

Vedic *samaha* ‘verily’

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Vedic *samaha* occurs four times in the Ṛgveda and two times in the Atharvaveda (AVŚ 5.4.10d = AVP 1.31.4d, AVŚ 6.24.1b = AVP 3.17.6b). The indigenous commentators take this word as the vocative singular of a (further unattested) adjective, which is certainly unsatisfactory. Roth glossed *samaha* in PW as an adverb ‘irgend, so oder so’, and Western scholarship has in general followed him. For instance, Grassmann in his dictionary glosses *samaha* by ‘irgendwie, auf irgend eine Weise, sei es wie es sei’, Macdonell (1910: 426) gives ‘in some way or other’. In the *Glossar*, Geldner (1907: 190) translates *samaha* ‘jedenfalls, gewiss’, but in his Ṛgveda translation, he chose for the former variant at all places.

Since Hübschmann (1877: 393), *samaha* has been analysed as the pronominal stem *sama-* ‘any, every’ plus the suffix *-ha* < **-dha* (cf. AiGr. I: 250, 289; III: 577f., 591). This analysis is problematic in several respects. Firstly, *samaha* is the only enclitic adverb (cf. Renou EVP X: 85: “l’atonie étant due à celle du pronom *sama* et favorisée par le sens faible “en tout état de cause”; seul cas de ce type en véd.”). It always occupies the second position in the clause and is rather reminiscent of a conglomerate of particles. Secondly, the suffix *-ha* < **-dha* forms adverbs with a locative or temporal meaning (*ihá* ‘here’, *kúha* ‘where’, *viśváhá* ‘always’). This is probably the reason why Wackernagel and Debrunner (AiGr. III) on p. 577 translate *samaha* ‘irgendwie, irgendwo’, and on p. 591 ‘an einigen Orten’. Thirdly, and most importantly, the contexts where we find this word clearly speak against this interpretation. As we shall see, *samaha* everywhere means ‘verily, forsooth’.

Let us start from the Atharvavedic passages, which are less ambiguous. AV 5.4 is a hymn to the healing plant *kúṣṭha*. The final stanza (10) reads:

śīṣāmayām upahatyām
akṣⁱyós tan^uvò rápah |
kúṣṭhas tát sárvaṃ níṣ karad
dáivam samaha vṛṣṇⁱyam ||

Whitney (1905: 228) translates as follows: “Head-disease, attack (? *upahatyā*), evil of the eyes, of the body - all that may *kúṣṭha* relieve, verily a divine virility (*vṛṣṇya*)”. And indeed, *samaha* can only be a strong emphatic particle here, reminiscent of *khálu* or *áha*. Bloomfield (1897: 4) translates the last pāda “a divinely powerful (remedy), forsooth!”. A more literal translation would be: “Divine verily is (its) power!”. Professor F.B.J. Kuiper points out to me

that a similar translation was used even before Bloomfield, cf. Grill (1888: 10): 'ein göttlich kräftig Mittel traun!'.

The same meaning of *samaha* is also evident in AV 6.24.1:

*himávataḥ prá sravanti
śíndhau samaha saṅgamāḥ |
āpo ha máhyaṃ tád devīr
dādan hr̥ddyótābheṣajām ||*

"From the Himavant (mountain) they flow forth, in the Indus verily is (their) gathering. May the heavenly waters give to me the remedy from heart-burn!"

Bloomfield (1897: 12) again renders *samaha* 'forsooth', but Whitney surprisingly chooses a different translation: "in the Indus somewhere [is their] gathering" (1905: 298), which is certainly inadequate. In a similar fashion, Grill 1888: 13 translates "Vom Himavat sie strömen aus, die Sindhu eint sie, weiss nicht wie?".

Let us now turn to the Ṛgvedic occurrences. In 7.89.3 the poet is asking Varuṇa to forgive him for his unintentional sin:

*krátvaḥ samaha dīnātā
pratīpāṃ jagamā́ sūce |
mṛlā́ sukṣatra mṛlāya ||*

"It is verily through weakness of will-power have I gone against the current, O pure one. Have mercy, good ruler, be merciful." Here, *samaha* stresses the poet's intention to prove to Varuṇa that his transgression was not intended (cf. comparable expressions in 7.86.6). Geldner's "Aus zu geringem Bedacht hab ich jedenfalls eine Widersetzlichkeit begangen" and Renou's "(Si) par quelque faiblesse de courage j'ai marché-jamais à contre-courant" (EVP V: 72) do not sufficiently express this idea.

5.53 is a hymn to Maruts, and 5.53.15 reads:

*sudevāḥ samahāsati
suvīro naro marutaḥ sá mártīyaḥ |
yām tráyadhve s'yāma te ||*

"The mortal whom you protect, O Maruts, will be verily a friend of gods, rich in heroes. May we belong to those!". Here again the affirmative "verily, forsooth" suits the sense of the passage.

It is difficult to grasp the exact meaning of the last two passages. Both 1.120.10-12 and 8.70.13-15 are ironic *dānastutis* for a stingy patron. In 1.120.10, the poet tells us that he has received from the Áśvins a chariot without a horse and he was oh so happy to get it. Then he says: 1.120.11 *ayām samaha mā tanūhyāte jānām ānu | somapéyaṃ sukhó ráthaḥ*. The interpretation

of *tanūhyāte* is troublesome. Following Grassmann and Renou (EVP XVI: 23), I take *tanu* as 2sg. impv. from $\sqrt{\text{tan-}}$ and *uhyāte* (against Pp. *ūhyāte*) as 3sg. subj. pass. of $\sqrt{\text{vah-}}$. The poet addresses this horseless chariot: 'This one, verily, pull me! May this easy-going chariot be drawn to Soma-drinking, along the people!'

Also 8.70.13-15 is a sarcastic *dānastuti* for a patron who gave to three singers only one calf. The text of 14

bhūribhiḥ samaha ṛṣibhir
barhīṣmadbhi staviṣyase |
yād itthām ékam-ekam íc
chāra vatsān parādādaḥ ||

may be rendered: 'Verily, by many offering *ṛṣi*'s you will be praised, if you, O *Śara*, will give a calf to every (poet)'.

The conclusion of this short note is that *samaha* is not an adverb 'in some way or other', but an emphatic particle 'verily, forsooth'. Therefore, Hübschmann's view that it contains the suffix *-ha* < **-d^ha* is improbable. Considering the meaning of *samaha*, it seems natural to explain this word as containing the affirmative particle *ha* < PIE **g^he*, added to the enclitic pronominal stem *sama-* 'any'. It has then the same formation as *āha*, yet another emphatic particle, presumably derived from the pronominal stem *á-*. This note is not an appropriate place for a detailed discussion of the semantic difference between the two particles, which remains a task for the future. I would only like to mention that the meaning of *āha* and *samaha* seems to reflect the meaning of the stems they are derived from. We may render *āha* more or less by 'then, in that case', which is in conformity with the anaphoric character of the pronoun *á-*, whereas *samaha* has an element of 'at any rate, whatever'.

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