Concise information for a broader public

The Dalai Lama recommended a change in 1977.

Was this really the beginning of ‘religious persecution’?

* In 1977, as Tibet’s pre-eminent spiritual leader and a leading member of the Gelug school, His Holiness the Dalai Lama recommended a change in the Gelug syllabus – to no longer regard ‘Shugden’ as a public ‘protector’ of the tradition. In 1996 he reinforced the need for this change.
* In 2008, due to increasing disharmony within Gelug monasteries, the Dalai Lama suggested using a democratic procedure which the Buddha himself had created for settling conflicts; following a majority vote, Shugden and non Shugden monks separated and divided up the monasteries’ assets peacefully and fairly.
* Shugden can be practised in private. Shugden practitioners have not been excluded from the Gelug school. Other schools of Tibetan Buddhism do not generally practice Shugden, seeing it as harmful, but have no specific public policy on this issue.

There are only two restraints on Shugden practitioners

* Firstly, they cannot live, study, make offerings and pray in some non-Shugden practising Gelug monasteries.

They have their own Shugden monasteries to live, study, make offerings and pray in, given to them by the Tibetan government and monastic authorities.

* Secondly, they are asked not to take initiations or extensive Buddhist teachings from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

As Shugden practitioners do not follow His Holiness’ advice then they are appropriately asked not to take him as their teacher.

* Whether or not a Shugden practitioner attends an initiation or a study programme of His Holiness or in a non Shugden monastery is taken on trust – no one will check the personal possessions or private practice of the person involved.
* If a Shugden practitioner goes to a non-Shugden monastery, they will not be offered the traditional ‘tea and biscuits’ that are offered to guests. If they continue to visit, they will be asked why and this will be discussed. There is no other consequence or punishment.

No one can either be prosecuted or punished for practising Shugden

* This is why Amnesty International and the Indian High Court say that there is no basis for alleging ‘Human Rights’ abuse by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the ‘Shugden issue’ is simply a change in religious doctrine.
* There are some private businesses owned by followers of the non-Shugden monasteries that do not welcome Shugden practitioners as customers. This is their personal decision and is not suggested or enforced by the CTA or the Dalai Lama. This practice is against Article 15 of the Indian Constitution but in some circumstances religious commitments may legally take precedence. Buddhist practitioners with tantric commitments take a vow not to associate with those who disparage their tantric master.
* Shugden practitioners have no legal restrictions on standing for governmental or political posts, or for accessing social care, education or travel permits from the Tibetan government.

**There is no illegal ‘ban’, ‘religious persecution’ or ‘restriction of religious freedom’ by the Dalai Lama towards Shugden practitioners**