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Thousands of pilgrims are pouring into the dense jungle of southern Nepal to worship a 15-year-old boy who has been hailed as a new Buddha.

Devotees claim that Ram Bomjon, who is silently meditating beneath a tree, has not eaten or drunk anything since he sat down at his chosen spot six months ago.

Witnesses say they have seen light emanating from the teenager's forehead.

"It looks a bit like when you shine a torch through your hand," said Tek Bahadur Lama, a member of the committee responsible for dealing with the growing number of visitors from India and elsewhere in Nepal.

Photographs of Ram Bomjon, available for five rupees (4p) from his makeshift shrine, have become ubiquitous across the region. "Far and wide, it's the only topic of conversation," said Upendra Lamichami, a local journalist.