

Irregular Lengthening of Vowels in Nominal Compounds in Sanskrit

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Most of nominal compounds in Sanskrit can be explained by so-called ‘internal *sandhi*’ rules, however, there are some forms that cannot be easily explained by them. In certain number of these forms, we observe that a stem-final short vowel in a prior member is lengthened.

In this presentation, confining myself to the nominal compounds ending in root nouns and other related forms in the *R̥gveda*, I will classify these irregular forms according to their triggers of the lengthening:

(1) The posterior member has a laryngeal in the front that causes the lengthening of the preceding vowel (*annāvṛdh-* ‘prospering with food’ < *ánna* + $\sqrt{\text{vardh}}$ < $*h_1\mu\text{erdh}$).

(2) The stem-final short vowel in the prior member becomes long, not because of a lengthening, but because the prior member takes a case form (*viśvāpús-* ‘all-sustaining’ < *viśva-* + $\sqrt{\text{pos}}$: *viśvā* as the neuter plural, but this can be also interpreted as metrical lengthening).

(3) The metre requires lengthening (*pratīṅ-* ‘receiving, acceptance’ < *prati* + $\sqrt{\text{vay}}$).

(4) Analogy with similar forms (*apāvṛt-* ‘turning oneself away’ < *apa* + $\sqrt{\text{vart}}$ by analogy with *āpāvṛta-* ‘opened’, the verbal adjective of *āpa* + $\sqrt{\text{var}}$ < $*H_1\mu\text{er-}$).

Paying special attention to the compounds that suffered lengthening by analogy, I will trace the history of how the lengthening caused by phonetical, grammatical, or metrical reasons was extended to other words. I suggest that, in general, irregular lengthening of the stem-final short vowel resulting from various reasons came to be attributed to the prior member itself, and the lengthening was also applied to other words beginning with the same prior member.

This phenomenon is of great interest from the viewpoint of Classical

Sanskrit, too. Among many examples of metrical lengthening or shortening of any kind of words in the *R̥gveda*, it is only these nominal compounds and other related forms I am going to discuss in the presentation that also survived as metrical variants in Classical Sanskrit poetry. A closer analysis of this lengthening, especially of the process of the expansion through analogy, will give an insight into the history of Sanskrit language.