

Editorial

‘HACKERS OF FAITH’: DECODING THE END-TO-END ENCRYPTION OF CULT-CODE-CREED

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The notion of 'faith-hacking' has crystallized in my mind, stirred by contemporary discussions on the interplay between modern techno-centric knowledge and spiritually illumined wisdom. This metaphorical use of "hacker" highlights a dynamic approach to faith-centred research, one that revitalizes spiritual practices and poses significant ethical questions through creative and critical engagement with religious doctrines. Unlike conventional hackers who breach computer systems and compromise cybersecurity, a faith hacker or religious hacker explores the depths of religious doctrines, texts, and traditions, using creativity and critical thinking to reinterpret and innovate within their spiritual frameworks.

Faith hacking can have profound consequences. While 'hacking' in its original sense referred to the skilful exploration and mastery of software, metaphorically applying it to religious faith encourages believers to delve deeply into the horizons of their faith traditions, uncovering deeper meanings and insights akin to 'mastering a programmed language'. Believers are thus encouraged to 'hack' the codes of religious faith, much like master programmers, to deepen their understanding and application of their traditions. However, when modern individuals adhere to religious creeds and rituals without access to the deeper spiritual truths they contain, they may remain conventional followers without fully experiencing the profound beauty and tranquillity promised by their religious traditions. This condition can lead them to spiritual stagnation as well as superficial practice of their

cult and creed. In essence, the consequences of not 'hacking faith' can result in missed opportunities for personal spiritual growth, a diminished understanding of one's faith, and a failure to fully realize the transformative potential that deep encounter with religious traditions can offer

In this context, the current issue of the *Journal of Dharma* invites every seeker of knowledge and faith to actively and positively engage in uncovering the hidden dimensions of one's spiritual paths and beliefs by adopting the role of a 'religious hacker'. To assume the mantle of a 'religious hacker' signifies a personal and subjective encounter with reality, achieved through the meticulous deciphering of spiritual codes. As we know, even if someone inadvertently seizes the "treasures of happiness," he will automatically be enveloped by the wealth of happiness. Similarly, a religious hacker, by associating oneself with religious creeds and divine codes, begins to explore the depths of its cult-code-creed nexus. In this way, they embody the spirit of the 'good thief' in Christianity, who ultimately dared to steal even the throne of heavenly bliss.

Again, decoding is employed as a method to analyse, interpret and reinterpret the coded information of faith, embodied in cult, code, creed, myth, mysticism, and prophecy, back into its original and contextual form. Cult, code, and creed signify the organizational, doctrinal, and faith aspects of religions and belief systems, while myth, mysticism, and prophecy explore the narrative, experiential, and revelatory aspects of various religious traditions. These elements collectively serve to convey profound meanings, offer guidance along spiritual paths, and ensure continuity of sacred wisdom and traditions across generations. The task of every religious scholar is nothing but to decode the latent and unmanifested data code in its present manifested form.

While encryption ensures privacy, its application within cultic contexts raises significant ethical concerns. End-to-end

encryption, traditionally a digital privacy safeguard, finds an intriguing parallel in how cults and fringe religious groups protect their ideologies. These groups adopt encrypted communication to shield their beliefs from external scrutiny, creating a digital fortress where their 'code' of beliefs is both disseminated and protected. Further, it challenges social norms of transparency and accountability, potentially obscuring harmful practices under the guise of religious freedom. The tension between privacy rights and public safety becomes particularly acute in these scenarios, necessitating a nuanced exploration of the ethical implications. The allure of encryption lies in its promise of security, yet within the confines of cult-code-creed, this security often masks darker realities. Decoding the encrypted layers of these belief systems reveals not just messages but the intricate power dynamics and control mechanisms that underpin these closed groups. They are not at all religious hackers but mere 'data hackers.'

Yet, true religious hackers resemble innovative theologians who challenge conventional interpretations of religious texts and traditions. They propose new perspectives, reinterpret scriptures in contemporary contexts, and critically evaluate the established norms within religious communities. Similarly, spiritual innovators introduce new cultic practices, rituals, and ceremonies within their religious communities, adapting and transforming existing traditions to address evolving spiritual needs and enhance mystical and spiritual experiences.

A hacker of faith fixes his gaze upon the supreme light, ascending to the pinnacle of spiritual enlightenment. This transformative journey is characterized by an earnest quest for divine illumination, wherein the "sinner becoming saint" effect manifests, culminating in deep noetic visions. In contrast, a data hacker dwells in the world of shadows, manipulating religious doctrines for personal gain or to wield power over others. This darker path exploits sacred teachings for political ambition,

financial enrichment, or selfish motives. Such actions erode the integrity of religious communities, spawning ethical dilemmas and potential harm.

In "Conceptualization of Cult-Code-Creed in Religious Traditions through Ceramics in Nigeria," Oghenekevwe E. Abamwa and Doris Udoka Uti analyze the metaphorical decoding of ceramics to unveil spiritually enriched symbolic expressions in Nigeria. Ceramic and pottery designs become visual narrators of religious tenets and faith traditions, allowing believers to grasp their creeds through these art forms. Risu Na, Yaqin Wang, Ruo Jia, Buqi Na, and Yucheng Ning, in their work "Creation and Stewardship: A Critical Analysis of Patristic Thoughts and Their Relevance in the Contemporary World," revisit the historical, scriptural, and theological bedrock of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. Meanwhile, Pune Karimi's "Exploring Humanistic Values in Persian Sufi Mysticism and Literature" innovatively decodes the humanistic values embedded within Persian Sufi mystic literature and Islamic thoughts.

Leema Jacob and K. Jayasankara Reddy, in "Theory of Mind as a Unifying Construct of Religious Cognition and Eudaimonic Well-being Among Christian Adolescents," adopt a contemporary psycho-spiritual lens to examine the religious *ethos* of Christian adolescents. This study aims to bridge the Theory of Mind (ToM), an emerging concept in neuroscience, with theological views of God and divinity. Chunlan Liao's "Negotiating Differences for Productive Diversity: A Religio-Ethical Study on Structures and Models of Home School Learning in China" creatively integrates Biblical and Confucianist principles to promote productive diversity in education. The author reaffirms that religious beliefs and cultural heritage can inspire families to opt for homeschooling, providing a socio-religious approach rooted in eternal values. This method is designed not to limit students' personal growth but to expand their perspectives for the benefit of the community. Thus, Liao eloquently explores the concept of homeschooling within the ambit of religious traditions and mythical beliefs, illustrating the

harmonious coexistence of diverse educational approaches rooted in cultural, religious and ethical foundations. Bibhudatta Dash, in "The *Saptanadi*: Mythico-Religious Significance on Contemporary Indian Biodiversity," elucidates how the seven sacred rivers of Hinduism have deeply influenced India's religious framework and social philosophy. His 'religious hacking mind', indeed, illuminates the profound nexus between ecologically rooted biodiversity and theologically upheld spiritual traditions. Finally, Hyosook Kim's "Religion and the Sense of Ethics in Ancient Japan: Analysis of the Buddhist Worldview Based on *The Tale of Genji*" encapsulates how the characters of this novel reflect on the lives of people during the Heian period. Kim argues that *The Tale of Genji*'s deep-rooted Buddhist themes embody a strong socio-spiritual longing for the renewal of humanity.

The metaphorical expression of 'faith hacking' denotes a nuanced perspective on how creativity and contemplation shape religious discourses and ritual performances. Beyond the encrypted veils of technology, it unveils the resilience of belief systems adapting to the digital age. Further, religious hackers creatively and systematically engage with sacred myths which are predominantly religious narratives conveying divine truths enshrined in various faith traditions. They deftly reinterpret them to unveil deeper spiritual insights, challenge literal interpretations, or address pressing contemporary ethical and social issues.

In the domain of mysticism, hackers are fascinated by the ecstatic union with the Supreme reality, crafting new contemplative practices, probing altered states of consciousness, or reinterpreting mystical texts to resonate with the spiritual quest for truth. By immersing themselves in the realm of prophetic texts, religious hackers meticulously decode their relevance in contemporary society. In this endeavor, they courageously challenge entrenched interpretations and skillfully explore how prophetic wisdom can illuminate ethical decision-making in our modern world. Ultimately, faith hacking enables us to see how ancient wisdom adapts to meet the challenges and complexities of our ever-evolving world. This approach unfolds the

transformative potential of faith and the visionary spirit propelling religious evolution in our digital epoch, guiding the path to the Supreme Reality.

Hackers of faith apply modern tools and techniques to re-examine ancient scriptures, much like decoding encrypted messages. Integrating insights from theology, philosophy, sociology and technology enriches religious experience and practice, reminiscent of the blend of Eastern and Western sacred and educational philosophies. The encrypted nature of religious symbols ultimately reflects divine mystery, and decoding them serves as a form of 'divine revelation', unveiling the 'interiors of the Eternal Abode'. Epistemologically, this metaphor of encryption and decryption applies to religious knowledge, where doctrines and symbols often hold layers of meaning. Similar to digital hackers decoding data, I do visualize the advent of more religious hackers who can interpret sacred texts, sacred cults, sacred creed and sacred codes to uncover profound truths and enhance spiritual understanding.

References

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