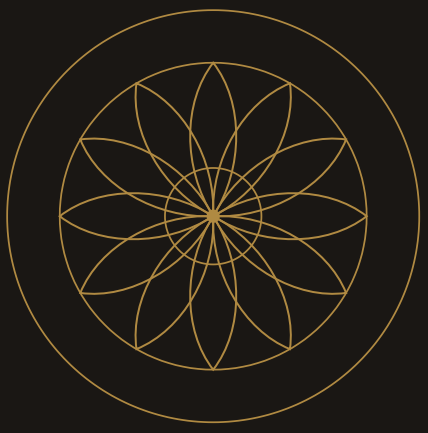


THE SACRED DIVIDE

THE FULL RECORD

Dawoodi Bohra

Islam family

HONOR THE FAITH · NAME THE MACHINERY

TEXT CHECKED 2026-10-03

Before you begin

This is the record of Dawoodi Bohra 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 Dawoodi Bohra 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	The community has about 1 million members [15].
WHO'S IN CHARGE	The Daʿi al-Mutlaq (the community's supreme religious leader) is Mufaddal Saifuddin, in office since 2014 [15].
CHOSEN BY	Designation (nass) by the predecessor; contested, upheld by the Bombay High Court in 2024 (appeal pending before a Division Bench) [4 31].
REMOVABLE BY	No one.
MONEY IN ONE LINE	The community is funded by annual dues (wajebaat) and levies and by large community trusts [18], and interest-free loans run inside the same structure [15].
LEAVING IN ONE LINE	Excommunication (baraat) carries social boycott, including denial of mosque access and community burial [17].

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION	Why can a funeral need permission?
FAMILY	Islam — islam, sunni-islam, shia-islam, ahmadiyya, dawoodi-bohra
LAST CHECKED	2026-10-03

Disclosure scorecard

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

Accounts: UK community charities file public accounts, e.g. Anjuman-e-Burhani, London [27]

Safeguarding: the London charity declares a safeguarding policy to the regulator; its text is not published [27]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The glance table's answer to who chooses the top office is "Designation (nass) by the predecessor; contested, upheld by the Bombay High Court in 2024 (appeal pending before a Division Bench)", and to who can remove its holder, "No one". 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, allegations going to police first, a written removal procedure or on-the-record replies. 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.

- **name:** Zainab
- **when:** A Tuesday in Muharram (the month in which Shia Muslims mourn Husayn)

- **where:** Mumbai

1. Her daughter turned seven in March. The question arrives at breakfast, from her mother-in-law, gently, as all of it arrives: has she thought about the thing that is done at seven?
2. Zainab has read the stories from Sahiyo (a survivor-led group) on her phone, late at night, in English, so her mother-in-law won't see them.
3. At noon the ʿamil's office (the ʿamil is the Daʿi's appointee in her local community) calls about the wajebaat. Her husband handles it. He comes back quieter than he went.
4. In the evening, the majlis (the gathering for sermon and mourning). The whole community in rida and topi (the women's and men's traditional dress), the sermon relayed on screens, and the grief for Husayn she has felt every year of her life.
5. Her cousin, whose father was put under baraat for signing a reformist letter decades ago, is not there. He is never there. Zainab thinks of the funeral they had to hold somewhere else.
6. At night she lies awake with the decision about her daughter, which everybody says is a small one, and understands that the smallness is the whole mechanism.

Zainab is a composite drawn from documented patterns. No real person is depicted.

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 may belong to one of the most generous, well-organized communities in this book: loans without interest, a kitchen that feeds everyone, and a prayer life that shapes every day. Nothing here dismisses that. This page is about a permission system that can reach from your wedding to your grave, and about a practice done to little girls that courts in three countries have examined.

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION

Why can a funeral need permission?

The strongest objection, answered

- *Attack:* "A small minority singled out by outsiders."
- *Concede:* Bohras are a minority within a minority, and anti-Shia hostility is real.
- *Answer:* The critics cited here are Bohras [11][13], and the findings are courts' findings [1][2][4].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Try answering the unanswered question yourself: *Why can a funeral need permission?* 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 Dawoodi Bohra, 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.

> The community has about one million members [15], mostly in India (Gujarat, Maharashtra) and Pakistan, with communities in East Africa, the

> Gulf, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia. It is a Shia Ismaili community (a branch of Shia Islam) led by a single spiritual leader, the Da'i al-Mutlaq ("absolute missionary"), who acts on behalf of a hidden Imam [15]. It is known for strong communal institutions, business networks, distinctive dress and an extensive welfare system.

- The community runs an effective welfare system of interest-free loans, housing and community kitchens [15] [18].
- The community's own site describes literacy as very high, with no gap between girls and boys; no independent figure is recorded on this page [33].
- The Sydney community authority (Anjuman-e-Burhani) told members in February 2016 to obey Australian law against khatna (female genital cutting, FGC), and the Da'i's office directed Bohra trusts abroad to follow local bans [16].
- Survivor-led reform comes from inside the community, through Sahiyo, WeSpeakOut and the Progressive Dawoodi Bohras [11].

The Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust's redevelopment of the Bhendi Bazaar area of Mumbai promises new homes for some 20,000 residents [18]. The community's own interest-free loans are recorded as real welfare in section 9 [15].

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.

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.

The community descends from the Fatimid Ismaili tradition (the Ismaili caliphate of medieval Egypt) through the Mustaʿli line and the Tayyibi line in Yemen (successive lines of Ismaili succession). After the Imam al-Tayyib's concealment in the 12th century, authority passed to the Daʿi al-Mutlaq [14]. In 1539 the 23rd Daʿi appointed an Indian successor, and the daʿwa's headquarters (the daʿwa is the community's organized mission,

headed by the Da'i) moved to Gujarat in the 1560s [14]. A 1592 succession dispute split the Dawoodi (mainly Indian) from the Sulaymani (mainly Yemeni) [14]. The 53rd Da'i, Mufaddal Saifuddin, has led since 2014 [15]. His succession was challenged in court and upheld in 2024, and an appeal is pending before a Division Bench [4][31].

Timeline

DATE	EVENT	READING
12th c.	Imam al-Tayyib's concealment; the Da'i al-Mutlaq office in Yemen [14]	Authority passes to a deputy who never has to hand it back.
1539 / 1560s	An Indian appointed as Da'i; headquarters moves to Gujarat [14]	The community's center becomes Indian.
1592	The Dawoodi–Sulaymani split [14]	A succession dispute names the community.
1949	Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act [1]	The state outlaws the boycott.
1962	Supreme Court strikes the Act down [1]	The Court protects excommunication as religious management.
1979	Nathwani Commission report (Citizens for Democracy) [13]	The Commission documents reformists' testimony of boycott and assault.
2014	52nd Da'i dies; succession challenged in court [4]	The office's transfer goes to litigation.
2015	Australia's first FGM (female genital mutilation) prosecution: three convicted in the Supreme Court of New South Wales (NSW) [10]	The trial ended in three convictions.

2016	Maharashtra social-boycott law [3]; the Da'i publicly describes female circumcision as a religious rite [16]	The legislature and the pulpit move in opposite directions.
2017	Detroit: the first US federal FGM prosecution [5]; Sahiyo online survey (80% of 385 respondents cut) [11] [28]	The practice enters courtrooms and data.
2018	US judge rules the 1996 federal FGM law unconstitutional and dismisses the FGM counts [5]; NSW appeal court quashes the Australian convictions [10]; India's Supreme Court refers the khatna petition to a Constitution Bench (a bench of five or more judges that hears constitutional questions) [12]	The three jurisdictions reach three different outcomes.
2019	High Court of Australia allows the Crown's appeals and holds that the law covers the practice [8]	The High Court answers the legal question.
2020	NSW orders retrials [9]; the Crown abandons the proceedings before any retrial [10]	No Australian conviction stands.
Jan 2021	STOP FGM Act signed in the US [7]	The law is rewritten after the case.
Sep 2021	Remaining US charges (conspiracy, false statements, witness tampering) dismissed; the judge found a vindictive prosecution [6] [32]	No US FGM conviction stands.
2023	Supreme Court refers the excommunication question to nine judges [2]	The 1962 ruling is in doubt.
2024	Bombay High Court dismisses the succession challenge [4] [30]; the appeal is admitted by a Division Bench in December and remains pending [31]	A secular court confirms the religious apex.
2026	The nine-judge bench hearing the Sabarimala reference reserves judgment (14 May) [29]	The excommunication and khatna questions wait on it; no judgment had been reported when this page was last checked.

Moments in the room

YEAR	TITLE	WHAT HAPPENED	WHY IT MATTERS
1962	The excommunication case	The Supreme Court struck down the 1949 anti-excommunication law [1].	The Court treated boycott as religious management.
2019–20	Canberra, then Sydney	The High Court clarified the law [8]; retrials were ordered [9], then charges dropped [10].	The law was fixed; this case was not.
2023	Constitutional morality	The Supreme Court referred the 1962 precedent to nine judges [2].	The central protection is back in question.

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

Dawoodi Bohra 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 community has a Dawoodi majority, two historical splits (the Sulaymani and Alavi Bohras) [14] [25], the Progressive Dawoodi Bohras, and the Qutbi line that contested the 2014 succession [4].

BRANCH	WHERE	WHAT DIFFERS ON THIS PAGE'S QUESTIONS
Dawoodi Bohra	India, Pakistan, East Africa, the Gulf, diaspora [15]	Led by the *Dai al-Mutlaq*, with authority over permissions for marriage, burial and pilgrimage [19]. Split from the Sulaymani in 1592 over the succession of the 27th dai [25].
Sulaymani Bohra	Yemen, and a smaller Indian community [25]	Followed the rival claimant in 1592 [25].
Alavi Bohra	Gujarat [25]	Split from the Dawoodi in 1621 [25].
Progressive Dawoodi Bohras	India and diaspora	They are a reform movement inside the community since the 1970s, demanding accountable finances and an end to excommunication, and their leader was expelled in 2004 [13] [20].

The 2014 succession dispute	India	A rival claim to the office after the 52nd dai's death was dismissed by the Bombay High Court in 2024, and an appeal is pending [4 31].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

If you know one community of Dawoodi Bohra, 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:** The community has about 1 million adherents [15].
- **regions:** The community is found in India (Mumbai, Surat, Gujarat), Pakistan (Karachi), East Africa, the Gulf, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia.
- **branches:** The community has a Dawoodi majority, two historical splits (the Sulaymani and Alavi Bohras) [14] [25], the Progressive Dawoodi Bohras, and the Qutbi line that contested the 2014 succession [4].
- **trend:** No independent figure for growth or prosperity is recorded on this page; the community describes itself as a worldwide body of about 1 million members [15].
- **participation:** Participation is very high and institutionally recorded through the oath of allegiance (misaq), dues and functions [13] [19].

Authority

- One Da'i al-Mutlaq holds authority over religious and communal life [15].
- Local communities (jamaats) are run by 'amils appointed by the Da'i. Permission (raza) is required for religious functions and life-cycle rites. Reform sources and litigants describe permission depending on paid dues [17] [19].

- An oath of allegiance (misaq) is taken before adulthood. The 1979 Nathwani Commission, appointed by the civil-society group Citizens for Democracy, is reported, in published summaries of its findings, to have called it "the main instrument" of control over the community [13].
- The central administration (Dawat-e-Hadiyah) holds trusts, property and institutions [15].

The top of the chain

> One office, above every permission. A secular court confirmed who holds it.

OFFICE	WHO SITS IN IT NOW	CHOSEN BY	REMOVABLE BY
Da'i al-Mutlaq	Mufaddal Saifuddin, since 2014 [15]	Designation (nass) by the predecessor; contested, upheld by the Bombay High Court in 2024 (appeal pending before a Division Bench) [4 31]	No one

Who holds what

ENTITY	TYPE	HOLDER	HOLDS	SECTOR	RECEIPT
Da'i al-Mutlaq	Religious apex	Mufaddal Saifuddin (53rd, since 2014) [15]	The Da'i holds religious and communal authority.	He governs every permission in your life.	OFFICIAL POLICY · COURT RECORD [4]
'Amils	Local appointees	Appointed by the Da'i	They hold local permissions and discipline.	They govern your jamaat.	INVESTIGATIVE REPORT [13]
Central trusts (e.g. SBUT, the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust)	Property and welfare	Trustees	They hold property, loans and redevelopment.	They govern your neighborhood.	OFFICIAL POLICY [18]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

One office, the Da'i al-Mutlaq, has authority over the permissions that shape a Bohra life: marriage, burial and pilgrimage. When the 52nd Da'i died in 2014, the succession went to court, and the Bombay High Court dismissed the challenge in 2024, and an appeal has been filed. If your family's permissions all run through one office, who could you appeal to if that office were wrong about you?

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 SAYS	WHERE IT STANDS
India — excommunication	A 1949 Bombay law banning excommunication was struck down in 1962 as violating the community's religious freedom [1]; Maharashtra's 2016 law bans social boycott [3]	In 2023 the Supreme Court doubted its own 1962 precedent and sent the question to a larger bench, which reserved judgment in May 2026 [2] [17] [29]
India — khatna (FGC)	India has no specific law on khatna, and a public-interest petition seeks a ban [12].	The petition was referred to a nine-judge constitution bench, which reserved judgment on the reference in May 2026, with survivors intervening [12] [21] [29].
United States — FGC	The 1996 federal FGM law was ruled unconstitutional in the first prosecution (2018); the case ended in 2021 [5] [6]	Congress replaced the law in 2021 (STOP FGM Act) [7]
Australia — FGC	The High Court held in 2019 that the practice falls within the offence [8]	Retrials ordered, then the Crown abandoned the case before any retrial in 2020 [9] [10]

United Kingdom — FGC	It is illegal, including taking a girl abroad for it, and specialist support exists [22] [23].	No prosecution involving the community is recorded on this page for the United Kingdom.

Who can compel an answer

Indian courts ([1] [2] [12]) and Maharashtra's boycott law [3] can compel an answer, as can criminal courts abroad ([5]–[10]) and charity regulators over diaspora trusts [27].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

India has changed its mind about excommunication four times. A 1949 Bombay law outlawed it. The Supreme Court struck the law down in 1962 as an infringement of religious freedom. Maharashtra banned social boycott in 2016, and in 2023 the Supreme Court sent the 1962 ruling to nine judges. On khatna, courts abroad have also acted: the first U.S. federal FGM prosecution was in Detroit in 2017. If you live in India, your rights here are still being decided. Are you following the case?

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.

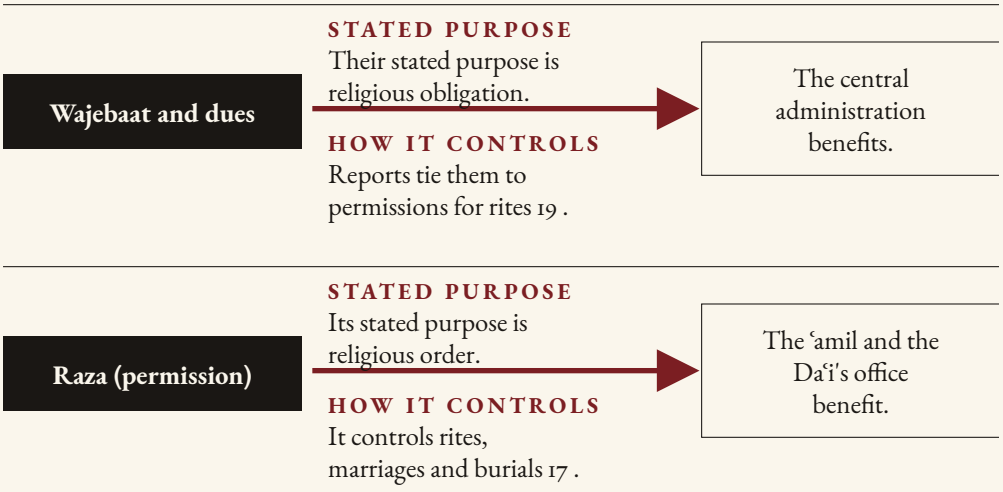
Where it comes from

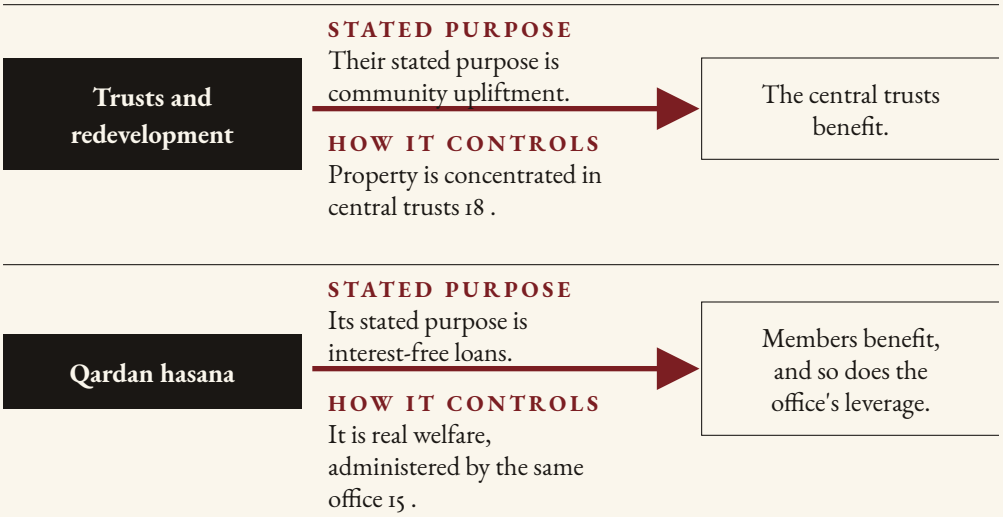
- The community collects annual dues (wajebaat) and other levies. Reformist accounts report that a card showing paid-up wajebaat is required for rites [19]. These mechanics come from reformist testimony; no primary source for them has been found.
- The community runs large trusts and projects. The Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust's redevelopment of Bhendi Bazaar, Mumbai covers about 16.5 acres, roughly 3,200 families and 1,250 shops, with an estimated cost of about ₹4,000 crore (Rs 40 billion) [18].
- Interest-free loans (qardan hasana) are real welfare, administered inside the same structure [15].

Follow the money

FLOW	STATED PURPOSE	HOW IT CONTROLS	WHO BENEFITS
Wajebaat and dues	Their stated purpose is religious obligation.	Reports tie them to permissions for rites [19].	The central administration benefits.
Raza (permission)	Its stated purpose is religious order.	It controls rites, marriages and burials [17].	The ʿamil and the Daʿi's office benefit.
Trusts and redevelopment	Their stated purpose is community upliftment.	Property is concentrated in central trusts [18].	The central trusts benefit.
Qardan hasana	Its stated purpose is interest-free loans.	It is real welfare, administered by the same office [15].	Members benefit, and so does the office's leverage.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES, AND WHAT IT HOLDS





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

Money in numbers

Members pay *wajebaat* and other dues to the office of the dai; no audited accounts are published to members [19]. The one large number on the public record is a building project.

- **Saifee Burhani Upliftment Project, Mumbai:** The project is a redevelopment of the Bhendi Bazaar area promising new homes for some **20,000** residents [18].
- **Wajebaat:** Wajebaat is a religious obligation paid to the dai's office, with no published ledger [19].

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The community is known for order and care: nobody hungry, nobody in debt to a bank. It is funded by annual dues (wajebaat) and other levies, and reformist accounts say that a paid-up card is required for rites, which the page flags as testimony awaiting a primary source. The questions section asks it simply: where are the accounts? If your family's rites depend on having paid, do you know where the payment goes?

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?

1. **The permission (raza) system** - *Origin:* The Da'i held authority as deputy of the hidden Imam, and it was extended across religious life [13] [15]. - *Then:* It gave order in a dispersed trading community with no state. - *Expired?* When burial can be refused [17], the office holds a key to the grave. - *Benefits now:* The central office benefits.
2. **Excommunication and boycott** - *Origin:* The community asserted a right to discipline members, and the Supreme Court protected it in 1962 [1]. - *Then:* Its purpose was doctrinal integrity. - *Expired?* The

Nathwani Commission recorded boycott used against reformers who questioned the priesthood's authority [13], and the Supreme Court now doubts the 1962 protection [2]. - *Benefits now:* The office benefits, against its critics.

3. **Khatna** - *Origin:* It is a long-standing practice defended as a religious rite [12] [16]. - *Then:* The sources on this page give no original purpose for it. - *Expired?* 81% of surveyed Bohra women want it ended [11], and diaspora authorities have told members to stop where it is illegal [16]. - *Benefits now:* No one benefits. It persists where it is not clearly renounced everywhere.

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

- The Da'i's sermons are the principal religious authority [15].
- Reformists have described exclusion from mosques and community spaces after public criticism [13] [17].

Children

- **Khatna** (female genital cutting, most often at six or seven): in Sahiyo's 2017 online survey of 385 women, 80% said they had been cut, and 81% wanted the practice to end [11] [28].

- In India a petition to ban khatna is pending, referred to a nine-judge Constitution Bench that reserved judgment on the reference in May 2026 [29]; the community's defense argued it is an essential religious practice [12].
- The misaq is taken before adulthood [13].

Bodies

- Khatna is the defining documented gender harm [11]. The Da'i's 2016 statement described female circumcision as a religious rite practised throughout the community's history [16]. Diaspora authorities told members to follow local law [16].
- The religious hierarchy is all male, and women wear distinctive dress (the rida) [15].

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

14	12	4
DOCUMENTED	CULTURAL	CONTESTED

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

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

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.

The community feeds, lends to and houses its own [15] [18].

What it asks of you: Whose name is on the loan?

1 · Love Bombing

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

How it shows here

- The community offers a warm, total embrace.

The strongest defense. Brotherhood.

The counter. Test whether the welcome survives a question.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The embrace is ordinary community life; no rule makes it conditional.

2 · Weaponized Generosity

Giving help that installs unspoken obligation.

How it shows here

- Loans and housing come from the office that disciplines [15] [18].

The strongest defense. Welfare.

The counter. Welfare that follows standing can be withdrawn with it.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED The community's own pages and press describe loans and housing run by the same office [15] [18].

Stage 2 · Hook

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

Salvation is offered through allegiance to the Da'i, sworn before adulthood [13].

What it asks of you: Could a teenager refuse?

3 · Future Faking

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

How it shows here

- Salvation is taught as coming through allegiance to the Da'i.

The strongest defense. Faith.

The counter. It is unverifiable, and it is exclusive.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Allegiance to the Da'i as the path to salvation is community teaching, held without a written rule.

4 · Hoovering

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

How it shows here

- Families pull back those who drift.

The strongest defense. Family concern.

The counter. Concern that arrives with the 'amil's message is enforcement.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Families pulling back those who drift is reported practice.

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.

Unpaid dues and questions are treated as breaches of the oath [13].

What it asks of you: Who decided what loyalty costs?

5 · Devaluation

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

How it shows here

- Breaches of the misaq are framed as spiritual failure [13].

The strongest defense. Loyalty is a virtue.

The counter. Loyalty that cannot be withdrawn is capture.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED The Nathwani Commission recorded breaches of the oath being treated as spiritual failure [13].

6 · Gaslighting

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

How it shows here

- Khatna is minimized as harmless against survivors' testimony [11].

The strongest defense. It's minor.

The counter. Of the survey's respondents, 81% want it ended [11].

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED Survivors' testimony and survey findings are on the record [11].

7 · Double Bind

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

How it shows here

- An oath is sworn before adulthood and binds for life [13].

The strongest defense. A sacred covenant.

The counter. A covenant made before adulthood is not an adult's choice.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> **DOCUMENTED** The oath and its lifelong terms were recorded by the Nathwani Commission [13].

Stage 4 · Confuse

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

Khatna is called a "religious rite" at home, and members are told to "follow the law" abroad [16].

What it asks of you: Which is it?

8 · Intermittent Reinforcement

Unpredictable reward that creates addictive emotional dependency.

How it shows here

- Favor and permissions go to loyal families.

The strongest defense. Rewarding devotion.

The counter. Permission as reward teaches obedience.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Favour for loyal families is reported practice, with no published rule.

9 · Moving the Goalposts

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

How it shows here

- Khatna is a "religious rite" at home and "follow the law" abroad [16].

The strongest defense. Local law differs.

The counter. The girls' bodies do not.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> DOCUMENTED The different instructions at home and abroad are on record [16].

10 · Strategic Ambiguity

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

How it shows here

- No written renunciation of khatna covering every country is recorded on this page [16].

The strongest defense. It is a private family matter.

The counter. Then renounce it publicly.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED Whether a renunciation exists is disputed; none covering every country is recorded on this page [16].

11 · Projection

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

How it shows here

- Reformers are labelled divisive [13].

The strongest defense. Unity matters.

The counter. The division is the boycott.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Labelling reformers divisive is recorded in testimony [13], but as community practice rather than a rule.

12 · DARVO

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

How it shows here

- Survivors who speak out are accused of defaming the community [11].

The strongest defense. Protecting our name.

The counter. The name is protected by ending the practice.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED Survey and press reporting record survivors being accused [11].

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

- Khatna, most often at six or seven, is treated as a family rite [11] [28].

The strongest defense. Tradition.

The counter. Tradition is not consent.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> **DOCUMENTED** The age and the framing are documented in survey research [11] [28].

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.

Business, marriage and burial all take place inside the community [13].

What it asks of you: Where is outside?

14 · Isolation

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

How it shows here

- Business, marriage and burial take place inside the community [13].

The strongest defense. Community life.

The counter. It is a world with no outside door.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> DOCUMENTED The Nathwani Commission recorded how business, marriage and burial run inside the community [13].

15 · Triangulation

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

How it shows here

- The mother-in-law, the ʿamil and the community align.

The strongest defense. Everyone agrees.

The counter. Everyone in the triangle is inside.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL The alignment of family, ʿamil and community is reported practice.

Stage 6 · Extract

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

Reformist accounts say the office collects dues, permissions and loyalty [19].

What it asks of you: What does each permission cost?

16 · Flying Monkeys

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

How it shows here

- Boycotts are enforced by members [13].

The strongest defense. Members choose.

The counter. The institution never has to act.

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED The Nathwani Commission recorded boycotts carried out by members [13].

17 · Smear Campaign

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

How it shows here

- Reformers are vilified and assaulted, per the 1979 testimony [13].

The strongest defense. Individuals acted.

The counter. The Commission recorded reformists' testimony of boycott and assault [13].

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED The 1979 testimony to the Nathwani Commission records vilification and assault [13].

18 · Silent Treatment / Stonewalling

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

How it shows here

- Litigation ran for decades before any reconsideration [12].

The strongest defense. The courts decided.

The counter. The courts are now deciding again [2].

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> DOCUMENTED The court record shows decades of litigation [12].

19 · Manufactured Consent

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

How it shows here

- The misaq is taken before adulthood [13].

The strongest defense. Freely sworn.

The counter. It is sworn by a child.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> DOCUMENTED The Nathwani Commission recorded that the oath is taken before adulthood [13].

20 · Trauma Bonding

The wound and the bandage come from the same hand.

How it shows here

- Shared grief (Muharram) and belonging bind members to the office.

The strongest defense. Faith unites us.

The counter. Members are united with each other, not with the ʿamil.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Shared grief binding members is a pattern described by members, not a rule.

21 · Learned Helplessness

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

How it shows here

- Reformist accounts say every life event needs permission [17] [19].

The strongest defense. Order.

The counter. Order that cannot be refused teaches people not to try.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED The claim rests on reformist accounts and is disputed by the community [17] [19].

22 · Benevolent Control

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

How it shows here

- Permissions are framed as spiritual care.

The strongest defense. Guidance.

The counter. Guidance that can refuse a funeral is power.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Framing permissions as care is reported practice.

23 · Infantilization

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

How it shows here

- Adults seek permission for life events [17].

The strongest defense. Humility.

The counter. Adults don't need a slip to marry or to bury.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> DOCUMENTED The need to seek permission for life events is recorded in court reporting [17].

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

- Selfhood is fused with allegiance.

The strongest defense. Faith is identity.

The counter. If it cannot leave, it was assigned.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Identity fused with allegiance is a pattern described by members.

25 · Spiritual Bypassing

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

How it shows here

- Harm is answered with calls for loyalty.

The strongest defense. Trust the Da'i.

The counter. Trust is not a remedy.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL Answering harm with calls for loyalty is reported practice.

26 · Financial Control

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

How it shows here

- Reformist accounts tie dues to permissions [19].

The strongest defense. Religious obligation.

The counter. Publish the accounts.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CONTESTED The link between dues and permissions rests on reformist accounts and is disputed [19].

Stage 7 · Discard

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

Baraat and boycott discard members [1][13][17].

What it asks of you: The 1962 ruling upheld the power, and the 2023 referral doubted it [2].

27 · Manufactured Crisis

Creating urgency to suppress critical thinking and generate loyalty.

How it shows here

- Outside threats are cited against reformers.

The strongest defense. We are under attack.

The counter. The reformers are family.

EVIDENCE GRADE

CULTURAL Citing outside threats against reformers is a pattern in community messaging.

28 · Discard

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

How it shows here

- Members are discarded through baraat [1][13][17].

The strongest defense. Only for grave breaches.

The counter. Who decides, and can you reply?

EVIDENCE GRADE

DOCUMENTED Excommunication is recorded in court judgments and the Nathwani report [1][13][17].

Stage 8 · Replace

Your seat is filled before the door shuts, and nobody is responsible for any of it because the authority was attributed to God.

The office continues, as the court confirmed [4].

What it asks of you: The structure outlives every dissenter.

29 · Replacement

Your seat is filled before the door closes behind you.

How it shows here

- The office and the community continue unchanged [4].

The strongest defense. The community endures.

The counter. It endures without the ones it removed.

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CULTURAL The office continuing after removals is the ordinary working of the structure [4].

30 · Plausible Deniability

The institution is never responsible, because the authority is attributed to God — who isn't available for cross-examination.

How it shows here

- Responsibility is placed with families and individual cutters rather than the institution; no source on this page records that framing.

The strongest defense. The institution does not perform it.

The counter. It has defended it in court [12] and from the pulpit [16].

> EVIDENCE GRADE
>
> CONTESTED The deflection is disputed, and no source on this page records the framing; the court and pulpit statements are recorded [12] [16].

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 where its fact is recorded.

1 · Money



I

Dues fund the office that grants the permissions members need, and reformist accounts say the rites require proof of payment [19].

How it runs.

1. Members owe annual dues (wajebaat) and other levies (section 9).
2. Permission (raza) is required for religious functions and life-cycle rites, and reform sources and litigants describe it as depending on paid dues (section 7). Source [19] is reformist testimony with no primary source found (section 9).
3. The ʿamil, appointed by the Daʿi, grants or withholds the permission (section 7).
4. The dues go to an office that holds trusts, property and institutions, and no audited accounts are published to members (sections 7 and 9).
5. The office that received the dues is the office whose permission the member needs next.

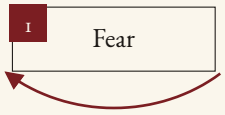
Techniques that feed it. 26 · Financial Control, 21 · Learned Helplessness, 8 · Intermittent Reinforcement.

Why it closes. The office that collects the dues also grants the permissions, and members cannot see the accounts. A member who withholds payment risks the permission, and a member who pays cannot follow the money.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens wherever the money becomes visible. Published accounts are among the changes section 20 lists, and community charities in the United Kingdom already file public accounts (section 1, source [27]). The office can publish its accounts, and members can ask for them (section 23). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. In section 2, the ʿamil's office calls Zainab's household about the wajebaat, her husband handles it, and he comes back quieter than he went. The scene is a composite.

2 · Fear



2

The fear of losing the Daʿiʾs favor, and with it burial in the community, keeps members inside [17].

How it runs.

1. Excommunication (baraat) carries social boycott, including denial of mosque access and community burial (section 15).
2. Reformists describe exclusion from mosques and community spaces after public criticism (section 11).
3. The boycott is carried out by members, so the office does not have to act (section 15).
4. Families of the excommunicated lose burial and rites across generations (section 17).
5. Members weigh that cost against asking a question, and the power to excommunicate goes untested.

Techniques that feed it. 28 · Discard, 16 · Flying Monkeys, 21 · Learned Helplessness.

Why it closes. Every member knows the cost of leaving, and members themselves carry out the boycott. The office needs to do nothing further for the fear to hold.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where the power to excommunicate is tested and where an appeal exists. The Supreme Court referred the 1962 protection to nine judges in 2023 (section 15), Maharashtra's 2016 law bans social boycott (section 8), and a written appeal procedure for baraat is one of the changes section 20 lists. The Supreme Court and the office can change it; a member can ask what the procedure is. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Asghar Ali Engineer was expelled in 2004 and was attacked at least six times (section 21).

3 · Children



3

The oath (misaq) is taken before adulthood [13], and khatna is most often done at six or seven [28].

How it runs.

1. Khatna is performed on girls, most often at six or seven, before consent is possible (sections 11 and 17).
2. The misaq, an oath of allegiance, is taken before adulthood (section 7).
3. The oath binds for life, and breaches of it are framed as spiritual failure (section 12, techniques 5 and 7).
4. The girls grow up in a community where khatna is attributed to mothers and grandmothers (section 15).
5. The practice continues where it is not clearly renounced everywhere (section 10).

Techniques that feed it. 19 · Manufactured Consent, 7 · Double Bind, 13 · Normalization, 5 · Devaluation.

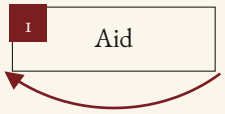
Why it closes. Each commitment is made before the person can consent to it, and the people who ask are often those it was done to.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens if the practice is renounced in writing and universally, which section 20 lists as the first change that would revise this page. Diaspora authorities have already told members to follow local law (section 11). Parents can refuse for their own daughters, as

many Bohra women have publicly (section 23). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. Sahiyo's 2017 survey of 385 women found that 80% said they had been cut and 81% wanted the practice to end (section 11).

4 · Aid



4

Welfare and redevelopment build loyalty and public standing [18].

How it runs.

1. The community offers interest-free loans, housing and community kitchens (sections 4 and 9).
2. The same office administers the welfare and disciplines members (section 16).
3. Welfare that follows standing can be withdrawn with it (section 12, technique 2).
4. Large projects such as the Bhendi Bazaar redevelopment add public standing to the office (section 9).
5. Members' gratitude and dependence run to the office, and the office is harder to question.

Techniques that feed it. 2 · Weaponized Generosity, 1 · Love Bombing, 8 · Intermittent Reinforcement.

Why it closes. The office that gives the aid is the office that disciplines, so the benefit and the sanction come from one place.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where welfare is held by a body other than the disciplining office, and where trust accounts are published. Charity regulators oversee diaspora trusts (section 8). The office could separate the two functions; members can ask which office decides who

receives a loan. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust's Bhendi Bazaar project covers about 16.5 acres, roughly 3,200 families and 1,250 shops (section 9).

5 · Labor



5

Participation in religious functions and trusts is recorded on this page (sections 2 and 7); whether it amounts to unpaid or organised labor is not recorded on this page.

How it runs.

1. Participation is very high and institutionally recorded (section 7).
2. The community holds religious functions, such as the Muharram majlis, on a large scale (section 2).
3. Trusts run redevelopment, loans and welfare (sections 7 and 9).
4. How far the events and trusts depend on that participation is not recorded on this page.

Techniques that feed it. 20 · Trauma Bonding, 1 · Love Bombing, 15 · Triangulation.

Why it closes. Belonging is expressed through participation in the same institutions that grant standing, so participating and belonging are hard to separate (analysis; the page does not document labor as such).

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens where service is voluntary and standing does not depend on it. No section of this page documents unpaid labor in detail, so the steps above follow the functions the page does record. Members decide how much they give; the office decides whether standing depends on it. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The evening majlis in section 2 gathers the whole community, with the sermon relayed on screens.

6 · Scandal



6

Prosecutions abroad ended without convictions [6] [10], and the practice's status at home awaits a Constitution Bench [12].

How it runs.

1. Khatna was prosecuted in Australia from 2015 and in the United States from 2017 (section 5).
2. The United States judge held the 1996 federal FGM law unconstitutional in 2018 and the remaining charges were dismissed in September 2021 (section 5).
3. In Australia the convictions were quashed in 2018, the High Court clarified the law in 2019, retrials were ordered in 2020 and the charges were then dropped (section 5).
4. No conviction stands in either country, and the leadership continues to describe female circumcision as a religious rite (section 14).
5. The laws were rewritten or clarified, and the practice is unresolved at home (sections 8 and 14).

Techniques that feed it. 18 · Stonewalling, 10 · Strategic Ambiguity, 9 · Moving the Goalposts, 30 · Plausible Deniability.

Why it closes. Each case ends without a conviction, and the practice continues to be defended in India, so each outcome leaves the next case to start from the same place.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens if a written, universal renunciation of khatna is issued (section 20) or if the Constitution Bench rules in India (section 8). The leadership can renounce; the court can rule; survivors' campaigns continue (section 14). This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The Detroit prosecution was the first federal FGM case, and Congress rewrote the law in January 2021 after it (section 5).

7 · Persecution



7

Anti-Shia and anti-minority hostility is invoked against reformers.

How it runs.

1. Bohras are a minority within a minority, and anti-Shia hostility is real (section 3).
2. Reformers are labelled divisive, and outside threats are cited against them (section 12, techniques 11 and 27).
3. Survivors who speak out are accused of defaming the community (section 12, technique 12).
4. Criticism is read as an attack from outside, although the critics cited here are Bohras (section 3).
5. Members close ranks, and the criticism goes unanswered.

Techniques that feed it. 27 · Manufactured Crisis, 11 · Projection, 12 · DARVO.

Why it closes. Real hostility supplies a reason to distrust criticism, and each criticism that is read as hostility strengthens the solidarity that protects the institution from it.

Where it could be broken, and by whom. It weakens when members recognize the reformers as Bohras. Section 3 records that the critics cited here are Bohras and that the findings are courts' findings. Members can read the court findings; the leadership can answer the reformers, which section 23 asks. This paragraph is analysis, not a documented finding.

An example from this page. The reformers who testified to the Nathwani Commission in 1979 were Bohras, and their testimony of boycott and assault was documented (sections 5 and 23).

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
"Follow the law of the land." [16]	The Da'i described female circumcision as a religious rite the same year (2016) [16]; defended as essential in India's Supreme Court [12].	LEADERSHIP STATEMENT · COURT RECORD
"Excommunication is spiritual."	It carries denial of mosque and burial [17].	COURT RECORD

Accountability or theatre?

- **Last ran:** Two national prosecutions of khatna ended without convictions [6] [10]. Laws were then rewritten or clarified [7] [8].
- **Chair now:** The chair is held by the Da'i al-Mutlaq [15].
- **Predict:** Change will come through courts in India [2] [12] and survivor campaigns [11], not a pulpit renunciation.

Words used here

TERM	INSIDE MEANING	WHAT IT DOES	SAID PLAINLY
Raza	Permission	It makes every rite a grant.	"You may, if we say so."
Baraat	Excommunication	It is social death [17].	"No one may know you."
Misaq	Oath of allegiance	It secures allegiance before adulthood [13].	"You promised as a child."

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

- Excommunication (baraat) carries social boycott, including denial of mosque access and community burial [17].
- The Bombay Prevention of Excommunication Act (1949) outlawed it. The Supreme Court of India struck the Act down in 1962 as infringing the community's right to manage its religious affairs [1].
- In 2023 a Constitution Bench doubted that ruling, holding that excommunication must be tested against "constitutional morality", and referred the question to the nine-judge bench hearing the Sabarimala matters [2]. That bench reserved judgment on 14 May 2026 [29].
- Maharashtra's 2016 Act criminalizes social boycott generally [3].

The ledger of exit

COST	DOCUMENTED?	DETAIL	THE OFFICIAL DENIAL
Excommunication and boycott	Yes [1 2 13 17]	The person loses mosque, burial, marriage and community.	"Excommunication is a protected religious right." (the 1962 position [1])
Burial	Yes [17]	Community burial is denied to the excommunicated.	"Cemeteries are for members."

Marriage and family	Reported [13] [19]	Permission is needed.	"Religious order."
Business networks	Reported [13]	The excommunicated lose community trade relationships.	No denial is recorded on this page.

How the cost is denied

CHANNEL	LEVEL	NOTE
Explicit policy	Low	The permission system, the misaq and the dues are institutional [13].
Informal enforcement	Medium	The boycott is carried out by members [13].
Leadership distance	Low	Leadership sits in one named office.
Doctrinal ambiguity	Medium	Khatna is described as a religious rite in India [16], and members are told to "follow the law" abroad [16].
Cultural outsourcing	High	Khatna is attributed to mothers and grandmothers.
Volunteer enforcement	High	Members carry out the boycott [13].
Sacred secrecy	High	Khatna is performed privately, and discipline is unpublished.
Exit cost denial	Medium	The cost is denied by calling excommunication a protected religious right (the 1962 position [1]).

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Excommunication (baraat) carries social boycott, including denial of mosque access and community burial. That makes it a cost for the family as well as the person, across generations. If you are thinking about speaking up on khatna or anything else, this is the price the page says reformers have paid. Knowing that, who would you want standing beside you?

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

- The office of the Da'i and the central administration benefit, because they hold the permission system, the trusts and the dues [13][15][17].
- Appointed 'amils benefit as well.

Money out, leverage back

- Reformist accounts describe every life event as a point of permission [17][19].
- Welfare is administered by the same office that disciplines [15].
- Excommunication has had constitutional protection since 1962, now under review [1][2].

Who pays

- Girls pay when they are subjected to khatna [11].
- Reformists and dissenters pay when they are put under boycott [13][17].
- Families pay when they are denied rites or burial [17][19].

- Women pay by living under an all-male hierarchy.

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 fall on three groups on this page, and the first row is girls. Section 16 also names women, who live under an all-male hierarchy [15]. The table sets out how each group is affected and what the harm compounds with.

WHO	HOW	COMPOUNDS
Girls	They are subjected to khatna [11].	It is performed before consent is possible.
Reformists	They are put under boycott [13].	It compounds with business and family loss.
Families of the excommunicated	Burial and rites are denied to them [17].	It compounds across generations.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

The first row is girls. Khatna is most often performed at six or seven, long before consent is possible. In Sahiyo's 2017 survey of 385 women, 80% had been cut and 81% wanted the practice to end. If you are a Bohra parent of a daughter, you are the person this section is written to. Many Bohra women have already said no, publicly, from inside the faith.

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.

Below the Da'i, the work of permission and discipline is done by people who see decisions without making them. The table sets out what each role does, what it sees, what it is asked to do and what it could refuse.

ROLE	DOES	SEES	ASKED	COULD REFUSE
'Amils	They grant or withhold permission.	They see every family's standing.	They are asked to enforce.	They could refuse to deny a burial.
Women who perform khatna	They cut.	They see the girls.	They are asked to keep the tradition.	They could refuse to cut.
Community doctors	They care for patients.	They see the practice.	They are asked to stay silent.	They could refuse to perform it (as the United States case alleged of a physician [5]).
Jamaat committees	They administer.	They see dues and boycotts.	They are asked to implement.	They could refuse to boycott.

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.

1. ***Sardar Syedna Taher Saifuddin Saheb v. State of Bombay*** **(SC India, 9 Jan 1962)** [1]**; referral to a nine-judge bench (2023)** [2]**.** COURT RECORD

2. ***United States v. Nagarwala*** **(E.D. Mich., 2017–21)** — FGM counts dismissed (2018) after the 1996 law was held unconstitutional [5]; remaining charges dismissed Sep 2021 [6]. COURT RECORD

3. ***The Queen v A2; Magennis; Vaziri*** **[2019] HCA 35** [8] → **[2020] NSWCCA 7** (retrials ordered) [9] → charges abandoned by the Crown before any retrial, 2020 [10]. COURT RECORD

4. ***Sunita Tiwari v. Union of India*** — referred to a Constitution Bench, 24 Sep 2018 [12]. COURT RECORD

5. **Bombay High Court succession judgment, 23 Apr 2024** (Suit No. 337 of 2014) [4] [30]; appeal pending before a Division Bench [31]. COURT RECORD

6. **Nathwani Commission report (1979)** [13]. INVESTIGATIVE REPORT · non-governmental

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WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

These are not hypotheticals. Six 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	COST
Survivor-led campaigns and the first survey [11]	Bohra women (Sahiyo, WeSpeakOut)	2015–	The cost was community backlash.
US STOP FGM Act [7]	Survivors and legislators after the Detroit case	Jan 2021	The cost was a failed prosecution first.
High Court of Australia clarifies the law [8]	NSW prosecutors	2019	No convictions followed [10]
Maharashtra social-boycott law [3]	Reformers and legislators	2016	No cost is recorded on this page.
Excommunication precedent sent for reconsideration [2]	Reformist petitioners	2023	The cost was decades of litigation.

What would change this page

Three changes would revise this page: a written, universal renunciation of khatna, published accounts, and an appeal procedure for baraat.

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

- **Asghar Ali Engineer (1939–2013).** He was a scholar who led the reform movement, demanded accountable finances, was attacked at least six times, and was expelled in 2004 [20].
- **Masooma Ranalvi and WeSpeakOut.** They are survivors who went public about khatna from 2015 and brought their stories to the Supreme Court [21].
- **Sahiyo.** It is a survivor-led group whose 2017 survey found 80% of respondents had been cut and 81% wanted the practice ended [11] [16] [28].
- **The Nathwani Commission (1979).** It was a citizens' inquiry into the community's governance, prompted by reformers [13].

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?

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.

India

APEX: The Dai al-Mutlaq sits in Mumbai, and the Bombay High Court upheld his succession in 2024, and an appeal is pending before a Division Bench [4] [31].

LAW: Excommunication has been protected as religious practice since 1962 and is now before a nine-judge bench that reserved judgment in May 2026 [1] [2] [29]; Maharashtra has a social-boycott law [3]; and khatna is before a nine-judge bench [12] [21].

DOCUMENTED: The Nathwani Commission (1979) [13] and the Sahiyo survey [11] document it.

EXIT: Excommunication (baraat) can cut a member off from family, mosque and burial [19].

REGULATOR: The Supreme Court is the regulator, and it has twice been asked to decide [2] [12].

TELL: This is a community whose leader's power to expel was protected by the constitution in 1962, and whose members are asking the same court sixty years later to reconsider.

United States

APEX: Local jamaats sit under the dai.

LAW: The federal FGM law was struck down in 2018 and replaced in 2021 [5] [7].

DOCUMENTED: The first federal FGM prosecution took place in Detroit (2017–2021) [5] [6].

EXIT: Members are legally free to leave.

REGULATOR: Federal prosecutors act as regulator under the 2021 law [7].

TELL: The first prosecution failed on a constitutional point, the later charges were dismissed as a vindictive prosecution [6] [32], and Congress rewrote the law because

of it.

Australia

APEX: Local jamaats sit under the dai.

LAW: The High Court ruled in 2019 that the practice is within the offence [8].

DOCUMENTED: The 2015 convictions were quashed on appeal in 2018; the High Court allowed the Crown's appeals in 2019, retrials were ordered and the Crown abandoned the case [8][9][10].

EXIT: Members are legally free to leave.

REGULATOR: State police and prosecutors act as regulator.

TELL: The highest court clarified the law; the case still ended without a conviction.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

This page covers India, the United States and Australia. 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

Why can burying your parent require permission from an office [17]?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Burial is the last thing a community gives. When it requires permission from an office, that office holds a lever over every family. The question asks why it exists.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The branches table records the Da'i's authority over permissions for marriage, burial and pilgrimage [19]. The cost section records that excommunication carries denial of community burial [17].

QUESTION 2 OF 6

If khatna must stop where it is illegal [16], why was it defended as a religious rite in India in the same year [16], and why was it defended as essential in court [12]?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

If a practice stops where it is illegal and is defended where it is not, the law is what changes it, not religious necessity. The question asks which explanation is true.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The say-do table sets "Follow the law of the land" [16] beside the record: the Da'i described female circumcision as a religious rite the same year (2016), and it was defended as essential in India's Supreme Court [12].

QUESTION 3 OF 6

Where are the accounts for wajebaat?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

Dues that are required for rites should be accountable to the people who pay them. The question asks for the accounts.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The money section records annual dues (wajebaat), and reformist accounts that a paid-up card is required for rites. The precedent section lists published accounts among the changes that would revise this page.

QUESTION 4 OF 6

What written procedure exists to appeal an excommunication?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

A penalty without an appeal is a verdict without a hearing. The question asks for the written procedure.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The precedent section records that an appeal procedure for baraat is one of three changes that would revise this page's findings.

QUESTION 5 OF 6

Four in five surveyed Bohra women want khatna to end [11]. Who is still deciding otherwise?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

When most of the people affected want a practice to end, the question is who is still deciding otherwise, and by what authority.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The reach section records Sahiyo's 2017 survey of 385 women: 80% said they had been cut, and 81% wanted the practice to end [11].

QUESTION 6 OF 6

The reformers who testified in 1979 were Bohras [13]. Why were they boycotted rather than answered?

WHY THIS IS ASKED

The reformers were members of the community, not outsiders. Boycotting them instead of answering them is a choice about how to handle dissent.

EXAMPLE ALREADY ON THIS PAGE

The history section records the 1979 Nathwani Commission report, which documented reformists' testimony of boycott and assault [13].

In closing

1. Your community's gift is order and care: nobody hungry, nobody in debt to a bank. That same order becomes a cage when it can refuse a

funeral. The standard is your own: care that is real does not need a permission slip.

2. You can honor the Da'i and still say no to khatna for your daughter. Many Bohra women already have, publicly, from inside the faith [11].

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. **Understand baraat.** Expulsion can mean exclusion from the mosque, the community's burial grounds and family events [19]; in Maharashtra, a social boycott is itself illegal [3].
2. **Protect daughters from khatna.** It is illegal in the United Kingdom, the United States (federal law re-enacted in 2021) and Australia; specialist helplines exist [7] [8] [22].
3. **Expect permissions to be withheld.** Marriage and burial permissions run through the dai's office [19].
4. **Find others who have spoken out** [21] [16].

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 2026-10-03.

ORGANIZATION	FOR	WHERE	CONTACT
WeSpeakOut	Survivors of khatna; campaign and support	India and global	Contact is through the website [21].
Sahiyo	Survivor-led education and support on FGC	Global	Contact is through the website [16].
NSPCC FGM Helpline	Anyone worried a girl is at risk of FGM	UK (and from abroad)	**0800 028 3550**, free and anonymous; open 24 hours [22]
GOV.UK FGM help	Protection orders, reporting, health care	UK	Contact is through the GOV.UK page [23].
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) [24]

Karma Nirvana	Honour-based abuse, forced marriage	UK	**0800 5999 247** (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm; not a 24-hour line) [26]

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Save one contact now, before anyone needs it: **WeSpeakOut** (survivors of khatna; campaign and support; India and global). 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:** Corrected the claim about community notices abroad to the one notice on record (Sydney, February 2016); regraded eight techniques whose evidence did not fit their grade and removed an unsourced quotation; replaced "around age seven" with the survey's six or seven; named the survey report, the succession judgment and the court reports behind several claims; recorded that the nine-judge bench reserved judgment in May 2026 and that the succession appeal is pending before a Division Bench; added the reason the 2021 Detroit charges were dismissed; said plainly that this page does not document unpaid labor; corrected help-line hours and the Faith to Faithless number.
- **2026-09-27:** Added Branches, Law & state, Money in numbers, Voices from inside, three regional cards, Leaving safely and Where to get help; the 1592 and 1621 splits are sourced to reference summaries.
- **2026-09-29:** Disclosure scorecard added: accounts and safeguarding are rated from the UK charity register [27]; leaders' pay, police-first reporting, a removal procedure and on-the-record replies are not established from any public source.

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.