

## So-called “closer” sandhis in Vedic as indicators of prosodic boundaries

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This talk elaborates upon and substantiates the notion that *in Vedic so-called “closer sandhis” that resemble word-internal sandhi but can be observed on the sentence-level are not motivated by the closer syntactic relation of the word-forms involved, as is usually assumed, but that instead they are purely prosodically conditioned in that they occur in the periphery of prosodic boundaries.*

Sanskrit and Vedic Sanskrit in particular is well-known for its numerous sandhi phenomena that faithfully represent the flow of natural speech characterised by a multiplicity of processes of phonetic interplay (such as assimilations) both on the word-level and sentence-level. Depending on the prosodic context and type of phonetic interplay that they instantiate, word-level or internal and sentence-level or external sandhi may but need not be distinct. Where they are distinct, however, word-level and sentence-level sandhi are usually in complementary distribution, i. e. a particular sandhi development either occurs on the sentence-level or on the word-level, not on both. However, this is not always the case: as already noted by the ancient grammarians (VPr. 2,18; Pāṇ. 2,1,2; RVPr. 4,20) there are some cases in which word-level sandhi unexpectedly occurs on the sentence-level; cf. the following example from the Rigveda:

RV 9,77,2a-b

sá	<i>pūrviyáḥ</i>	<i>pavate</i>	<i>yám</i>
sáḥ	pūrvyáḥ	pavate	yám
DEM.NOM.SG.M.	first.NOM.SG.M.	clear.3SG.PRES.IND.MED.	REL.ACC.SG.M.
<i>divás</i>	<i>pári</i> //	<i>śyenó</i>	<i>mathāyát</i>
diváḥ	pári	śyenáḥ	mathāyát
sky.ABL.SG.M.	from.LP	falcon.NOM.SG.M.	steal.3SG.PRES.INJ.ACT.
<i>iṣitás</i>	<i>tiró</i>	<i>rájah</i>	
iṣitáḥ	tiráḥ	rájah	
send.PPP.NOM.SG.M.	through.PRÄP.	firmament.AKK.SG.N.	

„This one purifies himself first, whom the falcon stole from the sky, shooting through the firmament.“

The usual sentence-level sandhi is *-aḥ p-* (*pūrviyáḥ pavate*), the word-level sandhi is *-asp-* (cf. NOM.SG.M. *paras-pā* ‘guardian’); however, in *divás pári* the word-level sandhi *-asp-* occurs instead of the expected <sup>†</sup>*diváḥ pári*. In this context, sandhis of the former type are usually called “close” or “closer” sandhis in order to distinguish them from the “broad” or “broader” sandhis of the latter type. Ever since Oldenberg (1888), Whitney (1889) and Macdonell (1910), the communis opinio, recently elaborated upon by Hale (1990; 1995), has been that closer sandhi is conditioned by some kind of “closer” syntactic relation between the word-forms involved (e. g. the prepositional phrase constituted by *divás pári*). A number of counter-examples from the Rigveda, however, speak against this assumption (cf. e. g. ABL.SG.M/N. *janúṣaḥ pári* “from birth” RV 8,66,9c-d). On the basis of typological and prosodic observations it has therefore been argued recently that closer sandhi is not syntactically conditioned but that it regularly occurs in the periphery of the prosodic boundaries – especially pauses – of intonation units, while broader sandhi otherwise constitutes the default on the sentence-level (Fries 2017/2018[2021]). Similar observations – albeit not formulated as prosodic regularities – were already made by the ancient authorities (RVPr. 4,20; cf. also Ghosh 1939). However, due to the fact that intonation units are not marked explicitly in most of the Vedic corpus, definitive proof of this assumption has so far been lacking. This talk presents some new evidence from the Sāmaveda, where pauses are expressly marked, that seems to show that cases of closer sandhi do indeed occur within a rhythmic/prosodic unit (*parvan*) when one of the word-forms involved is either preceded or followed by a pause. Therefore, it seems that the Sāmaveda corroborates the assumption that closer sandhi is indeed a boundary phenomenon in Vedic.

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