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.

Greetings 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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Greeting</th>
<th>Fixed Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between status equals</td>
<td>namaskaar</td>
<td>namaskaar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>namaste</td>
<td>namaste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu to Muslim</td>
<td>aadaab(arIz)</td>
<td>aadaab (arIz)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim to Muslim</td>
<td>aslaam alaikum</td>
<td>vaalaikum salaam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between status unequals namaskaar namaskaar
adab (arIz) adab (arIz)
aslaam alaikum valaikum salaam

2.2.2. Open (Limited predictability)

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

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
  meh arbAAnii
  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  ‘Peace be with you.’
  vaalaikum  salaam  ‘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’aaaSAA  vaaray  chivaa?  ‘How are you?’
  sAArii  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)  ‘Power?Authority!’
  or zuv  ‘Healthy!’
  dor koTh  ‘Good health!’
  sadbiisaal  yumIr  ‘One hundred twenty years of age.’
  rumi  reshun  aay  ‘As long life as that of a great Rishi!’
  DekI  boD  ‘Lucky!’
  lAsiv  ‘May you live long!’
  patI  gaash  ‘Enjoy the pleasure of children!’
  Ach  puur  ‘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:

\[\text{mAAj bagvatii thAvinay vaarI} \]
\[\text{bagwati kArinay anIgrah} \]
\[\text{‘May Mother goddess protect you!’} \]

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

\[\text{namaste namaste} \]
\[\text{namaskar namaskar} \]
\[\text{aadaab aadaab} \]

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:

\[\text{jay shiv shankar} \quad \text{for Lord Shiva} \]
\[\text{he raam} \quad \text{for Lord Ram} \]
\[\text{he raadhee shyaam} \quad \text{for Lord Krishna} \]

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, tsl chakhay vaaray / toh’ chivaa vaaray?’ etc. Educated women do use the terms of greetings used usually by men such as: namaskaar /namaste, aslaam 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greeting</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>namaskaar</td>
<td>zindI ruuziv/Asiv ‘live long’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aslaam aalaikum</td>
<td>aslaam aalaikum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or zuv/dor koTh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Same age group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>namaste/namaskaar</th>
<th>namaste/namaskaar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aadaab(arlz)/aslaam</td>
<td>aadaab(arlz)/vaalaikum salaam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Old man to younger person**

| ‘How are you?’   | namaskaar         |
| ‘vaaray aa?’     | toh’chivaa vaaray?|
| ‘fine?’          | ‘How are you?’    |
Man to older Woman
  namaskaar  orzuv/dorkoTh/
  D’akIboD
Same age group
  namaskaar  orzuv.dorkoTh
Young woman to elder woman
  namaskaar
  namaskar/ bab  lasun/ booy lasun/
  DekIbAD
  vaaraay chakhay?
Same age group
  namaste/namaskaar
  namaste/namaskaar/ aslaam aalaykum
  booy IAsun/bab lasun
  vaaray chakhay?
  vaarayaa?
  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.’
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:

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.

Greetings, please do my work.

O brother, please listen to me.

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

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

Greetings hon., my work do-imp-polite hon.

Greetings hon. please do my work.

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,

I am folding my hands before you and seek your forgiveness.

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 bajeeyi
how much Hon.struck-time
‘What is the time, please?’

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

REFERENCES


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