

TWO PECULIAR USAGES OF THE
PARTICLE *kira/kiri* IN
APABHRAṂŚA

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1. Introduction

The Sanskrit particle *kila* 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 *kila* and Ickler two, van Daalen recognized as many as four. Whatever is exactly the case here, in most contexts of *kila*, 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 himself would 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 *kila* were restricted to (Vedic) Sanskrit, the dramatic Prākritis and Pāli. Apabhraṁśa material has not been considered so far. In what follows I would like to present some findings from Apabhraṁśa. I would like in particular to draw attention to two usages of *kira* (or *kiri*) in Apabhraṁśa, which, though otherwise “regular”, seem to be peculiar of that dialect.

2. *kira* in combination with an interrogative pronoun

What immediately strikes the eye are the many instances in Apabhraṁśa of *kira* in combination with an interrogative pronoun, in particular so in the *Harivaṁśapurāna*. 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:

*rappijjai kiṃ kira kāmīnīhīm
vaiṣiyamandīracūdāmaṇīhīm,*

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

or 89.12.12:

*parigaliyamuttasonīyajaleṇa kiṃ kijjai kira
soṇīyaleṇa,*

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 falls in love with a woman. Similarly, the expected answer to the question *dhammeṃ viṇu kaḥiṃ kira sukīu kammu* (84.1.7) "where does one find a good deed without Dharma ?" is "nowhere". In 88.4.6: *ajja vi kira tuhuṃ 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, Prākṛit and Pāli. However, what seems to be peculiar of Apabhraṃśa or at least of the *Harivaṃśapurāṇa*, is the frequency of the combination of *kira* with an interrogative pronoun. Admittedly, Emeneau, Ickler, 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 *kira* with an interrogative pronoun one might conclude that in their sources the combination was not very frequent or,
1. *kiṃ 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 tuhuṃ kāiṃ* 88.4.6, *kira kāsū* 85.7.8., *kaḥiṃ kira* 84.1.7, 89.7.9, *kavaṇa kira* 87.16.5

at least, did not strike them as so.²

3. *kira* in comparisons

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

*etalai śuśarmā dali dhola vājaiṃ
jāṇe asādhū kiri meha gājai*

In the meantime in Śuśarmā's army the drums were beaten: it sounded like the thundering clouds in the month of Āṣādhā.

Here *kiri* is found side by side with *jāṇe* "as if, as it were". However in *Vidyāvilāsapavāḍu*, lines 67-70, it is found on its own instead of *jāṇe* (beside *jāṇe*, note also *jisyā* and *jīma*):

*adhara suraṃga jisyā paravālī sarala sukumala bāha
pīṇa payohara atihim maṇohara jāṇe amiyapavāha
ūrayugala kiri kadalīthambhā caraṇakamala sukumāla
mayagala jīma mālhamtī cālai 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 (*jāṇe*) a stream of nectar, her pair of thighs [like] (*kiri*) the

2. Emeneau (1969: 251) refers to *Chandogya Upaniṣad* 4.14.2: *kiṃ nu somya kila te 'vocann iti*. This passage turns up again with Ickler (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 viprakṛṣṭatamaḥ kila prabodhakālaḥ* in Bhavabhūti's *Mahāvīrcarita* (6,7+) and an instance of *kiṃ nāma kir 'tam* from *Jātaka* 2.63.21. Other instances of *kira* in combination with an interrogative are found in, for instance, *Sattasāī* 773 (*kamalāyarāṇa uṇho hemamto sīalo jaṇavayassa/ko kirā bhīṇṇasahāvam jāṇai paramatthayam loe*), *Setubandha* 3,56 (*samuhamiliekkamekke ko ira āsaṇṇasaṃsaammi sahāo ...*), 4,62 (*kaha ira sakajjakusalā ...*), and *Samdeśarāsaka* 154 (*hiyau na kiṇa kiri phuttāu ṇam vajjihī ghaḍiu*).

stems of the plantain 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):

dīsai nahīm bhuiṃ kiri nīri būḍī,

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*, *jāṇe* 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 Apabhraṃśa, which would be a learned language just like Sanskrit.

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