TWO PECULIAR USAGES OF THE PARTICLE KIRA/KIRI IN APABHRAṂŚĀ

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1. Introduction

The Sanskrit particle kīla has been studied in considerable detail, first by Emeneau (1969) and Ickler (1976) and after them by van Daalen (1988). Where Emeneau distinguished one function of kīla and Ickler two, van Daalen recognized as many as four. Whatever is exactly the case here, in most contexts of kīla, if not all of them, we seem to be dealing with a speaker who wants to convey the idea that he is only passing on a message or is affecting to do so. The speaker wants, among other things, to convey the idea that he himself does not have the slightest idea or cannot think of any good reason as to why things are the way he is reporting them to be.

The above-mentioned studies of kīla were based on (Vedic) Sanskrit, the dramatic Prākrits and Pāli. Apabhraṃśa material has not been considered so far. In what follows I would like to present some findings from Apabhraṃśa. I would like in particular to draw attention to two usages of kīra (or kirī) in Apabhraṃśa, which, though otherwise “regular”, seem to be peculiar of that dialect.

2. kīra in combination with an interrogative pronoun

What immediately strikes the eye are the many instances in Apabhraṃśa of kīra in combination with an interrogative pronoun, in particular so in the Harivamśapurāṇa. In this text this combination accounts for altogether 18 of the 28 instances in the passages edited by Alsdorf.¹ One example is 89.12.9:

rappijai kim kīra kāminthiṃ vaisiyamandiracūḍāmanthiṃ,

How is it possible to entertain a passion for women, who are the crest-jewels of the brothels?;
or 89.12.12:

parigaliyamuttasoniyajaleṇa kim kijai kira soniyalena.

What does one expect from a woman’s belly, which is leaking blood and urine?

In both instances we are dealing with rhetorical questions. The speakers obviously want to convey the idea that they fail to understand why a man would fall in love with a woman. Similarly, the expected answer to the question dhannem viṇu kahiṃ kira suku kammu (84.1.7) “where does one find a good deed without Dharma?” is “nowhere”. In 88.4.6: ajjā vi kira tiḥum kāiṃ cirāvahi “Why are you still hesitating?” the speaker wants to express that he does not understand the hesitation.

These instances of kira seem to fall within the range of the functions recognized for Sanskrit, Prākrit and Pāli. The point, however, is the relative frequency of the particular combination in Apabhramśa or at least of the Harivānśapurūṇa. Admittedly, Emeneau, Eckler and van Daalen do not provide information on the frequency of the different types of contexts of the particle. However, going by the cursory treatment accorded by these scholars to kila with an interrogative pronoun one might conclude that in their sources the combination was not very frequent or, at least, did not strike them as so.2

3. kira in comparisons

In the texts published in the anthology Gurjararāṣāvāḷi 1 I have found three instances of kiri in comparisons. The first instance to be discussed is from the Vīraṭaparvā, lines 337-8:

etalai śuṣarmā dali dhola vājaiṃ
jāne asadhiḥ kiri meha gajai

In the meantime in Śuṣarmā’s army the drums were beaten: it sounded like the thundering clouds in the month of Aṣādha.

Here kiri is found in combination with jāne “as if, as it were”. However, in Vidyōvīlāsapavāḍau, lines 67-70, it is found on its own “instead” of jāne (beside jāne, note also jisyā and jīma):

adharā suraṃga jisyā paravāli sarala sukōmala bāha
piṇa payohara aṭihiṃ maṇohara jāne amiyapavāha.
uirayugala kiri kadalihaṁbhā caraṇakamala sukumāla
mayagala jima māthama śīlai bolai vayaṇa rasāla,

Her lips are red (lit. of a good colour) like (jisyā) coral, her arms straight and
tender, her thick round breasts lovely like (jāne) a stream of nectar, her pair of
thighs [like](kiri) the stems of the plaintain plant, her lotus-feet tender, she swings
her hips like (jima) an elephant, she speaks words full of love.

The other instance is found again in the Virāṭaparva (line 420):
dīśai nahiṃ bhuṣm kiri niri bīdī,

The earth has disappeared as if it has been submerged in the water.

Again, the function of kiri in these instances agrees with the ones established
for Sanskrit. With kiri the poet (or the speaker) seems to emphasize that he is
merely repeating common poetic images or descriptions. What is exceptional,
however, is the use in the latter two instances of kiri as a veritable particle of
comparison. This function becomes especially clear from the instance from the
Vidyāvilāsapavāḍau, in which kiri is found side by side with jisyā, jāne and jima.
While the aim of the poet in this stanza clearly was to show his skill in varying
the possible particles of comparison, his use of kiri on its own as such is peculiar.
The same applies to its use in Virāṭaparva 420. The question arises if we are not
dealing with a meaning “invented” on the basis of the occurrences in kira/kiri in
“messages”. As such, these instances of kiri as a particle of comparison would
testify to the artificial nature of Apabhramśa; which would be a learned language
just like Sanskrit.

Annotation:

1. kim kira in 83.3.11, 85.8.7, 88.12.6, 89.8.9, 89.12.9, 89.12.12, 89.13, 90.2.7, 92.12.11,
   92.13.2, ko kira in 83.8.8, 85.1.11, kira ko in 85.8.6, kira tuhun kāśi 88.4.6, kira kāśu
   85.7.8, kāśi kira 84.1.7, 89.7.9, kavāna kira 87.16.5.

   titi. This passage turns up again with Lelker (1976: 86), who queries the possibility of a
   substitution of original khalu by kila. Van Daalen (1988: 125-6 and 136, note 66) refers
   besides to katham adyāpi viprakṛṣṭatānaḥ in Bhavabhūti’s Mahāvīracarita (6,7+) and an
   instance of kim ndaṁ kirtetam from Jātaka 2.63.21. Other instances of kira in combination
   with an interrogative are found in, for instance, Sattasai 773 (kamalāyaraṇa
   kila prabodhakālak.
References


