

# The Ṛgvedic Syllable: Insights from the Ṛgvedaprātiśākhya and Modern Perspectives on Syllabification

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March 31, 2025

## Abstract

This study examines the theory of the syllable as presented in the *Ṛgvedaprātiśākhya* and contrasts it with the modern linguistic perspectives on syllabification. The *Ṛgvedaprātiśākhya* defines a consonant cluster (*saṃyoga*) as a group of consonants, noting that consonant clusters between two vowels can belong to the following or optionally the preceding vowel, thus demonstrating a specific framework for syllable division. In modern linguistics, the syllable is viewed as a hierarchical and prosodic unit, with key components such as onset, nucleus, and coda (Hockett, 1955; Fudge, 1969).

Modern theories emphasize the role of sonority and the Sonority Sequencing Principle (SSP), which governs the arrangement of segments within a syllable, ensuring a rise in sonority towards the nucleus and a fall thereafter (Jespersen, 1904; Clements, 1990). Additionally, constraints on syllable formation, such as the permissibility of clusters and their positional distribution within words, highlight the cross-linguistic diversity of syllabification (Zec, 2007; Maddieson, 2013). With evidences from Sanskrit (Varma, 1961) supported by the analysis of *Ṛgveda* data in Kessler (2004), align with the insights of the *Ṛgvedaprātiśākhya*, highlighting how certain phonotactic constraints support ambisyllabicity within the language.

By analyzing syllabic divisions in the *Ṛgveda*, this work explores the clustering patterns in terms of place, manner, and sonority, alongside their word-initial, medial, and final occurrences. Quantitative data from the *Ṛgveda* suggests that syllable structure is governed by a set of phonotactic constraints that reflect both the rules in the *Ṛgvedaprātiśākhya* and universal linguistic principles.

## References

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