

The Pāli Alphabet

In Myanmar and Roman Characters

8-Vowels

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	e	o
အ	အာ	ဣ	ဣိ	ဥ	ဥိ	ဧ	ဧဝ

Vowel Final Form

-	-ာ, -ါ	ိ	ိ	ိ	ိ	ေ-	ေ-ာ, ေ-ါ
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33 Consonants

25 Group Letters

	First	Second	Thrid	Fourth	Fifth
<i>Ka-group</i>	k	kh	g	gh	ñ
	က	ခ	ဂ	ဂှ	ဇ
<i>Ca-group</i>	c	ch	j	jh	ñ
	စ	ဆ	ဇ	ဇှ	ဇ
<i>Ṭa-group</i>	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ
	ဇ	ဇှ	ဇ	ဇှ	ဇ

Only one Final Consonant (ṃ)

In Pāli language, there is only one final consonant(ṃ) which follows three short vowels:

am̐ = अं	im̐ = इं	um̐ = उं
မံဂလာ	တာဝတိံသ	ဒါတုံ
maṅgala	Tāvatiṃsa	dātum̐

Eleven Syllables

A consonant or consonant-cluster can be formed into eleven syllables as follows;-

ka	kā	ki	kī	ku	kū
က	ကာ	ကိ	ကီ	ကု	ကူ
ke	ko	kam̐	kim̐	kum̐	
ကေ	ကော	ကံ	ကိံ	ကုံ	
kha	khā	khi	khī	khu	khū
ခ	ခါ	ခိ	ခီ	ခု	ခူ
khe	kho	kham̐	khim̐	khum̐	
ခေ	ခေါ	ခံ	ခိံ	ခုံ	
ḷa	ḷa	ḷi	ḷī	ḷu	ḷū
ဇ	ဇာ	ဇိ	ဇီ	ဇု	ဇူ
le	lo	lam̐	lim̐	lum̐	
ဇေ	ဇော	ဇံ	ဇိံ	ဇုံ	

kya kyā khi kyī kyū kyū kye

ကျ ကျာ ကျိ ကျီ ကျူ ကျူး ကျေ

kyo kyam̄ kyim̄ kyum

ကျော ကျံ ကျိံ ကျိံ

kra krā kri krī kru krū

ကြ ကြာ ကြိ ကြီ ကြူ ကြူး

kre kro kram̄ krim̄ krun̄

ကြော ကြောံ ကြိံ ကြိံ ကြိံ

kva kvā kvi kvī

ကွ ကွာ ကွိ ကွီ

kve ---- kvam̄ kvin̄ kvum̄

ကွေ ကွံ ကွိံ ကွိံ ကွိံ

hma hmā hmi hmī hmu hmū hme

မှ မှာ မှိ မှီ မှူ မှူး မှေ

hmo hmam̄ hmim̄ hmum̄

မှော မှံ မှိံ မှိံ မှိံ

Conjunct-Consonants

In the poly - syllabic words, there may be two consonants between two vowels. The two consonants are called Conjunct-Consonants or Double Consonants. Conjunct - Consonants are generally written one over another in Myanmar script and one after another in Romanised Pāli --

ꣳ = kk , ꣳꣳ = kkh , ꣳꣳꣳ = gg ,
ꣳꣳꣳꣳ = ggh , ----- , ဝယဗ္ဗ = mm etc

How to Pair two Consonants

In order to pair the two consonants twenty five group-Consonants are divided into five series: Ka-series, ca-series, ṭa-series, ta-series, and pa-series. Each series must be subdivided into three groups: voiceless letters (Aghosa Akkharas), voiced - letters (Ghosa Akkharas) and Nasal-letters (Nāsika Akkharas). In each series, the first and the second letters are voiceless the third and the fourth letters are voiced and the fifth letters are nasal.

In voiceless and voiced groups, the first and the third letters are Non-aspirate letters (Sithila Akkharas) and the second and the fourth letters are Aspirate letters (Dhanita Akkharas).

The first and the third Non-aspirate letters and the fifth nasal letters can be paired between themselves as conjunct-consonants. The first and the third Non-aspirate letters can be paired to the second and the fourth Aspirate letters to form conjunct-consonants. The fifth letters can be paired to the former four letters in its series.

ka-vagga cakka yakkha vagga byaggha ---
 ဧက ယက္ခ ဝဂ္ဂ ဗျတ္တ
 caṅkama kankhā maṅgalā saṅgha ---
 စင်္ကမ ကင်္ခါ မင်္ဂလာ သင်္ဃ

ca-vaggasacca maccha majja majjhima Paññā
 သစ္စ မစ္ဆ မဇ္ဇ မဇ္ဈိမ ပညာ
 Pañca puñcha vañjana vañjha
 ပဉ္စ ပုဉ္စ ဝဉ္စန ဝဉ္စ

ṭa-vagga vaṭṭa diṭṭha aḍḍa vuddha āciṇṇa
 ဝဋ္ဌ ဒိဋ္ဌ အဋ္ဌ ဝုဇာ အာစိဏ္ဏ
 kaṅṭaka kaṅṭha khaṅḍa -----
 ကကုက ကက္က ခက္က -----

ta-vagga citta hattha sadda saddhā anna
 စိတ္တ တတ္ထ သဒ္ဓ သဒ္ဓါ အန္န
 danta gantha vandana khandha
 ဒန္တ ဂန္ထ ဝန္တနာ ခန္ဓ

<i>Pa.vagga</i>	sippa	puppha	dibba
	သိပ္ပ	ပုပ္ပ	ဒိဗ္ဗ
	dubbhikkha	kamma	
	ဒုဗ္ဘက္ခ	ကမ္မ	
	sampanna	samphapphalasa	
	သမ္ပန္န	သမ္ပပ္ပလာပ	
	udumbara	kumbhaṇḍa	
	ဥဒုမ္မရ	ကုမ္မဏ္ဍ	

Conjunct-Consonant in Non-group-letters

Four Non-group letters - y, l, s and h can be paired to form conjunct-consonants.

<i>e.g</i>	uyyāna	dullabha	phassa	mayha
	ဥယျာန	ဒုလ္လဘ	ဖဿ	မယျ
	dalha	bahvābadha		
	ဒဠ	ဗဟ္ဗာဗာဓ		

Note- The above mentioned four consonant clusters may be considered as Conjunct-Consonants though they disobey the conjunct-consonant rules in pairing letters.

There are some irregular conjunct - consonants.

<i>eg.</i>	pañha,	taṇhā,	nhāna,	tumha
	ပဉ္စ	တဏှာ	နှာန	တုမ္မ
	brahma	yasmā		
	ဗြဟ္မ	ယသ္မာ		

Conjunct-Consonant Reading

In conjunct consonants, the first consonant must be considered as final consonant. But in Pāli language the final consonants are mute i.e. they are not pronounced as in English and German. The final consonants change the sounds of the front vowels.

In order to make correct pronunciation the final Consonants must be divided into two classes, - namely Nasal finals and Stop finals. ñ, ñ̄, n, ṅ, m, y, l, should be noted as Nasal - finals and the rest are considered as stop-finals. The Nasal-finals and the stop-finals changed the front vowels into long sounds and stop-sounds respectively:

(1) The final consonants change the final vowel 'a', into '- at' and '- an.'

စက္က	ယက္ခ	မဂ္ဂ	အနတ္တ	အင်္ဂ	အယျက
sakka	yakkha	magga	anaggha	anga	ayyaka
သစ္စ	ဂစ္ဆāမိ	မဇ္ဈ	မဇ္ဈိမ	ပဏ္ဍ	သလ္လာပ
sacca	gacchāmi	majja	majjhima	paññā	sallāpa

(2)The final consonants change the front vowel.

'i -' into '-it' and '-in'

ဒိဋ္ဌ	ခိဋ္ဌ	တိဏ္ဏ	စိတ္တ	တိတ္ထ	မိဒ္ဓ
diṭṭha	khiḍḍā	tiṇṇa	citta	tittha	midda

ဒိန္န နိယျာနိက
 dinna niyyānika

(3)The final consonants change the front vowel
 'u' into '-ut' and '-un.'

သုပ္ပ	ပုပ္ပ	ဒုပ္ပဓ	ဒုပ္ပိက္ခ
suppa	puppha	dubbaca	dubbhikkha
ကုမ္ဘ	ဥယျာန	ဒုလ္လာဘ	
kumbha	ayyāna	dullabha	

Note

There are no finals which can change the vowel (a) into -et, -in sound in Roman script. So all ka-group finals are read -at, -an in Roman script.

ဦးသဇ္ဇန	ဦးပညာဇောတ
U sajjana	U Paññājota

(2)the ca-group finals change the front vowel
 (a) into '-it', '-in' sound in Myanmar
 script and '-at', '-an' sound in Roman script

သစ္စာ	မဇ္ဈ	အဇ္ဈ	လဇ္ဈိ	မဇ္ဈိမ	သညာ
saccā	maccha	ajja	lajjī	majjhima	saññā