

Pāḷi Prepositions and Prefixes (*upasagga* or *upasaṇa*)

from: *MAGADHABHĀṢĀ (PĀḲI): A Compendious Grammar on the Language of Pāḷi Buddhism Second, Revised Edition A. Bhikkhu pp 138-140*

Kinds of Prepositions

(a) There are twenty prepositions or prefixes – generally prefixed to roots and *kita* nouns,¹ although quite a number can be used independently too (Thitzana, 2016: 323; others limit their number to exactly five; see below). (b) The following list was grafted mainly from Kacc 221, with explanations from Thitzana (pp. 324–40) and Ānandamaitreya (1993/2012: 97), if not indicated otherwise:

_ *a/ā*: till, up to, upward, back, intensifier, signifies opposite meaning of root to which it is affixed (e.g. *āgacchati* – “He comes”; *akkosati* – “He insults”).

_ *abhi*: being special, specially, distinctive, beyond, very much, predominantly, toward, wrongly, recklessly, to, unto, facing, opposite, up, above (e.g. *abhigacchati* – “He goes toward”).

_ *adhi*: being lord over, up, over, superior, supreme, to attain, deeply, excessively, with regard to (e.g. *adhigacchati* – “He goes over, ” “He attains”).

_ *anu*: following, again and again, alongside, in compliance with, suitable, small, after, repeatedly, behind, inferior, favorable, in detail (e.g. *anugacchati* – “He follows”).

_ *apa*: away from, off, negatively, wrongly (e.g. *apagacchati* – “He goes away from”).

_ *api*: above, cover up, close on (e.g. *apidhānaṃ* – “a cover, ” “a lid”).

¹ See chapter “*Kita* and *Taddhita* Affixes.”

_ ati: over, much, excessively, beyond, across (e.g. atikkamati – “He passes over”).

_ ava:² down, inside, contemptuously, mean, away, off, around³ (e.g. okkamati – “He descends”).

_ du: ill, inauspicious, bad, without, lack of, unwholesome, poor in nature, being difficult (e.g. dujjana – “a bad man”).

_ ni: down, out, away, into, opposite of, without, lack of (e.g. nisīdati – “He sits down”).

_ nī: out, off, to remove (e.g. niggacchati – “He goes out”).

_ pa: forth, specifically, up, away, the source, successively, chief, noble, clear, clean, inside, intensifier (e.g. pabbajati – “He goes forth”).

_ parā: opposite, again and again, continuously, wrongly (e.g. parābhavati – “He is ruined”).

_ pari: round, insulting, dominant, overall, completely, altogether⁴ (e.g. paribhavati – “He scolds”).

_ pati/paṭi: again, in response to, in return, instead of, in exchange for, against, on behalf of, similar to, being suitable, minor parts or limbs of the body, opposite, back, representing, similar to, afterward,⁵ intensifier (e.g. paṭipucchati – “He questions in return”).

_ saṃ: together, well, oneself, in union, unitedly, self, again and again, intense, intensifier (e.g. saṅgacchati – “He meets”).

² It may change to o before consonants; see also the section “Consonantal Sandhi (byañjanasandhi),” pt. 10.

³ The three last mentioned were taken from Nārada (n.d.: 120).

⁴ Last two-mentioned meanings have been taken from PED (s.v. “pari”).

⁵ Pd I (p. 5) attests that paṭi can mean “afterward”: paṭīti vā ayaṃ saddo pacchāti etassa atthaṃ bodheti – “or this word ‘paṭi’ reveals the meaning of ‘afterward.’”

_ su: good, well, auspicious, being easy, abundance, intensely, firmly, intensifier (e.g. sugati – “good [or ‘happy’] destination [after death]”).

_ u: up, upward, above, wrong, opposite of, intensifier (e.g. uggacchati – “He goes up, ” “He rises”).

_ upa: to, close by, toward, near, subordinate, firmly, allegation, over, to exceed, intensifier (e.g. upagacchati – “He goes to, ” “He goes near”).

_ vi: away, off, variously, in different ways, transformed, without, out, specially, being off, separated, apart (e.g. vigacchati – “He goes away”).

Usage. (a) An *upasaggam* (“addition”) adds to verbs, participles, absolutes, infinitives, nouns or adjectives semantically or otherwise, specifying, emphasizing or altering their meaning – it may be added to those (Ānandamaitreya, 1993/2012: 97), but Collins (2006: 125) mentions that five are also common as independent words and prepositions: *anu* (+ accusative), *apa* (+ ablative), *abhi* (+ accusative), *ā* (+ ablative), *paṭi* (+ accusative). (b) They usually modify or specify the meaning of the root, intensifying it (classification name: *dhātvatthavisesako* – “that which modifies [or ‘enhances’] the meaning of the root”) and sometimes even reversing its significance altogether (classification name: *dhātvatthabādhako* – “that which debars the meaning of the root”). (c) At other occasions, they add no meaning whatsoever – or just little – to the original sense of the root (type name: *dhātvatthānuvattako* – “that which keeps on alongside the meaning of the root, ” Collins: 125; Thitzana, 2016: 323; Tun, 2019: 3). (d) Adverbs (e.g. *antarā* – “in between, ” “meanwhile”), as well as absolutes (e.g. *nissāya* – “near”), adjectives (e.g. *samīpa* – “near, ” “close”) and nouns (in oblique cases) may operate as prepositions proper. (e) Even verbal forms may carry the sense of a preposition (e.g. *sahita* – “with”; Perniola, 1997: 133; Collins: 126).