



## A Descriptive Study of Assamese Prefixes

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**Abstract**— Assamese language is inflectional in nature where prefixation of various Assamese words play a very vital and sensitive role in the process of word formation. Sometimes prefixes have a derivational nature which leads to create new words differing in part-of-speech and meaning from the words with which these are attached. Thus, prefixation acquires an identity of a morphodynamic process in the language through which new words take birth, while old words change their forms, functions, and meanings to increase lexical inventory of Assamese language. This particular study, aims to create a theoretical foundation about the nature of lexical generativity of prefixes used in formation of words in Assamese language. This study of prefixation may help in the fields of descriptive linguistics, applied linguistics, and language technology, since analysis of forms and functions of prefixes supplies necessary information for developing text materials for Assamese language teaching, compiling dictionaries, designing systems for machine learning, and developing databases for machine translation.

**Keywords**— Assamese, prefix, prefixation, verbal roots, morphosemantics

### I. INTRODUCTION

Language is like a deep ocean which looks very simple from the outside but it is full of endless possibilities and opportunities of new precious things and resources. The deeper one goes inside the ocean, the more strange things one will discover. Likewise, language in general sense appears very easy and simple but it is very complex in nature and there are many aspects which should be explored for the betterment of the socio-cultural background as well as to enhance the grammatical knowledge of the language users and the common people.

Being the first language of Assam, there are a wide range of Assamese speakers in Assam and its neighboring states. But only a handful work on Assamese language is done so far till now, and many important aspects are still untouched, pending and waiting to be explored. Among such various important aspects of Assamese language, we are here going to discuss about the types and applications of prefixes in Assamese language. A prefix makes the language shorter, more prominent in terms of meaning and also makes the word melodious. So it has a great linguistic and grammatical importance and hence one must have proper knowledge about it.

### II. PREFIXES

Prefixes come at the beginning of a word. They are usually one to three letters long, and attaching them to a word will affect the word's meaning. Even if prefixes do not bear any meaning itself individually until combined with a root verb or a substantive root, still they possess certain semantic senses because of which prefixes play a very crucial role in Assamese word-formation in terms of providing an additional spark to the meaning of the root word. Prefixes are very productive in nature [10] and hence can generate new words in Assamese language which in turn increasing the lexical stock of the Assamese language. So, it is very significant to have a thorough knowledge of Assamese prefixes for a better hold and understanding of Assamese language.

In Assamese language when a prefix is placed at the beginning of a verbal root or a substantive root, the new formed word will be either noun or adjective.

However, it can be observed from the given Assamese corpus that prefixes can be tagged with nouns, adjectives, verbal nouns, participial verb, pronoun, transitive verb etc [2], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7].

1. Prefix + Noun	=New Word	Meaning
পৰা + জয় "victory"	= পৰাজয়	"defeat"
2. Prefix + Pronoun	=New Word	Meaning
অধি + কাৰ "whose"	= অধিকাৰ	"right"
3. Prefix + Adjective	=New Word	Meaning
নি + কৃষ্ট "dragged"	= নিকৃষ্ট	"inferior"
4. Prefix + Verbal Noun	=New Word	Meaning
প্র + চলন "act of Moving"	= প্রচলন	"use, circulation"
5. Prefix + Verbal Adjective	=New Word	Meaning
অৱ + নত "bent"	= অৱনত	"modest"
6. Prefix + Participial Verb	=New Word	Meaning

অনু + গত “gone”	= অনুগত	“dependent”
7. Prefix + Transitive Verb	=New Word	Meaning
অপ + ঘাত “to get defeated”	= অপঘাত	“unusual”

### III. TYPES AND FORMS OF ASSAMESE PREFIXES

Generally prefixes are one to three letters long and once it is tagged with a stem or a base, it is considered to be a single word. In Assamese word-formation around 80 numbers of prefixes are used where 21 nos of prefixes are borrowed from Sanskrit, about 42 nos of prefixes are acquired from the native Assamese source and about 17 nos of prefixes are adopted from the foreign languages like Persian, French, Arabic, English, etc. However most of these Assamese prefixes are nothing but the different forms of Sanskrit prefixes [1, 8].

The 21 nos of *Sanskrit prefixes* are:

প্র, পৰা, অপ, সম্, অনু, অৰ, নিৰ্, দুৰ্, অতি, বি, অধি, সু, উৎ, অ, অতি, নি, প্রতি, পৰি, অপি, উপ, আ

The *Assamese prefixes* are as follows:

অ, অন, অনা, অনু, সা, আও, আদ, উপ, এ, কা, কু, দুৰ, নি, প্রতি, বদ, বি, বিনা, বে, স, সু, উ, সহ, পাতি, ভৰ, ভৰা, হা, ৰাম, প্ৰা, আবি, তিৰ, বহি, পৰি, ধি, অজ, বিনি, বিনা, গন্ড, পাচ্, আগ, মাজ, মিত, প্ৰ, etc.

Now-a- days, many **foreign prefixes** are also used to form words in the Modern Assamese language. Some of such foreign prefixes are as follows.

আম, কাৰ, গৰ্, গুন্, দৰ্, না, বৰ, বদ, ফুল, বে, বৰ্, হাফ, আব, খাচ, খোচ, খুচ, ব etc.

বে-বেনামী, বেআইনী, বেদখল, etc.

গৰ-গৰহাজিৰ, গৰমিল, etc.

কাৰ-কাৰবাৰ, কাৰখানা, etc.

বৰ-বৰখাস্তব, বৰবাদ, বৰদাস্ত, etc.

### IV. NATURE OF SEMANTIC CHANGE OF ASSAMESE WORDS WITH ADDITION OF PREFIX

In this part of the paper, we will observe that how prefixes play a vital role in the word-formation of Assamese language. Moreover, we will be able to discover from this part of the paper that prefixes are very productive in nature and also that prefixes have a stupendous importance in nurturing the Assamese language. The most amazing fact of prefix is that prefixes have no constant meaning [9], but a prefix can extremely influence a word semantically it is tagged with.

In Assamese language prefixes are generally indeclinable and they do not bear any meaning itself individually until combined with a root verb or a substantive root.

Again, a prefix can affect a word semantically to which it is tagged with in the following three ways [7]:

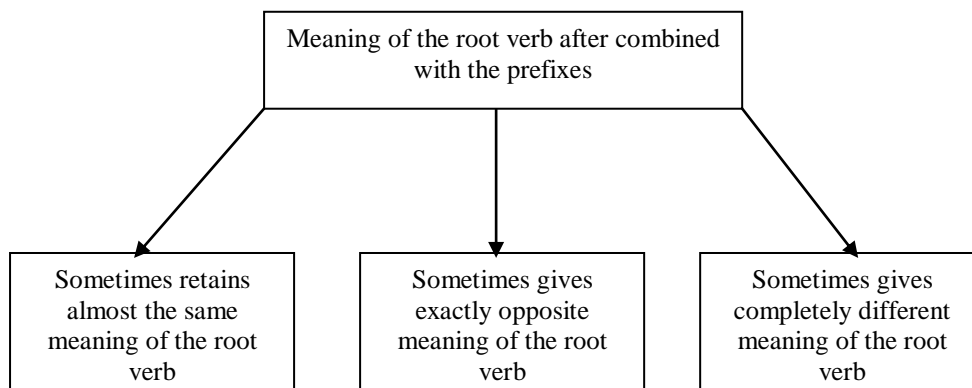


Fig 1: Semantic change of words after tagged with prefixes

For example:-

- (i.) In the word “প্রতিৰোধ” meaning resistance/obstruction, “প্রতি” is the prefix and “ৰোধ” is the root verb which means stoppage/obstruction. So the verb “ৰোধ” retains almost the same meaning even after combined with the prefix “প্রতি”. Also the words like উত্তপ্ত, নিযুক্ত, সুখ্যাতি etc
- (ii.) Like in the word অপমান, here the meaning of the verb মান is praise, but অপমান means insult which is the opposite meaning of মান. Similarly অপমশ, নিৰতিশয়, নিঃসঙ্গ etc
- (iii.) The word অভিযোগ bear the completely different meaning of the verb যোগ after combining with the prefix অভি, where “যোগ” means “addition” and “অভিযোগ” means “complaint”. Similarly প্ৰহাৰ, অনুচৰ, অৱগত, বিশাল, উৎসৰ্গ, আহাৰ, নিগম, etc.

Because of the intrinsic semantic budding of prefixes, they are able to generate new meanings of the word it is attached with. In fact due to this exceptional attribute, prefixes can provide an extra surpass to the semantic overview of the word it is tagged with. Some examples are given below to show how different prefixes tagged with the same Assamese stem

“কাৰ” (“whose”) gives different meanings. However, such type of semantic tempering is very common and usual phenomenon in Assamese word formation with respect to the tagging of prefixes.

**A. Semantic Change of the same words “কাৰ” after attached with different prefixes**

TABLE 1

Prefix	+	Word	=	New Word	Meaning
অ	+	কাৰ	=	অ কাৰ	Lord Brahma
অপ	+	কাৰ	=	অপকাৰ	Harm, mischief
অনু	+	কাৰ	=	অনুকাৰ	imitative
অধি	+	কাৰ	=	অধিকাৰ	Right, authority
অনাধি	+	কাৰ	=	অনাধিকাৰ	Absence of right
আ	+	কাৰ	=	আকাৰ	A form, a shape
আব	+	কাৰ	=	আবকাৰ	distiller
আৰি:	+	কাৰ	=	আৰিষ্কাৰ	discovery
উপ	+	কাৰ	=	উপকাৰ	Benefit, help, favour, assistance
তিৰ:	+	কাৰ	=	তিৰষ্কাৰ	Abuse
ধি	+	কাৰ	=	ধিকাৰ	Insult, abuse
নিৰা	+	কাৰ	=	নিৰাকাৰ	Having form or figure, shapeless, incorporeal
পৰি	+	কাৰ	=	পৰিষ্কাৰ	Clean, neat
প্ৰ	+	কাৰ	=	প্ৰকাৰ	Sort/means
প্ৰতি	+	কাৰ	=	প্ৰতিকাৰ	Revenge, retaliation, remedy
প্ৰা	+	কাৰ	=	প্ৰাকাৰ	A wall, bulwark
বহি:	+	কাৰ	=	বহিষ্কাৰ	Expulsion, banishment
বি	+	কাৰ	=	বিকাৰ	Sickness, delirium, beaker
বে	+	কাৰ	=	বেকাৰ	unemployed
সম্	+	কাৰ	=	সংস্কাৰ	Purification, the act of repairing or improving
সা	+	কাৰ	=	সাকাৰ	Corporeal, having a form or shape

**B. Semantic change of different words when tagged with the same prefix**

Again, it can also be observed from the Assamese corpus that a single prefix can be tagged with various numbers of words to generate new words giving different shades of senses to the words it is tagged with. This fact can be easily illustrated from the table 2 where the same prefix “প্ৰ” is tagged with various words to generate new words with added shade of meanings.

TABLE 2

Prefix	+	Word	Meaning	=	New Word	New Meaning
প্ৰ	+	হাৰ	Defeat, Rate, measure	=	প্ৰহাৰ	Beating, a blow, a strike
প্ৰ	+	চেষ্টা	try	=	প্ৰচেষ্টা	Effort, endeavour, persistent, attempt
প্ৰ	+	চলন	The act of moving	=	প্ৰচলন	Use, circulation
প্ৰ	+	গাঢ়	Thick, deep	=	প্ৰগাঢ়	Very thick or dense
প্ৰ	+	গতি	The of going, motion	=	প্ৰগতি	Progress, advancement
প্ৰ	+	কৃতি	Action, work	=	প্ৰকৃতি	Nature, the universe
প্ৰ	+	কৃত	Done, made, performed	=	প্ৰকৃত	Real
প্ৰ	+	স্তাৰ	Praise	=	প্ৰস্তাৰ	A proposal, suggestion
প্ৰ	+	চন্দ্ৰ	Passionate, furious	=	প্ৰচন্দ্ৰ	Powerful, violent
প্ৰ	+	ভূত	past	=	প্ৰভূত	Much, abundant
প্ৰ	+	ৰেশ	Dress, disguise	=	প্ৰৰেশ	entrance
প্ৰ	+	সাদ	Fatigue, sadness, harm	=	প্ৰসাদ	Favour, food offered to a deity
প্ৰ	+	লয়	Destruction, Equal time in dancing and music	=	প্ৰলয়	Calamity, the total destruction of the word
প্ৰ		বল	Strength, an army		প্ৰবল	Powerful, violent
প্ৰ	+	খৰ	Quick, an ass, the ringworm,	=	প্ৰখৰ	Very hot, very sharp

			<i>to be very dry</i>			
প্র	+	দূষণ	<i>The act of blaming or pointing out a fault</i>	=	প্রদূষণ	<i>Pollution</i>
প্র	+	ভাৰ	<i>To think, intention</i>	=	প্রভাৰ	<i>Strength, influence</i>
প্র	+	ৰঞ্জন	<i>Fraud, deceit</i>	=	প্রৰঞ্জন	<i>Cheating, evasion</i>
প্র	+	স্থান	<i>a place, spot, position</i>	=	প্রস্থান	<i>A departure, a march</i>
প্র	+	ক্ষিপ্ত	<i>Thrown, gone mad</i>	=	প্রক্ষিপ্ত	<i>interpolated</i>
প্র	+	কৃষ্ট	<i>Dragged, pulled</i>	=	প্রকৃষ্ট	<i>Excellent, prominent</i>
প্র	+	সিদ্ধ	<i>Fulfilled, accomplished</i>	=	প্রসিদ্ধ	<i>Renown, celebrated</i>
প্র	+	হৰ	<i>To steal, fire, each</i>	=	প্রহৰ	<i>One-fourth of a day or night or about three hours</i>
প্র	+	বীণ	<i>A kind of stringed musical instrument</i>	=	প্রবীণ	<i>Learned, Elder, skilful</i>
প্র	+	যুক্তি	<i>The Reason of an argument, justice, estimate</i>	=	প্রযুক্তি	<i>Application, technology</i>
প্র	+	যোজনা	<i>A plan, a proverb, epigram</i>	=	প্রযোজনা	<i>production</i>
প্র	+	ফুল্ল	<i>To expand</i>	=	প্রফুল্ল	<i>Fully blown, Smiling</i>
প্র	+	লেপ	<i>A plaster, a quilt used as a covering in bed</i>	=	প্রলেপ	<i>An ointment or poultice, a plaster</i>
প্র	+	বাস	<i>The act residing, a cloth</i>	=	প্রবাস	<i>A temporary residence away from home</i>
প্র	+	ব্রজন	<i>movement</i>	=	প্রব্রজন	<i>Migration</i>
প্র	+	জনন	<i>Birth, production</i>	=	প্রজনন	<i>Reproduction</i>
প্র	+	ভাত	<i>Boiled Rice</i>	=	প্রভাত	<i>The morning, dawn</i>
প্র	+	শিক্ষক	<i>Teacher</i>	=	প্রশিক্ষক	<i>A trainer, an instructor</i>
প্র	+	শাসন	<i>Government, control, a edict</i>	=	প্রশাসন	<i>administration</i>
প্র	+	শাখা	<i>Branch</i>	=	প্রশাখা	<i>A branchlet</i>
প্র	+	শান্তি	<i>Peace</i>	=	প্রশান্তি	<i>Deep calmness</i>

From the above cited examples it is clear that the prefix “প্র” can generate various meanings when tagged with various stems. Accordingly, other prefixes like প্রতি, উপ, সম, অনু, উৎ, নি, etc. also can provide different meanings when tagged with different stems.

#### V. TAGGING OF MULTIPLE PREFIXES IN FORMATION OF A SINGLE WORD IN ASSAMESE LANGUAGE

Though prefixes are not recursive in nature, [10] that is the same prefix is not used repeatedly with the same word again and again to generate several new forms of the same word, but sometimes more than one prefixes are tagged with the same base to generate new words in Assamese language. Following are some examples of such Assamese words which are formed when two different prefixes are tagged successively one after another at the beginning of various stems.

TABLE 3

<i>Prefix 1</i>	+	<i>Prefix 2</i>	+	<i>Word</i>	=	<i>New word</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
উপ	+	নি	+	ষদ	=	উপনিষদ	<i>Vedanta philosophy</i>
উপ	+	সম্	+	হাৰ		উপসংহাৰ	<i>Conclusion, end</i>
অ	+	পৰি	+	পূৰ্ণ		অপৰিপূৰ্ণ	<i>Incomplete, imperfect</i>
অ	+	প্রতি	+	ৰোধ		অপ্রতিৰোধ	<i>Not prevention</i>
অন	+	অধি	+	কাৰ	=	অনধিকাৰ	<i>Absence of right, absence of authority</i>
অন	+	আ	+	জৰী	=	অনাজৰী	<i>A try of love, absence of string or rope</i>
অন	+	উপ	+	কাৰ		অনুপকাৰ	<i>Harm, mischief</i>
অন	+	উৎ	+	সাহ		অনুৎসাহ	<i>Lack of enthusiasm</i>
অনু	+	প্র	+	ৱেশ	=	অনুপ্রৱেশ	<i>Infiltration, unauthorised entry</i>
অপ	+	আ	+	ৰৰণ	=	অপাৰৰণ	<i>Unveil</i>
অপ	+	উৎ	+	ঘাত	=	অপূদঘাত	<i>Unusual</i>
অতি	+	উৎ	+	খান	=	অভ্যুৎখান	<i>A revolt, an uprising</i>
নিৰ	+	অপ		ৰাধ	=	নিৰপৰাধ	<i>Innocence</i>

নিঃ	+	আ	+	কাৰ	=	নিৰাকাৰ	<i>Shapeless, incorporeal</i>
প্ৰতি	+	অৱ	+	আয়	=	প্ৰত্যায়	<i>Loss, a sin</i>
প্ৰতি	+	আ	+	ঘাত	=	প্ৰতাঘাত	<i>A counter-blow</i>
বি	+	সম্	+	গত	=	বিসংগত	<i>Unreasonable, inconvenient</i>
সম্	+	আ	+	চাৰ্	=	সমাচাৰ	<i>News, information</i>
সম্	+	উৎ	+	দত	=	সমুদ্যত	<i>About to, perfectly</i>
সু	+	পৰি	+	চালিত	=	সুপৰিচালিত	<i>Well-run, well-managed</i>
সু	+	প্ৰ	+	ভাত	=	সুপ্ৰভাত	<i>A pleasant morning</i>
সু	+	বি	+	খ্যাত	=	সুবিখ্যাত	<i>Well-reputed, very famous</i>
সু	+	সম্	+	গতি	=	সুসংগতি	<i>concordance</i>
দুৰ্	+	অভি	+	সন্ধি	=	দুৰ্ভিসন্ধি	<i>An evil design or purpose</i>
দুৰ্	+	আ	+	গ্ৰহ	=	দুৰাগ্ৰহ	<i>Earnest</i>

This type of uses of two prefixes together at the beginning of a stem or a base is more frequent in Assamese language. However, sometimes three or four prefixes are also used one after another in a single word, such as *অতিপ্ৰাকৃত* (*অতি-প্ৰ-আ-কৃত*), “supernatural” and *উপপ্ৰতিসমাহৰ্তা* (*উপ-প্ৰতি-সম্-আ-হৰ্তা*) “Sub-Deputy collector” etc. respectively but such words are very rare in terms of usage as well as in terms of lexical stock in Assamese language.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Prefixation has a very wide coverage in the Assamese language and has a very high influence in the area of descriptive linguistics, applied linguistics, and language technology. So this particular study of prefixes and its forms and application will provide a strong base for the better understanding of Assamese language and its grammar. Such a comprehensive and elaborated study on prefixation of Assamese language will flourish the linguistic creativity and will also expand the vocabulary of the language users as well as the Assamese speakers.

Moreover, this work on Assamese prefixes will supply valuable information for developing systems and tools for Assamese language teaching, compiling dictionaries for vocabulary enhancement, and writing descriptive grammars of the language.

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