

'Dawoodi Bohras against order to compulsorily attend Muharram sermons'

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MUMBAI: There is resentment among Dawoodi Bohras against the order by their spiritual leader to compulsorily attend Muharram sermons later this month, said a survey.

The 'Worldwide Survey for Dawoodi Bohras 2015' is the second annual online study to gauge opinion about community issues after the death of their last head, or Syedna, in January 2014. Mufaddal Saifuddin, the current leader, is his son, but his uncle, Qurbuddin, half-brother of the last Syedna, has disputed the succession.

The Syedna's office dismissed the survey and said the findings did not represent the community's views. "Muharram rituals are a vital part of our faith; there

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SYEDNA'S SPOKESPERSON

is no question of compulsion," said the spokesperson.

Muharram will start on October 12 and the 10th day marks the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad, during the fight for succession after his death. The events led to the schism that created the two main sects of Islam. As Shias, the Dawoodi Bohras mourn the incident. Recently, the Syedna asked his followers to compulsorily attend the sermons in their mosques on all nine days; community members were asked to declare their intention

in writing or orally, which would be recorded in the e-jamaat cards they carry. The survey indicates many community members do not want attendance at the sermons to be compulsory. Only a third of the respondents (224) said they put their intent in writing, and a little less than half of these (94) said they did so because they wanted to. A little more than a fifth (49) said it was out of compulsion. A fifth (44) said they did it because they feared their identity cards might be blocked.

The Syedna's spokesperson

said the views of a few hundred people did not represent views of the one-million-strong community. "Who gave them (surveyors) the authority to conduct the study? We do not know whether the people who responded to the survey are Dawoodi Bohras," the spokesperson said. "Anybody is free to do a survey."

However, some community members said there was resentment against the order. A resident of Fort said there was resentment against compulsory attendance even during the last Muharram. "How can they force everybody to attend? Last year, people had to leave their work, college and school to go for the sermons. I know a person who was warned at work after he remained absent from office," said a member of the Bohra community, requesting anonymity.

FINDINGS FROM THE SURVEY BY WWW.MUMINEENS.COM

A survey comprising 757 respondents was conducted between August 18 and September 24. The surveyors said they were a neutral group not aligned to the offices of the current head or his opponents, nor with the reformist section.

757 Respondents
224 Said they have done 'azam' (Committing to attend the sermons)

Of the 224

94: Said they did so because they 'wanted to'.

49: Said they did so because they felt they had no other choice, even though they object to being asked

44: Said they did it because they feared their ID card might be blocked. The cards are used for various community services.

Other issues:

76%: Of the respondents are dissatisfied with the way community affairs were being conducted

16%: Of the respondents are satisfied

8%: Of the respondents are have no view



THE ESTIMATES

Those conducting the survey estimated a margin of error at 3.5 points below or above true scores with 95% confidence. This means that if the survey was given to the entire population of 1 million people, there is a 95% chance that the results of the survey are true, within a margin of 3.5 percentage points below or above the true scores obtained on each of the question items.