

Notes on Noble Silence and Practice at Santi

Generally, we try to encourage all residents to help keep an atmosphere of quiet reflection in the monastery, as too much talking (especially when we are a larger group), can easily detract from the monastic practice environment in this small building. Subdued conversations at times are fine, but please try to be mindful of the content and purpose of the discussion and try to minimise too much habitual socializing and 'chit-chat'.

Having said that, we realise this is not always appropriate or within our control, with many day visitors bringing dana (lunch offering) and thus the need to also be polite and responsive. And there are always some practical things we need to communicate with each other about at times. But if we remember to try to keep such engagement 'low-key' in general, this will help keep the atmosphere one of mindful attentiveness. Primarily, not talking too much can help to deepen and strengthen one's own meditation practice, as well as support a conducive environment for others to do the same.

To support this aim, we suggest the practice of keeping '**Noble Silence**' in the following periods:

- Over **breakfast**
- From **1:30pm to 5pm** (personal practice period)
- And from **6pm till after breakfast the next morning** (practice period)

Talking with others over lunch is fine, but please also be mindful of the need to assist with the kitchen clean-up after lunch too, so it's not left to just a few people.

Generally, from about 1:30 p.m. after lunch clean-up, residents are encouraged to use the afternoon for personal meditation or study as suits their own needs, either privately in their own dwellings, in the meditation hall, or out in nature. Please try to keep the library and kitchen areas quiet from this time on as sound travels easily up to the hall which will disturb those who wish to practice there.

The meditation hall should be kept quiet most of the time - no mobile phones in the hall at all please. And no lying down in the hall during group meditation unless you have a back problem, in which case, please mention it to the senior nun and if you need to lie down, please do so by the back wall, closer to the chairs, keeping your feet in a direction not pointing to the shrine.

Tea-time from 5-6pm is a good time for connecting with each other and Dhamma discussion, especially if a monastic is present in the library who will be happy to answer any questions or discuss Dhamma with you. (Tea-time is optional, and a self-serve situation. You can help yourself to drinks, and afternoon allowables if needed, from the kitchen). If a monastic is present and doesn't have a drink, please offer to make one for them.

Currently, we have set aside every **Tuesday as a 'quiet day'** in the monastery, with no morning work period (with the exception of the usual meal-prep, clean up, and the regular daily chores). This is an opportunity to have one day a week when the community keeps **Noble Silence** more strongly for the whole day (like a retreat day), and use the opportunity to focus more fully on our formal meditation practice. On these days, it is encouraged not to engage in conversation at all, unless necessary for practical needs, clarification or direction. Sometimes, of course, this can be forgotten in the flow of life here (which is ever changing), and as other unexpected things may impinge on the usual routine. At such times we can just gently and kindly remind each other if forgetfulness emerges, or adapt skillfully if unexpected events happen.

It's always a bit of a 'dance' in a small place like Santi where people come and go regularly...
May we dance mindfully and kindly in the flow of life here ☺.