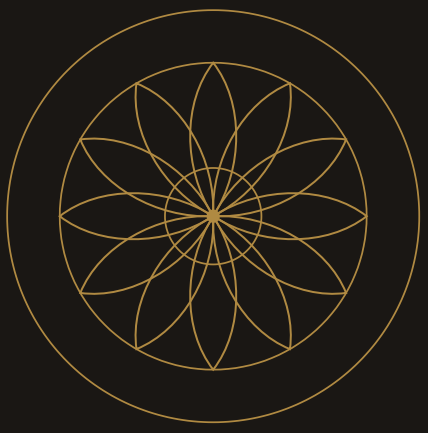


THE SACRED DIVIDE

THE FULL RECORD

Buddhism

Buddhism family

HONOR THE FAITH · NAME THE MACHINERY

TEXT CHECKED 2026-10-03

Before you begin

This is the record of Buddhism in *The Sacred Divide*. It has 27 sections, the same 27 used for every tradition, so that any section can be set beside the same section for another. Every fact is sourced.

Before each section, a short note says what the section is built to show, so you know what you are looking at before you read the detail.

After each section, a note headed *Why this matters to you* points at the part of the section most likely to touch an ordinary reader: a member, a donor, a parent, a voter, someone thinking about leaving, or someone outside forming an opinion. It usually ends with a question. The questions are not traps. They are the ones a careful reader would ask anyway.

The hard questions in section 23 are set out one at a time: the question, why it is asked, and an example already documented in this record.

Where a note states a fact, the fact comes from this record's own tables and cited sources or, in a few places, from a well-known research finding named in the text. Corrections are logged, with their dates, in the last section, *What changed on this page*.

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How to read this

Every religion in The Sacred Divide is laid out the same way, in the same 27 sections, so that any section can be compared across religions. This file examines institutions, offices, money and power. It does not judge anyone's faith or the truth of any belief.

EVIDENCE GRADES

Each of the 30 techniques carries a grade for how it is established in this tradition.

- **CODIFIED** Written policy, published rule, contractual requirement, or a procedure the institution has confirmed in its own documents. The strongest grade and the hardest to deny.
- **DOCUMENTED** Established by court judgment, government inquiry, regulatory action, or financial filing. Not the institution's own words, but a body with subpoena power.
- **TAUGHT** Repeated leadership instruction from platform, publication, or curriculum, without a formal rule. Deniable as emphasis rather than policy.
- **CULTURAL** Community enforcement the institution neither mandates nor prevents. Real in effect, unattributable by design — the highest-deniability grade. A volume graded mostly Cultural has not been cleared of anything: it means the page names no document that makes the institution responsible. Cultural does not mean minor, and it is not a finding of absence.

- **CONTESTED** Occurs in some parts of the tradition and is actively opposed in others. Generalizing this grade across a whole tradition is a misuse of it.
- **REFORMED** Documented historically and materially changed since — policy withdrawn, practice ended, or independent oversight accepted. Recorded because omitting it would be dishonest.
- **UNGRADED** Present in the source material without a grade assigned yet. Read as an unverified pattern claim, not as a finding.

RECEIPTS

Bracketed labels such as [OFFICIAL POLICY] name the kind of source a claim rests on.

- **Official policy.** The institution's own written rule: handbook, canon, policy letter, catechism, trust deed, temple recommend question. The strongest evidence available, because it cannot be attributed to a rogue individual.
- **Court record.** Judgments, convictions, filings, and testimony given under oath. Adversarially tested, which is more than most religious claims about themselves have been.
- **Government inquiry.** Royal commissions, grand juries, parliamentary and state investigations with subpoena power. Where these exist they are usually the best record of what an institution did rather than said.
- **Regulatory action.** Findings and penalties from bodies like the SEC or consumer-protection regulators. Narrow in scope, unusually precise in what they establish.
- **Financial record.** Filings, audited statements, tax returns, disclosed compensation, property transactions. Frequently the only place an institution tells the truth about its priorities.

- **Leadership statement.** Recorded sermons, conference addresses, published letters. The institution in its own voice, to its own people, on the record.
- **Independent investigation.** Reports commissioned by the institution but conducted externally. Weaker than a court and far stronger than a press release — and notable when the institution publishes them in full.
- **Academic source.** Peer-reviewed history, sociology, and demography. Best for context, structure, and scale; weaker for specific institutional conduct.
- **Former member testimony.** Firsthand accounts from people who were inside. Indispensable and interested at once — graded as testimony, never presented as documentary proof.
- **Pattern observed.** A recurring configuration with no single document behind it. Labeled as an observation rather than a finding, and the weakest claim type in this codex.

METHOD

- Separation of targets. This codex analyzes institutional control patterns, never the worth of believers or the truth of beliefs. Theology is out of scope; behavior, money, and power are in scope.
- Pattern over anecdote. A tactic is attributed to a tradition's high-control expressions only where the mechanism recurs — one bad congregation proves nothing; the same architecture in a hundred proves the architecture.
- Evidence weighting. Every factual claim carries a bracketed source-type label and should carry a grade (A–D). Claims marked SOURCE NEEDED or PATTERN OBSERVED are analysis, not established fact, and must not be published as fact.
- Steelman rule. Every tactic section presents the institution's strongest defense before countering it. If the defense cannot be stated in a form its adherents would recognize, the counter is not yet earned.

- Asymmetry honesty. Similar tactic does not mean identical severity. A shunning policy that costs your entire family is not the same as a community that cools toward doubters, and the codex must never flatten that difference.
- The mirror rule. Any framework this powerful can itself be misused — to smear traditions, flatter one's own, or manufacture grievance. The self-audit and language guardrails apply to this project as much as to any institution it examines.

CITATIONS

A small raised number in the text links to the matching item in this religion's Sources, near the end. Every source was checked, and the date of the last check is shown at the top.

01 At a glance

BEFORE YOU READ

The whole page on one screen: how big Buddhism is, who sits at the top, how that person is chosen and whether anyone can remove them, where the money comes from, and what leaving costs. The disclosure scorecard underneath asks six yes-or-no questions any charity or public company would be expected to answer. Every later section expands one of these rows.

SIZE	Buddhism had about 324 million adherents by Pew's 2020 count, the only major religion that shrank from 2010 to 2020; Pew's 2012 report counted about 488 million Buddhists for 2010, and its 2025 estimates leave out people who practice alongside folk traditions without formally identifying as Buddhist. **ACADEMIC SOURCE** · Pew, 2025
WHO'S IN CHARGE	No single office leads Buddhism; the Tibetan Buddhism and Soka Gakkai volumes describe their own offices. In Thailand the Sangharaja (head of the sangha, the Buddhist monastic community), also called the Supreme Patriarch, is Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatanana IX, appointed by the King in 2017; royal appointment of the office is statutory. He was born in 1927, so check this row again for a change of holder.
WHO CHOOSES AND REMOVES THE TOP OFFICE	No global office exists. In Thailand the Crown chooses the Supreme Patriarch; the sources read for this page do not say who can remove him.

MONEY IN ONE LINE	The money comes from dana (donation) economies, merit-making (funding temples to improve karma and rebirth), funeral monopolies (Japan's danka system, under which each household belongs to one temple), retreat and course fees in convert Buddhism (Buddhism practiced by people who were not born into it), and the monetization of mindfulness.
LEAVING IN ONE LINE	Monastics who disrobe (give up the robes and return to lay life) in traditional societies lose status, and members of convert sanghas (Buddhist communities of converts) who leave scandal-hit centers lose their community and the years of practice they invested.
THE UNANSWERED QUESTION	The Vinaya (the monastic code) prescribes confronting a monk who errs. Why did Western centers need outside investigators to do what the code already required?
EVIDENCE	Two of the 30 techniques are sourced to a named document (6 and 12). The grades are Taught 6, Cultural 21, Contested 2, Documented 1 and Codified 0.
FAMILY	Buddhism — buddhism, tibetan-buddhism, soka-gakkai
LAST CHECKED	2026-10-03

Disclosure scorecard

ACCOUNTS	PAY	SAFEGUARDING	EXTERNAL FIRST	REMOVAL	REPLY
PARTIAL	NO	PARTIAL	PARTIAL	NO	PARTIAL

Y Yes — established from a public source · **P** Partial — true of some parts of the tradition, or true in some jurisdictions · **N** No — not established from any public source · **?** Not assessable — no institutional apex exists to assess

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The glance table's answer to who chooses the top office is "No global office exists. In Thailand the Crown chooses the Supreme Patriarch; the sources read for this page do not say who can remove him". Read that as though it described the board of a pension fund holding your savings. Would you accept the arrangement there? The scorecard finds no public evidence of leaders' pay or a written removal procedure. Each "No" is something the institution could publish tomorrow. Ask yourself why it hasn't.

02 A day inside

BEFORE YOU READ

One ordinary day, told from inside. The person is a composite built from documented patterns, not a real individual. The point is to make the structure visible at human scale: phrases like "removal mechanism" or "giving record" are easy to read past, but a Tuesday organized around them is not.

Grace · A Tuesday in the practice period · A Zen centre in the Pacific Northwest

Zazen (seated Zen meditation) at 5:30, forty minutes, and the first twenty are agony and the last five are the reason she has organized eleven years of her life around this. That is not a small return. She wants it on the record before anything else.

Work practice: she scrubs the kitchen for two hours. She is a residential student, which means she pays a monthly fee and also works twenty hours a week, and she has never quite been able to say that sentence out loud to her sister without it sounding like something.

At eleven she has dokusan, the private interview with the teacher. She raises, carefully, the thing about Peter — Peter who is a senior student and who put his hand on the back of a nineteen-year-old's neck at the summer sesshin (a multi-day silent retreat), twice, and who is on the board. The teacher listens with total attention and then says, gently, that she might look at where her reactivity is arising. She leaves the room and stands in the corridor and cannot locate what she is feeling, and then thinks that not being able to locate it is probably instructive.

Lunch is silent. She likes the silence. In the silence she notices that she has decided not to raise it again, and she notices that she reached this decision without any words being said to her, and she notices herself noticing, which is the trap she has never once found the edge of.

In the afternoon a new student, maybe twenty-three, asks her whether the fee includes food. Grace says it does and hears her own voice doing the thing the senior students' voices do — warm, settled, slightly above the question.

Nine p.m., her room, a phone with three bars. Her sister has texted asking if she's coming at Christmas. Grace does the math on the retreat schedule and the work rota and types *probably not this year!* and then sits with the exclamation mark for a while, and then puts the phone face down and sits, which is what she does, which is the whole point, and which is also — she

thinks, briefly, before letting it go — an extremely convenient thing to be good at.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Did any moment in that day feel familiar: a cost nobody questions, a door nobody can see how to open? The section of this page that explains that moment is the one to read first. If nothing felt familiar, ask whether that's because it isn't your life, or because the patterns have become normal to you.

03 The forefront

BEFORE YOU READ

The page's thesis in one place. First, the single question the documented record could not answer. Then the widest gap between what the institution says and what the record shows, one cost of leaving set beside how it is officially denied, and the strongest objection to this whole page, answered rather than dismissed.

> You came for the end of suffering, and you may have found real relief — the breath, the sitting, the first time the noise went quiet. That is not in dispute. What is in dispute is a set of ideas about ego and attachment that, in the wrong hands, can be turned into the most elegant silencing device in this entire codex.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

The Vinaya prescribes confronting a monk who errs. Why did Western centers need outside investigators to do what the code already required?

The widest gap between word and record

THEY SAY	THE RECORD SHOWS	RECEIPT
The dharma (the Buddha's teaching) is offered freely.	Retreats, trainings, and certifications are priced, and unpaid work-exchange labor sustains the centres.	PATTERN OBSERVED

One cost of leaving, beside its denial

COST	DOCUMENTED?	DETAIL	THE OFFICIAL DENIAL
Monastic status and livelihood	Yes	Disrobing carries stigma in traditional societies, and a monastic who disrobes loses housing, education, and standing	"Anyone may leave the sangha freely — the Buddha permitted it."

The strongest objection, answered

The objection. You are misunderstanding the teaching. Ego and attachment are not silencing devices.

What is true in it. They are not. As self-applied contemplative tools they are among the most sophisticated psychological instruments any tradition produced, and this codex says so.

The answer. The objection is to a specific inversion: a teacher applying them to a student's complaint. The tradition's own answer is the Vinaya, which contains public confession and expulsion procedures for teacher

misconduct. Each of the teacher-misconduct cases documented here occurred where that code was set aside in favor of a teacher's authority.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Try answering the unanswered question yourself: *The Vinaya (the monastic code) prescribes confronting a monk who errs. Why did Western centers need outside investigators to do what the code already required?* If you can't, who could, and would asking them be welcome? How an institution reacts to a fair question often tells you more than the answer does.

04 What healthy looks like here

BEFORE YOU READ

What genuinely works in Buddhism, stated first and separately from any critique. That is a standing rule of this book: no tradition is reduced to its worst documented moments. Anything criticized later is measured against the best of what is described here.

> Buddhism has about 324 million adherents by Pew's 2020 count (Pew's 2012 report counted about 488 million for 2010, and its 2025 estimates leave out people who practice alongside folk traditions without formally identifying as Buddhist [19]), across the Theravada (Southeast Asian and Sri Lankan), Mahayana (East Asian) and Vajrayana (Tibetan and Himalayan) streams. It teaches a path of liberation from suffering through ethics, meditation, and insight.

Healthy practice here starts from the Vinaya's own accountability design, which provides public confession and expulsion rules for teachers [9]. It includes centers that commissioned independent investigations of teacher misconduct, and engaged Buddhism (Buddhism applied to social and political questions), which confronts institutional complicity.

Some of that standard is already on the record. Rigpa commissioned the independent Lewis Silkin investigation, whose report of August 2018 is cited on this page [6]. Four women were ordained as bhikkhunis (fully ordained nuns) in Perth in 2009 [13], and Dhammananda Bhikkhuni, ordained in Sri Lanka in 2003, became Thailand's first fully ordained Theravada nun [14]. Thai authorities charged officials of the National Office of Buddhism with embezzling temple funds in 2018 [5]. Each is a place where the tradition met the standard this page applies, and each is recorded here as credit.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

A bias check before the critique. People tend to read criticism of their own group as an attack and criticism of other groups as simply true. Social psychologists call this in-group bias; it shows up even when the groups are assigned at random (Tajfel's "minimal group" experiments, 1971). If you belong here, did this section feel fair? If you don't, did anything in it surprise you? The surprise is a rough measure of what you had assumed.

It teaches a path of liberation from suffering through ethics, meditation, and insight.

05 History

BEFORE YOU READ

A dated timeline and a few moments where the direction changed. Dates matter because they show that most rules had a beginning. A rule that began in a particular year, for a particular reason, is a rule that can be examined, and sometimes retired.

In the 5th to 4th century BCE, Siddhartha Gautama's renunciant movement (a movement of people who gave up household life) began in northern India. Monasticism was institutionalized under royal patronage, notably that of Ashoka. Buddhism spread across Asia and adapted to each culture. In the 20th century, Western transmission created convert sanghas and meditation industries.

Timeline

HISTORY AT A GLANCE



Numbered markers match the timeline below; spacing is proportional to the years.

1

C. 5TH–4TH C. BCE

Siddhartha Gautama's renunciant movement in northern India

A wandering community with no property, explicitly outside caste and priestly authority.

2

C. 400 BCE

First councils; Vinaya (monastic code) established

The tradition writes its own accountability system — public confession, expulsion rules, no hereditary rank.

3

C. 250 BCE

Ashoka's patronage; missions to Sri Lanka and beyond

Royal sponsorship arrives, and with it land, buildings, and dependence on rulers.

4

1ST C. BCE–500 CE

Pali canon (the Theravada scriptures) written; Mahayana sutras; monastic universities (Nalanda)

Institutional scholarship and endowments; monasteries become major landholders.

5

500–1200 CE

Spread to China, Korea, Japan, Tibet, Southeast Asia; Chan/Zen lineages (the Chinese and Japanese meditation schools) form

Dharma transmission becomes a certified lineage — authority by pedigree.

6

1200–1800

State Buddhism in Theravada kingdoms; Japan's temple-registration (danka) system

Households compulsorily affiliated to temples; funeral monopoly established. ACADEMIC SOURCE

7 1800S–1940S

Colonial disruption; Buddhist modernism; Japanese imperial Zen supports militarism

Ethics subordinated to nationalism — documented by the tradition's own later self-criticism. ACADEMIC SOURCE

8 1950S–1970S

Communist suppression in China, Tibet, Cambodia; Vipassana (insight meditation) and Zen reach the West

Transmission to convert cultures with no local accountability structures.

9 1980S–2010S

Western teacher-misconduct scandals across Zen, Vipassana-adjacent, and Tibetan lineages

Charisma without Vinaya produces predictable failure.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

10 1990S–PRESENT

Mindfulness commercialization; Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar and Sri Lanka

Technique monetized without ethics; monks mobilized for ethnic violence. GOVERNMENT REPORT

Monasticism was institutionalized under royal patronage, notably that of Ashoka.

Moments in the room

1956 — AMBEDKAR CONVERTS, WITH HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF FOLLOWERS

At Nagpur, B. R. Ambedkar took refuge with Dalit followers, in numbers estimated at 400,000 to 500,000 [21], choosing Buddhism explicitly as an exit from caste. It was one of the largest mass religious conversions in modern history and it was framed as a liberation from a different religion's hierarchy.

Why it matters. It shows Buddhism entering the modern record as the escape route from another tradition's control system, and it is the codex's clearest illustration that traditions are not uniformly anything.

2017–2019 — THE RIGPA LETTER

Eight senior students wrote publicly to Sogyal Rinpoche alleging abuse; an independent investigation (the Lewis report), commissioned by Rigpa, the Tibetan Buddhist organization

Sogyal Rinpoche founded, substantially upheld the allegations. It had taken decades and a letter that named the teacher.

Why it matters. The Vinaya already contained the procedure for confronting a monk who errs. What was missing was anyone willing to apply it to the person it was written for, and outside lawyers supplied the willingness.

2012–2018 — THE BUDDHIST MONK ON THE MAGAZINE COVER

Ashin Wirathu's ultranationalist preaching in Myanmar preceded and accompanied atrocities against the Rohingya; Sri Lankan monastic nationalism produced parallel violence. In March 2017 Myanmar's State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, the state-recognized Buddhist authority, barred Wirathu from preaching for a year for hate speech [20]. This page records nothing on what Sri Lankan monastic authorities did.

Why it matters. It is included because a tradition marketed in the West as constitutionally peaceful requires the same instrument as every other page here. Doctrine does not restrain structure; structure restrains structure.

Sources for this section: [8] [9] [20] [21]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Pick one rule that shapes your week and look for it on the timeline. If it has a start date, it was decided by people at a particular moment, for reasons of that moment. Were you taught it as timeless? What would it mean for you if it turned out to be younger than your grandparents' grandparents?

06 Branches & variants

BEFORE YOU READ

Buddhism is not one bloc. This section maps the main branches and variants, so that nothing documented about one community is read as true of all of them.

The tradition has three main branches: Theravada (Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka), Mahayana (East Asia, including the Pure Land, Zen/Chan,

Tiantai and Nichiren schools) and Vajrayana (Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism, profiled separately).

BRANCH	WHERE	WHERE AUTHORITY SITS
Theravada	It is practiced in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos.	Authority sits with monastic orders. In Thailand a Supreme Patriarch has been named by the king since 2016 [3] [4], and full ordination of women is not recognized there [13] [14].
Mahayana	It is practiced in China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Vietnam.	Authority sits with schools and temples (Pure Land, Zen/Chan, Tiantai, Nichiren). In Japan, historic temple registration tied families to temples [9].
Vajrayana	It is practiced in Tibet, the Himalayas, Mongolia, and Western centres.	Authority sits with lamas (Tibetan teachers) and tulkus (teachers recognized as reincarnations of earlier ones); see Tibetan Buddhism.
Western convert centres	They are found in Europe, North America and Australia.	Authority sits with a founding teacher and a board, and the centres are often registered charities [6].

There were about **324 million** Buddhists in 2020, down from 343 million in 2010, and Buddhism is the only major religion to shrink [1] [2].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you know one community of Buddhism, you know one community. Most bad generalizations about a religion, and most unfair defenses of it, come from treating one branch as the whole. Which branch is the one you picture when you hear the name? Is that picture yours, or one you were given by news coverage or by the community itself?

07 Structure

BEFORE YOU READ

The organizational chart: how many people and institutions there are, where authority sits, who holds the top office, and who holds what beneath it. The question to keep in mind is simple: if the person at the top got something badly wrong, what written procedure exists to correct or remove them?

Size and shape

Adherents	Buddhism had about 324 million adherents by Pew's 2020 count, the only major religion that shrank from 2010 to 2020; Pew's 2012 report counted about 488 million Buddhists for 2010, and its 2025 estimates leave out people who practice alongside folk traditions without formally identifying as Buddhist. **ACADEMIC SOURCE** · Pew, 2025
Regions	The main Buddhist populations are in China (largest by count), Thailand, Japan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, South Korea, Taiwan and Tibet, plus convert populations across the West.
Trend	Institutional participation is declining in Japan (temple closures, funeral-market erosion), stable in Thailand, and growing among convert and secular-mindfulness populations in the West.
Participation	There is a very large gap between cultural Buddhism and practice. Japanese respondents commonly report no religion while maintaining temple funeral affiliation. Convert Buddhism is small in numbers but highly institutionalized, which is where most documented Western abuse cases occur.

Authority

- Authority sits with monastic hierarchies (Theravada sangha councils, state sangha bodies in Thailand/Myanmar), Zen lineages with dharma transmission (the certified handing-on of a teacher's authority), and meditation-center teachers with charismatic authority.
- In state Buddhism, governments license and direct monastic bodies, as under Thailand's Sangha Act (the Thai law governing the monastic

order) and through Myanmar's ma-ba-tha nationalism (the nationalism of a Myanmar monastic network). OFFICIAL POLICY / ACADEMIC SOURCE

The top of the chain

> Where the state establishes Buddhism, as in Thailand, the apex is royal; in imported convert centers it is the founder and a board of his students.

OFFICE	WHO SITS IN IT NOW	CHOSEN BY	REMOVABLE BY
Sangharaja of Thailand — Supreme Patriarch	Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatanana IX holds it; the King appointed him in 2017, and royal appointment of the office is statutory.	The Crown chooses the office holder.	This page does not record who can remove the office holder.
Sri Lanka's monastic chapters	The Mahanayaka theros (the senior monks who head the chapters) are elected by monks and hold gatekeeping authority over higher ordination.	Monastic councils choose them.	Monastic councils can remove them.
Western convert centers	The founding teacher plus a board of his own students hold it, the structure the Rigpa and Shambhala (a Buddhist organization of Tibetan origin) investigations found unable to restrain the man at its center.	Effectively, the teacher chooses them.	The board the teacher formed can remove him. Both investigations were commissioned only after public exposure.

THE TELL

The Vinaya already contains the correction procedure. Each teacher-misconduct case in the record is a case of that procedure not being applied to the person it was written for.

Who holds what

ENTITY	TYPE	HOLDER	HOLDS	WHY IT MATTERS TO YOU	RECEIPT
State sangha councils	State-linked hierarchy	Supreme patriarchs and appointed councils	Licensing of monks, monastic discipline, and alignment with government	Whether your monk can say anything the state dislikes	OFFICIAL POLICY · national sangha acts
Large temple corporations	Commercial-devotional	Abbots and lay foundations	Merit-making revenue at industrial scale, construction, and media	What a better rebirth is priced at	INVESTIGATIVE REPORT / FINANCIAL RECORD
Hereditary temple families (Japan's danka system)	Inherited monopoly	Temple priest families	Funeral and memorial rights over registered households	What burying your father costs, and that you cannot change provider	ACADEMIC SOURCE

Convert-sangha teacher organizations	Charismatic authority	Named teachers and their boards	Retreat economies, teacher-training pipelines, and unpaid work-exchange labor	Years of your practice, and the equity you do not hold	PATTERN OBSERVED
Nationalist monastic networks	Political-religious	Movement monks	Mobilization capacity, documented in anti-Muslim campaigning with official tolerance	Whether your neighbor's village is safe	GOVERNMENT REPORT
Secular mindfulness industry	Commercial	App companies, trainers, corporate programmes	The technique, extracted from the precepts, sold at scale	Your employer's wellness programme, with the ethics removed	ACADEMIC SOURCE

Sources for this section: 1 2 3 4 7

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

In Thailand the King has named the Supreme Patriarch since a 2016 amendment to the Sangha Act. In the West, a meditation center usually answers to one teacher and a board. Either way, the page's point is that Buddhism already contains an accountability system, the Vinaya, with public confession and expulsion rules. If your teacher did something wrong, who at your center would apply those rules to him?

08 Law & state here

BEFORE YOU READ

What states actually do. That includes how they fund, protect, regulate or enforce the tradition, and which outside body, if any, can compel an answer from it. For most readers, this is where the institution meets their own passport.

COUNTRY	WHAT THE LAW DOES	THE ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTION
Thailand	A 2016 amendment to the Sangha Act gave the king the power to name the Supreme Patriarch [3]	Officials of the National Office of Buddhism were charged with embezzling temple funds in 2018; a former head was later jailed [5]
Thailand — discipline	Monks who break the celibacy rule are disrobed [11] [12]	At least nine abbots and senior monks were disrobed in the 2025 blackmail scandal [11] [12]
Myanmar	No law on the monastic order is recorded here; in March 2017 the state Buddhist committee barred the monk Wirathu from preaching for a year [20]	A UN fact-finding mission documented hate speech, including by nationalist monks, against the Rohingya (2018) [7]
United Kingdom	Charity law applies to registered centers [6]	The Charity Commission (the regulator of charities in England and Wales) found in its inquiry into Rigpa that its former trustees had failed to act (2020) [6]

Japan (history)	Temple registration was compulsory in the Tokugawa era (the period of Tokugawa rule in Japan, 1603 to 1868) [9]	Zen institutions supported militarism in the 20th century [8]

Who can compel an answer

Charity regulators can compel an answer wherever a center is a registered charity, which many are in the UK, and so can civil courts. In Thailand the Sangha Supreme Council can; the Crown names the Supreme Patriarch by statute, and this page does not record whether it can compel an answer.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you meditate at a center registered as a UK charity, the Charity Commission can investigate its trustees, and in 2020 it found that Rigpa's former trustees had failed to act on what they knew. In Thailand the state disrobes monks and prosecutes officials. In Myanmar a UN mission documented hate speech by nationalist monks against the Rohingya. Is your center a registered charity? If so, you can look up its trustees and accounts today.

09 Money

BEFORE YOU READ

Where the money comes from, how each flow is justified, how it can be used to control, and who benefits. Read it the way you would read any organization you give to: what is disclosed, what is not, and who decides.

Where it comes from

- The money comes from dana (donation) economies, merit-making (funding temples to improve karma and rebirth), funeral monopolies (Japan's danka system), retreat and course fees in convert Buddhism, and the monetization of mindfulness.
- Merit economics is the key mechanism: teaching that giving to the institution purchases karmic benefit converts cosmology into revenue.

ACADEMIC SOURCE

Follow the money

FLOW	STATED PURPOSE	HOW IT CONTROLS	WHO BENEFITS
Dana (donation) and merit-making	Support monastics; generate merit	Merit economics converts cosmology into revenue: giving buys better rebirth, refusal risks it	Monasteries, temples, monastic hierarchies ACADEMIC SOURCE
Funeral and memorial services (Japan's danka system)	Care for the dead and ancestors	The temples hold an effective monopoly, with very high fees for posthumous names (the Buddhist names given to the dead) and memorials, and families cannot easily exit.	Temple families and Buddhist sects ACADEMIC SOURCE
Retreat, course, and teacher-training fees (convert Buddhism)	Access to practice and training	Paywalled advancement; unpaid work-exchange labor at retreat centers	Centers, senior teachers, certification pipelines
Mindfulness industry licensing and apps	Secular wellbeing	Technique extracted from its ethical framework and sold at scale with no accountability	Corporations, app companies, individual trainers
Amulets, blessings, merit-transfer rites	Protection and blessing	Micro-transactions on fear and hope; heaviest on the poor	Temples, monks, ritual vendors

WHERE THE MONEY GOES, AND WHAT IT HOLDS

Dana (donation) and merit-making	**STATED PURPOSE** Support monastics; generate merit **HOW IT CONTROLS** Merit economics converts cosmology into revenue: giving buys better rebirth, refusal risks it	→	Monasteries, temples, monastic hierarchies ACADEMIC SOURCE
Funeral and memorial services (Japan's danka system)	**STATED PURPOSE** Care for the dead and ancestors **HOW IT CONTROLS** The temples hold an effective monopoly, with very high fees for posthumous names (the Buddhist names given to the dead) and memorials, and families cannot easily exit.	→	Temple families and Buddhist sects ACADEMIC SOURCE
Retreat, course, and teacher-training fees (convert Buddhism)	**STATED PURPOSE** Access to practice and training **HOW IT CONTROLS** Paywalled advancement; unpaid work-exchange labor at retreat centers	→	Centers, senior teachers, certification pipelines
Mindfulness industry licensing and apps	**STATED PURPOSE** Secular wellbeing **HOW IT CONTROLS** Technique extracted from its ethical framework and sold at scale with no accountability	→	Corporations, app companies, individual trainers
Amulets, blessings, merit-transfer rites	**STATED PURPOSE** Protection and blessing **HOW IT CONTROLS** Micro-transactions on fear and hope; heaviest on the poor	→	Temples, monks, ritual vendors

Not to scale. The table gives one figure, the German church tax of €6.75bn in 2025; the other flows are shown without amounts.

Pipelines this tradition shares

MERIT ECONOMY

Source. The money comes from poor households buying a better rebirth.

Path. It passes from the temple or monastery to the monastic hierarchy, and then to construction and state-aligned sangha bodies.

Disclosed. Not recorded on this page for temple giving in Asia. The only public accounts this page cites are the English Sangha Trust's charity-register entry (section 9).

Hidden. This page records no receipts and no split between personal and institutional use.

FUNERAL MONOPOLY

Source. The money comes from bereaved families who have no alternative provider.

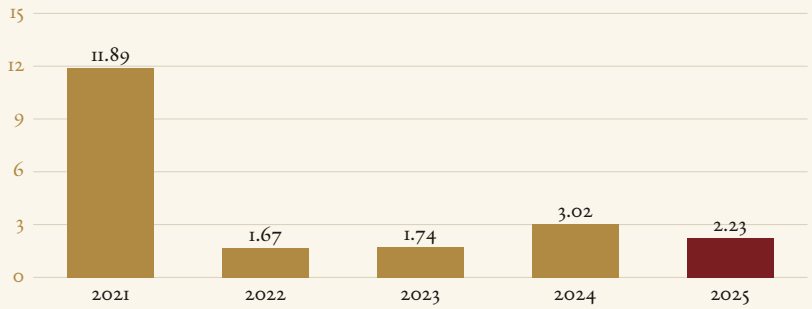
Path. It passes from the hereditary temple to the sect headquarters and on to temple family income.

Disclosed. Fee ranges are disclosed.

Hidden. The pricing tiers for posthumous names are hidden.

Money in numbers

THE ENGLISH SANGHA TRUST (UK): INCOME



£ million, years to 31 March — The English Sangha Trust is a UK Theravada monastic charity. Most of its income is donations (£1.89m of £2.23m in the latest year), with one exceptional year. [10]

- **English Sangha Trust, year to March 2025:** £1.89m of £2.23m income from donations [10].
- **Thailand, 2025:** the woman at the centre of the blackmail scandal received about 385 million baht over three years, police said [11] [12].
- **Merit economies and funeral fees** — see Money above.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The money comes from dana, merit-making, Japan's funeral economy and, in the West, retreat and course fees. The say-do table sets "the dharma is offered freely" beside priced retreats and unpaid work-exchange labor. If you have paid for a retreat or volunteered your labor, you have funded this structure. The last question on this page is a good one for your next donation: if giving improves your rebirth, why is the beneficiary an institution whose accounts are rarely public?

10 Genealogy

BEFORE YOU READ

Rules with a history. Each card asks the same three questions: what was this rule originally for, has that reason expired, and who benefits from the rule continuing anyway?

MERIT ECONOMICS — GIVING AS KARMIC PURCHASE

Origin. Dana was the material basis of a mendicant order that owned nothing; merit-transfer teaching developed as monasticism institutionalized under royal patronage. ACADEMIC SOURCE

What it was for. Monks who could not farm, trade, or hold money needed to eat. The laity fed them and the framework honored the exchange.

Why that reason expired. Monasteries are now landholders and, in some countries, commercial entities. When giving to an institution is taught to improve your rebirth, refusal becomes cosmically dangerous — which is not generosity, it is a levy on the afterlife, and it falls hardest on the poor.

Who benefits now. Monastic hierarchies and temple administrations benefit, and in state-sangha countries so do the governments that appoint them.

EGO AND ATTACHMENT AS DIAGNOSTIC CATEGORIES

Origin. It is core doctrine, ancient and philosophically serious, that craving and self-clinging are the roots of suffering. ACADEMIC SOURCE

What it was for. It was a tool for the practitioner's own examination of their own mind. It was self-applied and voluntary, and it was paired with the Vinaya's public accountability rules for teachers.

Why that reason expired. It is weaponized when a teacher applies it to a student's complaint. 'That's your ego' converts every grievance into evidence of the grievant's spiritual immaturity. It is unfalsifiable, and in convert communities it enabled decades of documented misconduct. INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Who benefits now. Any teacher who would not survive scrutiny benefits. The doctrine was designed for you to use on yourself; its abuse is that someone else now uses it on you.

LAPSED FULL ORDINATION FOR WOMEN

Origin. The bhikkhuni lineage lapsed in Theravada centuries ago, and the eight garudhammas (eight special rules for nuns) subordinate nuns to monks regardless of seniority.

OFFICIAL POLICY

What it was for. Whatever the original rationale, the mechanism now cited is procedural: the lineage cannot be restored because the lineage is broken.

Why that reason expired. The Buddha ordained women. Revivals have occurred and are recognized by some sanghas and refused by others, which proves it is a decision, not an impossibility. A procedural objection that produces a permanent exclusion is a policy pretending to be a technicality.

Who benefits now. Monastic hierarchies benefit, because they keep resources, seniority, and authority male. Nuns' institutions remain chronically underfunded. ACADEMIC SOURCE

FUNERAL AND MEMORIAL MONOPOLY (JAPAN'S DANKA SYSTEM)

Origin. In the Tokugawa era every household was compelled to register with a temple.
ACADEMIC SOURCE

What it was for. It was a state surveillance and anti-Christian measure, which temples adopted as a guaranteed income base, so the origin is administrative, not spiritual.

Why that reason expired. Compulsory registration ended long ago; the economic structure survived it. Families face very high posthumous-name and memorial fees and cannot easily change temples without abandoning their ancestors' graves.

Who benefits now. Hereditary temple families benefit, and their income derives from a compulsory system that no longer legally exists but still functionally does.

Sources for this section: [9]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The expired-reason test works on any rule. Take one you follow or enforce, name what it was originally for, and ask whether that reason still exists. If it doesn't, and the rule survives anyway, the section's last question is the one that matters to you: who benefits from it continuing?

11 Reach

BEFORE YOU READ

How far the institution's authority extends into three private areas: what members may read and hear, how children are raised and schooled, and decisions about their own bodies.

Information

- Lineage authority discourages consulting outside the tradition on internal problems: 'you don't understand the teacher's methods' is the standard deflection. PATTERN OBSERVED
- In convert centers, the doctrine of ego and attachment provides a ready-made frame for reclassifying any complaint as the complainer's defect. FORMER MEMBER TESTIMONY
- In Myanmar, nationalist monastic networks have spread anti-Muslim material with state tolerance. GOVERNMENT REPORT / INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Children

- Child ordination, temporary or permanent, is practiced in Theravada countries, and novice monks are as young as 7 in some monastic schools, sometimes as a poverty-relief pathway. ACADEMIC SOURCE
- Abuse of child novices with weak external oversight is documented in several countries. INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
- Merit teaching directed at children makes family religious spending an obligation of love: withholding is framed as harming ancestors' rebirth.

Bodies

- The full bhikkhuni (nun) ordination lineage lapsed in Theravada and its revival is still contested and unrecognized by some national sanghas, which leaves women structurally excluded from full monastic status. OFFICIAL POLICY
- The eight garudhammas subordinate nuns to monks regardless of seniority; nuns' institutions are chronically underfunded relative to monks'. ACADEMIC SOURCE
- Teacher–student sexual misconduct across Western Zen and insight communities is among the best-documented harms in convert Buddhism, often framed by perpetrators as teaching. INVESTIGATIVE REPORT
- Some traditional teaching treats female rebirth as karmically inferior, and that is doctrine functioning as gender hierarchy. ACADEMIC SOURCE

Sources for this section: 7 9

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you are a parent, this is the section about your children: what they may read, what they are taught about their bodies, and who else has a say in their schooling. Ask what your child would need to do at sixteen to hear the strongest case against what they were taught. Would they be allowed? Would they know it existed?



12

The 30 techniques

How the thirty techniques are established here

1	6	21	2
DOCUMENTED	TAUGHT	CULTURAL	CONTESTED

STAGE 1 Idealize	1 Love Bombing CULTURAL	2 Weaponized Generosity CULTURAL					
STAGE 2 Hook	3 Future Faking TAUGHT	4 Hoovering TAUGHT					
STAGE 3 Devalue	5 Devaluation TAUGHT	6 Gaslighting CULTURAL	7 Double Bind TAUGHT				
STAGE 4 Confuse	8 Intermittent Reinforcement CULTURAL	9 Moving the Goalposts CULTURAL	10 Strategic Ambiguity CULTURAL	11 Projection CULTURAL			
	12 DARVO DOCUMENTED	13 Normalization / Desensitization CULTURAL					
STAGE 5 Isolate	14 Isolation CONTESTED	15 Triangulation CONTESTED					

STAGE 6 Extract	16 Flying Monkeys CULTURAL	17 Smear Campaign CULTURAL	18 Silent Treatment / Stonewalling CULTURAL	19 Manufactured Consent CULTURAL
	20 Trauma Bonding CULTURAL	21 Learned Helplessness CULTURAL	22 Benevolent Control CULTURAL	23 Infantilization CULTURAL
	24 Identity Erosion CULTURAL	25 Spiritual Bypassing TAUGHT	26 Financial Control TAUGHT	
STAGE 7 Discard	27 Manufactured Crisis CULTURAL	28 Discard CULTURAL		
STAGE 8 Replace	29 Replacement CULTURAL	30 Plausible Deniability CULTURAL		

Thirty named techniques from domestic-abuse and social-psychology research, applied to institutions, in the eight stages of the cycle.

BEFORE YOU READ

A fixed checklist of thirty influence and control patterns from research on coercive control and social psychology, applied here to institutions rather than to individual people. Every entry carries an evidence grade. The grade matters more than the name of the technique: Codified or Documented means there is a paper trail; Contested means the claim is disputed.

Thirty named techniques from domestic-abuse and social-psychology research, applied to institutions, in the eight stages of the cycle. Each carries an evidence grade for this tradition.

Stage 1 · Idealize

You arrive with a need and are met with more warmth than you have had in years.

You are met with calm voices, tea, cushions and compassion language. Your suffering is given a diagnosis — craving, attachment, ignorance — and the center offers the cure. You are told you have good karma and the teacher sees your potential.

What it asks of you: You arrived in pain and were handed an explanation. Notice who supplied it.

1 · Love Bombing

Overwhelming affection on arrival to create emotional dependency before terms are revealed.

How it shows here

- Newcomers arrive anxious, grieving, burned out, or spiritually disillusioned. They are met with calm voices, meditation cushions, tea, compassion language, and the promise of peace.
- The beginner is told their suffering has a diagnosis: attachment, craving, ego, ignorance. The center, teacher, lineage, or sangha offers the cure.
- The love is quiet, not loud. But it can still be intense: "You are finally seeing clearly," "You have good karma," "The teacher sees your potential."

The strongest defense. Buddhism is about reducing suffering, not recruiting dependency.

The counter. A system can reduce some suffering while creating another kind. If a person's pain is reinterpreted so that every objection becomes ego, every boundary becomes attachment, and every doubt becomes ignorance, then calmness has become control.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Center and temple welcome is local practice; convert sanghas set their own tone with no oversight.

2 · Weaponized Generosity

Giving help that installs unspoken obligation.

How it shows here

- Buddhist centers may offer meditation instruction, retreats, tea, compassion, community, trauma-sensitive language, and a peaceful refuge for anxious or wounded people.
- A sangha may provide emotional steadiness when someone is grieving, burned out, or recovering from religious trauma.
- The debt appears when the student is expected to donate, volunteer, defer to the teacher, attend retreats, accept correction, or interpret discomfort as ego.
- Some communities offer "dharma freely," but the path can still become expensive through retreat fees, teacher gifts, lodging, books, memberships, and unpaid labor.

The strongest defense. The dharma is offered to reduce suffering. Dana, or giving, is voluntary generosity.

The counter. Voluntary giving is clean only when refusal has no spiritual penalty. If people are praised as mature when they donate, volunteer, and surrender, but subtly treated as selfish, attached, or ego-driven when they set limits, then dana has become a spiritualized invoice.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Whether help from a center or teacher carries an expected return depends on each center's own practice, and no global authority governs it.

Stage 2 · Hook

You are given a future that cannot be verified, and a rope for whenever you drift toward the door.

You are promised enlightenment, perhaps in this life, perhaps in another, and it is undefined, unfalsifiable and endlessly deferred. If you drift toward the door, your drift is framed as your own resistance: you receive an invitation to the next retreat and the suggestion that your absence is itself the attachment.

What it asks of you: A goal with no definition cannot be reached, and a teacher who defines it cannot be wrong about your distance from it.

3 · Future Faking

Promising a future that keeps you invested but never has to arrive.

How it shows here

- Buddhism can future-fake through enlightenment, nirvana (release from the cycle of rebirth), liberation from suffering, better rebirth, merit, karmic purification, and eventual awakening.

- The seeker enters because they want relief from suffering. The institution offers a path. But the path can stretch indefinitely: more meditation, more retreats, more donations, more discipline, more teacher interviews, more surrender of ego.
- If practice helps sometimes but not always, the answer is rarely "the method may have limits." The answer is usually: keep practicing.
- Enlightenment is difficult to verify externally. A teacher may be treated as awakened, while students are told their inability to see it proves their own obscuration.
- Suffering becomes diagnostic: your pain proves attachment; your anger proves ego; your doubt proves ignorance; your dependence proves you need more dharma.

The strongest defense. Buddhism does not promise easy salvation. It honestly teaches a demanding path out of suffering.

The counter. Difficulty is not the problem. Unfalsifiability is. If every failure confirms the doctrine and every objection confirms the ego, the system cannot be tested. The promise of liberation becomes a treadmill where exhaustion is called progress.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Enlightenment as an undefined and deferred goal is taught doctrine; retrieval framing is teacher practice.

4 · Hoovering

Pulling someone back after they've started to leave, through guilt, love, or fear.

How it shows here

- A student leaving a Buddhist center may be told they are running from their suffering, avoiding practice, clinging to ego, or losing a precious human opportunity.
- The teacher or senior students may say, "This resistance is part of the path," "Don't abandon the sangha," "Your mind is creating stories."
- If the person leaves after teacher misconduct, the community may urge them to return for mediation, compassion practice, or "not creating division."
- The hoover is often calm and therapeutic rather than dramatic: tea, soft voices, concern, meditation invitations, and subtle reframing of exit as avoidance.
- Former members may be told they will not find real liberation in ordinary life, activism, therapy, relationships, or anger.

The strongest defense. Buddhist teachers encourage students not to run from discomfort because avoidance perpetuates suffering.

The counter. Not all discomfort is spiritual resistance. Sometimes discomfort is the body correctly identifying harm. If every impulse to leave is interpreted as ego, avoidance, or attachment, then the doctrine has converted self-protection into pathology.

EVIDENCE GRADE

TAUGHT The entry rests on the taught idea that leaving is running from suffering or clinging to ego, and on senior students and teachers applying that idea to a student who is leaving.

Stage 3 · Devalue

You are taught that you are broken, that your perception is unreliable, and that both exits from the trap lead back inside.

Your practice is shallow, your resistance is ego, your boundary is attachment, your anger is unskillful. The ideal is equanimity and you are always short of it.

What it asks of you: A standard where any objection proves you are not there yet cannot be failed by the teacher, only by you.

5 · Devaluation

Reducing your sense of worth so you become dependent on the institution for identity.

How it shows here

- Institutional Buddhism can devalue by defining ordinary desire as the root of suffering, in a form like: "You are trapped in samsara (the cycle of rebirth). Your desires are the disease."
- The person's grief, anger, ambition, attachment, sexuality, and longing may be treated as evidence of ignorance.
- If someone resists a teacher, community, or doctrine, the resistance can be diagnosed as ego.
- The self itself may be framed as illusion, which can be liberating philosophically but dangerous institutionally: if the self is illusion, then boundaries can be dismissed as ego-clinging.
- The student is always less awake than the teacher, less detached than the senior practitioner, less calm than the ideal.

The strongest defense. Buddhism does not devalue people; it identifies the causes of suffering so they can be free.

The counter. A diagnosis becomes control when the institution owns the cure. If anger at harm is called attachment, if boundaries are called ego, and if distrust of authority is called ignorance, then the path to liberation has become a method for disarming self-protection.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Suffering, craving, and ignorance as the member's condition are core teaching, delivered contemplatively.

6 · Gaslighting

Making you doubt your own experience so you trust the institution's interpretation instead.

How it shows here

- A student says a teacher behaved abusively, and the sangha says, "Notice your aversion," "Do not cling to anger," or "This is your projection."
- Someone wants to leave, and they are told they are running from discomfort or avoiding their practice.
- A person's pain is interpreted as attachment; anger as ego; grief as clinging; doubt as ignorance.
- The student's ordinary self-protection is spiritualized into a defect.
- The community may remain calm while doing harm, making the victim look unstable for reacting.

The strongest defense. Buddhism teaches people to examine their reactions because the mind creates suffering.

The counter. Self-examination is useful until it is used to silence accurate perception. Sometimes anger is not ego. Sometimes anger is the nervous system correctly identifying violation.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Reclassifying a student's complaint as ego is teacher practice, not doctrine — the Vinaya in fact prescribes the opposite. *(sourced)*

7 · Double Bind

A trap where both options lead to compliance. No exit serves you.

How it shows here

- Students are told to test the teachings like gold, as the Buddha instructed — but negative findings are diagnosed as ego, aversion, or insufficient practice. The assay is welcome as long as the gold always passes.
- Attachment is the root of suffering — including, conveniently, attachment to your boundaries, your money, your time, and your objections. Detach from those; remain attached to the sangha.
- Anger at genuine harm is 'unskillful,' but equanimity toward the harm is 'spiritual maturity.' The abused person's only approved state is the one most convenient to the institution.

The strongest defense. The dharma really does locate suffering in reaction; this is liberation psychology, not control.

The counter. A true insight can still be aimed. When 'your reaction is the problem' is only ever pointed at the powerless — and never at the teacher's greed or the center's secrecy — the diagnosis has become a muzzle.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT The bind is built from taught doctrine: students are told to test the teachings, and the same teachings classify negative findings and anger at harm as ego, aversion, or unskillfulness.

Stage 4 · Confuse

The rewards become unpredictable, the standard keeps moving, the answers stop meaning anything, and the accusation gets turned around.

Report misconduct and hear about your projections, your father issues, your inability to receive skillful means (a teacher's adaptation of method to the student). In documented Western cases, complainants were told the teacher's behavior was advanced teaching.

What it asks of you: 'Crazy wisdom' (unconventional teacher behavior presented as teaching) is invoked to explain conduct that serves the teacher; this page records no case of it explaining a teacher doing something inconvenient to himself.

8 · Intermittent Reinforcement

Unpredictable reward that creates addictive emotional dependency.

How it shows here

- Meditation itself reinforces intermittently — some sits open into stillness, most are noise — and centers put that schedule to use: breakthroughs credit the method and teacher; dry months indicate your hindrances (in Buddhist teaching, the mental obstacles to meditation) and need for another retreat.
- Teacher interviews (dokusan) deliver rare, unpredictable moments of being truly seen, rationed across a sangha that reorganizes its striving around them.
- Retreats reliably produce openings that fade on re-entry — and the fade is framed not as neurology but as evidence you need the next retreat, at the next price tier.

The strongest defense. Practice genuinely deepens unevenly; no honest teacher promises linear progress.

The counter. Uneven progress is honest. Billing the peaks to the brand and the plateaus to the student is not — it is the retention model of every subscription that ever ran on hope.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Meditation's uneven results are ordinary experience. Crediting the peaks to the teacher and the plateaus to the student, and selling the next retreat, is practice at individual centers.

9 · Moving the Goalposts

The standard of success keeps shifting so you can never arrive.

How it shows here

- A seeker begins meditation for suffering. Then they must attend retreats, accept teacher correction, volunteer, donate, watch attachment, examine ego, and stop trusting anger.
- A student names harm. First they are told to observe anger. They do. Then they are told to cultivate compassion. They try. Then they are told their continued boundary shows attachment.
- Progress is always deferred: if practice helps, continue; if it fails, practice more; if it harms, examine your resistance.

The strongest defense. Buddhist practice is gradual; suffering requires deep inner work.

The counter. Gradual work becomes moving the goalposts when the method can never be questioned because every failure proves the student needs more method. That is not liberation. That is spiritual recursion.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The shifting standard described (retreats, then correction, then donation and labor) is the practice of individual centers and teachers.

10 · Strategic Ambiguity

Language that sounds profound but means nothing specific — functioning as a shutdown to real questions.

How it shows here

- "Nonattachment" can mean freedom from craving, but also emotional suppression, tolerance of abuse, or refusal to name harm.
- "Ego" is vague enough to describe narcissism, ordinary identity, healthy anger, boundaries, or dissent.
- Sanghas may say the teacher is not perfect, while treating criticism of the teacher as spiritual immaturity.

The strongest defense. Buddhist concepts are subtle and easily misunderstood.

The counter. Subtlety becomes strategic ambiguity when the same word can invalidate any boundary. If ego means whatever the teacher needs it to mean, doctrine has become a solvent for self-protection.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The entry describes how centers and teachers use terms such as ego and nonattachment. The terms are doctrine; using them to invalidate any boundary is practice.

11 · Projection

Accusing the outside world of the exact thing the institution practices.

How it shows here

- A Buddhist teacher may accuse a questioning student of ego while the teacher's own ego is protected by robes, titles, lineage, and spiritual status.
- A sangha may accuse an abuse survivor of anger while remaining attached to its reputation, donors, teacher, and image of peace.
- Critics are accused of creating division, while the original division was created by misconduct and secrecy.
- A student who leaves may be accused of avoiding discomfort while the community avoids the discomfort of accountability.

The strongest defense. Buddhism teaches people to examine ego, anger, and attachment.

The counter. That teaching becomes projection when aimed only at the less powerful. If the student must examine anger but the teacher does not examine exploitation, then ego has simply put on a robe.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The entry describes teachers and sanghas who turn the teaching on ego and anger against critics while exempting themselves. That is behavior at individual centers.

12 · DARVO

Deny the wrongdoing. Attack the person who raised it. Reverse victim and offender.

How it shows here

- A student reports teacher abuse, sexual exploitation, financial pressure, or emotional manipulation. The sangha may deny it, minimize it, or say the student misunderstood skillful means.
- Then the student is attacked as angry, attached, ego-driven, unstable, or divisive.
- The teacher becomes the victim of slander; the survivor becomes the person "creating bad karma."
- The community may insist on compassion for the teacher while treating the harmed student's anger as spiritual failure.
- Calm institutional language makes the reversal harder to detect: the violence is quiet, polished, and meditative.

The strongest defense. Buddhist communities value compassion, careful speech, and avoiding reactive anger.

The counter. Compassion without accountability is complicity. If the teacher receives compassion and the victim receives instruction on anger, then the sangha has reversed victim and offender under the banner of peace.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> **DOCUMENTED** Independent investigations at multiple Western centers, including the Lewis Silkin report on Rigpa (2018) [6], documented misconduct reframed as teaching. *(sourced)*

13 · Normalization / Desensitization

Practices that would seem extreme to an outsider feel normal to insiders because they were installed before critical evaluation developed.

How it shows here

- Practitioners can become desensitized to interpreting pain as attachment, anger as ego, desire as craving, and resistance as ignorance.
- Long retreats, silence, teacher interviews, and sangha norms can normalize surrendering ordinary emotional responses to the teacher's framework.
- Abuse by teachers may be softened through repeated language of compassion, nonjudgment, projection, karma, and "working with difficult emotions."
- Students may become used to overriding anger because anger is treated as spiritually inferior.

The strongest defense. Buddhism trains people to observe emotions without being controlled by them.

The counter. Observing emotion is not the same as discrediting it. If repeated practice makes someone unable to recognize anger as a boundary signal, then mindfulness has become emotional anesthesia.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Retreat, silence, and interview routines are local practice that can normalize setting aside one's own emotional responses.

Stage 5 · Isolate

Your world narrows until every voice you hear is inside the system, and everything you came for now runs through a middleman.

The sangha becomes your social world, your identity, your practice years. Complaints go to senior students who protect the teacher. Outside frameworks — therapy, other traditions — are gently reframed as less deep.

What it asks of you: If your teacher were wrong, who in your community is structurally able to say so?

14 · Isolation

Shrinking your world until the only voices you hear are inside the system.

How it shows here

- Buddhism can isolate through sangha dependence, retreat culture, teacher authority, monastic ideals, and suspicion of ordinary worldly life as attachment.

- A student may be encouraged to spend more time meditating, attending retreats, volunteering, and associating with serious practitioners while reducing time with people who "do not understand the path."
- Anger, romantic attachment, ambition, grief, and family obligations may be framed as obstacles to practice, making ordinary life feel spiritually inferior.
- If a student questions a teacher, they may be told to process it within the sangha — the very group invested in preserving the teacher's authority.
- Long retreats can create psychological isolation: the person is physically removed from normal relationships while becoming more dependent on the teacher's interpretation of experience.

The strongest defense. Buddhist practice requires periods of solitude, discipline, and community support.

The counter. Solitude is not the same as isolation. Practice becomes isolating when outside relationships and ordinary emotional responses are treated as lower consciousness. If the sangha is the only place where your experience can be interpreted correctly, then refuge has become enclosure.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Community insularity varies from negligible in cultural Buddhism to substantial in residential convert centers.

15 · Triangulation

Inserting intermediaries between you and the thing you came for, so the institution is always in the middle.

How it shows here

- Buddhism can triangulate through teacher, sangha, lineage, senior students, retreat community, dharma texts, and the ideal of the calm practitioner.
- A student harmed by a teacher may be approached by senior students who say, “You should speak to the teacher directly,” “You are creating division,” “You are attached to your anger.”
- The person is compared to more advanced practitioners who supposedly endure discomfort without ego.
- The sangha triangulates through group calm: everyone else appears peaceful, so the harmed person looks reactive, unstable, or spiritually immature.
- Leaving is framed through comparison: “People who run from practice repeat their suffering,” “Serious practitioners stay with discomfort.”
- The teacher’s authority is reinforced by lineage: you are not merely questioning one person; you are questioning a tradition.

The strongest defense. Buddhist communities rely on teacher, sangha, and dharma as supports for practice.

The counter. Support becomes triangulation when all three are used to invalidate harm. If teacher, sangha, and dharma each reinterpret your pain as ego, then the three jewels (the Buddha, the dharma and the sangha) have been rearranged into a three-sided cage.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED How far the teacher, the sangha, and the lineage insulate a teacher varies, from negligible in cultural Buddhism to substantial in residential convert centers, so the grade is disputed.

Stage 6 · Extract

Now the harvest: your labor, your money, your identity, your silence, your children's schooling, your capacity to trust yourself.

Merit economics converts your rebirth into a donation schedule. Funeral and memorial monopolies charge families who cannot change temples without abandoning their ancestors' graves. Centers charge retreat fees and rely on unpaid work-exchange labor. Nuns are denied full ordination and resources. Every boundary you set is reclassified as attachment.

What it asks of you: When your refusal to give is framed as spiritual immaturity, generosity has been converted into an obligation with cosmological interest.

16 · Flying Monkeys

The community enforces the institution's norms without being asked — mobilized by culture, not memos.

How it shows here

- A student harmed by a Buddhist teacher may be approached by senior students: “You are attached to anger,” “Don’t create division,” “This is your projection,” “Speak compassionately.”
- The sangha may pressure the person to process the harm internally rather than seek outside accountability.
- Calm, respected practitioners may become the enforcers of silence: they do not yell, but they reinterpret the person’s anger as ego.
- A student who leaves may be told by multiple community members that they are avoiding discomfort or abandoning the path.

The strongest defense. Sangha members help one another work with difficult emotions.

The counter. Help becomes FLYING MONKEY behavior when the group’s emotional advice protects the teacher. If everyone asks the victim to examine anger while no one asks the teacher to examine power, compassion has become enforcement.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The phrases senior students use (“attached to anger,” “don't create division”) borrow taught vocabulary, but the entry describes what senior students do to a complainant, which is community practice.

17 · Smear Campaign

Rewriting your character after departure to protect the institution from the implications of your leaving.

How it shows here

- A student reporting teacher abuse may be labeled angry, attached, egoic, unstable, divisive, or spiritually immature.
- The sangha may describe the critic as unable to work with difficult emotions.
- Survivors may be accused of creating bad karma or harming the Dharma.
- The teacher's calm image makes the harmed person look reactive by contrast.

The strongest defense. Buddhist communities value careful speech and non-reactivity.

The counter. Careful speech becomes smear when it sanitizes abuse and pathologizes the victim's anger. Sometimes anger is not ego. Sometimes it is the last honest witness left in the room.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The labels used against critics (angry, attached, egoic, divisive) come from taught categories of attachment and careful speech, but the entry describes applying them to someone who has left, which is community practice.

18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling

Refusing to engage with legitimate questions in order to maintain control.

How it shows here

- A student reports teacher abuse and is told to sit with their anger, examine projection, avoid divisive speech, and practice compassion.
- Sangha leaders may delay action while urging calm process and non-reactivity.
- The harmed person's urgency is treated as spiritual immaturity.
- Public silence is mistaken for peace while the victim is left alone with the consequences.

The strongest defense. Buddhist communities value non-reactivity, careful speech, and compassionate process.

The counter. Non-reactivity becomes stonewalling when it protects the teacher from consequences. If the sangha can sit silently with abuse but not act against it, silence has stopped being mindfulness and become complicity.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Non-reactivity, careful speech and compassionate process are taught values, but the entry describes delaying action on a report, which is practice at individual centers.

19 · Manufactured Consent

Creating the appearance of choice when the conditions of choice were shaped before you could evaluate them.

How it shows here

- A student "chooses" to accept teacher authority after being taught that resistance is ego and discomfort is practice.
- A harmed student "chooses" silence because anger is treated as attachment and public criticism as divisive.
- Retreat participants may consent to intense practices without understanding psychological risks, power dynamics, or teacher dependency.
- Donations and unpaid labor are framed as dana, making refusal feel spiritually immature.

The strongest defense. Buddhist practice is voluntary and based on personal experience.

The counter. Voluntary practice becomes manufactured consent when the system interprets every no as ego. If refusal itself becomes evidence that the student needs more practice, consent has been made circular.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The entry draws on taught vocabulary (refusal and resistance as ego, giving as spiritual practice), but the consent it describes is manufactured at individual centers.

20 · Trauma Bonding

The wound and the bandage come from the same hand.

How it shows here

- A person comes to Buddhism suffering. The teacher identifies craving, ego, attachment, ignorance, and delusion as the cause — then offers meditation, sangha, retreats, and teacher guidance as relief.
- Anger at harm is framed as attachment; calm returns when the student suppresses reaction and recommits to practice.
- Teacher misconduct may destabilize the student, then the sangha soothes them by reframing the pain as practice.
- The student becomes bonded to the very framework that keeps invalidating their alarm.

The strongest defense. Buddhism helps people understand suffering and reduce reactivity.

The counter. Reducing suffering becomes TRAUMA BONDING when the method repeatedly invalidates the sufferer's perception. If pain caused by the teacher is treated as the student's attachment, the relief of "practice" reinforces the abusive frame.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The diagnosis of suffering as craving, ego and attachment is taught, but the entry describes the bond formed when meditation, sangha and retreats are offered as the relief, which is practice at individual centers.

21 · Learned Helplessness

Teaching you that your own judgment is unreliable until you stop trusting it entirely.

How it shows here

- A student repeatedly names harm and is told to examine attachment, anger, projection, and ego.
- Attempts to set boundaries are reframed as resistance to practice.
- The student learns that every emotional protest will be turned inward as their own spiritual failure.
- Eventually they stop objecting and call numbness equanimity.

The strongest defense. Buddhism teaches people to observe reactions and reduce suffering.

The counter. Observation becomes LEARNED HELPLESSNESS when it replaces action. If every protest is meditated into silence, the student has not transcended suffering. They have been trained not to respond to it.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Observing reactions and reducing reactivity are taught practices, but the entry describes how individual teachers apply them to a student's repeated objections, which is practice.

22 · Benevolent Control

Control wrapped in the language of care, so that resisting the control feels like rejecting the love.

How it shows here

- Teachers may control students through compassion language: "We are helping you work with ego," "This is practice," "Your anger is attachment."
- Sanghas may discourage public criticism to protect harmony and prevent harm to the Dharma.
- Retreat rules, silence, teacher interviews, and emotional regulation are framed as care for awakening.
- A harmed student may be told the most compassionate response is to stay calm, examine themselves, and avoid division.

The strongest defense. Buddhism teaches compassion, discipline, and working skillfully with difficult emotions.

The counter. Compassion becomes BENEVOLENT CONTROL when it is used to make harmed people easier to manage. If the teacher receives protection and the victim receives mindfulness instructions, care has become institutional sedation.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Compassion and discipline language ("this is practice," "your anger is attachment") is taught, but the entry describes teachers and sanghas using it to manage harmed students, which is practice.

23 · Infantilization

Positioning the adult believer as permanently childlike and dependent on institutional authority.

How it shows here

- Students may be treated as spiritually immature if they trust anger, grief, desire, or moral alarm.
- Teachers and senior students may interpret the student's experience for them.
- A person who reports harm may be told they are projecting or not advanced enough.
- Retreat and sangha structures can make adults dependent on teacher approval for internal reality.

The strongest defense. Teachers help students see blind spots and ego patterns.

The counter. Teaching becomes INFANTILIZATION when the student's perception is always inferior. If the teacher gets to define your anger, boundary, and pain as immaturity, spiritual training has become adult invalidation.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The entry describes teachers treating students as spiritually immature, which is teacher practice. The eight garudhammas, which subordinate nuns to monks, belong to sections 11 and 17, not to this entry.

24 · Identity Erosion

Gradually replacing your identity with a role the institution provides, until you can't separate who you are from where you belong.

How it shows here

- Buddhist practice can erode identity by turning desire, anger, selfhood, attachment, ambition, and personal narrative into problems to transcend.
- A student may become "the practitioner," "the meditator," "the one working with ego," rather than a full person with ordinary needs.
- Anger at harm is reframed as attachment. Boundaries become clinging. Grief becomes identification. Desire becomes craving.
- The self is treated as illusion in ways that can disable protection.
- The person may stop asking "What happened to me?" and start asking "Why am I attached to my reaction?"

The strongest defense. Buddhism teaches non-self to reduce suffering, not to erase people.

The counter. Non-self becomes IDENTITY EROSION when it is used before a stable self has been respected. If the doctrine dissolves boundaries faster than it builds safety, the person is not liberated from ego. They are separated from agency.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Non-self and the treatment of desire, anger and attachment as problems to transcend are taught doctrine, but the entry's claim is that the doctrine is applied to disable a student's protection, which is practice at individual centers.

25 · Spiritual Bypassing

Using spiritual language to avoid engaging with real pain, real questions, and real accountability.

How it shows here

- Anger is bypassed as attachment.
- Boundaries are bypassed as ego.
- Grief is bypassed as clinging.
- Abuse is bypassed as projection, karma, or an opportunity to practice compassion.
- Teacher misconduct is bypassed with "do not create division," "work with your reaction," or "all phenomena are empty."
- The self is bypassed before it is protected.

The strongest defense. Buddhism helps people reduce suffering by not clinging to reactive emotions.

The counter. Nonattachment becomes SPIRITUAL BYPASSING when it invalidates accurate anger. Sometimes anger is not clinging. Sometimes anger is the alarm that proves the self is still alive.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Attachment framing applied to grief and anger, taught widely in convert communities.

26 · Financial Control

Extracting money through spiritual obligation while offering no transparency about where it goes.

How it shows here

- Buddhist centers may rely on dana, retreat fees, teacher gifts, memberships, book sales, volunteer labor, and unpaid service.
- "Generosity" can become pressure when good students are expected to donate, volunteer, cook, clean, host, organize, and fund teacher travel.
- Retreat costs can create status differences between those who can afford deeper practice and those who cannot.
- Abuse may remain hidden because centers depend on donors, teacher reputation, and retreat revenue.

The strongest defense. Dana is voluntary generosity that sustains the Dharma.

The counter. Dana becomes FINANCIAL CONTROL when refusal carries spiritual shame. If students are praised for giving and subtly judged for limits, the gift economy is still an economy — just one that hides the invoice inside virtue.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> TAUGHT Merit-transfer teaching linking donation to rebirth, taught rather than mandated.

Stage 7 · Discard

You become expensive — too many questions, too much independence — and the urgency ramps up until you are removed.

You are excluded quietly rather than expelled formally: you stop being invited, stop being trusted, and your years are reframed as a stage you failed to pass.

What it asks of you: Non-attachment doctrine makes it awkward for you to even name the loss. That is convenient for someone.

27 · Manufactured Crisis

Creating urgency to suppress critical thinking and generate loyalty.

How it shows here

- Buddhist communities may manufacture crisis by framing departure as running from suffering, abandoning precious human birth (the teaching that a human life capable of practice is rare), damaging karma, or creating division in the sangha.
- A student's anger at abuse becomes an urgent spiritual problem to manage.

- Criticism of the teacher becomes a crisis for the Dharma.
- The community may rush the harmed person back into meditation, compassion, or internal process before external accountability occurs.

The strongest defense. Buddhist practice encourages careful attention to suffering and division.

The counter. Carefulness becomes MANUFACTURED CRISIS when the victim's reaction is treated as more urgent than the teacher's harm. If anger becomes the emergency and abuse becomes context, the crisis has been manufactured to protect power.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The entry describes urgency created around departure and criticism (running from suffering, damaging karma, dividing the sangha); this is practice at individual centers.

28 · Discard

Removing members who become too costly — too many questions, too much independence, too visible a contradiction.

How it shows here

- A student who reports teacher abuse may be quietly excluded from sangha spaces.
- The person is no longer a practitioner in pain; they become angry, attached, divisive, or unable to work with ego.
- Calm community members may distance themselves to preserve harmony.

- The teacher remains central; the harmed student becomes disruptive.
- Discard happens under peaceful language.

The strongest defense. Sanghas must prevent divisive speech and preserve harmony.

The counter. Harmony becomes DISCARD when the harmed person is removed so the group can keep feeling peaceful. If the victim's anger is less welcome than the teacher's misconduct, the sangha has chosen image over refuge.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Departure is handled by quiet exclusion rather than any procedure, so cases seldom reach a record.

Stage 8 · Replace

Your seat is filled before the door shuts, and nobody is responsible for any of it because the authority is attributed to the dharma, the lineage, or skillful means.

You are not expelled; you simply stop being invited, and your years are recast as a stage you failed to pass. And the authority is the dharma itself, or the lineage, or skillful means — none of which can be summoned to explain itself.

What it asks of you: Ask what evidence could establish that a teacher acted wrongly rather than skillfully. If none exists, you are not in a tradition; you are in a closed circuit.

29 · Replacement

Your seat is filled before the door closes behind you.

How it shows here

- A student who reports abuse leaves; new retreatants arrive and are told nothing.
- The teacher's role continues; the harmed student becomes a footnote.
- The sangha replaces a critic with students more invested in calm, harmony, and devotion.
- New seekers' gratitude is used to drown out former students' warnings.

The strongest defense. Sanghas continue practice while handling difficulties.

The counter. Practice becomes REPLACEMENT when new students are welcomed into an unsafe structure. If the cushion is filled before the harm is addressed, the sangha is not continuing the Dharma. It is continuing access to the teacher.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The entry describes centers filling a critic's place with newcomers who are told nothing; this is practice at individual centers.

30 · Plausible Deniability

The institution is never responsible, because the authority is attributed to the dharma, the lineage, or skillful means, none of which is available for cross-examination.

How it shows here

- A sangha may say anger is welcome as something to observe, but when anger targets the teacher, it becomes ego, attachment, projection, or divisive speech.
- Teacher misconduct can be reframed as misunderstanding, skillful means, or the student's unresolved trauma.
- Centers may say donations are voluntary, while good students are expected to give, volunteer, cook, clean, organize, and remain grateful.
- Silence and internal process can delay accountability while the group says it is practicing care.
- A teacher's authority is unofficial enough to deny hierarchy but strong enough to control the room.

The strongest defense. Buddhism teaches self-inquiry, not suppression. Sanghas avoid gossip and reactive speech. Teachers are human; the Dharma is separate.

The counter. Self-inquiry becomes PLAUSIBLE DENIABILITY when only the harmed student is asked to examine themselves. Avoiding gossip becomes concealment when warnings about abuse are treated as unspiritual. Separating teacher from Dharma after harm is convenient if the teacher was fused with Dharma during recruitment.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Authority attributed to the dharma, the lineage, or skillful means — none of which can be summoned to account.

Sources for this section: [9]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Count grades, not names. A long list of Contested entries says something very different from a short list of Codified ones. A bias to watch for in yourself: people rate the same pressure as "normal" when their own group applies it and as "manipulation" when another group does. Before you judge an entry, try imagining it applied by a group you distrust. Does it look different?

13

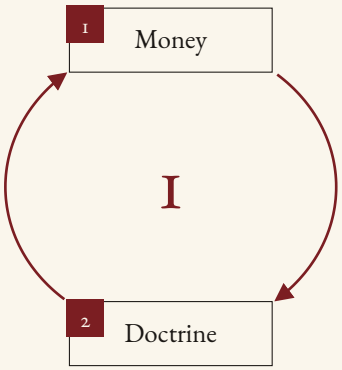
The loops

BEFORE YOU READ

How the techniques connect into cycles. A single practice can look harmless on its own. The loops show how one step feeds the next, so that, for example, a newcomer's welcome turns into an obligation.

> The seven loops below show how the practices connect, so that each step makes the next one easier and the last step feeds the first. The loops are analysis built from findings recorded elsewhere on this page PATTERN OBSERVED; each step names the section or technique where its fact is recorded.

1 · Money to Doctrine to Money



Merit teaching converts your rebirth into a donation schedule, and it is taught by the institutions that receive the donations.

How it runs.

1. Monasteries and temples teach that giving to the institution purchases karmic benefit, which converts cosmology into revenue (sections 9 and 10).
2. Refusal is framed as spiritual immaturity, and in the genealogy card as cosmically dangerous (section 10; technique 26).
3. The money passes from poor households to the temple or monastery, then to the monastic hierarchy, then to construction and state-aligned sangha bodies (section 9, merit economy pipeline).

4. The institutions that receive it benefit: monastic hierarchies, temple administrations and, in state-sangha countries, the governments that appoint them (section 10).

5. Those same institutions go on teaching merit, and the giving continues.

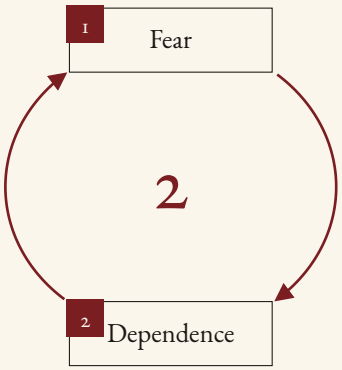
Techniques that feed it. 2 · Weaponized Generosity, 3 · Future Faking, 19 · Manufactured Consent, 26 · Financial Control.

Why it closes. The institution that teaches that giving improves rebirth is the institution that receives the gift. The receipts, and the split between personal and institutional use, are hidden (section 9), so the giver cannot check the exchange.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens wherever the money becomes visible and refusal carries no penalty. The English Sangha Trust's income is on a public charity register (section 9), which shows that publication is possible; other temple and monastery accounts are in the institutions' hands. A donor can ask to see the accounts before giving (section 23, question 4). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Officials of Thailand's National Office of Buddhism were charged in 2018 with embezzling state funds meant for temples, and a former head of the office was sentenced to 94 years for fraud (sections 8 and 19).

2 · Fear to Dependence to Fear



Samsara and karmic consequence are installed as the diagnosis, and relief comes through practice supervised by the diagnosing teacher.

How it runs.

1. Newcomers arrive in pain and are given a diagnosis (craving, attachment, ignorance), and the center, teacher, lineage or sangha offers the cure (stage 1; technique 1).
2. Suffering becomes diagnostic: pain proves attachment, anger proves ego and doubt proves ignorance (technique 5).
3. The cure is practice under the same teacher, and any objection to the teacher is read as ego, aversion or insufficient practice (techniques 6 and 7).
4. Relief arrives unevenly, and dry months are credited to the student's hindrances and answered with another retreat (technique 8).
5. A student who starts to leave is told they are running from suffering or clinging to ego (technique 4), and returns to the same teacher to have the diagnosis renewed (technique 20).

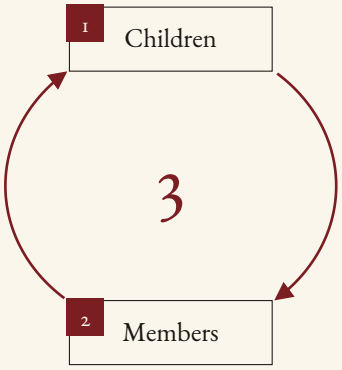
Techniques that feed it. 4 · Hoovering, 5 · Devaluation, 8 · Intermittent Reinforcement, 20 · Trauma Bonding.

Why it closes. The only relief on offer comes from the party that names the problem. Every protest is read as confirming the diagnosis, so the student who objects is treated as proving it (technique 7: the assay is welcome as long as the gold always passes).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where a student can test the teachings against a source outside the center. The Vinaya already prescribes confronting a monk who errs (section 3), and the decision to apply it sits with the center's board and senior students. A student can also seek a view from outside the center before accepting a diagnosis. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In the day described in section 2, Grace raises her concern about a senior student, and the teacher tells her gently that she might look at where her reactivity is arising.

3 · Children to Members to Children



Child ordination and temple registration attach identity before evaluation, and they are transmitted by household.

How it runs.

1. Children are ordained, temporarily or permanently, in Theravada countries, with novice monks as young as 7 in some monastic schools and sometimes as a poverty-relief pathway (section 11).
2. In Japan, Tokugawa-era temple registration attached every household to a temple, and funeral and memorial rights follow the registered household (sections 5, 7 and 10).
3. Merit teaching directed at children makes family religious spending an obligation of love, and withholding is framed as harming ancestors' rebirth (section 11).
4. Ancestor rites and funeral affiliation follow the household, not the individual (section 15).
5. The next generation inherits the same affiliation and the same spending, and the cycle continues.

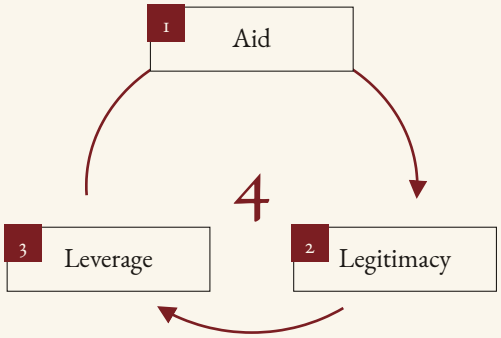
Techniques that feed it. 13 · Normalization / Desensitization, 19 · Manufactured Consent, 26 · Financial Control.

Why it closes. Each generation is affiliated before it can evaluate the affiliation, and the affiliation is carried by the household rather than by the individual. Leaving would mean abandoning ancestors' graves (section 10).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where affiliation waits for the individual's own choice. Compulsory registration has ended in Japan (section 10), and the choice to leave the affiliation now sits with families. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The Japanese funeral monopoly is the clearest case: families face very high fees and cannot easily change temples without abandoning their ancestors' graves (section 10).

4 · Aid to Legitimacy to Leverage to Aid



State-aligned sangha bodies trade legitimacy for licensing and protection, and the licensing preserves the alignment.

How it runs.

1. State sangha councils license monks, supervise monastic discipline and align the monastic order with government (section 7).
2. In Thailand the King names the Supreme Patriarch under a 2016 amendment to the Sangha Act, and this page does not record who can remove him (sections 6, 7 and 8).
3. The state-aligned hierarchy lends the government religious legitimacy and receives governmental privilege in return (section 16).
4. In Myanmar, nationalist monastic networks have been documented spreading anti-Muslim mobilization with official tolerance (sections 11 and 16).
5. Licensing keeps the hierarchy dependent on the state, so the exchange continues (section 7: whether your monk can say anything the state dislikes).

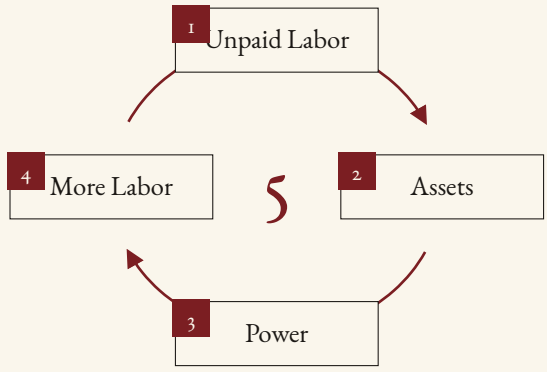
Techniques that feed it. 22 · Benevolent Control, 26 · Financial Control, 30 · Plausible Deniability.

Why it closes. Each side holds what the other needs. The state supplies licensing, appointment and protection, the hierarchy supplies legitimacy, and the licence is what keeps the hierarchy aligned.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where courts and regulators can reach the state-linked bodies. Thai officials of the National Office of Buddhism were charged in 2018 (section 8), and the UN fact-finding mission put the nationalist monks' hate speech on the formal record (section 19). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The National Office of Buddhism administers Thailand's temple funds, and its former head was sentenced to 94 years for fraud (sections 19 and 22).

5 · Unpaid Labor to Assets to Power to More Labor



Work-exchange labor and merit donations build centres and temples that the practitioners never own.

How it runs.

1. Convert-sangha centers are staffed with unpaid work-exchange labor, and residents pay fees as well (sections 2 and 7).
2. Retreat, course and teacher-training fees are charged alongside the unpaid labor (section 9).
3. Together they build the center and its teacher-training pipelines, and the practitioners hold none of the equity (section 7: the equity you do not hold).
4. Authority over the center sits with the founding teacher and a board of the teacher's own students (section 7).

5. A student who reports harm and leaves is replaced by new retreatants, and the unpaid labor continues (technique 29).

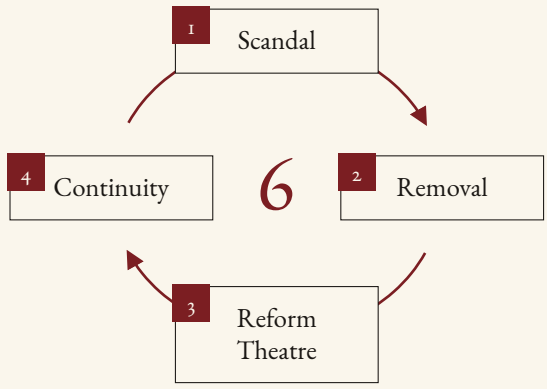
Techniques that feed it. 19 · Manufactured Consent, 26 · Financial Control, 29 · Replacement.

Why it closes. Value flows from the students to the center, and authority sits with the teacher and the board. The people who produce the assets hold no office that controls them.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where labor is scheduled as labor and not as the teaching. Section 18 names this as the point where retreat managers and work-exchange coordinators could refuse. It also weakens where the board answers to someone other than the teacher who formed it. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Grace in section 2 is a residential student who pays a monthly fee and also works twenty hours a week.

6 · Scandal to Removal to Reform Theatre to Continuity



A teacher is removed, the lineage continues, the students who reported are gone, and the Vinaya still is not used.

How it runs.

1. A student reports harm inside the center and is told to notice aversion, examine projection or not cling to anger (techniques 6 and 12).
2. The center delays, urges calm process and treats the student's urgency as immaturity, and the student is quietly excluded (techniques 18 and 28).
3. Exposure comes from outside: at Rigpa, eight senior students wrote publicly, and the investigations at Rigpa and Shambhala were commissioned only after public exposure (sections 5 and 7).
4. The teacher is removed and the lineage's prestige stays intact, with no Vinaya procedure invoked (section 14, last time the chair ran).
5. New students arrive and the critics' warnings are drowned out (technique 29), and section 14 predicts that the next case will again be handled by an internal committee.

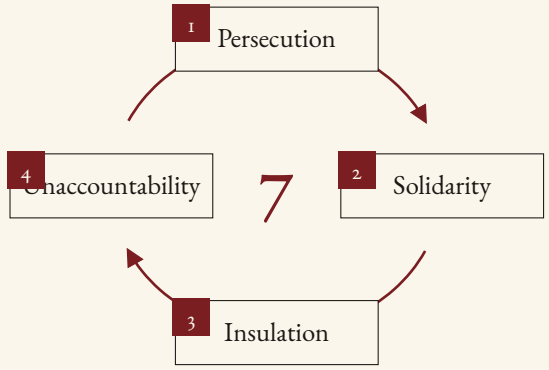
Techniques that feed it. 12 · DARVO, 18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling, 28 · Discard, 29 · Replacement.

Why it closes. Each step closes the complaint without applying the Vinaya procedure, so the structure that produced the case is left unchanged.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. Section 20 names the change that would break it: Western centers adopting independent misconduct processes with lay authority over teachers, before a scandal rather than after one. That lies with boards and members. Regulators can reach registered charities, as the Charity Commission did at Rigpa (section 8). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The Charity Commission's inquiry found that Rigpa's former trustees had failed to act on what they knew (sections 8 and 19).

7 · Persecution to Solidarity to Insulation to Unaccountability



Colonial suppression and communist destruction were real. This page records no instance of either being cited against a critic, so the loop is a pattern observed, not a documented finding.

How it runs.

1. Persecution of Buddhism was real: colonial disruption, and communist suppression in China, Tibet and Cambodia (section 5, timeline).
2. Criticism of a teacher is then framed as creating division, and the critic as harming the Dharma (techniques 11 and 17).
3. Members close ranks: senior students ask the complainant to speak compassionately and not to create division (technique 16).
4. Harm is attributed to Asian culture or, in the West, to individual teachers' personalities, and the structure is not examined (section 15, cultural outsourcing).
5. Nothing changes inside, and the Vinaya is still not applied (section 14).

Techniques that feed it. 11 · Projection, 16 · Flying Monkeys, 17 · Smear Campaign.

Why it closes. The more criticism arrives, the more it can be read as a continuation of the earlier hostility, and each reading strengthens the solidarity that shields the institution from the criticism.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where members read inquiry findings as the institution's own record and not as an outsider's attack. Section 20 records engaged Buddhists, monks and scholars inside those countries, who confront monastic nationalism at the cost of arrest and exile. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Section 5 records both halves: communist suppression in China, Tibet and Cambodia between the 1950s and the 1970s, and, from the 1990s, monks mobilized for ethnic violence in Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The UN fact-finding mission documented hate speech by nationalist monks against the Rohingya (section 19).

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The loops explain why good people stay in arrangements they would never sign up for from scratch. The more you have already put in, the harder it is to walk away. Researchers call this the sunk-cost effect (Arkes & Blumer, 1985), and it works on time, money and relationships alike. Ask yourself: if you were starting today, knowing what you know, would you join?

The seven loops below show how the practices connect, so that each step makes the next one easier and the last step feeds the first.

14 Say versus do

BEFORE YOU READ

Direct, checkable comparisons: a public statement on one side, the documented record on the other, and the receipt that links them. This is the most falsifiable section on the page, because each row either matches its source or it doesn't.

What they say, what the record shows

THEY SAY	THE RECORD SHOWS	RECEIPT
The dharma is offered freely.	Retreats, trainings, and certifications are priced, and unpaid work-exchange labor sustains the centres.	PATTERN OBSERVED
There is no hierarchy in Buddhism.	State sangha acts license monks, and full ordination of women is not recognized in Thailand or by some other national sanghas.	OFFICIAL POLICY
His behavior was skillful means.	The Vinaya contains public confession and expulsion procedures for exactly this, and they were not used.	OFFICIAL POLICY · monastic code

Buddhism is inherently peaceful.	Nationalist monastic networks have been documented mobilizing ethnic violence.	GOVERNMENT REPORT

Accountability or theatre?

Last time the chair ran. In multiple Western teacher scandals, the teacher was removed, the lineage's prestige stayed intact, and no Vinaya procedure was invoked.

Who holds the chair now. Lineage holders, centre boards, and state sangha councils hold it.

Prediction. The next case will be handled by an internal committee, the term used will be skillful means, and the complainant will leave the community.

Words used here

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS INSIDE	WHAT IT DOES	SAID PLAINLY
Attachment	Attachment is clinging that causes suffering.	It is correct as doctrine; as a response to a person raising a grievance it renames their legitimate concern as their own spiritual defect.	'Your objection is your problem.'
Right speech	Right speech is the precept against harmful, divisive, or false speech.	It is a genuine ethical commitment, routinely invoked to suppress accurate reports of institutional misconduct.	'Saying true things about us is unethical.'
Skilful means (upaya)	Skilful means is teaching adapted to the student's capacity.	It is legitimate and ancient. It also supplies the standard retrospective justification for conduct that would otherwise require an apology.	'It looked wrong and it was actually advanced.'

In multiple Western teacher scandals, the teacher was removed, the lineage's prestige stayed intact, and no Vinaya procedure was invoked.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Test one row yourself. Pick a "they say" line you have actually heard said in person, then read the receipt. If the record matches the statement, this page is wrong about that row, and you should tell us. If it doesn't, what does it mean that you had never seen the receipt?

15 Cost & cover

BEFORE YOU READ

What leaving actually costs here, in family, work, housing, money and legal status, and how each of those costs is officially denied. Where the cost is low, the page says so plainly.

What leaving costs

- Monastics who disrobe in traditional societies lose status, and convert-sangha members who leave scandal-hit centers lose their community and the years of practice they invested.
- For lay Buddhists in traditional societies, exit costs are mostly familial/ritual (funerals, ancestor obligations).

The ledger of exit

COST	DOCUMENTED?	DETAIL	THE OFFICIAL DENIAL
Monastic status and livelihood	Yes	Disrobing carries stigma in traditional societies, and a monastic who disrobes loses housing, education, and standing	"Anyone may leave the sangha freely — the Buddha permitted it."
Community (convert sanghas)	Yes	Members' years of practice identity and friendship are housed entirely in one center	"It's a meditation group, not a church."
Reframed as spiritual failure	Yes	Departure is attributed to ego, resistance, or bad karma	"That's a diagnosis, not a punishment."
Family ritual obligation	Yes in East Asia	Ancestor rites and funeral affiliation follow the household, not the individual	"It's custom, not religion."

How the cost is denied

CHANNEL	LEVEL	NOTE
Explicit policy	Medium	The Vinaya is published and detailed — an unusually strong internal receipt when anyone chooses to apply it.
Informal enforcement	High	Merit anxiety and community expectation replace any written requirement.
Leadership distance	High	No global authority; each lineage and national sangha disclaims the rest.
Doctrinal ambiguity	Very high	'Skillful means' and 'crazy wisdom' can retroactively justify almost any teacher behavior.
Cultural outsourcing	High	Harms are attributed to Asian culture, or in the West to individual teachers' personalities.
Volunteer enforcement	High	Senior students police complaints and manage reputations on the teacher's behalf.
Sacred secrecy	Medium	Private interview traditions and lineage confidentiality shield conduct.
Exit cost denial	High	Non-attachment doctrine makes it awkward to even name what leaving costs.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Leaving is usually easy on paper. The cost is emotional and lies in years of practice, a community and a teacher you trusted. Monks and nuns who disrobe in traditional societies can lose status. If your practice genuinely helped you, the page's point is that you can keep it. The breath and the sitting don't belong to any single teacher or center.

16 The ledger

BEFORE YOU READ

The balance sheet. It shows who benefits, who pays, and what leverage flows back to the institution in return for what it gives.

Who benefits

- State-aligned sangha hierarchies benefit, trading legitimacy with governments. So do temple families in funeral-monopoly systems and celebrity teachers in convert Buddhism, whose organizations survived

documented abuse through lineage prestige (multiple Zen and Vipassana-adjacent scandals). INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

- The secular mindfulness industry benefits by extracting the technique while discarding the ethics, which is monetization without accountability. PATTERN OBSERVED

Money out, leverage back

- State-aligned monastic hierarchies in Thailand and Myanmar trade religious legitimacy for governmental privilege; in Myanmar, nationalist monastic networks have been documented spreading anti-Muslim mobilization with official tolerance. GOVERNMENT REPORT
- The secular mindfulness industry extracts technique from its ethical framework and sells it at scale — to corporations, armies, and schools — with no precepts and no accountability attached. The tradition's ethics were the part that got dropped. ACADEMIC SOURCE
- Merit-making economies channel very large sums from poor populations into temple construction and monastic institutions, with cosmological framing that makes refusal spiritually costly. ACADEMIC SOURCE

Who pays

- Nuns and women practitioners pay, denied full ordination and resources.
- Child novices pay, in monastic schools without safeguarding.
- Students of abusive Western teachers pay, because their complaints were reframed as ego.
- Poor families in merit economies pay, spending on rites they cannot afford.
- Rohingya Muslims and Sri Lankan Tamils and Muslims pay, as targets of Buddhist nationalist mobilization. GOVERNMENT REPORT
- Japanese families pay, locked into hereditary temple funeral costs.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Find yourself in this table. Are you among those who benefit, those who pay, or both? Most readers are both. The question is whether the exchange was ever explained to you in these terms, and whether you would agree to it if it had been.

17 Who gets hurt most

BEFORE YOU READ

Where the weight lands hardest, and what it compounds with: poverty, childhood, gender, a lack of civil alternatives. This is the human stakes stated plainly.

Where the weight lands

The costs in section 15 do not fall evenly. They fall hardest where a person has the least power inside the institution and the fewest places to go outside it. The table names who carries the most, how, and what makes it worse.

WHO	HOW	WHAT IT COMPOUNDS WITH
Nuns and female practitioners	They are denied full ordination, seniority, and resources.	The harm compounds in traditions where nuns outnumber monks and are funded least.
Child novices	They are ordained as poverty relief, with documented abuse and weak oversight.	The harm compounds where the monastery is the only school available.
Students of abusive Western teachers	Their complaints are reclassified as ego and attachment.	The harm compounds after a decade of practice identity invested in one centre.

Poor families in merit economies	They spend money they cannot afford on rites framed as karmic necessity.	The harm compounds where a funeral's cost determines the family's standing.
Rohingya Muslims and Sri Lankan minorities	They are targets of Buddhist nationalist mobilization.	The harm compounds with state complicity and no protection.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The table puts nuns and female practitioners first: denied full ordination, seniority and resources in traditions where they are funded least. Then child novices, ordained partly as poverty relief, with documented abuse and weak oversight. If you are a Western practitioner who admires Theravada, did you know that full ordination of women is not recognized in Thailand or by some other national sanghas?

18 The middle tiers

BEFORE YOU READ

The people in the middle: local clergy, teachers, officials and volunteers who apply rules they did not write. The section exists so that an institution is not collapsed into a monolith, and so that people in the middle can see their own position in it.

Most of the institution's work is done below the apex, by people who see the decisions without making them. Ordinary monks, centre boards and practice coordinators, retreat managers and work-exchange coordinators, nuns and female teachers, and temple family priests in Japan each carry part of the load, and each stands at one point where the next decision could be declined. The table sets out what each tier does, what it sees, what it is asked to do and where it could refuse.

ROLE	DOES	SEES	IS ASKED TO	COULD REFUSE
Ordinary monks	Keep the tradition alive on almsfood and no property	How the temple's money actually moves	Accept the hierarchy's authority	Participate in merit-selling aimed at the poor
Centre boards and practice coordinators	Run the convert sangha	Complaints about the teacher arriving and stopping	Protect the lineage's reputation	Handle a misconduct report inside the organization
Retreat managers and work-exchange coordinators	Staff the centre with unpaid labor	The hours against the fees	Call it practice	Schedule labor as though it were the teaching
Nuns and female teachers	Hold much of the actual instruction with a fraction of the resources	That ordination is closed by procedure, not principle	Be patient	Accept a procedural objection that produces a permanent exclusion
Temple family priests in Japan	Bury the dead of registered households	That the monopoly is administrative, not spiritual	Maintain the tier pricing	Charge by posthumous-name rank

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you are a local leader, a teacher or a volunteer, this section is about you. It is not an accusation: most of the people who carry out a rule did not write it. But the middle tier is also where a rule is most often quietly softened, or quietly enforced. Which do you do, and what would happen to you if you chose differently?

19 Documented cases

BEFORE YOU READ

Named, dated, sourced incidents: court records, government inquiries, regulators' findings and on-the-record reporting. Read the outcome lines in particular. They show what actually changed, if anything.

Temple funds embezzled by officials (Thailand, 2018)

WHEN: 2018

WHAT: Officials of the National Office of Buddhism were charged with embezzling state funds meant for temples [5].

RECORD: Buddhistdoor, 2018; UCA News [5]

OUTCOME: A former head of the office was sentenced to 94 years for fraud [5]. A later report on the appeal gives a 20-year term, so the time actually served may be shorter than 94 years [22].

TACTICS: 26 · Financial Control

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

The teacher and the trustees (United Kingdom, 2017–2020)

WHEN: 2017–2020

WHAT: An independent investigation for Rigpa found that its founder, Sogyal Rinpoche, had abused students [6].

RECORD: Lewis Silkin report (August 2018); Charity Commission statutory inquiry (concluded November 2020) [6]

OUTCOME: The regulator found the charity's former trustees had failed to act on what they knew [6].

TACTICS: 30 · Plausible Deniability, 20 · Trauma Bonding, 18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

The abbots and the blackmail (Thailand, 2025)

WHEN: 2025

WHAT: Police arrested a woman who, they said, had sexual relationships with senior monks and blackmailed them, receiving about 385 million baht over three years;

they found more than 80,000 photos and videos [11][12].

RECORD: Royal Thai Police Central Investigation Bureau, reported July 2025 [11][12]

OUTCOME: At least nine abbots and senior monks were disrobed [11][12]. No court outcome for the woman is recorded on this page.

TACTICS: —

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

Monks and hate speech (Myanmar, 2012–2018)

WHEN: 2012–2018

WHAT: A UN fact-finding mission documented hate speech against Rohingya Muslims, including by nationalist monks linked to Ma Ba Tha [7].

RECORD: UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, A/HRC/39/64 (2018) [7]

OUTCOME: It forms part of the UN's formal record on the violence against the Rohingya [7].

TACTICS: —

GRADE: DOCUMENTED

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

These are not hypotheticals. Four documented cases on this page rest on a named record. The most common reaction to documented cases is "that was them, not us." Before settling on that, read the outcome lines. Did anything change in the structure that allowed each case to happen, or did one person leave while the structure stayed?

20 Precedent

BEFORE YOU READ

What has already been broken once, somewhere, and what would count as real change here. It is a benchmark, not a prediction.

It has been broken before

WHAT	WHO	WHEN	WHAT IT COST
The Vinaya itself — public confession, expulsion rules, no hereditary rank	The tradition's founders	24 centuries ago	It cost nothing, and it is the strongest internal instrument in this codex.
Centres that commissioned and published independent investigations of their own teachers	Boards and members who insisted	2010s	It cost some of them organizational upheaval.
Bhikkhuni ordination revivals recognized by some sanghas	Nuns and supporting monks	1996–present	They were met with non-recognition and censure from national bodies.
Engaged Buddhism confronting monastic nationalism	Monks and scholars inside those countries	Ongoing	They have faced arrest and exile.

What would change this page

Western centers adopting independent misconduct processes with lay authority over teachers — before a scandal rather than after one — would revise the pattern this page documents.

Sources for this section: [9]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Some rows here record a change that has already happened somewhere; others name what would count as change here. When you are told something "can't change", it is fair to ask: can't, or won't? And who decided?

21 Voices from inside

BEFORE YOU READ

People from inside Buddhism who raised the hard question publicly, often at real cost. They answer the objection that criticism only ever comes from outsiders.

- **Dhammananda Bhikkhuni.** She is Thailand's first fully ordained Theravada nun, and she had to go to Sri Lanka for ordination in 2003

[14].

- **Ajahn Brahm.** He was expelled from the Ajahn Chah forest lineage after he helped ordain four women as bhikkhunis in Perth in 2009 [13].
- **The Rigpa students.** Their complaints led to the 2018 investigation [6].
- **Brian Victoria.** He is a Zen priest and scholar, and his *Zen at War* documented his own tradition's support for militarism [8].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Were these people traitors, or the most loyal members their tradition had? Most were treated as the first at the time, and some are honored as the second now. If someone in your community raised one of these questions tomorrow, how would they be treated, and by you?

He is a Zen priest and scholar, and his Zen at War documented his own tradition's support for militarism.

22 Regional variants

BEFORE YOU READ

The same tradition under different governments. What a member can say, leave, marry or inherit depends heavily on the state, and these cards show how differently it plays out.

Thailand

APEX: The Supreme Patriarch, appointed by the King, and the Sangha Supreme Council hold the apex. The current holder was born in 1927, so check this row again for a change of holder.

LAW: The Sangha Act makes monastic governance a matter of statute. The National Office of Buddhism administers temple funds.

DOCUMENTED: Thai authorities have prosecuted temple funding scandals, and the state has intervened in monastic appointments.

EXIT: Exit costs are low for laypeople and high for monastics, whose entire status is administrative.

REGULATOR: The National Office of Buddhism and the courts regulate, and, on the apex, the Crown, which names the Supreme Patriarch.

TELL: Where the apex is royal by statute, monastic accountability is a branch of public administration — with the advantages and the capture that implies.

Western convert centres

APEX: The founding teacher and a board of the teacher's own students hold the apex.

LAW: Centers in the UK can be registered as charities [6], and US entities are frequently classified as churches and therefore exempt.

DOCUMENTED: The Lewis report on Rigpa (2018) was commissioned after eight senior students wrote publicly, and the Shambhala investigations are also on record. Registration gave regulators a handle: the Charity Commission's statutory inquiry later found Rigpa UK's former trustees had failed to act on what they knew.

EXIT: Exit costs are low socially and high for residents and staff whose housing and income are inside.

REGULATOR: The Charity Commission regulates registered centers in England and Wales, and it was the handle that made the Rigpa findings enforceable. Ordinary courts also have jurisdiction.

TELL: The corporate wrapper is the handle. Lineage authority has no external address; a registered charity does.

Sources for this section: [3] [4] [5] [6]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page covers Thailand and Western convert centres. Your country changes what this tradition can do to you, and what you can do about it. If you live somewhere not listed, ask which of these cards your country most resembles. If you are a voter, note that each of these arrangements was chosen by a government.

23 The questions

BEFORE YOU READ

The six questions the documented record could not resolve. Each is set out below: why it is being asked, and a concrete example already on this page that it points back to.

QUESTION 1 OF 6

The Vinaya contains public confession and expulsion procedures for teacher misconduct. Ask your center why it did not use them.

WHY THIS IS ASKED

The tradition wrote its own accountability system over two thousand years ago. The question asks why centers waited for outside investigators instead of using it.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The history section records that the Vinaya established public confession and expulsion rules around 400 BCE. It adds that what was missing "was anyone willing to apply it to the person it was written for."

QUESTION 2 OF 6

If a complaint can always be reclassified as the complainant's ego, what evidence could ever establish that a teacher did something wrong?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

If every complaint can be reframed as the complainant's own ego, then no evidence could ever establish misconduct. The question points out that the reframing makes the teacher unaccountable.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The forefront section calls this "a specific inversion": ideas about ego applied to a student's complaint by the teacher it concerns.

QUESTION 3 OF 6

The Buddha ordained women. Ask the monk who says the lineage cannot be restored who benefits from it staying broken.

WHY THIS IS ASKED

If the tradition's founder ordained women, the barrier is historical rather than doctrinal. The question asks who benefits from leaving the lineage broken.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The who-gets-hurt table lists nuns and female practitioners "denied full ordination, seniority, and resources," and the branches table records that full ordination of women is not recognized in Thailand.

QUESTION 4 OF 6

Ask your center for its financial statements and its safeguarding policy. Note whether the request is treated as a spiritual failing.

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Asking for a safeguarding policy is a normal request of any organization that hosts vulnerable people. The question asks you to notice whether it is treated as a spiritual failing.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The law table records the Charity Commission's 2020 finding that Rigpa's former trustees "had failed to act" [6], after an independent investigation found that its founder had abused students.

QUESTION 5 OF 6

In your tradition's own analysis, who has more attachment — the student setting a boundary, or the teacher who needs the boundary gone?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

The tradition's own analysis of attachment can be applied to both sides. The question asks who is more attached: the student setting a boundary, or the teacher who needs it gone.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The cases section records the Rigpa investigation into Sogyal Rinpoche's abuse of students. The forefront section notes that the objection is to a teacher applying ideas about ego to a student's complaint.

QUESTION 6 OF 6

If giving improves your rebirth, ask why the beneficiary is always an institution that can be audited and rarely is.

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Merit-making turns giving into a spiritual transaction. The question asks why the receiving institution so rarely shows where the gift went.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The cases section records that officials of Thailand's National Office of Buddhism were charged with embezzling temple funds, and that a former head was sentenced to 94 years for fraud [5].

In closing

Your tradition wrote its own accountability code twenty-four centuries ago. The Vinaya has expulsion rules for exactly this, public confession, no hereditary rank, and an explicit instruction to test teachings rather than accept them on authority. Each of the teacher-misconduct cases documented here happened where that code was set aside in favor of a teacher's authority.

You can keep the practice and drop the man. In fact the tradition tells you to: examine, test, verify, and do not accept on the strength of someone's reputation. Applying that instruction to your own teacher is not a lapse in devotion. It is the assignment.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Choose one question and ask it this month, out loud, to a real person who could answer it. Then write down what happened. Were you answered, redirected, or told that asking was the problem? Whichever it was, the response is information.

24 Leaving safely here

BEFORE YOU READ

Practical, non-theological guidance for someone who needs to step back or step away safely. It is a safety document, not an argument.

Practical guidance, not legal advice.

1. **Leaving a Buddhist centre is legally free;** the costs are the loss of community and, for residents, of housing.

2. **If a teacher abuses you,** go to the police; if the centre is a UK charity, you can also report to the Charity Commission [6].
3. **Monks and nuns who disrobe** may need help with housing, work and documents.
4. **Find support** [15] [16] [17].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Even if this section is not for you, it may be for someone you know. Most people who leave a high-demand community say that the first person who listened without trying to argue them back mattered more than anything else. Could that person be you?

25 Where to get help

BEFORE YOU READ

Organizations that can help, each checked directly against its own site, with the date of the check. Nothing here is endorsed beyond that check.

Checked 2026-09-27.

ORGANIZATION	FOR	WHERE	CONTACT
Faith to Faithless	People leaving high-control religion	UK	**0800 448 0748** (freephone; Monday 10:00–13:00, Wednesday 10:00–13:00, Thursday 16:00–19:00 UK time) [15]
Recovering from Religion	People questioning or leaving faith	US, Canada and online	**(844) 368-2848** [16]
ICSA	Former members of high-control groups; families	International	Via website [17]
NAPAC	Adult survivors of childhood abuse	UK	**0808 801 0331** [18]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Save one contact now, before anyone needs it: **Faith to Faithless** (people leaving high-control religion; UK). People in crisis rarely have the energy to research options. Having a name ready is one of the most useful things you can do for someone else.



26

Sources

BEFORE YOU READ

Every numbered citation on this page, with a named, checkable source. Spot-check a few before trusting the rest; that is the honest way to read any page in this book, including this one.

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WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Don't take this page's word for anything either. People tend to believe a claim more the more often they have heard it, whether or not it is true; this is the "illusory truth effect" (Hasher, Goldstein & Toppino, 1977). Spot-check three citations at random. If any fails, tell us, and it will be corrected and logged.

27 What changed on this page

BEFORE YOU READ

A dated log of what changed on this page: corrections, additions and new sources. Changes are logged in public rather than made quietly.

- **2026-10-03:** The page no longer treats Thailand's Supreme Patriarch as the head of all Buddhism, and no longer says the Crown can remove him, which the sources do not state. Narrowed the claim that every documented failure involved a set-aside monastic code to the teacher-misconduct cases. Re-graded nine techniques whose evidence was what teachers and communities do rather than taught doctrine or written rules, so the page now counts Taught 6, Cultural 21, Contested 2, Documented 1 and Codified 0. Added a sourced 2017 preaching ban on the monk Wirathu, sourced the size of Ambedkar's 1956 conversion, replaced an unsourced 500 million figure, and marked the 94-year sentence and the blackmail case as lacking a recorded outcome. Corrected the tags on three documented cases, the claim that centers collapsed after investigations, and the claims about who can compel an answer, who is denied ordination, and whether temple accounts are ever audited.
- **2026-09-27:** Added Branches, Law & state, Money in numbers (English Sangha Trust accounts 2021–2025), four documented cases, Voices from inside, Leaving safely and Where to get help.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page keeps a public log of its own changes, mistakes included. Does the institution you belong to, give to, or were raised in keep one like it? If not, how would you know what it got wrong, and when?

Colophon

Set in EB Garamond (SIL Open Font License), regular, italic and bold, with true small capitals and old-style figures in text and lining tabular figures in tables. Laid out with Paged.js in Chromium from the same Markdown that feeds the website. US Letter, single-sided, tagged for accessibility and checked against PDF/UA-1 with veraPDF. Built 2026-10-27. Text checked 2026-10-03.

Palette: ink, oxblood, gold, cream, rule. Seven type sizes. Rules of 0.4 pt and 2 pt only.