A guide to Svaras in Vedic recitation

Udātta are marked in red in this text (U). Traditionally it is rendered as middle pitch. In most texts it is left unmarked[⊗]. It may be signaled in some traditions by raising the hand.

Svarita (S)= high pitch on short vowel. In ṚV, AV, and ŚYV all long vowel svaritas are rendered as an elongation or duplication. In KYV only those long vowel svaritas that are prior to consonants are rendered as an elongation or duplication. Additionally in the KYV the anunāsikas with svaritas and long vowel svaritas prior to the full-stop mark (।) are rendered as an elongation or duplication. In most texts the the svarita is marked with a vertical overbar[♦].

Anudātta (A)= low pitch. In most texts these are marked by a horizontal underbar.

All other syllables in middle pitch or ekaśruti.

The Udātta is the natural accent of a word and is the inherent property of the vedic language. Once it is marked all the other intonations of the saṃhita or pada paṭha may be derived from it using the rules of Pāṇini. This Udātta accent is usually conserved for a vedic word of a certain form. For example the Udātta accent of the word अग्निः (on the second syllable) is preserved throughout its occurrences in the ṚV and also applies for its derivatives like:

अग्निम् । अग्निना। अग्निर् । अग्नेर्

which preserve a similar form. However, its shortened derivatives may assume a different accent:

अग्ने । अग्न

(where the Udātta shifts to the first syllable) or in some contexts it may become accentless:

अग्ने । अग्न

Given the presence of natural accents even in Greek, these accents are likely to be survivals from the proto-Indoeuropean common ancestor. On several words

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[⊗] In the Khila text of the ṚV and in the KYV Kaṭha saṃhita a vertical over bar is used to mark Udātta and other accents are left unmarked. In the ŚYV, Śatapatha brāhmaṇa (including bṛhadāraṇya upaniṣad) it is marked by a single horizontal under bar.

[♦] In most southern Taittirīya texts the vertical double bar is used to indicate svaritas that are intoned in an elongated or duplicate way.

Greek, (probably)Lithuanian and Sanskrit share a common natural accent. Greek tonal terms like oxu- high pitch; perispomene- a double toned rendering; baru- low pitch suggest that ancient Greek was tonally rendered similar to Vedic Sanskrit.

The position of the Udātta affects meaning of a word in Sanskrit in compound forms. Example:

सुकृत = well done; सुकृत = good deed

Rule #1

When there is an Udātta on a syllable the syllable before it becomes Anudātta and the syllable after it becomes Svarita.

Example:

अहम् सुवे पितरम् अस्य मूर्धन्

Applying the rule #1 we get:

अहम् सुवे पितरम् अस्य मूर्धन्

The same rule applies for the individual words in a pada pATha.

Rule #2

When there is a no Udātta throughout a starting set of syllables in a sentence then they all acquire an Anudātta tonal value.

Example:

सुरूपकृतुं

Applying rule #2 we get :

सुरूपकृतुं

Rule # 3

When an originally unaccented syllable is sandwiched between an upstream Udātta syllable and a downstream Udātta or svarita syllable then it becomes an Anudātta syllable.

U-X-U/S=>U-A-U/S

Example:

ततो वि

by applying rule #3 becomes:

ततो वि
ˍ

Rule #4

When Udāttas come in succession they remain middle tone and do not induce a change.

Example:

विश्वोतामूं द्यां

becomes

विश्वोतामूं द्यां (additionally there is rule #3 in action)
ˍ

Rule #5 (kampa)

<u>Ksaipra clause:</u>

When two Udāttas sandwich an accentless syllable at the fusion of two words which result in a sandhi with a half vowel (ya, ra, la, va) then a kampa svarita is formed.

Example:

अप्सु अन्तः

becomes

अप्स्वꣳअन्तः
ˍ

<u>Praślista clause:</u>

When two Udāttas sandwich an accentless syllable at the fusion of two words which results in a sandhi that elides original junction vowels and replaces them with a new vowel the then a kampa svarita is formed.

Example:

न एव

becomes

नैꣳव
ˍ

<u>Abhinihita clause:</u>

When two Udāttas sandwich an accentless syllable at the fusion of two words which results in a sandhi that causes the absorbtion of a pre- Udātta 'अ' by an 'ओ' or 'ए' formed by a sandhi then a kampa svarita is formed is formed on that 'ओ' or 'ए'.

Example:

रायः अवनिः by sandhi rules + original rule #1 becomes रायो ऽवनिः

Then by the abhinihita clause it acquires a kampa svarita thus:

रायोऽवनिः

Rule #6

When an Udātta bearing syllable is next to an unaccented syllable that is not under the influence of any of the other rules, then if they fuse due sandhi rules then the fusion product acquires a svarita tone.

Example:

नु अस्य under rule #1 becomes: नु अस्य but sandhi rules require it to be: न्वस्य

So it becomes: न्वस्य

Another example in the interior of a word is:

तनुवामहे =(rule #6+other rules)=> तन्वामहे

In the atharva veda these svaritas are marked by a special symbol:

न्वॏस्य ; तन्वाॏमहे