



The following dialogue was prepared by the late Qamar Jalil (d. 2019), who taught Urdu at the Berkeley Urdu Language Program in Pakistan, the University of Madison, Wisconsin, and the University of California, Berkeley from the 1970s until 2016. Two generations of Urdu students and scholars owe their language skills to the guidance of this exceptionally talented, dedicated, and humble teacher.

The following dialogue is taken from an unpublished course packet which Qamar wrote for an Introductory Urdu college class. I have reproduced it and the related drill exactly as they appear in the packet. To these I have added his grammar notes on this and the preceding dialogues, as well as his cultural notes on the current one. I have lightly edited the notes, added Urdu words, transliterations, and translations, and included examples from the dialogue (or based on it) to illustrate Qamar's points. Qamar typically taught vocabulary in class through dialogue, demonstration, and occasionally sharing an English synonym. He therefore did not typically include glossaries with his dialogues. I have therefore added my own here.

The dialogue illustrates a very typical conversation between acquaintances, نجمہ [najmā] and حامد [hāmid]. In addition to introducing and reinforcing standard Urdu greetings, it also shows how plurality, gender and verb agreement, tense, emphasis, and postpositional phrases work in Urdu. It also introduces readers to the everyday vocabulary describing familial relationships and the use of honorifics. See the notes for Qamar Jalil's perspective on these and other themes in the text.



A Conversation Amongst Acquaintances

created by Qamar Jalil, edited by Gregory Maxwell Bruce

نجمہ : السلام علیکم، آپ کیسے ہیں؟

حامد : و علیکم السلام، میں ٹھیک ہوں، آپ کیسی ہیں؟

نجمہ : میں بھی ٹھیک ہوں۔ یہ میرے شوہر ہیں، جمال۔

حامد : آپ سے مل کر خوشی ہوئی، جمال صاحب۔

جمال : مجھے بھی۔ وہ آپ کی بیٹی ہے؟

حامد : جی۔ اور وہ میرا بیٹا ہے۔

نجمہ : آپ کی بیوی یہاں نہیں؟

حامد : نہیں، آج وہ ہمارے ساتھ نہیں، وہ میری والدہ کے ساتھ ہیں۔

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Glossary

(peace be upon you)	[as-salāmu alaikum]	السلام عليكم
(and upon you, peace)	[va alaikum as-salām]	و عليكم السلام
(I)	[mainī]	میں
(fine)	[thīk]	ٹھیک
(am)	[hūnī]	ہوں
(you)	[āp]	آپ
(how [f.])	[kaisī]	کیسی
(are)	[hainī]	ہیں
(this)	[ye]	یہ
(my)	[merā]	میرا
(husband)	[shauhar]	شوہر
(with, from)	[se]	سے
(having met)	[mil kar]	مل کر
(happiness)	[khushī]	خوشی
(occurred, happened)	[huī]	ہوئی
(sir)	[sāhib; idiom. sahāb]	صاحب
(me too)	[mujhe bhī]	مجھے بھی
(your)	[āp kā]	آپ کا
(daughter)	[betī]	بیٹی
(son)	[betā]	بیٹا

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(wife)	[bīvī]	بیوی
(here)	[yahān]	یہاں
(is not; no)	[nahīn]	نہیں
(today)	[āj]	آج
(with us)	[hamāre sāth]	ہمارے ساتھ
(she, he, it)	[vo]	وہ
(mother)	[vālidā]	والدہ

Conversation Drill.

Using the dialogue as your guide, please respond to the following:

- ۱۔ السلام علیکم آپ کیسی ہیں؟
- ۲۔ آپ سے مل کر خوشی ہوئی۔
- ۳۔ وہ آپ کی بیٹی ہے؟
- ۳۔ وہ آپ کا بیٹا ہے؟
- ۵۔ آپ کی بیوی / آپ کے شوہر کہاں ہیں؟

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Grammar Notes

1. آپ [āp] (m/f) means “you” and is considered a plural word even if the addressee is singular.
2. کیسے/کیسی [kaise/kaisī] (how) are inflected forms of کیسا [kaisā], which is an interrogative adjective meaning “how” and inflects like other [ā]-ending adjectives. Hence, کیسا will agree with the subject of a sentence in number and gender. For example, آپ کا بیٹا کیسا ہے [āp kā beṭā kaisā hai] (How is your son?); آپ کی بیٹی کیسی ہے [āp kī beṭī kaisī hai] (How is your daughter?); and آپ کے بیٹے ہیں [āp ke beṭe kaise hain] (How are your sons?).
3. ہوں [hūn] is one form of the verb ہونا [honā] (to be). It means, roughly, “am,” and is used only when the subject is میں [main]. Hence, میں ٹھیک ہوں [main̄ ṭhīk hūn] (I am fine), but آپ ٹھیک ہیں [āp ṭhīk hain] (you are fine).
4. بھی [bhī], in most cases, means “also” in Urdu and is placed after that word for which we need the emphasis of “also.” For example, میں بھی ٹھیک ہوں [main̄ bhī ṭhīk hūn] (I am also fine). If there is some postposition after that word, then بھی is placed after the postposition—for example, آپ سے بھی [āp se bhī] (from or with you also). In some cases, بھی means “even.” For example, وہ بھی ٹھیک ہے [vo bhī ṭhīk hai] (he/she/it is also fine; even he/she/it is fine).
5. کیا حال ہے [kyā hāl hai] is another way of asking “How are you.” Literally, it means “What is the condition/state.”
6. میرا [merā], میری [merī], میرے [mere] are three forms of the same possessive pronoun meaning “my.” میرا [merā] describes singular masculine objects such as بیٹا [beṭā] (son), as in میرا بیٹا [merā beṭā] (my son). میری [merī] describes singular and plural feminine objects, such as بیٹی [beṭī] (daughter) or بیٹیاں [beṭiyān] (daughters), as in میری بیٹی [merī beṭī] (my daughter) and میری بیٹیاں [merī beṭiyān] (my daughters). میرے [mere] describes plural masculine objects, such as بیٹے [beṭe] (sons) as in میرے بیٹے [mere beṭe] (my sons).
7. In Urdu, if an affirmative statement is said in an interrogative tone, it becomes a yes-or-no question. For example, وہ آپ کی بیٹی ہے [vo āp kī beṭī hai] (she is your daughter), when said in an

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interrogative tone in which the speaker's tone rises at the end of the sentence becomes a question, وہ آپ کی بیٹی ہے؟ [vo āp kī beṭī hai] (Is she your daughter?). In Urdu, unlike English, the order of the words does not change.

8. کے ساتھ [ke sāṭh] is a compound postposition and means "with," meaning "to be in the company of." For example, آپ کے ساتھ [āp ke sāṭh] means "with you" or "in your company."
9. While referring to one's own or someone else's parents, grandparents, spouse, and elder sister or brother, speakers typically use plural verb endings to show respect and politeness. For example, یہ میرے شوہر ہیں [ye mere shauhar hain] (this is my husband) and میری بیوی میری والدہ کے ساتھ ہیں [merī bīvī mere vālidā ke sāṭh hain] (my wife is with my mother). This contrasts with یہ میری بیٹی ہے [ye merī beṭī hai] (this is my daughter) and یہ میرا بیٹا ہے [ye merā beṭā hai] (this is my son). In the case of the husband and wife, the verb and any relevant adjectives are in the plural form to indicate the honorific. In the case of the daughter and son, they are in the singular.

Cultural Notes

1. Families in India and Pakistan tend to be large. The paternal grandfather, father, or eldest male member of the family is usually considered to be the head of the family and is shown a high degree of respect and great importance in all matters. The head of the family is also considered responsible for earning a livelihood and meeting all other familial expenses.