



A centre for meditation, and study of Buddhist psychology and philosophy

Consultative Seminar Series (Session 2): Executive Summary

Title: *Consultative Seminar on Buddha's Teachings and Mental Well-Being: A Dialogue*

Theme: *Communities of Care*

Date/Time: 6 June 2026 (2:30-5:30 pm IST)

Convened by: Mental Health Team, Atish Dipankar Dhyana Kendra (ADDK), Kolkata.

1. Context and Purpose

This seminar formed the second session of a three-part contemplative series exploring the relationship between Buddhist teachings and mental well-being. Building on the first session's focus on therapeutic care, the discussion shifted towards *Sangha* (community) and the role of relationships, belonging, and collective responsibility in supporting mental health and well-being. The session aimed to create a dialogic space where participants could reflect on mindfulness, community engagement, nature, activism, and compassionate action.

2. Opening Framing: From Therapeutic Care to Communities of Care

Opening the seminar, Dr. Diptarup Chowdhury welcomed participants and reflected on key learnings from the first session. While professional and therapeutic interventions remain important, he emphasized that mental well-being is also shaped by the communities in which we live. The session was therefore framed around the Buddhist concept of *Sangha*, highlighting the importance of belonging, mutual responsibility, and collective care. Participants were invited to consider how mindfulness and contemplative practice might support both personal healing and community well-being.

3. Session Structure and Panellists

Moderated by Dr. Saoni Banerjee, the session included opening reflections from panellists, small-group breakout discussions, plenary dialogue, and a closing meditation guided by Dr. Anindya Chatterjee.

Panellists

- **Tashi Choedup:** Buddhist monastic, social justice practitioner, and co-lead of a Queer-Trans Wellness and Support Centre in Hyderabad.
- **Sophia Ani Dolkar:** Counsellor, Kagyu Buddhist nun, mindfulness practitioner, and student at Tergar Institute.
- **Nitin Das:** Forest filmmaker and founder of Healing Forest, a nature-based mindfulness initiative.

4. Panel Initial Remarks

Sophia Ani Dolkar





Sophia explored mindfulness as an embodied and relational practice that complements therapeutic work. She emphasised self-awareness, compassionate presence, and integrating mindfulness into everyday life through simple actions and relationships. Mindfulness, she suggested, is best taught through example rather than instruction and flourishes within community settings.

Nitin Das

Nitin reflected on the growing disconnection between people and nature in contemporary life. Drawing on his Healing Forest initiative, he highlighted nature as a source of creativity, mental well-being, humility, and connection. He encouraged moving beyond awareness alone to direct experiences that foster deeper relationships with oneself, others, and the environment.

Tashi Choedup

Tashi reflected on the relationship between contemplative practice and social activism, emphasising that sustainable social change requires both outer action and inner transformation. Highlighting the importance of compassion, equanimity, and self-awareness, they discussed the need for communities that can hold conflict, diversity, and vulnerability with care.

The Four Immeasurables

The discussion also explored the Four Immeasurables (*loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity*), highlighting their role in addressing human suffering and nurturing healthy communities.

5. Breakout Rooms and Shared Reflections

Participants moved into facilitated breakout rooms to reflect on the themes raised by the panellists and explore the relationship between mindfulness, community, and well-being within their own lives and professional contexts.

6. Breakout Themes (Resonances, Challenges, Questions)

Resonances

Participants resonated strongly with themes of community, belonging, mindfulness, and reconnection with nature. The importance of everyday mindfulness, collective responsibility for well-being, and the role of supportive communities in fostering personal growth emerged as central themes. The Four Immeasurables, particularly compassion and equanimity, were also identified as meaningful yet aspirational practices.

Challenges

Participants discussed difficulties sustaining mindfulness amid busy lives, maintaining meaningful connections with nature, balancing engagement and self-care, and cultivating equanimity in relationships. Building and maintaining compassionate communities was recognised as an ongoing challenge requiring commitment, openness, and continual reflection.





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Representative Questions

Questions focused on three broad areas:

- Cultivating mindfulness in difficult personal and professional circumstances.
- Balancing community care, self-care, and professional responsibilities.
- Sustaining meaningful work, purpose, and non-traditional life paths over time.

Participants also sought practical guidance on applying the Four Immeasurables within everyday life and community settings.

7. Panel Responses

The speakers collectively emphasised that transformation emerges through ongoing practice, inquiry, and lived experience rather than fixed answers.

- **Sophia** highlighted embodied practice, self-compassion, equanimity, and the importance of integrating mindfulness into everyday life.
- **Tashi** emphasised community, collective care, balance, and the importance of remaining open to uncertainty, difference, and ongoing learning.
- **Nitin** focused on experiential learning, creativity, and nature as powerful teachers that deepen awareness and foster connection.

Across their responses, the panellists stressed that personal well-being, community care, and social engagement are deeply interconnected and require both inner reflection and compassionate action.

8. Closing

The seminar concluded with a guided meditation led by Dr. Anindya Chatterjee, focusing on mindfulness of mind and loving-kindness. Participants were invited to extend wishes of well-being to all beings and their environments through a short dedication prayer. The session ended with expressions of gratitude and a commitment to continue exploring the dialogue between Buddhist teachings, mental well-being, and community care.

The Mental Health Team acknowledges the use of Zoom AI Companion for transcription and Microsoft Copilot for summarising and structuring draft reports. The draft was subsequently reviewed and edited by members of the Mental Health Team of ADDK prior to finalisation.

