

## A SIMPLE GUIDE TO CHANTING PĀḲI

In PāḲi verse a syllable is considered to be light or heavy metrically, with a heavy syllable taking twice as long to pronounce as a light one. Through the alternation of light and heavy syllables it is possible to build up rhythmic structures just as it is in music.

As a guide to the pronunciation of the vowels for the English reader:

<p><b>a</b> as in <b>another</b></p> <p><b>i</b> as in <b>ink</b></p> <p><b>u</b> as in <b>under</b></p> <p><b>e</b> as in <b>age</b></p>	<p><b>ā</b> as in <b>art</b></p> <p><b>ī</b> as in <b>eel</b></p> <p><b>ū</b> as in <b>prudent</b></p> <p><b>o</b> as in <b>own</b></p>
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The sound written in PāḲi as *-ñ-* is pronounced *-ny-* as in *canyon*; *-c-* is pronounced as *ch-* as in *chat*; and *-ṁ* is a nasal sound produced by air escaping only through the nose.

Remember that in the chanting the following are always heavy sounds: *-ā-*, *-ī-*, *-ū-*, *-e-* & *-o-*; the endings *-am̐*, *-im̐*, & *um̐*; any vowel at the end of a line of verse (but not in prose); and a vowel followed by a double consonant (in PāḲi aspirates are marked with *-h* as *-kh* *-gh*, etc. these are not considered double consonants).

In fact all syllables are pronounced heavy except for the *-a-*, *-i-*, & *-u-* sounds followed by a single consonant, or another vowel, which are light (except at the end of a line of verse).

Double consonants must be clearly articulated as two sounds, not merged into one. When there is a double consonant it may help to imagine a hyphen between the two letters and pronounce accordingly.

If these rules are ignored then both the rhythms are broken, and the meanings may change with the weight of the syllable (e.g. *ananda* means *unhappy*, *ānanda* means *very happy*; *sata* means *one hundred*, *satta* means *a living being*, etc.)

In analysis 2 signs are used to indicate weight: ∪ = light; – = heavy.

Note the difference in weight in the first syllable of the 1st and 3rd words of this prose piece below:

--            ∪∪            --∪                    ∪-            ∪∪-            ∪-∪  
**Bud-dham̐ saraṇam̐ gac-chāmi**    not    **Budham̐ saraṇam̐ gachāmi;**

Here is an analysis showing the underlying rhythm of one of the verses (the signs || in the analysis, and ~ in the verse, are used to divide the lines):

∪---|∪---||-∪---|∪-∪-  
**Ime ete Mahā Bodhi ~ Loka-nāthena pūjītā**  
 ∪-∪-|∪---||-∪---|∪-∪-  
**Aham-pi te namassāmi ~ Bodhi-rājā namatthu te!**