A Qualitative Enquiry Concerning Transcendental and Religious Identities - Bringing Them Together and Setting Them Apart

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess whether there are any differences between transcendental and religious identities. This research focused on identity formation and identity maturity across three religions: Jainism, Krishna Consciousness, and Sikhism. The aim was to distinguish the specific relationship between identity and identity maturity, with the hypothesized expectation that both transcendental and religious identities are reached through a similar adoption and informational process.

Three in-depth interviews were conducted with self-identified prominent members of major religious bodies of the three religious strands. They delved into the specific facets of identity formation: dress, values and beliefs, association, self-awareness, and self-management. The findings elucidate the similarities and stark differences between transcendental and religious identities, along with those among the three apart in terms of identity formation, identity maturity, and identity exploration.

Keywords: Identity, Transcendental Identity, Religious Identity, Identity Formation, Identity Maturity, Identity Exploration

INTRODUCTION

Identity as a concept has been thoroughly explored in the field of psychology and philosophy. According to the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, the term is drawn from the Latin word *'identitas'* and refers to the relation each thing bears to itself and its surroundings.

In 1968, Erikson loosely defined the identity as the self, which could manifest itself as the "self-concept," "self-system," or a "fluctuating self-experience" (Erikson, 1968). Moving away from Eriksonian theory, Davis stated that identity could be understood as "our sense of who and what we are," and that "social identity" refers to both one's social status and the image of themselves that individuals seek to put forth to the rest of the world via various mediums, such as their behavior, dressing style, etc. Social identity is also flexible and susceptible to change depending on one's immediate surroundings and overall environment (1994). Scholte in 1996 asserted that our identities are complex and multidimensional in nature, with Hall (2000) stating that identity is dynamic and ever-evolving, both of them thus implying that identity cannot be seen as a one-dimensional or static phenomenon. More recently, Castells (2010) posited that our identities also guide us, providing us with

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information about ourselves, our surroundings, and how we relate to them, allowing us to interpret different situations that we come across and be receptive to new life experiences.

In the context of this study, identity is seen as a social construct, with the main focus on two types of identities: transcendental and religious. Although it is a topic that has often been delved into, the matter of whether the phenomena of religion, spirituality, and transcendence are the same or not is still highly ambiguous, particularly when it comes to identities centering around them. The purpose of the current study was to analyze these in greater detail, with the emphasis being specifically on religious identities and transcendental identities. Being conceptually different, the terms transcendental identities and religious identities, in general, are often overlapped. This study was thus undertaken to develop a more thorough understanding of these identities and discern whether any clear distinctions can be drawn between them or not, and bring more clarity to a field that would benefit highly from it.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to define the two identity types (transcendental and religious) to understand their nature and adoption process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review pointed out that identity generally tends to be perceived along the lines of two dimensions: the interpersonal and the intrapersonal. However, a more thorough consideration of the same makes it evident that identity, as it develops, is a multifaceted construct, comprising of a variety of socio-historical and cultural constructs, genetic factors, social structures, "collective memory," individual wishes and desires, spiritual experiences and institutions of power (Castells, 2010). Of these, the aspect of spiritual experiences is particularly of importance to us, for it carries us to a realm that lies beyond these personal and social domains and refers instead to one's connection with "higher, mystical entities."

Spirituality can be defined as "the extent to which a person experiences and acknowledges the reality of the numinous or transcendent either or both as something that exists separately from the person and/or aids the person in ascribing meaning to existence." Given its nature, spirituality is often perceived as either the same or as overlapping with religion. While this is accurate to a certain extent, some distinctions exist between them. While spirituality is more "personal and experiential" in nature, religion is more "learned and social." Notably, both "religiousness and spiritual experience" can be seen as combining and

mingling with the psychological aspects of the mind in order to result in the formation of a spiritual identity. (MacDonald, 2003).

Oft associated with spirituality is the concept of "transcendence," a term referring to a state of being in which "attachment and detachment, embracement, and renunciation" exist together (Stein, 1977). One is grounded in the real world but not bound by the plethora of constraints imposed upon the individual, whether material or emotional. Frankl, in 1962 even went so far as to assert that transcendence is "the essence of existence" (100). In Kantian philosophy, transcendental means pre-supposed in and necessary to experience, *a priori*. For Kant, the transcendental refers to that which is "in respect of the subject's faculty of cognition." Anything that impacts how our minds constitute things and, in fact, allows us to perceive them is transcendental.

The concept of transcendental can also be traced back and understood through Indian mythological and religious texts. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, when Lord Krishna and Arjuna had blown their conch shells, the sound of the conch shell was described as transcendental, as the purport describes that the sounding of the conch shells indicated that there was no hope of victory for the other side (Chapter 1, Verse 14). Similarly, it is said that the relationship between Krishna and his servitor is very sweet and transcendental, as it is an experience of transcendental pleasure to serve the infallible Master (Chapter 1, Verse 21). Furthermore, in Chapter 1, Verse 29, Arjuna's realizations have been described as transcendental realizations.

From a psychological perspective, in spiritual identity, "the individual ego relates to and incorporates spirituality into its personal sense of self" (MacDonald, 2009). Placing more of an emphasis on transcendence, another way to understand this is that the individual "experiences and integrates their sense of relationship to the transcendent into their egoic self-sense" (MacDonald, 2009). As transcendence essentially refers to an experience, a transcendental identity is not one that somebody is born with or suddenly adopts. Instead, by virtue of having transcendental experiences, you slowly begin to imbibe them into your life, and as you do so, integrate these experiences with your identity. A transcendental identity can thus be seen as "(involving) the egoic identification with aspects of experience considered spiritual (i.e., it is the identification with specific contents of experience that are defined as spiritual)" (MacDonald, 2009).

As opposed to religious identities, which refer to the religion that one belongs to and identifies with, often merely by virtue of ascription at birth, the claiming of a transcendental

identity is based upon the conscious adoption of a specific way of thinking and perceiving the world and deliberate actions taken to imbibe the same in oneself. In accordance with this, the way a person lives plays a crucial role in the development of transcendental identity, as active participation in spiritual activities increases the probability of one undergoing spiritual experiences, which serve to bolster one's beliefs and commitment to this particular identity. Thus, transcendental identities comprise "a persistent sense of self that addresses ultimate questions about the nature, purpose, and meaning of life, resulting in behaviors that are consonant with the individual's core values" (Kiesling et al., 2006). They refer to an individual's "personal relation to the sacred or transcendent, a relation that then informs other relationships and the meaning of (their) life" (Sinnot, 2002).

Furthermore, while religion as a whole offers people a "transcendent worldview," the rituals and traditions that it comprises representing the values, beliefs, and social norms that it propagates in a real-life context. These create a particular "spiritual context" for the individual, which is noteworthy due to the effectiveness of spirituality in allowing a person to recognize that they (or their Self) exist in conjunction with and in relation to other people around them. Not only does it help establish such inter-linkages between different human beings, but also with "the divine" (King, 2003).

Following, it is apparent that religious identity contains relevant content and goals, such as what to do, what to value, and how to behave (Oyserman, 2012). It is not solely a product of the specific religious beliefs and ideologies that an individual holds, but also that of a sense of belongingness resulting out of the intertwining of the individual with not only a greater community but also the past; of a feeling that they are part of something greater than themselves imparted by being one with the customs, traditions, values, and knowledge passed down to them (Oberoi, 1994).

THE PROBE
Having established the meaning, nature, adoption, and informational process of transcendental and religious identities, this section of the paper covers the study's primary probe.

The study focuses on the *Bhakti* Movement and three strands of religious thought that emerged from it: Jainism, Krishna Consciousness, and Sikhism. The phenomenon of Bhakti began propagating throughout India during the 1st millennium C.E. The *Bhakti* Movement developed the most in the 15th and 16th centuries as it was popularized and cemented as a

pivotal part of Indian tradition and religious thought by poet-saints such as *Kabir* and *Guru Nanak* (Hawley, 2019). The analysis of the Bhakti movement by Western scholars in the late 19th century led to *Bhakti* being understood as a religion associated only with *Krishna Bhakti* or *Vaishnavism*, and thus as only a religion of the Hindus. However, in actuality, the *Bhakti* Movement can be seen as encompassing many religious schools of thought, including not only Krishna Bhakti (or Krishna Consciousness, as it came to be known from the late 20th century onwards), but also Sikhism and Jainism, all of which vary from each other in significant ways when it comes to their specific beliefs and ideologies. Most notably, where Krishna Bhakti looks at God in a personal and monotheistic manner, Jainism and Sikhism stress the Divine's impersonal nature. However, they are all linked together by the notion of *Bhakti*, which centers around devotion to and connection with God (Pande, 2000).

In light of the secondary data enlisted above, both Jainism and Krishna Consciousness can be understood as transcendental identities whilst Sikhism comes through as a religious identity. Thus, the choice of placing these three identities under probe so as to investigate their formation, adoption process; maturity; exploration, and whether they share any similarities and dissimilarities. And if so, then what the nature of these conceptualizations might be.

Identity is often operationalized using Marcia's identity paradigm, which assesses ego identity commitment and exploration via four statuses: diffusion (low commitment, low exploration), foreclosure (high commitment, low exploration), moratorium (low commitment, high exploration), and achievement (high commitment, high exploration) (Marcia, 1966; Sanders, 1998). This understanding of identity formulates the study's chief point, leading to the hypothesis that religious identities are the same as transcendental identities.

METHOD

A qualitative approach was adopted for the study, as qualitative research is usually used for examining the meaning of social phenomena, rather than seeking a causative relationship between established variables (Feilzer, 2010).

Unlike quantitative research, which is known for its objectivity, qualitative research is highly subjective. It considers the human aspect of research and seeks to understand issues from the participant's perspective. It also acknowledges the researcher's role and the influence that the researcher's own views and beliefs have on interpreting a particular issue (Yin, 2003). Thus, making the qualitative approach most suited to the study.

The specific method used in the study was that of the semi-structured interview, which let the researchers both focus on the major points of interest related to the topic and delve deeper into the articulated hypothesis.

Sample[1]

This study draws upon the purposive sampling technique, and the sample included three participants, all of whom were prominent members from major religious bodies of the cited religious strands (i.e., Jainism; Krishna Consciousness; Sikhism).

The three interviewees were chosen based on Maxwell's understanding wherein particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that cannot be obtained from other choices. It is where the researcher includes cases or participants in the sample because they believe that they warrant inclusion (Yin, 2003).

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Data for the research was gathered through in-depth interviews conducted with three significant members of religious bodies associated with Jainism, Krishna Consciousness, and Sikhism. The data was collected with the main objective to understand how transcendental identities and religious identities come to be formed, and the exact nature of their relationship with each other.

The collected data was analyzed employing the thematic analysis technique, wherein the data was prepared for analysis by transcribing, reducing the data into themes through a process of coding: and representing the data (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1984). Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). From the analysis, themes emerged which largely evaluated the articulated hypothesis concerning transcendental and religious identities, and which have been given below.

Broadly, findings significantly showed that generally all followers of a particular religion are perceived as possessing a religious identity determined by it, implying that religious identities can be seen as a result of mere membership in a particular religion, further influenced and solidified by external factors such as following certain manners of dressing, rituals, and traditions. In contrast, transcendental identities are not found in all religions, and

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[1] For the purposes of the confidentiality, the details of the participants have been kept private. However, they can be shared upon request.

as a phenomenon, they seem to be characterized more by a sense of deep connection with the divine and detachment from the external world. However, at the same time, transcendental identities can also stem out of religious ones, as the basis for the former are spiritual or transcendental experiences, which may or may not be linked to one's religious life.

Based on the thematic analysis of the coded interview scripts, the following parameters of identity formation, dress, association, self-management, and benefits emerged, which shed light on the similarities and dissimilarities between these two identity types.

Theme 1: Identity Formation

According to Reimer and Dueck (2012), personal narratives play a crucial role in developing and establishing a person's spiritual identity. They help us understand who we are, why we do what we do, and what kinds of relationships we have with others. The basis of spiritual identities, they further note, is often that of experience, which may be religious in nature. Essentially, spiritual identities involve the imbuing of personal narratives with spiritual meaning. Kiesling et al. (2006) further emphasized the influential role of social relationships in the development of spirituality into a tool for "meaning-making," and how an individual's attempts to combat or suppress negativity in their life and personality and recognize positivity instead during their adulthood can be significant in them developing a spiritual identity.

In accordance with the above, findings showed that transcendental identity formation exists in Jainism and Krishna Consciousness. According to the representative of Krishna Consciousness, a multiplicity of factors influences the cultivation of a transcendental identity in a person (*"age also matters, environment also matters, association also matters, and, uh, family also matters"*). It was observed that as the participant described how he came to hold a transcendental identity, he, too, adopted a particular narrative that contextualized his past experiences in confluence with his understanding of himself in the present. The participant grew up in a home environment characterized by piety, which positively influenced his views about his religion and imparted a religious identity revolving around the same.

However, one particular experience of his held great significance for him concerning the spiritual journey that he underwent. The participant informed the researchers about a physical ailment that he had during his adolescence, which seemed to be nearly incurable; however, not only did he get cured, but the doctor who cured him passed away immediately after treating him. For him, this was an event akin to a miracle, and it reinforced his belief that there indeed did exist something beyond the confines of mortal reality, something divine

and supernatural. The participant further described how he ended up becoming quite lonely and reclusive during the early adulthood period of his life - which he associated with having an introverted personality - and had a lot of negative emotions pent up inside him, including self-doubt. At this point, he came into contact with some individuals who pushed him towards following the path of Krishna Consciousness, stressing how doing so could help him improve on his life, which ultimately culminated in him developing a transcendental identity. Therefore, according to the participant, introversion could be a personality factor influencing the development of transcendental identities by making a person more susceptible to isolation. However, this contradicts past research (Reimer and Dueck, 2012), which states that extraversion could just as easily be a component of transcendental identities, as such people often have to interact with and establish relationships with others (which may or not place them in a position of influence).

The personal factors influencing transcendental identity formation that could be derived from the participant's narrative in this case, therefore, were loneliness and negativity, which made him more vulnerable to the influence of others. It was also clear that transcendental identity formation was seen as both a matter of choice and a result of outside influence.

While in the above case, the participant's family played a role mainly in the formation of his religious identity, the participant representing Jainism highlighted the significance of one's home environment and living conditions in the formation of a transcendental identity. According to him, people who ended up devoting their lives to their religion and adopted a transcendental identity often belonged to poor families, as it provided them with an easy route towards a life which would allow for their fulfillment, in both a spiritual and a physical sense. In this sense, transcendental identities could also result from such a form of escapism, with the individual trying to get away from the hard, troubled conditions of life that they were earlier in. Also matching the previous participant's statements, he also emphasized the role of association with significant others in the accumulation of knowledge, beliefs, and values that contribute to developing a transcendental identity. The most significant contributors to transcendental identity formation here that could be derived from this account were thus family circumstances and outside influence.

In contrast to Jainism and Krishna Consciousness, it was observed that only religious identities exist in Sikhism. A Sikh religious identity is not one that has to be cultivated by an individual, but one that is ascribed to a person at birth. In the words of the Sikh participant,

"This identity has its beginnings in the *Gurmukhi* script. It was given by our Gurus in the 16th century during the establishment of *Khalsa Panth*. We started as a clan of warriors and continue to wear the identity even today, marked by five articles of faith. One is born a Sikh". Furthermore, anybody can become a *granthi* (a follower and preacher of the text in *Guru Granth Sahib*), as it merely requires being educated in a religious manner and being knowledgeable about various aspects of Sikhism, such as its history, myths, beliefs, teachings, and customs. *Granthis* are also taught *kirtans* (devotional songs) and/or how to read the *granth.* Before his death, the last Guru of the Sikhs in human form - Guru Gobind Singh decreed that *Gurū Granth Sāhib* would be the final and perpetual guru of the Sikhs. Sab Sikkhan Ko Hukam Hai, Guru Manyo Granth (GGS). As Sikhs are supposed to follow the text of the *granth* rather than a religious leader, and as individuals with transcendental identities often adopt the role of a mentor and leader, the very concept of transcendental identities was observed to be non-existent within Sikhism.

Findings also highlighted how while transcendental identities can be perceived as being more internally oriented, religious identities are more externally oriented. As stated by the participant representing Krishna Consciousness, certain hallmarks of transcendental identities are that they involve deep respect and appreciation for one's religion. Furthermore, if one ends up adopting religious symbols or customs just because they are supposed to or because others are doing the same, their identity will remain in flux, changing per societal developments and transformations. Transcendental identities, however, are more fixed in nature, as they are rooted in the person's own acknowledgment of their connection with the Divine.

Thus, by virtue of identity formation, Jainism and Krishna Consciousness share streaks of similarity governed by transcendence and related adoption and informational process. However, Sikhism entails an identity imbibed at birth by adherence to the religion.

Theme 2: Dress

Hume (2015) noted that the clothes that a person wears are often intricately linked to both their religious identity and their experiences related to it. Dress, therefore, becomes the simplest yet most visible marker of religious identity. Regarding Sikhism, N.G. Singh (2005) further stated that clothing and other physical/ visible markers of Sikhism (such as the *kara (bracelet); kesh (uncut hair capped with a turban*) act not only as signifiers of the fact that that individual embodies the religious identity of a Sikh, but they also connect the person to a complex "universal reality." Support for these statements was evident in this study, as all of

the participants stated that there were certain kinds of attire associated with their respective religions, down to the color of the clothing.

The participant belonging to Krishna Consciousness highlighted the importance of religious symbols in defining and communicating his religious identity. Members also tend to have a shaven head with a *shikha* (a tuft of hair at the back of the head) and wear clothing that is white, yellow, or saffron in color. The participant speaking of Jainism also mentioned how the transition in the color of clothes from saffron to white symbolized a change in his particular religious identity, with white indicating a Jain identity. The participant representing Sikhism elaborated on how clothing was supposed to be simple and minimalistic, not expensive, and was supposed to cover one's full body. Sikhs generally have untrimmed hair crowned with a turban. The turbans are also supposed to be of particular colors, such as white or *kesari* (orange). Sikhs are meant to carry five articles of faith: *Kach, Kada, Kirpan, Kesh, Kanga.* Clothing that was white, navy, or saffron was also indicative of Sikh religious identity. All of these details ascribed to Sikh clothing, in essence, were supposed to have the function of linking the devotee to his Guru by establishing a physical resemblance to the Guru's ways of dressing.

The dress of all three identities investigated was thus visually distinct. Similarities were noted among them, however, in that they were all very simple and restrained in style, with no sense of grandeur or glitz involved. This is particularly notable, as differences were found between the three identities in all dimensions except the dress.

Theme 3: Association

The findings elucidate that all three identities involved the inculcation of certain values and beliefs in members. They span across various areas of life, resulting in the formation of religious communities. Association refers to how religions seek to establish connections between members and strengthen the religious community, extending to recruiting new members into the religion's fold. Data analysis points out that in the case of Krishna Consciousness, this role is played by trained peers who are knowledgeable about the customs, rituals, and beliefs of the religion and impart this knowledge to other members. In Jainism, the same role is played by trained religious gurus, whom the followers can connect with and directly follow the teachings and advice of. In contrast to Krishna Consciousness and Jainism, where association occurs as a result of the interaction of members with other members, in the case of Sikhism, followers follow the guidance of their holy book, the *Guru*

Granth Sahib, which provides them with teachings that members of the Sikh community can follow as a whole.

Thus, under this theme, once again, similarities arise between the two transcendental identities, i.e., Jainism and Krishna Consciousness, setting them distinctly apart from the religious identity that of Sikhism. Whereas association in the case of Krishna Consciousness and Jainism was impacted by the influence exerted on individuals by other members of the community, in Sikhism association was a result of the influence of their Guru's teachings.

Theme 4: Self-management

In this study's context, self-management refers to individuals' recognition and cognizance of their own religious identity and the amount of control and effort they exert to claim and maintain their religious identity. This theme refers to how the members of a religion manage to establish and build a connection to their religion and develop an identity linked to it.

The participant belonging to Krishna Consciousness mentioned how self-management could be observed in the followers of Krishna Consciousness regularly chanting the *Mahamantras* (religious chants) so that the determination to maintain the identity does not waiver, thereby imposing a high sense of self-control. Likewise, the participant representing Jainism mentioned a high sense of self-control to arrive at identity maturity. The Jain identity's life span right from the induction stage to renunciation until death is rather difficult and challenging, again implying heightened self-control. However, in Sikh identity, this aspect is somewhat lax, pointing towards easier identity maturity and exploration, following the teachings promulgated in *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Krishna Consciousness and Jainism both have religious leaders in their communities whom the disciples follow. In the Krishna Consciousness community, there tends to be one *Guru* and many spiritual masters. The Guru and the disciples also engage in *Deeksha,* an initiation process through which the Guru brings the disciple deeper into the religious community's fold. In Jainism, many leaders can exist at a point in time. This presence of religious leaders is not there in Sikhism. Sikhs have one *Guru* - their sacred text, the *Guru Granth Sahib.* They follow its words, for it is supposed to be the last and ultimate Guru of Sikhism, putting forth the wisdom and guiding thoughts of Guru Nanak himself. It is because of this that there can be no new guru in Sikhism.

Thus, once more, under this theme, similarities between the transcendental identities (Jainism and Krishna Consciousness) come to the forefront, thereby differentiating them from the religious identity that of Sikhism.

Theme 5: Benefits

Data analysis elucidates that many material and social benefits were noted to accompany identity maturation in the case of Jainism and Krishna Consciousness. Participants belonging to these respective religious bodies mentioned that members who gained identity maturity and adopted a transcendental identity were often elevated to the roles of religious leaders and gurus and accorded numerous material and non-material benefits. The participant from the Krishna Consciousness community specifically stated that he received respect, fame, and high social status by virtue of his position. The participant also emphasized a stark change in his personality that occurred after the adoption of this identity, stating that "adopting and adapting this identity erased (his) negative emotions, including **self-doubt**. (He) became more confident, **receiving validation** from others."

The Jain participant also mentioned respect, fame, and high social status as benefits of his identity and position but added wealth as another one. He also mentioned that, according to him, "girls who ended up devoting their lives to their religion and adopt this identity often come from a humble background, as it provides them with a route towards a life which would allow respect and fulfillment, in both a spiritual and a physical sense. It also brings benefits to the family". Adopting this identity for him was also beneficial personally, allowing one to achieve spiritual and physical satisfaction and respect.

On the other hand, the only benefit available to the Sikhism members was that of receiving respect from others. There was thus no real impetus for them to strive for identity maturity, once again setting Sikhism apart from Jainism and Krishna Consciousness.

CONCLUSION

A significant conclusive finding of the research, ultimately, is that although all religions involve the concept of religious identity, the same is not applicable in the case of transcendental identities, the existence of which depends on both the beliefs and the structuring of the religion in question. However, religious and transcendental identities do converge in specific ways and seem to resemble aspects of each other. The hypothesis that religious identities are the same as transcendental identities were thus not proven true.

These findings can further be analyzed through the lens of Marcia's Identity Status Theory (1996), which proposes the existence of four identity statuses based on two criteria: Commitment and Exploration. In the context of this study, where commitment means how invested in their religion the individual is, exploration means the extent to which they have explored the various dimensions of their faith and considered other "meaningful alternatives," i.e., other faiths or beliefs. The study further uses two additional criteria: Self-Management and Association (as explained in the preceding section) to arrive at conclusions. These criteria lead us to the four identity statuses given by Marcia's Identity Paradigm- diffusion (low commitment, low exploration), achievement (high commitment, high exploration), moratorium (low commitment, high exploration), and foreclosure (high commitment, low exploration).

Combined, the four adopted criteria of exploration, commitment, self-management, and association lead to the development of a quadrant in which the three strands studied (i.e., Krishna Consciousness, Jainism, and Sikhism) are placed as follows:
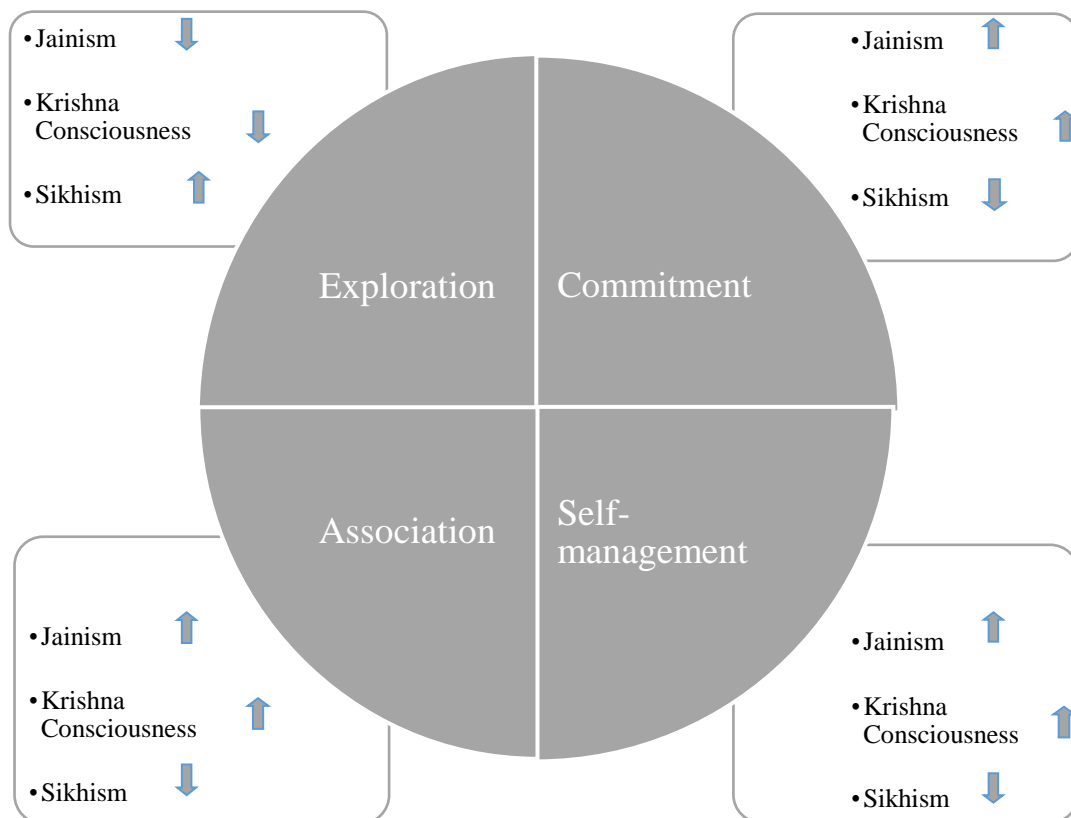

Figure 1

As shown above, Sikhism is characterized by low commitment, low self-management, low association, and high exploration. Sikhism ascribes solely to the notion of religious identities given to one by birth and not the result of an individual's active choice (low commitment). Individuals also actively explore different aspects of the Sikh religious identity in their daily lives through various mediums, such as clothing and dress, interpreting and defining what their faith means to them in their own unique ways (high exploration). Members of the faith are also free to live life on their own terms, as stated earlier. They are not obligated to participate in all the rituals and customs of their faith as part of an institution or community to display their commitment to their faith (low association). There is also no need for them to renounce worldly objects or attachments (*grahast* mode) in order to lay claim to their faith, and they are free to live their lives on their own terms and identify with their faith based on their own interpretations of it (low self-management).

Jainism and Krishna Consciousness, meanwhile, function in a manner quite different from Sikhism. Both strands are characterized by high commitment, high self-management, high association, and low exploration. The concept of transcendental identities exists in these religions, meaning that members of these faiths are not just part of them due to birth, but that they willingly adopt the ideas, beliefs, ideologies, and other aspects of their faith and subscribe to them out of their own volition (high commitment). Members do not delve into different dimensions of faith to develop their own interpretation of it but instead accept what is offered to them by religious leaders and what is already given in the scriptures (low exploration). Members also fully engage in faith rituals and customs as a regular part of their daily routine, such as morning chants. There also tends to be a strong sense of community centered on the institution, as religious leaders and Gurus often establish connections with other members of the faith while also acting as sources of wisdom imparting the religion's teachings to them (high association). Members also need to exert considerable self-control in various areas of their lives in order to maintain their religious identities, such as in the daily routines they adopt, their beliefs, and even their overall way of living (high self-management).

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