

# Men dressed as monks who ask for monetary donations in downtown Edmonton aren't the real deal, Buddhist says

*A group of men claiming to be Buddhist monks are looking for more than innate compassion and kindness in downtown Edmonton. Asking for money on the streets is not an accepted form of practise in Buddhism, says Maththumangala Chandananda, a resident Buddhist at the Alberta Buddhist Vihara Association in Edmonton. At least five men with shaved heads were seen downtown Tuesday dressed in brown or charcoal robes.*

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At least five men dressed as monks approached people on Jasper Avenue asking for money donations in Edmonton on Tuesday Aug. 18, 2105. It is not an accepted form of Buddhism, an Edmonton Buddhist says. PHOTO BY JOHN LUCAS /Edmonton Journal

A group of men claiming to be Buddhist monks are looking for more than innate compassion and kindness in downtown Edmonton.

Asking for money on the streets is not an accepted form of practise in Buddhism, says Maththumangala Chandananda, a resident Buddhist at the Alberta Buddhist Vihara Association in Edmonton. At least five men with shaved heads were seen downtown Tuesday dressed in brown or charcoal robes.

“Generally, that type of thing is not accepted by the Buddha, but there are different schools in Buddhism. Normally, that should be done by lay people, not monks. If they nag you to give money, that is outright prohibited,” Chandananda said.

Lay people, who are part-time supporters, are usually the ones who fundraise on behalf of monks.

The men, dressed in long robes, approached people downtown Tuesday and offered a gold “good luck” card, medallion or a bracelet in exchange for donations.

Edmonton police have not had any reports or complaints on the issue. It is not illegal unless the men become aggressive or pose as a specific person. One woman was shocked at the behaviour of one of the men who approached her in front of Shaw Conference Centre.

“He just came and gave me a card and said ‘Thank you.’ Then, he put a bracelet on me and said, ‘Thank you.’ Then, he gave me a book to sign and asked for my signature, name and donation. I said I don’t have any cash with me, so he took everything back,” Rosaly Palchevsky said.

“It was kind of strange, I was thinking this is kind of a negative monk. There was no positive vibe from him. He just came, gave me this thing and asked for money. He asked for \$20 and I said no. He said \$10. I said no, I don’t have any. Then he took the card, took the bracelet and walked away.”

Palchevsky was not the only person who had an odd encounter. Lukasz Horaczy was sitting on a bench when he was approached.

The man, in a charcoal-coloured robe, put a bracelet on his wrist, but took it away once Horaczy said he had no money.

“I always thought monks were supposed to try and attain the highest form of peace, so I thought this man was just being kind. He gave me a picture of Buddha and then put a bracelet on my wrist. I thought, what a nice gesture and then he said, ‘\$20.’ I said I’m broke and I don’t have any money and he just pulled it off my hand.”

Several Buddhist organizations in Edmonton indicated that this sort of behaviour is not related to Buddhism because there is no tradition that allow monks to walk the streets and hand out goods to raise money.

One man, dressed as a monk, was giving out gold cards, repeating the phrase “Life and peace.” When approached, he would not give details to which temple he belonged, but merely indicated he was from Chinatown.

Two of the men were seen about noon entering the Alberta Education building near Jasper Avenue and 108th Street. They were accompanied by a woman in casual dress.

Incidents of people wearing the robes and posing as monks are not new in Canada. In June, Toronto police cracked down on them after receiving complaints about similar men who were aggressive when asking for donations. People in Ottawa faced the same issue and there have been similar problems throughout the U.S.

“If monks go like that, it is not a nice thing. In my school, we do not do it. It’s an unfortunate situation,” Chandananda said.

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