



# Newsletter

Charity No. BN 11907 1256 RR 001  
c/o 89 Fentiman Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 0T7  
Tel: (613) 730-0446,  
Email: obs\_secretary@yahoo.ca  
WWW: <http://www.geocities.com/obswebs/>

February 2001 / 2544

## Thoughts from the President

by Nissanka Pussegoda

Many thanks to the outgoing Committee—we had a very active and successful year 2000, with four retreats and a significant number of guest speakers (monks, nuns and lay community). The OBS web site was also created during last year and it is appropriate to recognize Dilani Hippola's effort in this venture. Amin Kabani's efforts during the last two years have been appreciated by many members and may he be able to get the benefits of the dhamma activities of the OBS in the years ahead.

The objectives for this year's executive are:

- To plan and host as many mindfulness retreats as last year;
- To help our membership to focus on the Dhamma so that we may be more responsible for our actions;
- To respond to the needs of the membership in the best way we can;
- To give an opportunity to those who are keen on volunteering;
- To increase the membership by making the Dhamma available in as many ways as possible, including the web and for those who do not browse the web, by timely newsletters.
- Encourage the youth group to continue their activities and develop new ones as time permits

The above goals are consistent with objectives laid out in the OBS constitution.

Buddha-dhamma, the truth of the way things are as explained by the awakened one more than 2500 years ago, will continue to be available for those who need and search for it. This is clearly demonstrated in the modern "cyber world", for example, how the dhamma has found its way to the internet and no doubt will go "beyond" this cyber age. By contrast, OBS exists with the support

of membership both by volunteering and contributing with membership dues each year. Thus the existence of the OBS will be linked to the support of those who are searching for the dhamma.

May the triple gem (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha) guide you to be aware of the present-moment.

*Yathā saṅkāradhānasmim -- ujjhitasmim mahāpathe*

*Padumam tattha jāyetha -- sucigandham manoramam*

*Evam saṅkārabhutesu -- andhabhute puthujjane*

*Atirocati paññāya -- sammāsambuddhasāvako.*

Just as a sweet-smelling and beautiful lotus can grow from a pile of discarded waste, the radiance of a true disciple of the Buddha outshines dark shadows cast by ignorance.

Dhammapada, Verse 58-59

## CONTENTS

**Thoughts from the President 1**

by Nissanka Pussegoda

**A Personal Account of the Retreat with Ajahn**

**Viradhammo 2**

by Flora Liebich

**Condolences to the Families of Jonathan Chaplan  
and Nhung Hoang 2**

**New Executive for the Ottawa Buddhist Society 2**

**Do The Thoughts Ever Stop? 3**

by Bhante Henepola Gunaratana

**Two Day Vessak Retreat with Bhante Gunaratana 4, 5**

**Calendar of OBS Events and Library Announcements 6**

**Poem: Who Is To Say What Could Be? 6**

by Colleen Glass

## A Personal Account of the Retreat with Ven. Ajahn Viradhammo

By Flora Liebich

We drove in wind and blowing snow, icy roads. The forty-five minute drive to the Galilee Retreat Centre took me twice as long. It was dark. I was tired after a week at work.

Finally we came upon the town of Arnprior; at the end of the road, the Galilee Retreat Centre: a stately stone mansion from the 1850's, with a residential annex, nestled among the snow-laden fir trees, overlooking the Ottawa River and, beyond that, the Gatineau Hills. We had arrived!

The unwinding process began. In the silence, the stillness of the night, the first talk by Ajahn Viradhammo, the first sitting meditation, slowly the stress began to fade away and there was just the present moment.

At 5:30 am, the sound of the bell. Pure as a crystal; the only sound to be heard in the quiet of the morning. Minutes later, we were in the hall, chanting, breathing, listening...

Ajahn Viradhammo's presence was like a light drawing us near, a beacon for the mind and spirit. His teachings brought us back, over and over, to the Present Moment, to Loving-kindness, to the Precepts and the Four Noble Truths. Wisdom, insight, humour, compassion: Ajahn embodies and transmits them all.

The quiet joy of serving Ajahn a meal, the act of Dhamma, giving, sharing, warmed my heart.

Walking meditations in the vast beauty of these surroundings, conscious of my steps, the wind, each sound, emptiness.

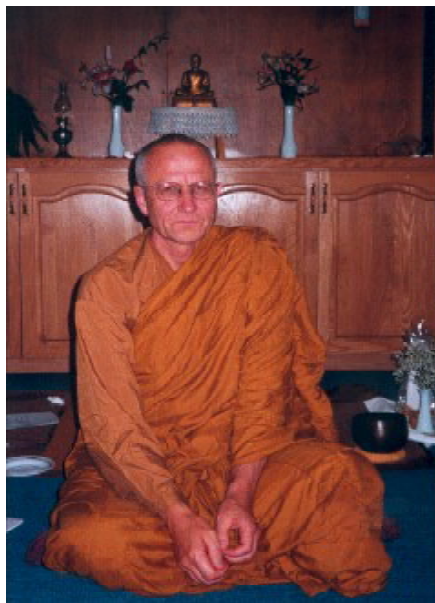
At meals, companionship in silence; the unspoken yet profound sense of community.

Three days later, the breaking of silence, the sharing of experiences, the offering of gifts, the sadness of leaving.

Days and weeks later, I go back to this retreat as an oasis in my mind, recreating the stillness, the silence, where everything else falls away.

N.B. This retreat took place in an idyllic setting, with individual rooms, a large teaching/meditation hall, wonderful vegetarian cooking, and lots of space for personal recollection and meditation. Warm thanks to the organizers for having allowed us to participate in this very special event.

*Ajahn Viradhammo is a Bhikkhu in the Thai Forest tradition currently the senior monk at Bodhinyanarama Monastery in Wellington, New Zealand*



## Condolences to the Family of Jonathan Chaplan and Nhung Hoang

The members and executive of the OBS would like to convey their deepest and most sincere sympathies to Jonathan Chaplan and Nhung Hoang for the sudden and tragic loss of Jonathan's father. Mr. Chaplan was 81 years of age and in good health before being murdered while on holiday in Hawaii. Mr. Chaplan is survived by his wife of 52 years, his daughter and Jonathan.

Jonathan writes about his father:

"My father was always willing to help anyone in need. He was very centred on family, but would extend his caring to anyone else who needed his help. For example, in the last couple of years, there were acquaintances in the condominium that they lived in who were sick (and later died). My father would insist on giving them lifts to the hospital so that they would not have to take cabs.

My father collected things. Newspaper clippings from 1931 to 1939, matchbook covers... He was always had a small kidding sort of joke to make people smile.

My father was very intolerant of prejudice. His experience as a Jew and the son of immigrants made him speak out if people were putting down immigrants, or especially if there was criticism of "getting tougher" about refugee laws. Later in his life he also extended his defence to those who criticized on the basis of sexual orientation."

## New Executive for the Ottawa Buddhist Society

The executive of the OBS for 2001 was elected at the Annual General Meeting of December 2000. The new constitution of the executive is as follows:

President:	Nissanka Pussegoda (npusse@magma.ca)	831-1972
Secretary:	Andre Vellino (obs_secretary@yahoo.ca)	730-0446
Treasurer:	Lionel Edirisinghe (laz@trytel.com)	591-8760
Librarian:	Philip Jurgens (philipjurgens@hotmail.com)	830-8846
Director, Children & Youth Programs:		
	Priyani Mendis (smendis@magma.ca)	736-9015
Ex-Officio:	Anoma De Silva (anomadesilva@yahoo.com)	226-8160

## Do The Thoughts Ever Stop?

by *Bhante Henepola Gunaratana*

The Buddha advised bhikkhus, "Bhikkhus when you have assembled together you should do one of two things: have Dhamma discussions or observe noble silence."

Noble silence is the state of mind where there are no thoughts. The mind is totally silent. Thoughts can be stopped only if we train our mind to do so through correct meditation practice.

A meditator should begin by paying undivided and uninterrupted attention to one single object without verbalizing the experience in the mind. When you verbalize and conceptualize things, you interrupt your attention on the one hand and on the other you perpetuate your thoughts.

When you verbalize, you add more and more concepts or ideas. The reality is not a word or verb. The reality is what you experience. When you experience aches and pains or pleasure and happiness in or out of your meditation, you directly notice the experience exactly as it is. You don't need a conceptual bridge between your experience and direct knowledge. When you are hungry, you experience hunger without saying: "I am hungry, I am hungry."

You need nouns and verbs only to communicate your experience. When you meditate you observe total silence, not trying to talk to anybody about your experience. You should know yourself exactly as you are. You should feel yourself exactly as you are.

From babyhood through college, we learn to use words, concepts and ideas to make others understand us. But during meditation you are not trying to express your experience to anybody. By training your mind to remain silent, you make it

silent. If you add more words to the mind, the mind simply remains busy.

We all have noticed people sitting or walking down the street carrying on a monologue with themselves. They cannot silence their minds. This is an extreme example of being unable to still thoughts. But in our own way, we wrestle with this in daily life and in meditation. It comes down to this; unless you try, you can never stop all that thinking. You still the thoughts only when you determine to do so.

Pay total attention to what you experience through the six senses without labeling what arises. There are certain things you experience for which no words are necessary. You simply know

*Noble silence is the state of mind where there are no thoughts... Thoughts can be stopped only if we train our mind to do so through correct meditation practice.*

them. Your mind knows them. You stay with this knowing. When you feel cold, the normal habit is to say to yourself, "Gee, it is cold." When you feel hot, you automatically think, "Boy, it is hot." Simply pay attention to the cold you feel without this additional thought. Simply feel the heat without verbalizing the experience. When you remember visiting a place, or talking to someone, or eating ice cream or holding someone by the hand, simply become aware of those objects of your memory.

You need to gain full concentration to stop your thoughts. You do this by paying total attention to one object at a time. If you start the practice by focusing your mind exclusively on one object, gradually you condition your mind to overcome discursive thoughts by sustaining initial contact with the object.

When you listen to your heartbeat you don't need concepts to feel this subtle occurrence. Similarly, during meditation as you pay total attention to your in-breathing and out-breathing, you can

notice the beginning, middle, and end of each inhaling and each exhaling. You can notice the brief pause between inhaling and exhaling. You can notice these natural occurrences in your breath if you pay total attention to them.

The mind moves so rapidly yet we can train it to notice these events exactly as they happen because they happen in succession. If you conceptualize these occurrences then you will be unable to notice them. Instead, you hang on to the words and miss the actual experience. You don't have to say, "This is the beginning of breathing in," or "This is the middle" or "This is the end." Simply notice these stages. You don't need thought to notice them. All you need is attention.

By no means do we become a vegetable when we still our thoughts. A quiet mind is receptive to insight. And you can stop the thought process by systematically

training the mind.

I use the phrase "quieting the mind" or "silencing the mind" to mean not having thought in the mind, but this does not mean slowing down the mind like slowing down a body's metabolism during hibernation. It simply means not having thought-creating habits in the mind.

The brain does not manufacture thoughts unless we stimulate it with habitual verbalizing. When we train ourselves by constant practice to stop verbalizing, the brain can experience things as they are. By silencing the mind, we can experience real peace. As long as various kinds of thoughts agitate the brain, we don't experience 100 percent peace.

Peace is not a thought, not a concept, it is a nonverbal experience. One can stay in this peaceful state up to seven days. But before one attains such a totally peaceful state of mind, one should gradually train oneself to slow down thoughts. Once slowed down, thoughts fade away and no more new thoughts are fed into the brain.

Even while not meditating, we experience many things deeply for which often there are no words. We may try to find a word or verb for that experience. We may call it intuition. Yet intuitions may arise with no associated words or concepts. You can also listen to sounds without any words arising in the mind. It is said the best way to enjoy music is to listen to music. While hearing music, you listen to the sound without trying to verbalize the sound. Or consider how you listen to a bird's song; you don't verbalize the sound. You may say "The robin sings like this..." but that is your imagination.

This means that even outside of meditation you can experience many very subtle things simply by paying total attention to your senses. Most of the time, we verbalize things after we have experienced them, not while experiencing them. But when you pay total, non-

verbal attention to something, you gain concentration which is not possible by verbalizing. Words stimulate the mind. Therefore the mind keeps producing more and more words and we express them in thoughts. By nonverbal attention, you can minimize the number of words you use. When the words are minimized, thoughts are minimized. Finally, this process makes the mind truly free from thoughts. But if you don't minimize the words, you can't free the mind from thoughts.

When you experience something, if you don't try to translate the experience into words you simply have the experience, not thoughts. Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, they can all be experienced directly without words. When you use words, you block your direct experience of sensory objects.

After all, it is not the words that make you experience what you experience. Suppose the color white appears before your eyes. The whiteness reflects on your eyes. The mind knows it as it is. Only if you want to express what you have seen do you really need words. Yet whiteness is not a word, but what it is. Blackness is not a word, but what it is. The same is true for sweetness, bitterness, sourness, toughness, and everything in your experience.

The brain does not manufacture thoughts from nothing. It has to be fed something to use as raw material for manufacturing thoughts. The raw material is what you have fed to it in the past. If you do not feed it words, if you have trained it by avoiding verbalization, the brain cannot manufacture thoughts from a vacuum.

## **Two Day Vipassana (Insight) Retreat with Bhante Gunaratana**

May 11-13, 2001

### **Vipassana Meditation**

Vipassana meditation comes from the Buddhist tradition of South East Asia. The practice uses mindfulness of various objects, including the breath, body sensations, and mental and emotional events, to cultivate calmness and insight. The steadiness of mind allows us to observe and experience whatever is happening in the present moment in a balanced and peaceful way. The insight is the arising realizations into the subtle nature of existence. Such understandings naturally promote a mature and compassionate attitude towards oneself and all other living beings.

Everyone is welcome. The retreat is designed for those with no previous experience as well as those who wish to deepen their practice.

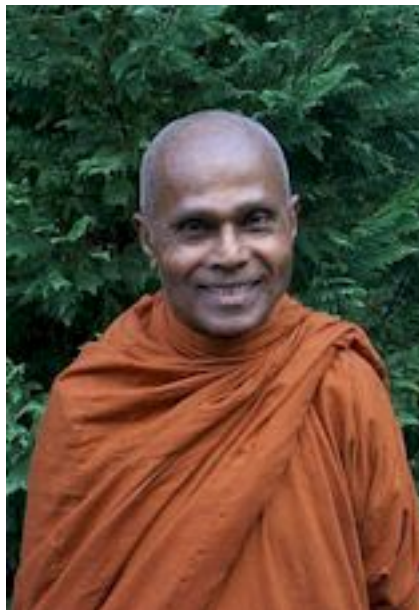
This particular retreat is being held on the weekend of Vesak, an auspicious day that marks the anniversary of the birth, renunciation, enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha.

The retreat will include a full daily schedule of sitting and walking meditation, instruction, and evening talks.

Please register before April 21 as space is limited (registration form at the end of this newsletter).

### **Bhante Gunaratana**

Bhante (venerable) Gunaratana is a bhikkhu (mendicant monk) of the Theravada (School of the Elders) tradition of Buddhism. He was born in Sri Lanka, ordained in 1940, and received a classical Buddhist education. He worked many years as a missionary in India and Malaysia. He was invited to the United States in 1968 to teach Buddhism and lead meditation retreats. He earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the American University, and has published several articles and books including *Mindfulness in Plain English* (1994), copies of which are available at the Ottawa Public Library.



Bhante Gunaratana is now abbot of the monastery Bhavana Center in the Shenandoah Valley of West Virginia, about 100 miles west of Washington, D.C. Bhikkhu Sona, a Canadian-born monk now living north of Vancouver, was ordained at the West Virginia monastery. Bhante Gunaratana continues to teach meditation and conduct retreats worldwide. Please visit the Bhavana Centre web site at: <http://www.bhavasociety.org>

**Vesak Retreat with Bhante Gunaratana**

This event will be held at the Galilee Centre in Arnprior, a scenic waterfront retreat location with comparatively luxurious accommodation, including fully furnished single rooms for everybody. There will be beds, bedding, and towels provided. As you can see below the price is very reasonable as well. The chef makes delicious vegetarian dishes using mainly natural ingredients. Please register early.

For those who have had no previous experience with meditation retreats, we recommended you come to one of the

Days of Mindfulness organized by the Ottawa Buddhist Society. This will give you a good sense of what to expect of at a week-end retreat.

Kind regards,  
Andre Vellino  
(613) 730-0446

**More About Bhante Gunaratana**

Bhante Gunaratana received full ordination at the age of 20 in Kandy, Sri Lanka. On behalf of the Maha Bodhi Society he then spent five years working with the Harijans (Children of God - Gandhi's term for the "Untouchables"). Later he spent ten years as a missionary, teacher,

and administrator in Malaysia. (Bhante Rahula another monk at Bhavana Center spent about six months last year in India working with this community.)

Bhante Gunaratana has taught courses on Buddhism at The American University, Georgetown University, Bucknell University, PA, and University of Maryland. Also he has lectured at many universities in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. He is the author of *Come and See, The Path of Serenity and Insight, The Jhanas* and *Mindfulness In Plain English* (1994 Wisdom Publication's best seller list).

**Registration Information for the Vesak Retreat with Bhante Gunaratana at the Galilee Centre**

WHEN: 7:00 PM Fri May 11th to 4:00 PM Sunday 13th, 2001

ARRIVAL TIME: 6:00 PM-7:00 PM

WHERE: Hwy 417 West, 17 West to Arnprior. Take Madawaska Blvd exit (near a Ford dealer) to Arnprior. Right on John St. North which ends at the Galilee Centre, 398 John St North., just after Arnprior Hospital.

Tel: (613) 623-4242

COST: C\$110, single room, all inclusive, for full 2 day retreat.

REFUND: Full refund if the cancellation is received before April 21st, 2001.

MORE INFORMATION: Andre at (613) 730-0446 or Nissanka at (613) 831-1972.

PRIORITY: There are a limited number of spaces available. Spaces for this retreat will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

DONATION TO THE MONK: The registration fee covers cost of accommodation, food, and only a part of the transportation costs for the monk. In keeping with the ancient Buddhist tradition, the teachings and meditation instructions are given by the monk free of charge. The monk and the monastery are supported by donations. You may make a donation to the monk through the Ottawa Buddhist Society and at the end of the year you will receive a tax receipt.

WHAT TO BRING: water bottle, toiletries, enough clothes for the duration of the retreat, insect repellent, flashlight, walking shoes, slippers, meditation cushion and a mat to put your cushion.

VOLUNTEERING: Your help with various tasks during the retreat would be appreciated. A form will be available for this.

NOBLE SILENCE: For the duration of the retreat, please observe noble silence, the Eight Precepts, and follow the Retreat Guidelines.

MEALS: Vegetarian breakfast and lunch are the two main meals; in the evening there will be tea, juice, and fruits.

TO REGISTER: Fill in the form and mail with your full payment to 89 Fentiman Ave Ottawa, ON K1S 0T7. Make all checks payable to the Ottawa Buddhist Society and write at the top "Bhante G Retreat, May 2001"

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

ARE YOU VEGAN? YES \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to attend the full retreat. Check for the full amount is enclosed.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make all checks payable to the Ottawa Buddhist Society.

## Calendar of OBS Events

### Days of Mindfulness

Once a month, members and friends of the Ottawa Buddhist Society gather to practice mindfulness meditation at the Tu-An Pagoda (Vietnamese Buddhist Temple), 3591 Albion Road. We make an attempt to schedule this observance day on the Saturday on or before a full moon, to commemorate the fact that the Buddha was enlightened under a full moon.

The days of mindfulness are scheduled as follows (to be confirmed):

February 17th  
March 17th  
April 14th  
May - no observance day. The Vesak May 11-13 week-end retreat will be held at the Galilee Centre)  
June 10th (with Ajahn Viradhammo)  
July - no observance day.  
August 11  
September 8th  
October 6th  
November 3rd  
December 1st

Whenever possible, the Days of Mindfulness will be conducted by a visiting Monk or Nun or by a lay person with experience in conducting such events. However, we will often need to conduct such days of mindfulness in community and your participation and contribution is welcome.

### Retreats

May 11-13 Vesak week-end with Bhante Gunarathana at the Galilee Centre.

June 28 - July 8 Nine day meditation retreat with Ajahn Sona at the Galilee Centre.

We are planning for a week-end retreat in November 2001 but we do not have enough details to publish at the moment.

### Library Announcements

The OBS Library is happy to receive donations of dhamma books or tapes in new or nearly new condition. Those that are not added to the collection will be freely offered to the membership. Donations may also be made in memory of someone.

The following are some of the recent OBS library acquisitions:

Things As They Are: A Collection of Talks on the Training of the Mind, Venerable Achariya Maha Boowa Nanasampanno, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: WAVE, 1988, 216p. Thirteen talks given to monastics in Thailand by a monk known for his emphasis on the practical application of the Dhamma. Since the monks who had assembled to listen to the talks were at different stages in their practice, each talk deals with a number of issues on a wide variety of levels. Every reader

who is interested in the training of the mind will benefit from these pages.(G#206)

Sutta-Nipata, H. Saddhatissa (transl.), Surrey, GB: Curzon, 1994, 135p., 0-7007-0181-8. This contemporary prose translation of a collection of the Buddha's shorter-length discourses presents a code of conduct that provides the basis for a system of moral philosophy. Contains a rational, straight-forward understanding of the ethics and psychology of Buddhism.(Su#209)

Path of Freedom (Vimuttimaggā), Arahant Upatissa, Kandy: BPS, 1995, 362p., 955-24-0054-6. A meditation manual evidently based on the experience of Buddhist monks in ancient times and compiled by a famous Sri Lankan monk who lived in the first century A.D. for the guidance of those intent on a contemplative life. The work is compiled in accordance with the classical Buddhist division of the path into the three stages of virtue, concentration, and wisdom, culminating in the goal of liberation. It is widely believed that the Vimuttimaggā may have been the model used by Acariya Buddhaghosa to compose his magnum opus, the Visuddhimaggā, several centuries later. The older work is marked by a leaner style and a more lively sense of urgency stemming from its primarily practical orientation.(M#210)

### Who Is To Say What Could Be?

#### A poem inspired by a misty summer morning.

by Colleen Glass

There are small moments that make up the day inconsequential as it may seem now as we hurry from this place to that.

There come small moments gathered into them is the helix and the handmaid. They are who we are, up until that moment, poised to respond, to wait, to become.

And yet, the small moment is formless as its true nature is. It may take a shape that we could not expect or a confluence of

interests and past events may make the outcome of any small moment - a foregone conclusion.

Some are like that, you knew before it came, what would be. Some would say - set in our ways we march out to meet the day.

There comes small moments, intimate and surprisingly, straight-up. Once, I saw one full-on now I want to be in all of them, for there are more.

It is as if you have managed to find a treasure chest and there, on the edge - with the helix and the handmaid, as you are about to open the lid, you feel the mind is free - the heart open and what will become of it all is up to no one.

Colleen Glass. July 99

## OTTAWA BUDDHIST SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Society serves Theravada Buddhists of all nationalities in and around Ottawa. All who support the Society and its objectives are welcome to Society events and to enrol as members.

The objectives of the Society are:

(a) To propagate, promote and advance the teachings of the Buddha by practising the religious observances, tenets and doctrines of Buddhism, with emphasis on those of Theravada Buddhism, and to promote the practice of these teachings in everyday life.

(b) To promote an awareness of the contributions made by Buddhism to humankind's intellectual advancement, and spiritual and physical well-being.

(c) To engage in charitable activities within Canada to alleviate suffering, whether physical, mental or spiritual, without regard to the species, gender, race, nationality or religion of the sufferer.

I would like to enrol as a member of the Ottawa Buddhist Society.

PLEASE PRINT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

eMail: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Dues (please indicate whether membership is [New] or a [Renewal] and circle its type below):

Single: (\$25); Family: (\$50); Friend (\$10 – newsletter only) Full-Time Student: (free)

Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ To Be Used For: \_\_\_\_\_ Payment Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this with your payment to the Treasurer, Ottawa Buddhist Society, 11 Longboat Ct., Kanata, Ont. K2K 2T3. For more information about the Society contact Andre at [obs\\_secretary@yahoo.ca](mailto:obs_secretary@yahoo.ca) or (613) 730-0446, or Nissanka at [npusse@magma.ca](mailto:npusse@magma.ca) or (613) 831-1972.

### VOLUNTEERS FOR OTTAWA BUDDHIST SOCIETY.

Ottawa Buddhist Society is looking for volunteers to help with the following activities:

Organization of Retreats; Days of Mindfulness; Social Events; Charitable Projects;  
Duplication of dharma talks on audio cassette.

Please indicate whether you are able to volunteer for any of those activities

#### ACTIVITIES:

Monthly Day of Mindfulness  
Youth Discussion Group  
Week-end and longer retreats  
Picnics and Hikes

#### PUBLICATION:

Quarterly Newsletter (to subscribe,  
write to [obs\\_secretary@yahoo.ca](mailto:obs_secretary@yahoo.ca))

#### LIBRARY:

We have a collection of books and tapes which members can borrow. The catalogue can be browsed at <http://www.geocities.com/obswebs/>  
Duplicates of audio tapes can be made upon request.