



Identity Reconstruction through Soul-Conscious Awareness: A Grounded Theory Study of the Spiritual Teachings of the Brahma Kumaris

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Abstract: *This study explores the process of identity reconstruction through soul-conscious awareness within the sacred teachings of the Brahma Kumaris. Grounded in a qualitative research paradigm, the inquiry adopts a Grounded Theory approach to understand how sustained engagement with Rajyoga meditation and spiritual knowledge facilitates transformation in self-perception, values, and lived experience. The study draws on in-depth interviews with 25 committed practitioners (both male and female), selected through purposive sampling to ensure rich experiential data. Participants had a minimum of three years of consistent spiritual practice within the organization.*

The findings indicate that identity reconstruction emerges through a progressive shift from body-consciousness to soul-conscious awareness, characterized by detachment from limiting self-concepts, emotional regulation, moral realignment, and a strengthened sense of universal belonging. A core category "Sacred Reframing of the Self" integrates the emergent themes, illustrating how spiritual cognition, meditation discipline, and collective spiritual culture interact to reshape identity.

Keywords: *Identity Reconstruction; Soul-Consciousness; Brahma Kumaris; Rajyoga Meditation; Grounded Theory; Spiritual Transformation.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Identity is widely understood as a dynamic and evolving construct shaped by social interaction, personal reflection, and cultural context rather than a fixed psychological entity (Erikson, 1968; Giddens, 1991). Contemporary research in spiritual psychology suggests that contemplative practices can significantly influence self-concept by fostering self-awareness, emotional regulation, and meaning-making processes (Taylor, 1989; Mezirow, 1991). Within this perspective, spiritual traditions offer interpretive frameworks through which individuals reinterpret their experiences and reconstruct their identities.

The teachings of the Brahma Kumaris present a distinctive model of identity grounded in the concept of soul-consciousness—the experiential recognition of the self as a spiritual being distinct from the physical body. Through the disciplined practice of Rajyoga meditation, adherents are encouraged to shift from body-centred identification toward a stable awareness of the self as soul, understood to cultivate inner peace, ethical clarity, and relational harmony (Walliss, 2002; Chryssides, 2011). While existing scholarship has examined the movement's organizational development and global presence, limited attention has been given to the lived processes through which practitioners internalize and embody this shift in identity. Addressing this gap, the present study explores identity reconstruction through a grounded theory lens.



2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1. Conceptualizations of Identity

Identity has been theorized as a developmental, social, and narrative construct. Erikson (1968) described identity formation as a central psychosocial task involving continuity and coherence across life stages. Later, Giddens (1991) reframed identity as a reflexive project in which individuals actively construct self-understanding amid changing social structures. Narrative scholars further argue that identity emerges through the stories individuals create to organize life experiences into meaningful patterns (McAdams, 1993). These perspectives collectively emphasize that identity is dynamic and continually reconstructed through interpretation and experience.

2.2. Transformative Learning and Identity Change

Transformative learning theory provides a framework for understanding deep shifts in self-concept. Mezirow (1991) proposed that critical reflection on assumptions can produce perspective transformation, reshaping both worldview and identity. Subsequent scholarship suggests that emotionally significant experiences and sustained reflective practices often catalyze such change (Taylor, 2007). Within this lens, identity reconstruction is viewed as a gradual process involving cognitive reframing, affective integration, and behavioral realignment.

2.3. Meditation, Spirituality, and Self-Concept

Research in contemplative psychology indicates that meditation practices can alter self-referential processing, enhance emotional regulation, and foster self-transcendent awareness (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). Spiritual traditions frequently frame these changes as shifts from ego-centered identification toward expanded or spiritual self-understanding. Empirical studies suggest that long-term meditative engagement is associated with greater psychological well-being and coherence of self-concept (Davidson & McEwen, 2012).

2.4. The Brahma Kumaris and Soul-Consciousness

Scholarly analyses of the Brahma Kumaris have largely focused on its historical development, theology, millenarian worldview, and gendered leadership structure (Walliss, 2002; Chryssides, 2011). Central to its teachings is the distinction between body-consciousness and soul-consciousness, cultivated through Rajyoga meditation. While existing research documents doctrinal features and organizational dynamics, limited empirical work has examined how practitioners internalize these teachings in reconstructing their identities.

2.5. Methodological Considerations

Grounded theory offers a systematic approach for examining lived processes without imposing predefined models (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014). Its emphasis on theoretical saturation and constant comparison is particularly appropriate for exploring spiritually mediated identity transformation.

2.6. Gaps in Existing Research

Despite interdisciplinary interest in identity and spirituality, several gaps persist. First, there is limited qualitative research exploring identity reconstruction as a lived, processual experience within specific spiritual communities. Second, studies on meditation frequently emphasize psychological outcomes without generating theory grounded in participants' narratives. Third, within scholarship on the Brahma Kumaris, few investigations have applied grounded theory methodology to explain the mechanisms through which soul-conscious awareness reshapes self-concept. Addressing these gaps, the present study develops an empirically grounded model of spiritually mediated identity reconstruction.



3. OBJECTIVES :

The present study seeks to explore identity reconstruction through soul-conscious awareness within the teachings of the Brahma Kumaris using a grounded theory approach. The specific objectives are:

1. **To explore practitioners' lived experiences** of engaging in Rajyoga meditation and spiritual study within the Brahma Kumaris.
2. **To examine the process through which identity shifts** from body-consciousness to soul-conscious awareness.
3. **To identify the psychological, emotional, and moral dimensions** involved in identity reconstruction among long-term practitioners.
4. **To analyze the stages, conditions, and strategies** that facilitate or hinder spiritually mediated identity transformation.
5. **To develop a grounded theoretical model** explaining the mechanisms and patterns underlying identity reconstruction within this spiritual context.

Research Questions

Aligned with the stated objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions within the context of the Brahma Kumaris:

Primary Research Question

1. How do practitioners experience and interpret identity reconstruction through soul-conscious awareness within the Brahma Kumaris?

Secondary Research Questions

2. How do long-term practitioners describe the shift from body-consciousness to soul-conscious awareness?
3. What psychological, emotional, and moral changes accompany sustained engagement in Rajyoga meditation?
4. What conditions, interactions, or practices facilitate or challenge the process of identity transformation?
5. How do practitioners integrate soul-conscious awareness into their daily roles, relationships, and social identities?
6. What core processes and stages emerge in explaining spiritually mediated identity reconstruction?

4. RESEARCH METHOD :

This study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore identity reconstruction through soul-conscious awareness within the teachings of the Brahma Kumaris. The methodological orientation is interpretivist, recognizing that identity transformation is a subjective, meaning-centered process best understood through participants' lived experiences. The aim is not to measure variables but to generate a contextually grounded explanation of spiritually mediated identity change.

4.1. Research Design

A **Constructivist Grounded Theory** design was employed to develop an explanatory model derived directly from participants' narratives. This design is appropriate when the objective is to examine processes, interactions, and stages of transformation. Rather than testing pre-existing theories, the study sought to inductively construct a theoretical framework explaining how practitioners reconstruct identity through sustained spiritual practice.

4.2. Research Approach

The research follows an inductive and process-oriented approach. Knowledge is co-constructed through interaction between researcher and participants. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the inquiry to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in participants' meanings rather than researcher assumptions. Constant comparison guided data generation and analysis simultaneously.

4.3. Participants and Sample Size

The study included **25 committed practitioners** of the Brahma Kumaris. Participants were adults (aged 25–65) with a minimum of three years of consistent Rajyoga meditation practice to ensure experiential depth. Both male and female practitioners were included to capture diverse perspectives.

The sample size was determined through the principle of **theoretical saturation** rather than statistical calculation. Data collection continued until no new conceptual categories emerged and existing categories were sufficiently elaborated. Saturation was observed after 22 interviews; three additional interviews were conducted to confirm conceptual density and stability.



4.4. Sampling Technique

A combination of **purposive sampling** and **theoretical sampling** was used. Initially, purposive sampling identified participants with substantial spiritual engagement. As analysis progressed, theoretical sampling guided the selection of additional participants to refine emerging categories, clarify variations, and strengthen the developing theory.

4.5. Data Sources

Data were derived from multiple qualitative sources to enhance depth and credibility:

- In-depth participant interviews
- Reflective personal narratives
- Field notes from meditation sessions and study classes
- Informal conversational interactions

These sources allowed triangulation and enriched contextual understanding.

4.6. Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary data collection method. Each interview lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and explored themes such as self-perception before joining the movement, experiences of meditation, emotional shifts, moral realignment, and daily integration of soul-conscious awareness. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

Reflective journaling was encouraged for participants willing to document their experiences between sessions. Observational field notes captured non-verbal expressions, group dynamics, and spiritual practices within natural settings.

Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage.

4.7. Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis followed systematic grounded theory procedures:

1. **Open Coding:** Line-by-line examination of transcripts to identify initial concepts.
2. **Axial Coding:** Grouping related codes into broader categories and identifying relationships among conditions, actions, and consequences.
3. **Selective Coding:** Integration of categories around a core category explaining the central process of identity reconstruction.
4. **Constant Comparative Method:** Continuous comparison across interviews to refine categories and ensure conceptual coherence.
5. **Memo Writing:** Analytical memos documented emerging insights, category development, and theoretical integration.

Trustworthiness was enhanced through member validation, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail of analytic decisions. This methodological framework ensures rigor, credibility, and theoretical depth in generating a grounded explanation of identity reconstruction through soul-conscious awareness.

5. DISCUSSION :

The present study sought to generate a grounded explanation of identity reconstruction through soul-conscious awareness within the Brahma Kumaris. The findings, organized around the core category “Sacred Reframing of the Self,” extend and refine existing theoretical discussions on identity, transformative learning, and contemplative practice.

First, the observed shift from body-consciousness to soul-conscious awareness aligns with Erikson’s (1968) understanding of identity as an evolving psychosocial construct, yet the present findings deepen this view by demonstrating how identity can be intentionally reconstructed through disciplined spiritual cognition. Similarly, Giddens’ (1991) notion of identity as a reflexive project is supported; participants actively reinterpreted their biographies through spiritual knowledge, suggesting that reflexivity can be spiritually anchored rather than purely sociocultural.

Second, the findings resonate strongly with transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991). Participants described critical reflection on previously unquestioned assumptions—particularly identification with the physical body—leading to profound perspective transformation. However, unlike educational contexts typically emphasized in transformative



learning literature (Taylor, 2007), the transformation here was sustained through daily meditation and collective reinforcement, highlighting spirituality as an enduring transformative structure rather than a singular disorienting event.

Third, the emotional regulation and cognitive shifts reported by participants corroborate contemplative psychology research indicating that meditation enhances self-regulation and metacognitive awareness (Walsh & Shapiro, 2006). While neuropsychological studies (Davidson & McEwen, 2012) document measurable benefits of contemplative practices, the present study contributes a process-oriented explanation of how these psychological changes integrate into identity reconstruction over time.

Regarding scholarship on the Brahma Kumaris, previous analyses have primarily focused on theology, millenarian beliefs, and organizational dynamics (Walliss, 2002; Chryssides, 2011). The current findings extend this literature by illuminating the lived experiential mechanisms through which doctrinal concepts particularly the soul–body distinction—are internalized and enacted. The emergent model demonstrates that teachings are not merely adopted cognitively but embodied through repeated meditative practice, ethical realignment, and relational transformation.

Importantly, the cyclical model developed in this study bridges doctrinal anthropology and psychological process. Identity reconstruction was not linear but iterative, reinforced through spiritual study, experiential validation, and community interaction. This insight contributes to interdisciplinary dialogues in spiritual psychology and identity theory by proposing that spiritually mediated identity change operates through sustained cognitive reframing combined with affective stabilization and moral integration.

Overall, the findings both affirm and extend existing scholarship by providing a grounded, empirically derived model explaining how soul-conscious awareness becomes a transformative axis around which identity is reconstructed.

6.CONCLUSION :

This study developed a grounded theoretical model explaining identity reconstruction through soul-conscious awareness within the Brahma Kumaris. The findings demonstrate that identity transformation is not a sudden event but a gradual, cyclical process sustained through spiritual study, Rajyoga meditation, reflective internalization, and community reinforcement. The emergent core category, “Sacred Reframing of the Self,” captures how practitioners cognitively redefine the self, emotionally stabilize inner responses, morally realign values, and relationally expand their sense of belonging. By situating identity reconstruction within lived spiritual practice, the study contributes to spiritual psychology and transformative learning literature, offering a process-based explanation grounded in participants’ experiences rather than abstract theory alone.

Implications for Practice

- **Spiritual Education Programs:** The findings suggest that identity transformation is strengthened when cognitive teachings are consistently paired with experiential meditation practice. Structured reflection and dialogue may enhance internalization.
- **Counseling and Well-being Interventions:** The model indicates that soul-conscious awareness fosters emotional regulation and ethical clarity. Integrating contemplative practices into counseling frameworks may support identity healing and self-integration.
- **Community-Based Spiritual Development:** Collective reinforcement and shared values appear crucial in sustaining transformation. Spiritual communities may serve as supportive environments for long-term identity restructuring.
- **Interdisciplinary Research:** The grounded model offers a conceptual bridge between spirituality, psychology, and adult learning, encouraging further cross-disciplinary inquiry.

7.LIMITATIONS:

Despite its contributions, the study has certain limitations:

1. The sample was limited to 25 committed practitioners, which may not represent newer or less-involved members.



2. Data relied on self-reported narratives, which are subject to memory bias and personal interpretation.
3. The study focused on one spiritual movement, limiting direct generalizability to other traditions.

Cultural context may have influenced interpretations of soul-consciousness and identity.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS / DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies may:

1. Conduct comparative research across different contemplative traditions.
2. Explore longitudinal designs to observe identity transformation over extended periods.
3. Integrate mixed-method approaches combining qualitative insights with psychological scales.
4. Examine gender, generational, or cultural variations in spiritually mediated identity reconstruction.

9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research. The study was conducted independently, and no financial, institutional, or personal relationships influenced the research design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, or reporting of findings.

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