The prefix *imma-* is typified by events in which the subject is affected by the action that he brings about, events in which the Initiator and the Endpoint are the same entity. As such, the prefix is a middle-voice marker, a claim that finds support in the prefix’s high degree of correlation with situations that are commonly middle-marked cross-linguistically (see Table 3), particularly body-action, translational motion, self-benefactive, and mental situations. With its primary focus on the affectedness of the subject, *imma-* views the event from its Endpoint. In this way the prefix differs critically from *mu-*, which is neutral to subject affectedness and revolves around the Initiator-Actor role. There has long been a broad, if vague, consensus that the prefix is functionally similar to *ba-*, even regarded by some as, essentially, an allomorph of *ba*. It is an assessment that is mirrored in the morphological derivation of *imma-* from *ba-* that most scholars subscribe to, even if differing in the details of that derivation (§1.3). But a definition of the distinction between the two, not to mention of the character of *imma-* alone, has remained elusive.

*imma-* and *ba-* are both middle voice markers—the difference between the two is a matter of both degree and type. Analogous to the cross-linguistically observed differences between reflexive and reciprocal markers (§2.9.6)—the reciprocal and reflexive, of course, being sub-domains of the middle—*imma-*, the phonologically heavier of the two, iconically conveys more meaning than its counterpart *ba-*. Whereas the middle voice meaning of *ba-* stems from this prefix’s tendency to occur with verbs that are naturally or inherently middle, *imma-*, in addition to appearing

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1 See, in particular, Attinger 1993: 280–281; Falkenstein 1978a: 184; Jacobsen 1965: 83–84; Postgate 1974: 19–22; Shaffer 1969: 437–438; cf. Michalowski 2004: 44, who considers *imma-* to be a reduplicated form of *mu-* (see also Rubio 2007: 1346, 1363). The similarities in meaning and function between *ba-* and *imma-*, as well as between *bi-* and *immu-*, are often reflected in their not uncommon alternation as textual variants, e.g., *ba-hun ~ im-na-hun* (GgHw-A 177); *im-na-ib-ar-sun-un ~ ba-ib-ar-sun (LgB 2: 12); *bi, ib-be ~ im-me* (EmkLA 174); *bi, ib-gal2 ~ im-mi-gal2* (InŠk 81); *im-mi-i-n-gub-bu-ne ~ bi, in-gub-bu-ne* (Hnds A 76).
with these predicates, may, more often than \textit{ba-}, add a reflexive reading to verbs that are not naturally middle, e.g., \textit{imma+du}_s ‘build s.th. for o.s.’ (cf. Sanskrit \textit{yajat-e} ‘He is sacrificing [for himself, as the one making the offering]’—see \S2.9.5). But there are also differences in the types of middle situations to which each gravitates. With \textit{imma-} the subject is more likely to exercise some degree of control and volition over the action, while \textit{ba-} correlates most highly with middle events in which the subject is a non-volitional patient, e.g., \textit{ni}_s—\textit{te} ‘fear’, \textit{šub} ‘fall’, \textit{uš}_s ‘die’, etc. Embracing the Actor role more than does \textit{ba-}, \textit{imma-} often corresponds to a ‘step up’ in transitivity vis-à-vis \textit{ba-}. To put it another way, \textit{imma-} is more \textit{mu-}like than \textit{ba-}. These respective affiliations of \textit{imma-} and \textit{ba-} hold particularly true for those verbs in which no case element intervenes between the verbal root and the prefix, and the semantic bond between prefix and root is at its closest (see \S3.2).

Central to an understanding of the meaning and function of \textit{imma-} is the notion of granularity and the elaboration of events. The domain of the middle voice, as discussed in \S2.9.6, can be described in terms of a low elaboration of events (Kemmer 1993a, 1994)—a diminishment in the conceptual separation between the participants and events involved. Accordingly, \textit{imma-}, as a middle marker, corresponds to events in which the Initiator and Endpoint, or subevents of the broader action, cannot be sharply differentiated from one another. But again, where \textit{imma-} differs from \textit{ba-} is in the degree of elaboration or distinction, or, in other terms, the grain-size with which an event is conceptualized. More so than \textit{imma-}, \textit{ba-} is concerned with the end result of an action or process, the resultant state assumed by an Object or patient. In this way, \textit{ba-} represents a more extreme manifestation of Endpoint perspective with the event viewed as an undifferentiated beginning-to-end whole. With \textit{imma-}, on the other hand, the event is opened up; it is presented as having some internal, albeit indistinct, structure. This amounts to a representation of events that have a greater complexity or intensity vis-à-vis \textit{ba-}. Consequently, with verbs that express naturally middle events, \textit{imma-} may be regarded as an emphatic or contrastive counterpart to \textit{ba-}, indicating greater subject involvement or intensity in the action.

This quality of \textit{imma-} is shown with particular clarity in the case of the verb \textit{šu—ti} (\S4.1.4). When coupled with \textit{ba-}, as it most commonly is, the subject plays a passive role in the event and the union of prefix and verb denotes ‘receive, get’ (\S5.1.4). With \textit{imma-}, on the other hand, the subject plays a more active role and consequently the event represented by \textit{šu imma+ti} expresses greater intensity, viz., ‘grab’, ‘seize’, or complexity, viz., ‘take for a (or one’s own) purpose’. The prefix