

# Modes of Greetings in Kashmiri

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## 1. Introduction

Modes of greetings have an important place in the sociology of language. In every greeting situation, two persons come in contact in a particular ethnic situation, which is characterized by means of some paralinguistic features like gestures accompanied with certain statements.

## 2. Types of Greetings

There are two types of greetings in any language: verbal and non-verbal. Most of the time the greeting is incomplete without some kind of non-verbal behaviour implicit or explicit in the use of any mode of the greeting. It may be a nod, or a smile or a twinkle in the eye. Verbal greetings are not complete or effective in isolation unless they are accompanied with appropriate gestural expressions.

Non-verbal behaviour appears as an indispensable part of greeting that is often implied in the expression itself. For example, *namaste* "I am bowing before you" denotes an activity of non-verbal behaviour. Often the responses of various greeting formulas are fixed and stereotyped and clearly laid down in the books of etiquette.

Greeting expressions are not necessarily communication of information. Greeting expressions in most of the languages including Kashmiri consist of a kind of medical diagnosis, an inquiry about one's health as: *vaaray chivaa?* "How are you?" The literal meaning of a greeting in most cases is completely irrelevant.

Greetings are not merely usages of adherence to certain norms and rules laid down by etiquettes. They are more than this. They are a kind of social rituals in which you generally say what the other person expects you to say.

### 2.1. Gestural / Non -Verbal Greetings

Every culture has its own set of formalized greeting expressions and/or non-verbal greeting gestures like kissing, embracing, bowing, saluting with hand, hand shake, folding hands, prostration, touching feet etc.

### 2.2. Predictability of Response

Greetings in Kashmiri from the point of view of predictability fall within two broad categories: closed and open. The closed greetings are those which have only one fixed response, where the predictability is cent percent. On the other hand, the open greetings can have more than one response. They have limited predictability. Examples of both types are given below.

#### 2.2.1. Closed (Maximum predictability)

Relationship	Greeting	Fixed Response
Between status equals	namaskaar namaste	namaskaar namaste
Hindu to Muslim	aadaab(arIz)	aadaab (arIz)
Muslim to Muslim	aslaam alaikum	vaalaikum salaam

Between status unequals	namaskaar	namaskaar
	adaab (arIz)	adaab (arIz)
	aslaam alaikum	valaikum salaam

### 2.2.2. Open (Limited predictability)

Relationship	Greeting	Alternative Response
Between status equals	vaaray chivaa ? Fine are-Q 'Are you fine?'	vaaray, toh' chivaa vaaray? fine you are -Q fine 'Fine. How are you?'
Hindu to Muslim	vaarayaa ? Fine-Q 'Are you fine?'	kwassh pAATh' happy like 'Very fine.'
Muslim to Hindu	khAArIy chaa ? Fine is-Q 'Are you fine?'	aahansAA khAArIy yes-Hon fine 'Yes, I'm fine.'
Between status unequals	k'aasAA vaarayaa? What-Hon fine-Q 'Are you fine?'	toh' chivaa vaaray ? you are-Q fine 'Are you fine?'
		tuhInz meharbAAnii Your-Hon kindness 'Your kindness.'
	k'aa mahraa vaarayaa ? What-Hon fine-Q How are you?	or zuv full health 'Be Healthy!' dor koTh Strong knee 'Be strong!' lAsiv 'Live long!' D'akI boD Forehead broad 'Be lucky!' potrI gaash children-gen light 'May your sons live!' etc.

Notice that the alternative responses are of two types: formal and non-formal. The expressions used for alternative greetings may enquire about general well-being of the addressee, indicate respect towards the addressee, indicate affection, good wishes or blessings from elders for younger ones. More examples are given below :

Greeter  
vaaray chivaa ?  
Fine are – q  
'How are you ?'

Greetee

meharbAAanii

kindness

‘Your kindness.’ (Due to your kindness, I’m fine)

caani day khAArI

your blessings

‘Due to your blessings (I’m fine).’

Unlike English, Japanese, Chinese etc. the verbal greetings in Kashmiri like Hindi-Urdu are the same for different times of the day. There are no special phrases referring to morning, evening etc.

Greeting phrases related to ‘peace’ are found in the Muslim greeting phrases :

salam alaikum

vaalaikum salaam

‘Peace be with you.’

‘And unto you be peace.’

Most frequent greetings are related to queries about one’s health and well-being. The phrases such as the following are very frequently used :

vaaray chivaa?

‘How are you?’

k’aasaAA vaaray chivaa?

‘How are you?’

sAAarii chivaa vaaray ?

‘Are all O.K/alright?’

Thiikh (pAATh’) chivaa ?

‘Are you O.K?’

The replies of the greetings also refer to the greeter’s health, happiness, well-being and longevity of life. The replies used by elders take the form of blessings:

aadikaar (< adhikaar)

or zuv

dor koTh

sadbiisaal vumIr

rumi reshun aay

DekI boD

lAsiv

patrI gaash

Ach puur

‘Power?Authority!’

‘Healthy!’

‘Good health!’

‘One hundred twenty years of age.’

‘As long life as that of a great Rishi!’

‘Lucky!’

‘May you live long!’

‘Enjoy the pleasure of children!’

‘May your eyesight last for ever!’

### 3. Sociolinguistic Variables

The greetings are determined by certain sociolinguistic variables of time, space, participants, channel and the communicative intent.

Sometimes the same person may use different modes of greetings for different persons at different time. A beggar near a Muslim shrine uses the greetings appropriate of the name of the saint or shrine such as :

dasgiir kArinay athI roT

‘May Dasgir protect you !’

reshmool thAvinay vaarI

‘May the Rishi keep you happy!’

The same beggar may use different set of terms near a Hindu shrine like:

mAAj bagvatii thAvinay vaarl  
bagwati kArinay anIgrah  
'May Mother goddess protect you!'

Time also plays a role when two friends meet after a long time, the greetings of namaste/namaskaar, aadaab (arlz) are repeated as :

namaste namaste  
namaskar namaskar  
aadaab aadaab

A certain type of greeting may be appropriate at one place but different at another. A teacher is greeted by his students by standing up in the classroom, but outside the class he/she may be greeted by folded hands, with hand salute or with a verbal greeting of namaskaar, aadaab(arlz)or salaam aalaikum .

Participants are of two types: (a)where the greeter and the greetee are human-beings, (b) where the greeter is a human-being and the greetee a non-human: a deity, an animal or an inanimate object.

Greeting phrases of gods and goddesses are of different types. The phrases may be as follows:

jay shiv shankar	for Lord Shiva
he raam	for Lord Ram
he raadhee shyaam	for Lord Krishna

Another mode of greeting is going around the idol of god or temple several times called parikrama.

Gender does play a role in the mode of greeting. The greetings between men and women are sometimes different from between the people of the same sex. Usually, women greet each other by the phrases 'varaay chakhay/chivay?' and receive replies such as 'vaaray, tsI chakhay vaaray / toh' chivaa vaaray?' etc. Educated women do use the terms of greetings used usually by men such as: namaskaar /namaste, alsaaam aalaikum etc.

Age of the participants has a significant role. Following are the examples of greetings used by the participants belonging to different age groups:

Young man to older person

Greeting  
namaskaar  
aslaam aalaikum

Response  
zindI ruuziv/lAsiv 'live long'  
aslaam aalaikyum  
or zuv/dor koTh

Same age group

namaste /namaskaar  
aadab (arlz) /aslaam  
aalaikum

namaste/namaskar  
aadab(arlz)/vaalaikum salaam

Old man to younger person

varaay chukhaa?  
'How are you?'  
vaarayaa?  
'fine'

namaskaar  
  
toh'chivaa varaay?  
'How are you?'

Man to older Woman namaskaar	orzuv/dorkoTh/ D'akIboD
Same age group namaskaar	orzuv,dorkoTh
Young woman to elder woman namaskaar	namaskaar/ bab lasun/ booy lasun/ DekIbAD vaaraay chakhay?
Same age group namaste/namaskaar  vaaray chakhay? vaarayaa?	namaste/namaskaar/ aslaam aalaykum booy lasun/bab lasun aahnii vaaray aslaam aalaikum aadaab (arIz)

Usually the younger person greets the elders first. In certain situations, however, elders greet the younger by virtue of the latter's social position including wealth, education and status. There is no cast hierarchy followed in the mode of greetings. It is customary to greet a Brahmin priest or a Muslim pir first irrespective of his age.

Education, occupation and social status play a prominent role in the greetings. A highly educated person prefers to be greeted with 'Good morning' or a handshake or namaste rather than a greeting phrase like vaaray chivaa?

### 3.1. *Deferential Order of Greeting*

The non-verbal greetings can be listed in the diminishing order of deference as follows: Prostration – bending on feet, touching feet – touching knee – folding hands – shaking hands – raising hand-nod. Kashmiri Hindus usually prostrate or bend on feet, or touch feet only of saints. It is becoming common among the younger generation under the influence of other communities outside the valley to touch the feet of elders, especially at the time of their meetings after long period or at the time of departure on travel.

The greeting terms namaskaar / namaste etc. are accompanied by paralinguistic features of pause, stress, tone, volume and facial expression.

### 3.2. *Relationship*

Relationship is usually studied in terms of intimate versus non-intimate or formal versus informal depending on the social distance between the participants and the duration and frequency of contact. Intimacy may be of two types: symmetrical and asymmetrical. The symmetrical relations exist between status equals or friends of the same age group. Examples of the use of modes of greetings in symmetrical relations are as follows:

vansAA vaarayaa?  
say-intimate fine-Q  
'Tell me, are you fine?'

The greetings are used in the asymmetrical intimate relationships between father/mother and son/daughter, elder brother and younger brother or between non-kins. Examples are as follows:

vAliv gobraa, bihiv yet'an  
come-pl son/daughter sit-polite here  
'Please come and sit over here.'

vansAA hee kar aayivI?  
say-polite hey when came-pl  
'Hey, tell me when did you come?'

The elders may use the polite expressions of address while being ironic. The father may address his son as follows:

laaTh sAAb k'aazi gAyi nI az skuul  
Lord sir why went neg today school  
'Lord, why didn't you go to school today?'

Communicative intent or purpose of interaction forms an important underlying factor in the exchange of greetings. It is customary to greet a person with whom one is not acquainted for expressing respect or obtaining a favour or help.

aadaab arIz jinaab, myeny kAAm kArytav haz  
greetings hon. my work do-imp-polite hon.  
'Greetings, please do my work.'

he baayaa, myeeny kath booztI  
O brother my talk listen to  
'O brother, please listen to me.'

Sometimes, they are used for asking for pardon. It is not uncommon to say,

maahraa, bI chusay guly ganDaan, mAAPHii diz'am  
sir I am -3s hands-folded forgive me  
'I am folding my hands before you and seek your forgiveness.'

Modes of greetings are deeply correlated with the modes of address. The modes of greetings are used before a conversation is started and also before parting. The greeting forms are mostly used first by the youngsters for elders or by juniors to seniors. The greetee then reciprocates by the use along with the modes of greetings. The forms of address may either precede or follow the greeting forms.

#### Modes of Address + Verbal Greeting

DaakTar sAAb, namaste/namaskaar/aadaab arIz

maasTar jii, namaskaar/aadaab(arIz)/salaam (aalaikum)

bAAy sAAb, namas kaar

#### Verbal Greetings + Modes of Address

namaskaar maahraa/maasTar jii

aadaab arIz jinaab/hazuur

aslaam aalaikum jinaab

Modes of greetings and address are used as opening phrases for conversations too. The opening phrases in Kashmiri may be of the following type:

twahi kot taam chu gatshun  
you-dat where up to is go-inf  
'Where do you intend to go?'

kAts maahraa/jinaab bajeeeyi  
how much Hon.strurck-time  
'What is the time, please?'

az maa peyi ruud  
today possible-part fall-fu rain  
'It looks like rain today.'

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