

Palatalization in Kashmiri: A Dialectological Study

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Introduction: Palatalization, the articulatory shift of a consonant to palatal point of articulation usually triggered by a following front vowel e.g. –i or the glide –y-, is one among the many characteristics of Kashmiri. This phonetic phenomenon has been studied, debated and discussed at length by scholars of international repute. In the present study the focus shall be on palatalization as a feature of dialectal difference in Kashmiri language both within and outside valley.

Previous Work: The term ‘palatalization’ in Kashmiri was first used by Bailey (1937:5): “*i-mātrā* has the effect of palatalizing the consonant to which it is attached. This means that the consonant is sounded with an inherent *i* resonance; the [i] appears to come both before and after the consonant, but is not a separate syllable”. Based on the description by Kaula (1897-98), Grierson (1911) is probably the first publication in English that postulated a set of so-called ‘*mātrā vowels*’ which includes the “*i-mātrā*” for the language. “The ⁱ*-mātrā* is an extremely short [i], and has the peculiarity that it is sounded, very faintly, both before and after the consonant which it follows in writing. Thus *asⁱ*, we, is pronounced something like *aⁱsⁱ*, and *gurⁱ*, horses, sounds like *guⁱrⁱ*.” (Grierson 1911:16)

Out of the various *mātrā* vowels posited by Grierson, Bailey proposed that it is the ⁱ*mātrā* that ‘palatalizes’ the consonant to which it is attached. Morgenstierne (1943) recapitulates Bailey (1937:183) saying that Bailey “believes that they [= the *mātrā* vowels] are no real vowels, but that ‘the consonant, so to speak, absorbs the vowel, and is velarized, palatalized, centralized or left neutral’. Bailey (1937: 6) for the first time proposes the ‘single quote’ mark ['] to represent ‘palatalization’. The next important work (and arguably the very detailed phonetic analysis of the language extant) by Kelkar and Trisal (1964) makes use of the “*semivowel* ⁱ” to account for the phonetic process of palatalization.

The original concept of *mātrā* vowels was given by Kaula (1897-98) and later expounded by Grierson (1911). However, Bhat (1987) expresses an extreme view, when he says: “Grierson’s analysis of the language which came before the concept of “phoneme” can’t be taken as authentic so far as the sound system of Kashmiri is concerned. It is unfortunate that the same system has been followed with little modifications in the subsequent works of Bailey and Morgenstierne. The presence of “very short” vowels in the contemporary Kashmiri has become obsolete if at all it existed at any stage”. “However, the functional aspect (grammatical) of *mātrā* vowels as meant by Pandit Ishwar Kaula can be taken care of by other processes i.e. diphthongization e.g. /gur/ ‘horse’ /guɪr/ ‘mare’ ”(p.20). Kelkar (1984) resymbolized these semivowels as /ⁱ/ and described that they are “... like extra-short vowels or vowel-colourings of preceding consonants when not followed or preceded by vowels...” (p.66) and also “adopted the convenient practice of writing /ⁱ/ as /y v/ when adjacent to vowels with which they form diphthongs ...” (p.67).

After Grierson’s observation in 1911 that the ⁱ*mātrā* sounded faintly *even before* the concerned consonant, and its phonological reinterpretation by Kelkar and Trisal in 1964 and Kelkar 1984, Bhat (2008) notes that the palatalization process leaves a mark before the actual ‘palatalized consonant’ begins, saying: “...plural form is obtained by palatalizing the final consonant and in the process the base vowel is diphthongized by positing an extra short ⁱ there” (p.43). “It is an extra short, ‘centered’ ⁱ occupying a position between high and mid-high positions” (Ibid). Handoo (1973: 50), Kachru (1969), Koul (1987), Razdan (2005), Shackel (1984), Wali and Koul (1997) recognize that several consonants in Kashmiri contrast for palatalization but do not go into the details of phonetics of palatalization. Bhaskararao et al (2009) examined the phonetic composition of the phenomenon of palatalization; “Palatalization of consonants in Kashmiri is spread around the concerned consonant and ‘palatalization’ of word-final consonants and consonant clusters is a secondary stricture (SS) composed of three parts: the onset of palatalization, its nucleus, and its offset” (p.15).

Present Work: Dialectology is in itself a vast domain. Kashmiri language or kə:ʃur being rich in many perspectives is even richer in its variations across geographical regions and social barriers. Kashmir valley is divided into three major regions North, South and Central Kashmir. The speech of these three regions differs at the phonological level and also lexical differences can be seen. Till date many linguists have studied and elaborated the points of dialectal differences between these three regions of the valley. The commonest linguistic variables that distinguish these areas are [an] ‘progressive marker’ and [R] ‘a flap’ which are present in South while as [a:n] and [r] are present in the speech of North and Central Kashmir. The present paper aims to bring into focus differences in the use these three regions with regard to the feature of palatalization. This is part of the findings of the project “Survey of Kashmiri Dialects” sponsored by the Central Institute of Indian languages, Mysore and Urdu Teaching and Research Centre, Lucknow in collaboration with the Department of Linguistics, University of Kashmir, Srinagar. Apart from these broader variations, the project also takes into account intra-district variations. The findings of the project so far reveal some interesting things about Kashmiri dialectology. The hypothetical rules devised, have been thoroughly checked and discussed, and their applicability seems almost certain albeit with some modifications at times.

The regional varieties differ in many aspects; however, these varieties also differ in palatalization- which is a distinctive feature in Kashmiri.

South (Anantnag)	Central (Srinagar)	North (Baramulla)	Gloss
kan ^ɨ iphol	kaniphol	kaniphol	pebble
Thup	Th ^ɨ up	Thup	cage
zar ^ɨ ul	zalur	zar ^ɨ ul	spider

[^ɨ] is used as a diacritic mark for palatalization (Bhaskararao et. al. 2009).

The above example clearly reveals that palatalization is a distinguishing feature. It is, pertinently, one of the major features of dialect difference. Palatalization is a feature of dialect difference; however, it is not always systematic and rule based. The differences between Anantnag and Pulwama are;

Anantnag	Pulwama	Gloss
Dul ^ɨ gin ^ɨ	DulgənD ^ɨ	rollings

mə:n	min ⁱ	frog
p ⁱ uš	piš	bed bug (sg.)
thoŋ	Th ⁱ oŋ	mountain peak

Similarly, data reveals that palatalization as a feature of distinction between dialects is non-systematic and cannot be accounted for by the rules both in intra and inter districts.

Kashmir, which is a multilingual area, is also multi-religious. Kashmiri is the common language of Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits. History is testimony to the fact that Kashmiri has been influenced by Persian and Sanskrit, thus, giving rise to two social dialects of it namely, Persianized Kashmiri and Sanskritized Kashmiri (Kachru, B.B. 1969). The two social dialects too differ from each other at various levels. It is interesting to see that they differ, at times, because of palatalization. It is seen that most of the times, the Hindu Kashmiri uses a non-palatalized consonant while as Muslim Kashmiri, especially, the one used in rural areas of South and South Eastern regions uses palatalized consonants as:

Sanskritized Kashmiri	Persianized Kashmiri	Gloss
karan	kar ⁱ an	they'll do
karakh	kar ⁱ akh	you'll do
pron	pr ⁱ on	blonde
pra:n	pr ⁱ a:n	green onion
prah	pr ⁱ ah	apprehension

The above mentioned examples differ only in palatalization, where Sanskritized Kashmiri has non-palatalized [r] and Persianized Kashmiri has the palatalized form [rⁱ]. However, in Srinagar there is no such clear distinction between the two forms of speech. But within South Kashmir, this is quite visible.

Kashmiri is also spoken outside the valley of Kashmir. The areas that have population of Kashmiri speakers are Banihal, Doligam, Phagu, Chamalwas, Maho, Mangit, Gool,

Gulabgad, Mahore, Khari, Doda, Kashtawar etc. It is also spoken in Ramban district. Palatalization is seen in the Kashmiri spoken over there, though there are differences in its usage. Sometimes we come across words, which would have palatalized consonants in the Kashmiri spoken within the valley but having no palatalization at all in these areas. For example, in Banihal the last consonant is not palatalized in these words, which otherwise have palatalization in the Kashmiri spoken in the valley. This is based on field survey that the resource persons of the project conducted in summer 2010.

Srinagar	Outside valley Kashmiri	Gloss
/hu:n ^ɨ /	/hũ:y/	bitch
/tsin ^ɨ /	/tsĩy/	coal
/tsin ^ɨ /	/tsĩyi/	coals
/khin ^ɨ /	/khĩy/	nasal fluid
/mә:n ^ɨ /	/mә:y/	avalanche
/sin ^ɨ /	/sĩy/	dishes
/ben ^ɨ /	/bēyi/	sister

Here it becomes clear that the palatalized consonant seen in the Kashmiri spoken in valley is deleted altogether but compensated with the addition of glide [y] preceded by the nasalisation of the vowel. It occurs with all the vowels no matter whether they are front, central or back vowels. This feature is seen only in areas outside valley. Palatalization, it must be reminded, performs the function of pluralisation even here as is seen in the valley Kashmiri as;

Srinagar	Outside Valley Kashmiri	Gloss
/gur ^ɨ /	/guR ^ɨ /	horses

/ʃur ^j /	/ʃuR ^j /	children
/hur ^j /	/huR ^j /	kind of brush
/kul ^j /	/kul ^j /	trees

However, at certain places there are more interesting phenomena e.g. in Gool the initial [tsh] is replaced by [s], but when the [tsh] is palatalized, the [s] is also palatalized. Similarly, when there is a plain (non-palatalized) [tsh], the [s] that replaces it is also plain or non-palatalized as;

Srinagar	Gool	Gloss
/tsh ^j oT/	/s ^j oT/	left-over
/tsh ^j on/	/s ^j on/	broke
/tshoT/	/soT/	dwarf
/tsha:y/	/sa:y/	shadow
/tshal/	/sal/	trap
/tsha:vij/	/sa:vij/	goat
/tsho:Ti/	/so:Ti/	pistil
/tshoT ^j /	/soT ^j /	dwarfs

Here it becomes quite evident that palatalization is retained even where there is replacement of a consonant. It is also to be mentioned that it is not nullified where it forms a grammatical function like changing number.

Conclusion: It has been stated that primarily South, Central and North regions are separated on the basis of phonological, morphological and lexical variations. However, it is evident that palatalization is a feature of dialect differences in the valley (Example I). Similarly, the speech of Anantnag and Pulwama reveals that palatalization is a feature of distinction between these two areas. It is quite evident that in two social dialects (i.e. Persianized Kashmiri and Sanskritized Kashmiri) palatalization is the factor of variation. The Kashmiri spoken outside valley has palatalization too as a feature. It does not change where it has the function of pluralizing the word. However, at many times, variation is seen- it may or may not be present in a word. Wherever it changes, a proper paradigm is formed so that the loss of its grammatical value e.g. changing number is not affected.

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