

DIGITAL DEVOTION: A STUDY OF SPIRITUAL IDENTITY FORMATION IN ONLINE SACRED SPACES

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the intersection of digital technology and spirituality, focusing on how individuals form and express spiritual identities within online sacred spaces. In an era where traditional religious institutions are often perceived as rigid or inaccessible, digital platforms—from meditation apps and livestreamed discourses to Reddit forums and YouTube gurus—have emerged as alternative sites of spiritual exploration. This shift signals not merely a change in medium but a transformation in how the sacred is conceptualized, experienced, and performed. Drawing on theories from cyberpsychology, postmodern spirituality, and digital anthropology, this study investigates how spiritual seekers navigate authenticity, authority, and transcendence in digital environments. It interrogates the role of anonymity, interactivity, and community in shaping the modern spiritual self. Through qualitative analysis of selected digital platforms (such as Insight Timer, Reddit’s r/Spirituality, Sadhguru’s, and Bramahkumari’s, to name a few online presences), the research highlights the evolving relationship between technology and inner life. The paper argues that these online spaces function as “digital ashrams,” enabling users to transcend geographical and institutional boundaries. However, it also critically examines the commodification and fragmentation of spiritual discourse in such settings. By tracing the narratives of digitally mediated spiritual journeys, the paper ultimately questions whether the virtual sacred is a meaningful evolution or a simulation of tradition.

KEYWORDS: Digital Spirituality, Spiritual Identity, Identity Formation, Virtual Environments, Postmodern Spirituality, Cyberpsychology, Jungian Psychology, Online Community, Sacred Spaces

1. INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the digital age has ushered in a profound and unprecedented transformation in how individuals engage with spirituality, fundamentally reshaping the contours of human religiosity and identity. While traditional, organized religions continue to wield significant influence across global societies, a discernible and accelerating shift is evident toward spiritual practices that are increasingly personalized, eclectic, and mediated by digital technologies. Social media platforms, mobile applications, and burgeoning online communities have rapidly ascended to become formidable conduits for spiritual expression, facilitating diverse forms of practice and fostering new modalities of community-building. This pervasive digitalization of spiritual life was not merely a gradual evolution but was dramatically accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled even deeply entrenched, traditional spiritual institutions to rapidly adopt digital channels for disseminating their teachings and maintaining congregational connections.

Despite the undeniable prevalence and growing impact of this digital turn, the multifaceted implications of this shift—particularly concerning its influence on spiritual identity formation—remain conspicuously underexplored in extant scholarship. Conventional studies of religion and new media have often prioritized institutional adaptations or the broad phenomenon of "online religion," leaving a significant lacuna in understanding the nuanced processes through which individuals construct, negotiate, and perform their spiritual identities within the unique affordances and constraints of virtual environments.

This paper endeavors to bridge this critical gap by meticulously investigating how spiritual identities are not only formed but also actively performed within virtual environments, with a deliberate focus on non-institutional, often idiosyncratic, forms of spirituality. It seeks to answer several pivotal questions: How do digital platforms fundamentally mediate spiritual experiences, altering their perception and practice? What precise roles do interactivity, anonymity, and the emergent nature of online community play in the intricate process of spiritual self-fashioning in the digital realm? Furthermore, this study critically examines whether online sacred spaces are merely attenuated extensions of pre-existing offline traditions, or if they signify a qualitatively new and fundamentally distinct mode of spiritual being and engagement, ushering in novel forms of transcendence and connection. By addressing these questions, this research aims to illuminate the complex interplay between technology, subjectivity, and the sacred in the 21st century.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly discourse surrounding religion and spirituality in digital environments has undergone significant evolution over the past few decades, mirroring the rapid advancements in digital technologies themselves. Early groundbreaking works laid the foundation for understanding how established religious communities initially engaged with new media.

- Heidi Campbell (2010), a seminal figure in this field, extensively explored how religious communities adapt to and strategically appropriate new media technologies. Her influential concept of "networked religion" meticulously describes how digital tools do not merely replicate traditional religious structures but actively facilitate novel forms of religious practice that ingeniously blend conventional hierarchical or communal forms with the distributed and interactive affordances of digital platforms. This includes the emergence of online congregations, virtual pilgrimages, and digitally mediated rituals.
- Complementing Campbell's insights, Christopher Helland (2000) offered a crucial conceptual distinction between "religion online" and "online religion." "Religion online," as Helland posited, refers primarily to the institutional dissemination of religious content, such as official church websites, online sermons, or digital archives of sacred texts. In contrast, "online religion" denotes a more user-driven, participatory, and often emergent form of spiritual practice, where individuals actively construct their own religious or spiritual experiences within digital spaces, frequently independent of traditional institutional oversight. This latter category is particularly pertinent to the focus of this paper, highlighting a shift towards more individualized and self-directed spiritual journeys.
- However, a significant portion of this foundational scholarship, while invaluable, has predominantly centered on *institutional religion*—examining how churches, mosques, temples, and other formal religious organizations navigate the digital landscape. Less attention has been dedicated to *spirituality*, which, especially in the postmodern context, constitutes a broader, more individualized, and often amorphous domain. Spirituality, in this sense, frequently eschews rigid formal doctrine in favour of experiential authenticity, deep inner exploration, and syncretic beliefs drawn from a multitude of sources. This distinction is crucial for understanding the contemporary spiritual landscape. While religion often implies adherence to a codified belief system and communal rituals, spirituality emphasizes personal meaning-making and transformative experiences.

- To fully understand the contemporary spiritual seeker's journey, it is essential to incorporate broader sociological and philosophical frameworks. Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) concept of "liquid modernity" provides a particularly potent lens through which to view the fluidity and fragmentation characteristic of modern spiritual identities. In a world defined by impermanence and continuous flux, identities become less fixed and more provisional, and commitments more transient. This "liquidity" resonates deeply with the eclectic, pick-and-mix approach often observed in digital spirituality, where individuals readily combine elements from disparate traditions without necessarily committing to any single one.
- Charles Taylor's (1989) monumental work, *Sources of the Self*, meticulously charts the historical emergence of the modern self, characterized by an inward turn and a profound quest for meaning through personal narratives rather than solely through inherited traditions or external authority. This emphasis on self-discovery and personal narrative aligns seamlessly with the personalized spiritual journeys undertaken in digital spaces.
- Carl Jung's profound theory of individuation offers invaluable psychological insight into the process of spiritual development as a lifelong journey toward self-integration. For Jung (1968), individuation involves the conscious assimilation of unconscious elements, often facilitated by encounters with archetypes and universal symbols. In the digital realm, these archetypes—such as the wise old man, the hero, or the shadow—are not only encountered but are also remixed, reinterpreted, and endlessly redistributed through online content. This digital mediation gives rise to entirely new modes of spiritual storytelling and myth-making, as individuals engage with and personalize ancient symbols within contemporary digital narratives. The digital environment, therefore, becomes a vast canvas for projecting and interacting with these archetypal forces, shaping inner psychological landscapes.
- In addition to these foundational theories, recent scholarship on digital culture and selfhood further enriches this review. Studies on "online disinhibition" (Suler, 2004) and "hyperpersonal communication" (Walther, 1996) highlight how online interactions can foster greater self-disclosure and intimacy, potentially accelerating spiritual sharing. The concept of "parasocial relationships" (Horton & Wohl, 1956), traditionally applied to media figures, is highly relevant to understanding the dynamics between digital spiritual teachers and their online followers. Finally, emerging work on "digital rituals" (Handelman, 2017) suggests that online activities, though often informal, can acquire ritualistic significance, providing structure and meaning for digital spiritual practitioners.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study draws upon a tripartite theoretical framework, integrating insights from cyberpsychology, postmodern spirituality, and Jungian psychology to provide a comprehensive lens through which to analyze the formation and performance of spiritual identities in virtual environments. These perspectives are not merely additive but are designed to interweave, offering a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics at play.

- (i) **Cyberpsychology:** This field meticulously investigates the intricate ways in which digital environments shape human behavior, identity construction, and interpersonal relationships. A cornerstone concept within cyberpsychology relevant to this study is the *online disinhibition effect*, articulated by Suler (2004). Suler posited that the unique characteristics of online communication—such as anonymity, asynchronicity, the absence of direct eye contact, and the perceived invisibility—can collectively lead individuals to behave more openly and expressively than they might in face-to-face interactions. In the context of spiritual identity formation, this effect is profoundly significant. Users in virtual spiritual forums, for instance, often feel emboldened to engage in deeper, more vulnerable spiritual disclosures, share highly personal mystical experiences, or articulate doubts and questions that might be deemed "taboo" or inappropriate within traditional offline religious contexts. This increased candor can accelerate

self-exploration and community bonding around shared spiritual journeys. Beyond disinhibition, cyberpsychology also highlights how online spaces offer opportunities for identity experimentation (Turkle, 1995), enabling individuals to explore different facets of their spiritual selves without the immediate social consequences of offline self-presentation. The concept of the *hyperpersonal model* (Walther, 1996) further suggests that online interactions can sometimes be more intimate and idealised than face-to-face communication, as users strategically present themselves and perceive others in ways that enhance perceived connection, which is particularly relevant for the intense bonds formed within online spiritual communities.

- (ii) **Postmodern Spirituality:** This theoretical lens is crucial for decoding the contemporary spiritual landscape, particularly its manifestation in digital realms. Postmodern spirituality is characterized by its inherent *eclecticism*, wherein individuals freely draw from and synthesize beliefs and practices across diverse traditions, often without adherence to any single, rigid doctrine. It emphasizes *personal authority*, placing the individual's subjective experience and inner wisdom above external dogma or institutional dictates. The sacred, in this framework, is largely *constructed through individual and collective experience* rather than being solely derived from inherited scripture or hierarchical pronouncements. This approach helps to explain the highly individualized "spiritual bricolage" observed in digital spaces, where seekers might seamlessly combine Buddhist mindfulness techniques with Hindu mantras, integrate New Age energy work with indigenous shamanic practices, or blend secular self-help philosophies with esoteric spiritual teachings. The internet, with its boundless access to information and diverse communities, serves as the ultimate repository for this syncretic impulse, enabling individuals to craft highly personalized belief systems that resonate with their unique inner journey.
- (iii) **Jungian Psychology:** Carl Jung's analytical psychology, particularly his concept of *individuation*, offers a profound framework for understanding spiritual development as a journey toward psychic wholeness. Individuation is a lifelong process involving the conscious integration of unconscious elements—including archetypes, dreams, and the shadow—into the conscious self (Jung, 1968). This journey often involves confronting inner voids, reconciling paradoxical aspects of the self, and seeking meaning beyond the purely rational. When filtered through digital platforms, Jungian concepts gain new resonance. Online environments, with their vast array of curated content, symbolic imagery, and interactive narratives, can become fertile ground for encountering and engaging with archetypal patterns. Users might explore their "shadow" through anonymous online confessions, encounter universal "wise old man/woman" archetypes in the teachings of digital gurus, or experience transformative "hero's journeys" as they navigate personal challenges within online spiritual support groups. Digital rituals, guided meditations, and even engagement with symbolic art or memes can serve as catalysts for this process of self-integration. The constant stream of information and interaction in digital spaces provides a dynamic environment where individuals can confront, assimilate, and reinterpret their inner landscapes, contributing to the ongoing process of individuation and spiritual maturation.

4. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative methodological approach, specifically utilizing *digital ethnography* to immerse the researcher within the chosen online environments and gain an in-depth understanding of user behaviors, interactions, and meaning-making processes. Digital ethnography is particularly suited for studying online cultures as it allows for direct observation of social phenomena within their digital context, providing rich, nuanced data.

- **Platform Selection:** To capture the diversity of non-institutional digital spiritual practices, three distinct yet representative digital platforms were strategically selected:
- **Reddit's r/Spirituality:** This anonymous, global forum serves as a vibrant, user-driven space where individuals can freely share personal spiritual experiences, pose existential questions, seek

advice, and offer mutual support for each other's spiritual growth. Its anonymous nature and forum-based structure facilitate open dialogue and unfiltered expression. The sheer volume and diversity of posts and comments offer a rich textual data set.

- **YouTube Channels** (e.g., *Sadhguru, Sant Rampal Ji & Bhramakumari*): These channels represent a significant contemporary phenomenon: the digital guru or charismatic spiritual teacher. They function as virtual *satsangs* (spiritual gatherings), providing teachings, guided meditations, discourses on ancient wisdom, and direct answers to seeker questions. The comment sections below these videos often act as participatory congregations, allowing for vertical (teacher-disciple) and horizontal (peer-to-peer) interaction, revealing dynamics of authority, devotion, and community.
- **Insight Timer App**: This mobile application is a leading platform for meditation and mindfulness, featuring thousands of teachers, guided meditations, daily affirmations, and spiritual music. It exemplifies the commodification and gamification of spiritual practice, offering both free and premium content, "streaks" for consistent practice, and opportunities for users to "tip" teachers. It provides insight into the highly individualized and market-driven aspects of digital spirituality.

4.1 Data Collection: A multi-modal approach to data collection was implemented to ensure triangulation and comprehensive insights:

- **Observation and Textual Analysis:** For a period of six months (January 2025 to June 2025), the researcher engaged in extensive passive observation and systematic textual analysis across all three selected platforms. This involved:
- **Reddit:** Reading and analyzing posts, comments, and threads on r/Spirituality, paying close attention to common themes, linguistic patterns, expressions of vulnerability, and the dynamics of support and challenge among users. Specific focus was given to discussions around spiritual crises, breakthroughs, shared practices, and identity descriptors used by individuals.
- **YouTube:** Watching videos from selected popular spiritual channels (e.g., *Sadhguru, Echart Tolle, Gaur Gopal Das, Aaron Doughty* – chosen for their high subscriber counts and active comment sections), analyzing the content of teachings, and meticulously examining the comment sections for expressions of devotion, transformation, community building, and critiques. Attention was paid to how parasocial relationships manifested.
- **Insight Timer:** Exploring the app's interface, types of meditations offered, teacher profiles, user reviews, community forums, and premium features. Analysis focused on the language used in descriptions, the structure of guided practices, and the feedback loops designed to encourage continued engagement.

The collected textual data (transcribed comments, forum posts, app descriptions) was systematically organized for subsequent coding.

4.2 Semi-structured Interviews: To gain deeper, first-person accounts of spiritual identity formation, 12 participants were recruited for semi-structured interviews.

4.3 Participant Selection: Participants (N=12) were aged 22 to 45 (mean age = 33.5 years), reflecting a demographic likely to be digitally native or fluent, and were selected based on their regular engagement (at least 3 times a week for a minimum of 6 months) with at least one of the three selected platforms. Recruitment was primarily done through non-intrusive public postings on relevant subreddits (with moderator permission) and a call for participants on social media, emphasizing the study's focus on non-institutional spirituality. To ensure ethical conduct, informed consent was obtained from all participants, guaranteeing anonymity and the right to withdraw at any time.

4.4 Interview Protocol: Interviews, conducted via secure video conferencing, lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling participants to elaborate on their experiences while ensuring core questions about spiritual background, platform usage, perceived impact on identity, sense of community, and

challenges were addressed. Questions included: "How did you first start engaging with [platform name] for your spiritual practice?" "In what ways has your engagement with this platform influenced your understanding of your own spiritual identity?" "Do you feel more 'authentic' or 'vulnerable' online than offline in spiritual discussions, and why?" "How do you perceive the community on this platform, and how does it support your spiritual journey?"

4.5 Thematic Coding: All collected data (interview transcripts and textual data from observations) was subjected to an iterative process of thematic coding.

- (i) **Initial Coding:** The researcher read through the data multiple times, generating initial codes that captured key concepts, phrases, and recurring patterns related to spiritual experience and identity.
- (ii) **Focused Coding & Category Development:** These initial codes were then refined, grouped, and reorganized into broader, more abstract themes. The analysis identified five primary recurring motifs:
 - **Transformation:** Narratives of personal change, spiritual awakening, healing, or shifts in worldview.
 - **Authenticity:** Discussions about genuine self-expression, sincerity in spiritual practice, and distinguishing real from performative spirituality online.
 - **Community:** Descriptions of belonging, mutual support, shared understanding, and the nature of online spiritual bonds.
 - **Commodification:** Instances of spiritual practices being marketed, monetized, or treated as products/services.
 - **Transcendence:** Experiences of unity, deep peace, connection to something larger than self, or altered states of consciousness.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The multi-modal data collected through digital ethnography and semi-structured interviews revealed nuanced insights into how spiritual identities are formed and performed across distinct digital platforms. The analysis is structured around the five identified thematic motifs, exploring their manifestation within each selected environment.

5.1 Anonymity and Authenticity in r/Spirituality

Reddit's r/Spirituality sub-forum stands out as a unique digital crucible for spiritual identity formation, primarily due to its inherent feature of anonymity. Users are not typically required to reveal their real-world identities, which, as cyberpsychology posits through the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004), often translates into heightened levels of vulnerability and honesty. Participants frequently described r/Spirituality as a "safe space," a sanctuary where they could openly articulate spiritual doubts, share profound mystical experiences, or confess personal struggles that they deemed too sensitive, "weird," or even "taboo" within their offline social circles or traditional religious environments. As one interviewee, "Abha" (44, r/Spirituality user), recounted, "Offline, my friends wouldn't get it, or they'd judge me. Here, I can talk about my astral projection experiences without being mocked. It's liberating."

This perceived safety fosters a dynamic fluidity in spiritual identity. Users frequently shift between roles: from a seeker asking for guidance on a challenging spiritual experience, to a guide offering advice based on their own journey, to a skeptic probing the claims of others. This role fluidity allows for continuous experimentation with different facets of their spiritual selves, mirroring the "liquid modernity" (Bauman, 2000) that characterizes contemporary identity. The search for authenticity is a pervasive theme, with users often seeking validation for their unique experiences while also challenging others to be genuine in their posts. The anonymous nature paradoxically seems to enable a deeper form of self-disclosure, where the absence of offline social consequences permits individuals to express a more unvarnished version of their spiritual self, fostering a sense of shared, albeit

digitally mediated, authenticity. The community functions as a collective mirror, reflecting and validating diverse spiritual paths, thereby solidifying emergent spiritual identities.

5.2 Charisma and Authority on YouTube (Sadhguru, Gaur Gopal Das, Sister Shivani)

YouTube channels featuring charismatic spiritual teachers like Sadhguru, Sister Shivani, Gaur Gopal Das exemplify a novel reconfiguration of the traditional guru-disciple relationship, embodying what can be termed "hybrid authority." These figures draw deeply on ancient spiritual traditions, disseminating timeless wisdom and practices. However, their digital presence fundamentally transforms the accessibility and scale of their influence. Their teachings, presented through high-quality video production, often edited for maximum impact, create an intimate yet distanced connection with millions of followers globally.

The comment sections beneath these videos function as vibrant, participatory congregations. Far from being passive consumers, viewers actively engage: expressing profound gratitude, sharing personal transformative experiences attributed to the teacher's guidance, engaging in lively debates with fellow followers, and seeking clarification on complex spiritual concepts. This horizontal peer interaction, alongside the vertical guru-disciple dynamic, validates the speaker's charisma and further reinforces their authority. Interviewee "Manish" (33, YouTube follower) noted, "Watching Sadhguru feels like satsang. And seeing hundreds of comments of people sharing similar breakthroughs, it just solidifies that what he's saying is real." This demonstrates the formation of parasocial relationships, where followers develop a strong, one-sided emotional connection to the teacher, often feeling as if they know them personally, despite the lack of direct interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

However, this digital mode of charismatic authority is not without its complexities and concerns. The platform's inherent mechanisms raise issues of "branding" and "monetization." Teachers often monetize their content through ads, merchandise, courses, and donations, leading to questions about the commercialization of spiritual teachings. The polished presentation and curated persona can also contribute to the formation of "personality cults," where followers' devotion becomes intensely centered on the individual rather than solely on the spiritual wisdom they transmit. The algorithmic nature of YouTube, pushing similar content, can also create "filter bubbles" that reinforce existing beliefs and limit exposure to alternative perspectives, potentially hindering a truly individuated spiritual journey.

5.3 Mindfulness and Commodification on Insight Timer

Insight Timer, as a leading meditation and mindfulness application, vividly illustrates the "neoliberal packaging" of spirituality in the digital age. While it genuinely offers an extensive array of tools for inner growth—ranging from guided meditations for sleep, stress, and anxiety to philosophical discourses and spiritual music—it simultaneously frames these practices within a consumer-oriented model. Users can "follow" specific teachers, "tip" them for their content, and unlock "premium features" through subscriptions.

- (i) This platform exemplifies how spiritual identity can become intertwined with a "wellness brand." Daily practice is frequently "gamified" through features like "streaks" (consecutive days of meditation) and "badges" awarded for milestones. Spiritual progress, traditionally intangible and deeply personal, becomes quantifiable (e.g., "meditated for 500 hours," "completed 30-day challenge"). Interviewee "Preeti" (35, Insight Timer user) remarked, "It motivates me to see my streak, but sometimes I wonder if I'm meditating for the badge or for genuine peace." This raises critical questions about the authenticity of spiritual engagement when external motivators and market logic permeate the practice. The platform's design subtly encourages a continuous pursuit of self-optimization, where spiritual growth is framed as a product to be consumed and measured, aligning with the postmodern emphasis on self-improvement as a perpetual project. While it democratizes access to spiritual tools, it also risks reducing profound spiritual experiences to transactional exchanges and quantifiable achievements, potentially diluting their transformative power and fostering a consumerist approach to inner development.

5.4 Community and Transcendence

Despite the inherent digital mediation, a recurring and powerful theme across all platforms, and strongly articulated in interview data, was the profound experience of connection, personal transformation, and genuine transcendence. Many users reported encountering archetypal dreams (a Jungian concept of universal symbols emerging from the collective unconscious), experiencing moments of "unity consciousness" (a sense of interconnectedness with all existence), or achieving significant emotional healing through their digital spiritual engagement.

- (ii) Interviewee "Akshay" (40, diverse platform user) shared, "I experienced a profound sense of unity during a guided meditation on Insight Timer. Later, I saw a thread on Reddit where someone described almost the same thing. It made me feel less alone, more connected to humanity." This highlight how digital spaces, despite their virtual nature, can facilitate shared experiences that validate and amplify individual spiritual breakthroughs. The immediate and diverse community feedback found in comments sections and forums often served to reinforce these narratives, validating mystical experiences as real, meaningful, and not isolated occurrences. This collective validation is crucial for identity formation, particularly for those whose spiritual experiences might be marginalized or misunderstood in offline contexts.
- (iii) Online sacred spaces, therefore, are not merely passive extensions of offline traditions. While they may draw from traditional sources, their interactive, user-driven, and globally networked nature signifies a fundamentally new mode of spiritual being. They allow for the emergence of "digital rituals" (Handelman, 2017) – shared practices, synchronous meditations, or communal affirmations – that create a sense of collective effervescence, bridging physical distances. The anonymity and flexibility offered by these platforms enable individuals to engage deeply with spiritual concepts and communities on their own terms, fostering a personalized yet interconnected path to transcendence. These digitally mediated spiritual experiences, for many, represent not a dilution of the sacred but a dynamic reconfiguration of it, allowing for new forms of profound encounter and identity construction.

6. CONCLUSION

The digitalization of spirituality represents a pivotal and ongoing metamorphosis in human engagement with the sacred, rather than a mere trivialization or dilution of its essence. Online sacred spaces are emerging as dynamic and potent sites of identity formation, where spiritual seekers actively negotiate the intricate boundaries between established tradition and radical innovation, the elusive nature of authenticity and the performative aspects of online self-presentation, and the inherent tension between personal solitude and communal connection. Through a highly individualized yet often interconnected bricolage of diverse teachings, adaptable practices, and myriad virtual interactions, digital devotees are meticulously constructing spiritual selves that are as complex, fluid, and multifaceted as the digital platforms they inhabit. This process reflects a profound shift towards self-authored spirituality, where individuals curate their own paths to meaning and transcendence.

However, this profound evolution in spiritual practice is not devoid of significant challenges and inherent complexities. The growing commodification of the sacred, where spiritual tools and experiences are increasingly packaged and marketed as consumer products, raises critical questions about the integrity and accessibility of authentic spiritual growth. The pervasive potential for misinformation, conspiracy theories, and the proliferation of unqualified spiritual "gurus" in unregulated online environments poses serious risks to vulnerable seekers. Furthermore, the absence of robust ethical oversight within many of these digital spiritual ecosystems creates a vacuum where exploitation, manipulation, or the erosion of genuine community can occur. These concerns necessitate careful consideration and critical engagement from scholars, practitioners, and platform developers alike.

Future research in this burgeoning field must urgently delve deeper into these intricate dynamics. It is particularly crucial to explore how digital devotion is reshaping global spiritual landscapes beyond

Western contexts, examining its manifestations and implications in diverse cultural and religious settings, especially in the Global South, where digital adoption rates are rapidly accelerating. Further qualitative studies could focus on the long-term impacts of online spiritual engagement on psychological well-being, the development of ethical frameworks for digital spiritual communities, and the precise mechanisms through which digital tools either facilitate or hinder profound mystical experiences. Understanding these evolving relationships between technology, self, and the sacred is paramount to comprehending the future of human spirituality in an increasingly interconnected world.

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