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Edo Shonin and the Pine Forest sangha

Lucy Costa, Abergele, Wales, UK, The Buddhist Channel, May 29, 2007

I became interested in this 'Pine Forest Sangha' when I first found their web site in a search for Buddhist places in North Wales last year. In those few months, Edo Shonin's lineage has changed about three times. First he had been ordained in the Plum Village Community, then he became a Shingon 'monk', now he claims a dual lineage: Mikkyo (!) and Nyigma.

At one time he gave the names of his teachers, but when people started discussing him in a forum, the names disappeared. Also at one time he had posted photograph of their 'mother temple' - one of the photographs was from a Burmese temple and another, I think, was Chinese. There have been requests for donations to build an orphanage in Nepal (for £50,000!), does anyone in Nepal know of this? A previous newsletter (?November) announced that they had been in contact with a monk in Nepal (no name of a monastery or shedra, or the locality in Nepal, were given) with a view to bringing him to their 'monastery'.

There has never been anything coherent or consistent in the web site, nothing to identify a lineage, tradition or even teachers. I wrote asking what their lineage was and was told that they would not give me any information unless I gave my full name and address, which of course I refused to do.

This 'Pine Forest' sangha appears to be in the route of one of the day trips organised by a touring company in Chester called Busybus.

Through my involvement in the e-Sangha forum, I was contacted by Mrs. vanGordon. She strikes me as a sincere and well balanced person who would not make up a story like this. She is not a Buddhist, but I do not sense any animosity against Buddhism in her at all, she seems very open-minded. She knows little about Buddhism, therefore she didn't know that nobody can be ordained under the Vinaya of any tradition without their parent's consent. She didn't know that drinking alcohol was against the precepts. She couldn't possibly have invented this story. She has told me that she wants to save others from also becoming ensnared by this Edo Shonin and that she had been considering for a whole year whether to go to the National press or not, knowing that it may well distance her more from her son.

I am so glad that all this is coming into the open. There are very few Buddhist organisations in North Wales and most people are very ignorant of Buddhism, they cannot tell what is Buddhism and what isn't, they could be easy prey for a scam like this.

External link: <http://www.pineforest.org.uk/> *

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