

## THE TIBETAN ALPHABET: THE THIRTY CONSONANTS

The table below shows the traditional layout of the thirty Tibetan Consonants. The Consonants are organized in rows (horizontal groups) and columns (vertical groups) according to how the spoken sound is made. The bold letters below each Consonant represent its *phonetics*, that is, how it's pronounced, or what it sounds like as a spoken syllable. Note that an apostrophe indicates a breathy quality.

<b>The Inherent Ah</b> <i>Each of the Consonants ends with an "A," pronounced like the "a" in father.</i>	<b>Column 1</b>	<b>Column 2</b>	<b>Column 3</b>	<b>Column 4</b>
	Short and high tone	High and breathy tone	Long and low tone	Long and low tone
<b>Row 1</b> In the back of the throat	ཀ་ KA	ཁ་ K'A	ག་ GA	ང་ NGA <sup>1</sup>
<b>Row 2</b> At the roof of the mouth	ཅ་ CHA	ཆ་ CH'A	ཇ་ JA	ཉ་ NYA
<b>Row 3</b> With the tip of the tongue behind the teeth.	ཏ་ TA	ཐ་ T'A	ད་ DA	ན་ NA
<b>Row 4</b> At the Lips	པ་ PA	ཕ་ P'A	བ་ BA	མ་ MA
<b>Row 5</b> Letters 1-3 Roof of the mouth Letter 4 At the Lips	ཅ་ TSA	ཆ་ TS'A	ཇ་ DZA	མ་ WA
<b>Row 6</b> Low tone	ཞ་ ZHA <sup>2</sup>	ཟ་ ZA	འ་ A <sup>3</sup>	ཡ་ YA
<b>Row 7</b> Letters 1 & 2 Even or Low tone Letters 3 & 4 High tone	ར་ RA	ལ་ LA	ཤ་ SHA	ས་ SA
<b>Row 8</b> High tone	ཧ་ HA	ཨ་ A <sup>4</sup>		

<sup>1</sup> Note that this syllable is pronounced like the English word "gnaw," but pronounced in the far back of the throat. It is also like the 'nga' part of "writing all thirty Consonants."

<sup>2</sup> The "ZH" sound in the Consonant ZHA is pronounced like the 's' in the word "leisure."

<sup>3</sup> This Consonant is pronounced with a low tone, like a relaxed "ahh."

<sup>4</sup> This Consonant is pronounced with a high tone, like the exclamation "ah!"