

Preserving Computational Uniformity in Vedic Sanskrit Stress Assignment

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Stress in Vedic Sanskrit (see generally Wackernagel 1896 and Macdonell 1910:76–82; \acute{V} = H*L pitch accent) is unpredictable based on reference to number of syllables and syllable weight alone and exhibits productive nonuniform patterns; see (1). Faithfulness to the prosodic properties of lexical entries and the morphological structure of stems largely governs stress assignment (see, e.g., Kiparsky 2010, Sandell 2015: Ch. 7, Perry & Vaux 2018, Yates 2020).

(1) Minimal Stress and Prosodic Contrast Pairs in Vedic Sanskrit

- a. **Minimal Stress:** *ápasā* [əpāsa:] ‘work:INST.SG’ vs. *apásā* [əpāsa:] ‘active, industrious:INST.SG’
- b. **Prosodic Contrast (4-Syllable):** *puróhitam* [puró:hitəm] ‘domestic priest:M.ACC.SG’ vs. *purūtámam* [puru:táməm] ‘much:CMPV.M.ACC.SG’

How the productive intraparadigmatic patterns of stress mobility (see (2)) and interparadigmatic patterns of stress assignment across morphologically related stems (see (3)) are best explained remains disputed. The approach adopted by Kiparsky (2010, 2018) relies in part on cophonologies implemented with lexical diacritics: [+dominant] affixes trigger accent erasure on stems to which they attach and condition stress on or near themselves. Contrast (3)c. (no stress shift) and (3)d. (stress shift).

(2) (Im)Mobile Stress in Vedic Nominal Inflection (stress on inflectional suffix underlined)

Gloss	ACC.SG	DAT.SG	GEN.PL
‘cow’	<i>gáv-am</i>	<i>gáv-e</i>	<i>gáv-ām</i>
‘man’	<i>nár-am</i>	<i>nár-e</i>	<i>nár-ām</i>
‘foot’	<i>pád-am</i>	<i>pad-é</i>	<i>pad-ām</i>

(3) Interparadigmatic Stress (Im)Mobility

- a. *gáv-* ‘cow’ + *-mant-* ⇒ *gómant-* ‘having cows’
- b. *pád-* ‘foot’ + *-vant-* ⇒ *padvánt-* ‘having feet’
- c. *bándh-u-* ‘family, relation’ + *-mant-* ⇒ *bándhumant-* (*-mant-* is [–dominant] and accented)
- d. *bándh-u-* ‘family, relation’ + *-tā-* ⇒ *bandhútā-* (*-tā-* is [+dominant] and preaccenting)

In contrast, this paper argues that intrastratal computational uniformity (Bermúdez-Otero 2012, Bermúdez-Otero 2024) for stress in Vedic can be rescued through lexical representations incorporating prespecified foot structure (Inkelas 1999, Yates 2020) and special faithfulness to the heads of morphologically complex stems (Revithiadou 1999). Furthermore, a distinction between a stem-level and a word-level stratum proves unnecessary when an analysis is implemented in a framework that allows for constraint ganging (e.g., Harmonic Grammar).

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