic focus on self-actualization and personal growth. Additionally, it is a question of embracing one's feelings, desires, and weaknesses and working towards a balance which yields satisfaction as an existence of humanity on this earth. Moreover, this standpoint further exemplifies the dignity and value of each human being; it further cultivates a humane and compassionate way of looking at oneself and others.

In these ways, the foregoing outlooks will enlighten such a complicated concoction that was self-identity. The question of "Who am I?" is not a private matter but altogether a universal one as it deals with questions about humanity. Therefore, sometimes I think that I am only a being in this world, or a by-product of my parents. However, from a different point of view, I understand that 'I' is an individual with empowered senses that gave me the ability to know what is right and wrong, where and what I want to be later in life and why I am happy, angry, or worried whenever any situation arises. Knowing all this, I still can't seem to get a good answer to my question. When I'm happy, I feel as though no one has ever felt joy like this before. And when I am unhappy, I am uniquely beset by the vagaries of fortune and complication. And the more I try to answer the question, the more baffled I get. I conclude for now, and let me say, hopefully, 'the day I find out who I am, I would have lived a complete life, at least in my own eyes and in the eyes of those who knew my strengths and weaknesses'.

(Kamal Paudel is a faculty member of English at Chautara Multiple Campus, Sindhupalchok. He can be accessed through ipaudelk@gmail.com)



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