

The “Accent” in the Veda

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The Vedic accent appears in all the *Samhitā-s*, the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* and *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Other texts, such as the *Brāhmaṇas* not cited may have at one time been accented. The accent was musical in nature with some stress accompanying it. The *Prātiśākhya*s, however, only indicate pitch, so the name of the chief tone is known as *udātta* “raised,” “high.” The three degrees of pitch include:

1. *udātta* “raised,” “high”;
2. *svarita* “sounded”
3. *an-udātta* “not raised”

The *udātta* is the highest pitch based upon an analysis of Comparative philology—most notably Greek—and as evidenced by the markings that appear in the *Sāmaveda*, the *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā*, and the *Kāṭhaka Samhitā*. The *udātta* appears to have a middle level pitch, which is lower than the *svarita*. This is based upon method of indicating the pitches in the *R̥gveda*.

The *svarita* is a falling accent, transitioning from a *udātta* to *anudātta*. In the *R̥gveda*, however, the *svarita* will have a higher pitch than the *udātta* before falling to the *anudātta* level. It is a combination of the two in one syllable

Some other observations include the following:

1. The *svarita* is usually found on a syllable in which a vowel is preceded by a *y* or *v* representing an originally accented *i-* or *u-* vowel.
2. In Roman transliteration the *udātta* is represented by the ´ mark, and the *svarita* with a ` mark.