

Course Title: *Reading Pāli through the Tipiṭaka*

Course Description:

This January Term evening intensive introduces students to the reading of Pāli through selected passages from the five Nikāyas, with a focus on the Dhammapada. Students will build competency in reading, translation, and chanting, while deepening their appreciation of canonical themes such as impermanence, mindfulness, and loving-kindness. The course balances linguistic training with interpretive and devotional dimensions of the Tipiṭaka.

Credit and Hours

- Credits: 2 (30 contact hours)
- Schedule: January 2 – January 29, 2026
- Time: 8:30 pm – 10:00 pm EST (1.5 hrs per session; 20 evenings total)

Instructor: Bhante Derangala Kusalagnana

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Read and understand basic Pāli passages from DN, MN, SN, AN, and KN (Dhammapada).
- Translate selected texts into English with attention to vocabulary and grammar.
- Recognize and explain core Pāli grammatical structures.
- Chant short suttas with proper rhythm and pronunciation.
- Discuss key doctrinal ideas in the context of canonical readings.

Course Components

- Foundations in Reading (DN & MN) – sentence structure, greetings, meditation passages.
- Thematic Readings (SN & AN) – dependent origination, aggregates, brahmavihāras.
- Wisdom Verses (KN – Dhammapada) – reading and chanting selected verses.
- Chanting Practice – Metta Sutta, Mangala Sutta, Ratana Sutta.

References

- **Primary Texts:**
 1. Dīgha Nikāya (DN)
 2. Majjhima Nikāya (MN)
 3. Saṃyutta Nikāya (SN)
 4. Aṅguttara Nikāya (AN)
 5. Khuddaka Nikāya (KN – Dhammapada)
- **Secondary Texts**
 1. Warder, A.K. *Introduction to Pali*
 2. Gair & Karunatilake. *A New Course in Reading Pali*
 3. Cone, Margaret. *A Dictionary of Pāli*
 4. Nabirittankadawara Gnanaratana. *A Pali Grammar for Tripitaka Studies* (Kelaniya: Department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, 2020)

Schedule Outline

- **Week 1 (Jan 2–6):** Pāli alphabet, pronunciation, grammar basics (Gnanaratana); DN/MN passages; chanting Metta Sutta.
- **Week 2 (Jan 7–13):** AN & SN readings on mindfulness and brahmavihāras; chanting Mangala Sutta.
- **Week 3 (Jan 14–20):** KN – Dhammapada verses; chanting Ratana Sutta; thematic discussions.
- **Week 4 (Jan 21–27):** Integrated reading practice; unseen passages; chanting review.
- **Jan 28–29:** Final reflections, review chanting, and closing session.

Grading and Assessment

- Evaluation in this 2-credit intensive will be based on active participation, translation exercises, chanting practice, and a final reading performance.
- Class Participation (20%) – Regular attendance, engagement in discussions, and contribution to group work.
- Translation Exercises (30%) – Short written or oral translations of selected passages from DN, MN, SN, AN, and KN.
- Chanting Assessment (20%) – Performance of Metta Sutta, Mangala Sutta, or Ratana Sutta with correct pronunciation and rhythm.
- Final Assessment (30%) – Reading and translation of an unseen short passage, with brief reflection on its doctrinal meaning.

Grading Scale

- A = 90–100 (Excellent command of Pāli reading and chanting)
- B = 80–89 (Good proficiency with minor errors)
- C = 70–79 (Satisfactory, basic competence achieved)
- D = 60–69 (Limited competence, significant errors)
- F = below 60 (Incomplete or inadequate performance).