

Prav Messaging App

Reclaiming our choice
of service providers

What is unique about Prav?

Most mainstream messaging apps that are convenient (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal) only allow you to talk to people who use the same app.



If you don't like a certain app, you can't move to a different one unless all your contacts move as well. This is known as vendor lock-in.

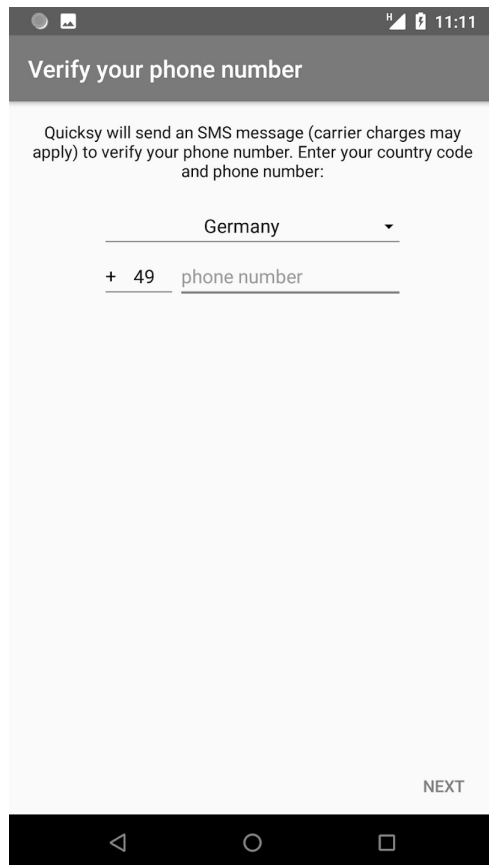


Contrast this to SMS, where you can switch from Airtel to BSNL and continue staying in touch with your Airtel contacts. If you don't like BSNL's policies, you can again switch to Vi and still stay in touch with everyone. SMS is a standard, with no vendor lock-in.

Prav App combines the best of both worlds. It is convenient to use, supporting video sharing, group chats, and more. And it does this using a common standard (XMPP) so there is no vendor-lock in.

Is there no other app like this?

Yes! Quicksy is one of them. Unlike most convenient apps, Quicksy comes without vendor lock-in. Quicksy offers the same convenience as WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, etc. It does not restrict users from talking only to Quicksy users; they can talk to others on any app or service that support the XMPP standard.



The screenshot shows a mobile app interface for verifying a phone number. At the top, there's a status bar with a signal icon, a battery icon, and the time 11:11. Below that is a dark grey header with the text "Verify your phone number" in white. The main content area is light grey and contains the following text: "Quicksy will send an SMS message (carrier charges may apply) to verify your phone number. Enter your country code and phone number:". Below this text is a form with two input fields. The first field is a dropdown menu currently showing "Germany" with a small downward arrow on the right. The second field is a text input with a plus sign and "49" on the left, followed by a placeholder "phone number". At the bottom right of the form area, there is a "NEXT" button. The very bottom of the screen shows a black navigation bar with three white icons: a back arrow, a circle, and a square.

So why not promote Quicksy?

If people can choose their own service, there had better be more services to choose from! The original idea was to promote Quicksy. Due to following reasons, we decided to rebrand Quicksy:

Support more platforms: Quicksy is currently available only on Android. We wanted a similar experience available across all platforms (like iOS and desktop).

Cooperative: In the longer term, Quicksy service and policies are managed by a single developer, whereas building Prav as a cooperative makes it more sustainable.

Resilience: People will now have a choice between Prav and Quicksy for a similar app experience. It will make the network more resilient, by not depending on a single service. If something happens tomorrow and Quicksy (or any similar service) gets shut down or blocked in a country, people will have a choice to continue communicating with Prav—and vice versa, of course.

Distribution of load: On a more everyday basis, running one service with millions of users take a lot of work. By having similar, compatible services, we can help split the load.

Personal connection: In our experience of running other services, people like to use services controlled by people they know. By being directly involved, we can also be there to troubleshoot any issues that come up—rather than having to say "we're sorry, but the service we recommended is down and we have to all wait till it comes up." As more people join the initiative, their friends and

family will have a personal connection too, and the word will spread that much faster.

Trust: We can inspect policies and read source code, but eventually, we all have to trust the people running our services. By running Prav ourselves, we allow people to trust us directly, instead of having to place their trust in some other person or organisation we are recommending.

More choices on services based on a free standard are great, and we would be happy if more people learn about Quicksy from us—or even start their own XMPP-compatible services which work in the same way!

What are the advantages of running Prav as a cooperative?

Having things run by a group is always better, since it is won't be dependent on one person. If some of the maintainers leave, there will be others to take over. This is how companies work too.

At Prav, we are going to take a step further and register as a cooperative. Every Prav user will have the option of becoming a member of the Prav cooperative. This will let them have a say on how the app runs, what features are prioritised next, and what the policy is. Instead of raising complaints and hoping a company listens, they can directly say "let's prioritise video calls" or "let's not waste resources on in-app payments".

Every member has a vote in electing the cooperative leadership periodically, irrespective of the number of shares they have.

What apps can be used to talk to Prav users?

Prav allows you to talk to Quicksy users and users of any other apps that support the XMPP protocol. You can think of XMPP as an improved version of SMS, which works over the Internet and supports modern messaging features like media, voice, and video.

Some other apps that support XMPP are:

Conversations and its variants like blabber.im, Cheogram, and Monocles Chat on Android.

Snikket on Android and iOS - You will need an invite from someone hosting a Snikket service or start your own Snikket service.

Siskin IM on iOS

Monal IM on iOS and Desktop (MacOS)

Dino on Desktop (GNU/Linux)

Gajim on Desktop (GNU/Linux and Windows)

ConverseJS on the web browser using instances like <https://webchat.disroot.org>.

<https://mov.im> Web app

The good part is that since XMPP is an open standard, if you don't have an app that suits your needs now, you can always customise it or make your own by raising funds and paying a developer.

Why did you choose Prav as the name?

'Prav' means pigeon in Malayalam. Domesticated pigeons were used to carry messages as messenger pigeons. They are usually referred to as "pigeon post" if used in post service, or "war pigeon" during wars.

Until the introduction of telephones, homing pigeons were used commercially to deliver communication. So we found the name 'Prav' to be a great fit for a messaging app. We hope that every Prav user feels empowered and in control of their own messaging service, just like with the original pigeons.

What features are available?

You will automatically find other Prav users in your phone addressbook.

You can share text messages, voice messages, photos, videos, and files, end-to-end encrypted, which means only the persons you are talking to can decrypt it (we as service providers cannot decrypt anything end-to-end encrypted in Prav). WhatsApp also claims they are end-to-end encrypted, but it cannot be independently verified because WhatsApp's source code is not available. Since Prav is Free Software and its source code is publicly available, its end-to-end encryption can be independently audited.

You can also make end-to-end encrypted audio/video calls (for example you can call people abroad with your mobile data).

Create private (invite only and end-to-end encrypted) and public (anyone can join with a group address) groups.

These are the basic features for now, but after this we will keep working on whatever the Prav cooperative members deem necessary. This could be you!

How do I get Prav?

We are not ready for release to general public yet, but you can get the Prav Android app now to test the features and provide feedback or help improve it. You will need to request an account. Please find details on the Prav website at <https://prav.app>.

How can I join the cooperative?

You can find the membership request form on the website at <https://prav.app/become-a-member>. We need at least 50 members each from two Indian states to register as a multi-state cooperative society, and we have reached 50 members in Kerala already. We still need to find 50 members from one more state to complete registration.

All members of Prav cooperative and people participating in Prav project's official channels should follow Code of Conduct & Inclusion Policy available at <https://prav.app/coc/>

I don't know any coding; can I help?

Certainly! There are many ways to contribute to Prav, such as:

- testing the app and reporting problems

- suggesting improvements

- spreading word and organizing events about Prav, privacy and Free Software

- creating promotional materials like posters and videos

To get involved, visit <https://prav.app/volunteer/>

I'm a developer; how can I help?

The Prav Server and Prav Android app are written in Java. We are using these as the base code for Prav. If you are an Android developer, you can help us by improving the Android app. The Prav server manages SMS-based registration and mapping of the phone number to an XMPP ID.

We are looking for iOS developers to create a Prav iOS version from Monal IM or Siskin IM. When we start supporting more platforms, you will be able to contribute in more programming languages.

We may be able to fund some of these work if you are not able contribute voluntarily, though we will need time to setup a selection process for funded work. Contact us and we can discuss about it.

I want to talk to someone in the project

Send an email to prav@fsci.in and we will get back to you. You can send us a message on Mastodon/ActivityPub [@prav@venera.social](https://mstdn.social/@prav@venera.social).

Or call/SMS anyone listed below

Praveen +91 9561745712 (can talk in Malayalam, English or Hindi)

Ravi +91 9535650745 (can talk in Hindi or English)

Badri +91 9442990598 (can talk in Tamil or English)

Vinay +91 9108313399 (can talk in English, Kannada or Telugu)

There are more ways to get in touch with us, which you can find on our website <https://prav.app>





The Prav social contract

We will put rights of users above profit.

Our products will always be committed to user privacy.

Our apps and services will always respect users' freedom (100% Free Software app and service).

Our service will be interoperable using a free standard (federated with any XMPP service). No one will be forced to use our app or service to talk to users of our service. Our users can switch to any other service provider without losing the ability to talk to their existing contacts (similar to sim cards provided by telecom operators).

We will donate, whenever possible, to the projects we rely on.