

Prefixes & Derivation

Here you can look up the main prefixes which form Pali words and whose knowledge is sometimes required for understanding properly the original meaning.

abhi-:

1. towards, against to, on to, at-.

ex: gacchati: to go > abhi·gacchati: to go towards, approach

2. out, over, all around, on top of.

ex: jāti: birth > abhi·jāti: offspring

kamati: to affect, come to > abhi·kamati: exceed

tapati: to shine > abhi·tapati: to shine forth

3. transitivising intransitive verbs as does English be-.

ex: jāyati: to arise, be produced > abhi·jāyati: to beget

4. intensification: very much, greatly.

ex: nipuṇa: clever > abhi·nipuṇa: very clever

jighacchati: to be hungry > abhi·jighacchati: to be very hungry

vandati: to salute > abhi·vandati: to salute reverentially.

5. pleonastic: appears in double-prefix compounds where it is often seemingly superfluous, ie. weakened in meaning, when the second part already denotes intensity.

adhi-:

remark: before vowels becomes, **ajjh-**

ex: adhi+attaṃ = ajjh·attaṃ

1. toward, to, up to, on, over.

ex: gacchati: to go > adhi·gacchati: "to go on to & reach it" ie. obtain

gaṇhāti: to take, seize > adhi·gaṇhāti: to overtake, surpass

bhāsatī: to speak > adhi·bhāsatī: to speak to, address

2. where, here, on top of, above, over.

ex: ("where":) vasati: to live, dwell > adhi·vasati: to inhabit

("here":) atta: self > ajjh·atta: "this self here", personal, subjective, interior, inwardly

3. in addition, quite, very, super, higher.

ex: jeguccha: detestable > adhi-jeguccha: very detestable
paññā: wisdom > adhi-paññā: higher, additional wisdom.

anu-:

1. after, behind (motion viewed from the front backward).

ex: dhāvati: to run > anu-dhāvati: to run after

bala: military force > anu-bala: rearguard

bhāsati: to speak > anu-bhāsati: to speak after, repeat

2. for, towards an aim, on to, into, over to, forward (motion viewed from the back forward).

ex: pavecchati: to give, bestow > anu-pavecchati: to hand over

rodati: to cry, weep > anu-rodati: to cry for

pavisati: to enter > anu-pavisati: to enter into

3. (emphasis).

ex: dayā: sympathy, kindness > anu-ddayā: pity

yoga: application, endeavour > anu-yoga: devotion, dedication

vitakketi: to consider, reflect > anu-vitakketi: to ponder over

4. according to, in conformity with, along.

ex: ñāta: kown, well-known > anu-ñāta: permitted, allowed

mati: opinion > anu-mati: consent, agreement

rūpa: form > anu-rūpa: conform

anu-dhamma: in conformity with the dhamma

karoti: to do > anu-karoti: to imitate

5. secondary, supplementary, inferior, minor, smaller.

ex: pabbajā: ascetic life > anu-pabbajā: discipleship in ascetism

majjha: average > anu-majjha: mediocre

pavatteti: to set in motion > anu-pavatteti: to keep in motion

6. each, every, one by one.

ex: disā: direction > anu-disā: each direction

pubba: previous, former > anu-pubba: 'each after the previous one' ie.

gradual

pañcāha: five days > anu-pañcāha: every five days.

paṭi-:

remark: also spelt **pati-**; before vowels becomes, **pacc-**

ex: paṭi+attaṃ= pacc·attaṃ

1. back, away from.

ex: patha: path, way > paṭi·patha: the opposite way.

kamati: to step > paṭi·kkamati: to step back, to retreat.

āneti: to bring > paṭi·āneti: to bring back.

2. against in opposition, contrary.

ex: karoti: to do, make > paṭi·karoti: to redress, repair, act against, be cautious.

manteti: to consult, take counsel > paṭi·manteti: to discuss in argument, refute.

remark: In this sense, opposed to **anu-**.

ex: sota: stream > anu·sota: with the stream; paṭi·sota: against the stream.

3. in return, in exchange (in revenge).

ex: bhāṣati: to speak > paṭi·bhāṣati: to speak back, to reply.

bhaṇḍa: goods, merchandise > paṭi·bhaṇḍa: merchandise in exchange, barter.

māreti: to kill > paṭi·māreti: to kill in revenge.

4. to, on to, up to, towards, at.

ex: jānāti: to know > paṭi·jānāti: to acknowledge, agree to, approve of.

5. again, a second time (Eng. re-).

ex: dasseti: to show, exhibit > paṭi·dasseti: to show up again, reappear.

nijjhata: pacified > paṭi·nijjhata: re-pacified.

sandhi: union > paṭi·sandhi: reunion (with a body), reincarnation.

6. secondary, minor.

ex: aṅga: limb > paṭi·aṅga: minor limb.

7. comparison.

ex: puggala: person > paṭi·puggala: rival, compeer.

8. sham.

ex: nāsikā: nose > paṭi·nāsikā: false nose.

sīsaka: top knot > paṭi·sīsaka: sham top knot.

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saṃ- (or sam-):

1. conjunction, closer connection = with, along, together.

ex: yutta: yoked, connected > saṃyutta: bound together, grouped.

vasati: to live > saṃvasati: to live together with

2. completeness, or accentuation of the meaning = thoroughly, quite, fully, perfectly. It often equals **pa-** with which it gets combined in **sampa-**.

ex: bodhi: awakening > sambodhi: complete awakening

jāna: knowing > sampajāna: knowing thoroughly.

3. pleonastic, without really modifying the meaning.

ex: bojjhaṅga: factor of awakening > sambojjhaṅga: factor of awakening.

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