

Atish Dipankar Dhyana Kendra: A Manifesto of Our Shared Values

“The Sangha is an unusually warm and kind place, unlike other spaces.”

“What I am learning here is a model for how I conduct myself in society.”

These two reflections that came up during the daylong workshop on January 31, 2026, underpin what Atish Dipankar Dhyana Kendra already is and wants to be more of for all those who join us.

Since the day it formally began its journey in 2022 with a handful of members, the Dhyana Kendra has emerged as a space supportive of spiritual practice and training the mind following the Buddha’s methods. Now, with a growing number of people from diverse backgrounds eager to receive the teachings and apply them in their day-to-day lives, the question arises — how do we benefit everyone in the best possible way?

What practices can we adopt as a group and as individuals to ensure it is an inclusive space free from all forms of discrimination, a space that treats everyone with dignity and respect, a space that nurtures co-learning to build a meaningful life?

Venerable Geshe La says, “In this training, we learn to develop and maintain a warm heart and a feeling of being close to all living beings without exception”. Here at the Sangha, it begins with us learning to develop and maintain a warm heart for all members of Atish Dipankar Dhyana Kendra without exception.

The workshop ‘Towards a Harmonious and Inclusive Sangha: Co-creating Values for Collective Practice’, attended by 21 members of Atish Dipankar Dhyana Kendra, threw up a wide range of concerns and converged on the foundational Buddhist principles that we want to uphold in our Sangha:

- Practising ethical conduct and observing the Five Precepts in one’s own practice, and in relation to others in the Sangha
- Anchoring all our actions of body, speech and mind in Bodhichitta motivation
- Practising non-violence and refraining from harm at all times
- Practising mindfulness in communication, especially in group and one-to-one interactions
- Practising equanimity in the face of challenges and difficulties

How to make the Shared Values a part of our daily lives? Reflecting on this, we drew up a framework of ethical conduct to guide us in that direction.

Practising Together: A framework for Ethical Conduct

1. **Observing the Five Precepts:** Refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxicants. We always have a choice, and we exercise it in maintaining the Five Precepts as best as we can in our personal life and in relation to others.
2. **Avoiding harmful speech and action:** Desisting from speech that is false, hurtful, offensive, judgemental and discriminatory, or causes mistrust and disharmony in the Sangha. Actively refraining from bodily actions and gestures that are aggressive or disrespectful to others.
3. **Practising equanimity, love and compassion:** Holding on to compassion when faced with challenges. There may be occasions when our patience is tested. At such times, we practise not getting carried away by anger or resentment, and try to hold a mind that cherishes others.
4. **Respecting personal boundaries:** Treating everyone with respect and dignity; not letting our biases and prejudices colour our interactions. Our fellow practitioners feel safe and supported when we are non-intrusive and non-judgemental.
5. **Observing the boundaries of the teacher-student relationship:** The teacher-student relationship is a source of support for spiritual development. It is based on mutual respect, trust and ethical conduct. Acting in accordance with the responsibilities and boundaries of that relationship is of utmost importance.
6. **Consideration for others:** Respecting others' viewpoints, listening with an open mind and giving everyone a chance to participate. Respecting others' need for silence and reflection and not assuming that silence necessarily signifies disengagement. Discussions and volunteer work are vital aspects of Sangha life, which calls for greater sensitivity during group interactions and activities.
7. **Maintaining harmony in the Sangha:** Behaving mindfully, and putting the teachings into practice and contemplation. We recognise that harmony within the Sangha is a shared responsibility. Hence, when difficulties arise, we aspire to seek understanding, reconciliation and resolution.