Research Article

Exploring the Complexity of *Māuli:* An Analysis of Solidarity, Speech Community, Religion, and Gender in Marathi Address Term Usage

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Abstract
This paper delves into the intricate semantic nuances and sociopragmatic functions inherent in the Marathi address term *"māuli"* in the context of a colossal religious gathering. Through morphosyntactic analysis, it uncovers the term's grammatical gender and its generic usage to encompass feminine and motherly attributes, embracing inclusiveness and generosity. Drawing from primary data collected during *the Aṣāḍhi* pilgrimage of 2023 through semi-structured interviews and participant observations, supplemented by secondary sources such as albums and songs, the study quantitatively and qualitatively examines the frequency and contextual use of *"māuli"*. Findings reveal its multifaceted sociopragmatic functions, including identity establishment, solidarity marking, politeness expression, and religiosity demonstration. However, its efficacy is constrained by temporal and spatial limitations, potentially hindering broader societal benefits. This exploration sheds light on the complex interplay between linguistic expressions, social dynamics, and religious practices within the Marathi cultural milieu.

Keywords- Address terms, Marathi language, Sociopragmatic functions, Identity negotiation, Gender discourse *Aṣāḍhi* pilgrimage, *Mauli*, Sociolinguistics, Politeness strategies, *Pandharpur*

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS — 4 QUALITY EDUCATION | 5 GENDER EQUALITY | 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES | 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | 13 CLIMATE ACTION | 15 LIFE ON LAND | 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

This paper undertakes a comprehensive investigation into the manifold meanings and socio-cultural usages of the Marathi address phrase *"māuli"* within the intricate context of the annual *Aṣāḍhi* pilgrimage in *Paṇḍharpur*, Maharashtra, India. The *Aṣāḍhi* pilgrimage, a venerable tradition spanning the Marathi month of *Aṣāḍhi* (June to July), constitutes a sacred homage to Lord *Viṭhal,* drawing approximately 10 lakh devotees, known as *wārkari*, from across Maharashtra and neighbouring territories. Central to the ethos of this week-long celebration is the pervasive usage of the term *"māuli"* amongst participants, signifying a profound socio-cultural and religious significance.

1. Cultural History and Significance of *"Mauli"* in Marathi Tradition and Pandharpur

As per the popular culture and the observations of the researchers, the term *"Mauli"* in Marathi, which translates to "mother," carries profound cultural and spiritual significance, particularly within the context of Maharashtra's religious and devotional practices. Its emergence and enduring presence are deeply intertwined with the legacy of *Sant Dnyaneshwar* and the deity *Vithoba of Pandharpur,* forming a cornerstone of the region's *Bhakti* tradition. *Sant Dnyaneshwar (1275-1296), also known as Jnaneshwar,* is a venerated Marathi saint, poet, philosopher, and *yogi* whose contributions to *the Bhakti* movement are unparalleled. His seminal work, the *"Dnyaneshwari*," a Marathi commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*, made spiritual wisdom accessible to the common people. Dnyaneshwar's compassionate teachings and nurturing approach earned him the affectionate title "*Mauli,"* symbolizing his role as a spiritual mother who offers unconditional love and guidance to his devotees. This designation highlights the integral relationship between the saint and his followers, emphasizing a personal and direct connection with the divine. *Vithoba,* also known as *Vitthal or Panduranga*, is a manifestation of *Lord Krishna or Vishnu* and serves as the presiding deity of *Pandharpu*r, a major pilgrimage site in Maharashtra. The association of *Vithoba with "Mauli"* is deeply rooted in the *Bhakti* tradition, where the deity is revered as a compassionate and caring mother figure. This perception underscores the nurturing aspect of the divine, providing comfort and guidance to devotees. *Pandharpur* is renowned for its bi-annual yatra (pilgrimage) during *Ashadhi Ekadashi* and *Kartiki Ekadashi,* drawing millions of devotees known as *Warkaris*. These pilgrims undertake long journeys on foot, singing *abhangas* (devotional hymns) dedicated to *Vithoba*. The *Warkari* tradition, heavily influenced by saints such as *Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Tukaram, Chokhamela, Sawata Mali, and Eknath*, advocates a simple and humble life devoted to the service *of Vithoba* and humanity. The term *"Mauli*," frequently invoked in *abhangas*, reflects the deep-seated love and reverence devotees hold for the deity, reinforcing the intimate bond between the worshipper and the divine. *Abhangas,* composed by various Marathi saints, often refer to *Vithoba as "Mauli,"* perpetuating the term's spiritual connotations through generations. These devotional songs have been instrumental in embedding *"Mauli"* into Maharashtra's cultural and spiritual fabric, symbolizing an enduring legacy of divine love and care. The legacy of *Sant Dnyaneshwar* as *"Mauli"* continues to inspire millions. His *samadhi* (tomb) in *Alandi,* near Pune, remains a significant pilgrimage site where devotees seek blessings and spiritual wisdom. The teachings and writings *of Sant Dnyaneshwar*, alongside contributions from other Marathi saints, have solidified the term *"Mauli"* as a symbol of divine compassion and guidance. This legacy has ensured that *"Mauli"* remains an integral part of Maharashtra's devotional practices and spiritual identity. In contemporary times, *"Mauli"* retains its profound significance in devotional contexts, symbolizing the unbroken faith and devotion of the Marathi people towards their spiritual heritage. The annual pilgrimages to *Pandharpur*, the communal singing of abhangas, and the celebration of festivals continue to reinforce the cultural importance of *"Mauli,"* reflecting an enduring tradition of divine love and nurturing.

The term *"Mauli"* holds a special place in the hearts of Marathi-speaking people, encapsulating a rich tradition of devotion and spirituality. Its association with *Sant Dnyaneshwar and Vithoba* of *Pandharpur* highlights a legacy that transcends its literal meaning, embodying the essence of divine love and care. This

deep cultural and spiritual heritage remains a vital part of Maharashtra's identity, perpetuating the values of compassion, devotion, and personal connection with the divine.

The etymology of *"māuli"* encompasses two principal theories: firstly, as an address term denoting motherhood, and secondly, as a reverential epithet attributed to *Saint Jñyāneswhar*, evoking sentiments of love and benevolence towards humanity. The embodiment of *Saint Jñyāneswhar as* a symbol of intellect and compassion renders the term *"māuli"* emblematic of devotion and altruism within the pilgrim community. Amidst the pilgrimage, *"māuli"* assumes novel connotations, serving as a unifying force that transcends socio-cultural disparities, fostering a collective consciousness and fervent dedication amongst participants.

Morphosyntactically, *"māuli"* assumes dual grammatical functions as both a proper noun and a common noun, with its semantic essence encapsulating the quintessential attributes of motherhood and universal love. Sociopragmatically, the term embodies a spectrum of socio-religious connotations, ranging from invading divine presence through singing god's name to expressions of courtesy, reverence, and solidarity amongst brethren. However, the ephemeral nature of its usage underscores its contextual and temporal specificity, with *"māuli"* gradually receding from linguistic usage upon the culmination of the pilgrimage festivities.

Participants' responses illuminate a profound awareness of the religious and ideological underpinnings that animate the usage of religious expressions, delineating the intricate interplay between linguistic discourse, religious devotion, and socio-cultural dynamics. As elucidated by Alsohaibani (2017), using religious lexicons serves as a testament to the enduring legacy of faith and spirituality within the pilgrim community, engendering a symbiotic relationship between language, culture, and religious praxis.

In light of the foregoing, this paper endeavours to unravel the rich tapestry of socio-cultural meanings and religious significances embedded within the linguistic contours of *"māuli"* within the sacred precincts of the *Aṣāḍhi* pilgrimage, offering insights into the intricate interplay between language, religion, and identity formation within the Marathi cultural milieu.

2. Language and Religion: Exploring the Sacred Nexus

The intersection of language and religion embodies a profound and enduring bond characterized by using archaic, metaphorical, and symbolic linguistic constructs within religious discourse. Shrouded in the veil of exotic languages, religious texts and practices often serve as repositories of cultural and spiritual wisdom, reflecting the prevailing ethos of civilizations while perpetuating entrenched socio-cultural norms and power dynamics. As elucidated by Pandharipande (1991), religious writings, authored predominantly by the powerful and knowledgeable elite, tend to perpetuate hierarchical structures and marginalize subordinate classes, thereby shaping linguistic and socio-cultural landscapes.

Despite the intrinsic symbiosis between language and religion, the realms of sociolinguistics and pragmatics have largely overlooked religion as a determinant of linguistic variation, neglecting the profound influence of religious beliefs and practices on language evolution and usage patterns. Indeed, religion, as a cornerstone of civilization, permeates every facet of linguistic and cultural expression, shaping social hierarchies, gender dynamics, and collective identities, at least in the Indian subcontinent.

In Hinduism, for instance, the pantheon of deities embodies intricate gender dynamics, with female goddesses often serving as consorts to male gods, thereby encapsulating the belief in harmonious coexistence between masculine and feminine energies. Despite the theological assertion of God's formlessness and genderlessness, societal perceptions invariably ascribe masculine attributes to the divine, perpetuating a hierarchical paradigm wherein gods subsume goddesses within an overarching unmarked gender category.

Critics, such as Britto (2005), contend that religious narratives frequently equate femininity with benevolence, thereby perpetuating gendered stereotypes and reinforcing patriarchal power structures. Within the realm of religious communication, interpersonal interactions serve as crucibles wherein participants negotiate their identities, adapt to unique situational dynamics, and forge interpersonal relations imbued with spiritual significance. Such gatherings, characterized by a convergence of diverse viewpoints and communication styles, foster mutual respect and harmony, thereby eschewing offensive or unpleasant language.

In summation, the symbiotic relationship between language and religion constitutes a rich tapestry of cultural and spiritual expression, wherein linguistic constructs serve as vessels for the dissemination of religious teachings, social norms, and collective identities. As scholars continue to unravel the intricate interplay between language, religion, and society, a deeper understanding of the sacred nexus between these two domains emerges, offering profound insights into the complex dynamics of human communication and spiritual expression.

3. *Wārkari Sāmpradāy*: A Socio-Religious Inquiry

As a distinctive Hindu sect, the *Wārkari Sāmpradāy* assumes a pivotal role in orchestrating the annual *Aṣāḍhi* pilgrimage, venerating Lord *Vithal* and adhering to the profound teachings of revered saints, including *Saint Jñyāneswhar, Saint Tukārām, Saint Nāmdeo, Saint Chokhāmelā, Saint Sāvtā Māli, and Saint Janābāi.* Exclusive to the cultural tapestry of Maharashtra, this sect transcends temporal epochs, predating contemporary socio-religious paradigms while instigating transformative societal changes.

Rooted in a historical milieu characterized by routine mistreatment of the disadvantaged, the emergence of *the Wārkari Sāmpradāy* marked a resilient opposition to oppressive practices and a fervent promotion of brotherhood. Despite commendable strides in advocating egalitarian principles, critiques have surfaced concerning the sect's purported failure to eradicate caste distinctions. Notably, the reluctance to endorse inter-caste marriages, perceived as a potential antidote to caste-based prejudices, remains a point of contention.

The distinctive sartorial choices of *Wārkari* adherents further accentuate their cultural identity. Men don white *dhotis*, shirts, headdresses, and basil beads, while women wear simple sarees and blouses. The symbolism embedded in these attire choices serves as a visual manifestation of cultural adherence and communal identity. Noteworthy is the intriguing practice wherein young fairgoers attire themselves as elderly pilgrims, illustrating a poignant continuity of tradition across generations.

Central to the *Wārkari* lexicon is the term '*māuli*,' which connotes equality and peace and is strategically employed as an address term across the religious community. Rooted in Labov's (1972) notion of a speech community*, 'māuli'* emerges as a solidarity marker, defying conventional linguistic hierarchies, including the t/v distinction delineated by Brown and Gilman (1960). Its ubiquity fosters mutual intelligibility among pilgrims from diverse regional vernaculars, encapsulating a linguistic egalitarianism that transcends linguistic diversity.

The prospect of the term's evolution among subsequent generations prompts contemplation. The entwining of tradition and modernity may see *'māuli'* either eclipsed as archaic or cherished for its centuries-old legacy. Additionally, future pilgrimages may witness semantic shifts or constrictions within the term's purview, spurred by technological advancements and the pervasive forces of globalization.

This phenomenon necessitates a reevaluation of conventional paradigms surrounding address terms, urging scholars to scrutinize linguistic phenomena through the prism of participants' ideologies, beliefs, and shared interests. As a microcosm of sociolinguistic dynamics, the *Wārkari Sāmpradāy and its utilization of 'māuli'* beckon nuanced scholarly inquiry, illuminating the intricate interplay between language, culture, and religiosity within the broader context of global linguistic diversity.

4. Background to the Pilgrimage: A Cultural and Religious Odyssey

The focal phenomenon under examination in this scholarly inquiry unfolds amidst the annual *Aṣāḍh* fair, a revered tradition entrenched within the cultural fabric of Maharashtra, India, spanning the Marathi month of *Aṣāḍh*, corresponding to the English months of June and July. While smaller-scale gatherings such as *Kartiki* (November), *Chaitra* (April), and *Maghi* (January) punctuate the annual calendar, the *Aṣāḍh* pilgrimage assumes unparalleled significance, resonating with age-old conventions and profound spiritual fervour.

Nestled within the sacred precincts of Paṇḍharpur, Maharashtra, the *Aṣāḍh* pilgrimage pays homage to Lord *Vithal,* also known as *Pāṇḍurang,* the venerated deity of *the Wārkari Sāmpradāy*. This seminal event witnesses the ceremonial procession of palanquins bearing the holy sandals (*padukas*) and busts of revered saints, including Saint Jñyāneswhar and Saint Tukārām, as they embark on a symbolic pilgrimage to reunite with Lord Viṭhal.

Central to the spiritual ethos of the *Aṣāḍh* pilgrimage is the ekādashi, a sacred day of fasting observed by devotees, wherein offerings of limited sustenance such as *sābudānā khichadi* are made in devout reverence. Amidst the sacred rites and rituals, pilgrims transcend their individual identities, embracing a collective consciousness steeped in the tenets of tolerance and humanistic values. Language, as a conduit of communal expression, assumes a catalytic role in facilitating collective action and spiritual communion.

The pilgrimage reverberates with the harmonious chants of devotees as they intone slogans dedicated to their revered deities, accompanied by the rhythmic cadence of cymbals and mridangam. The fervent recitation of sacred hymns and devotional verses, known as bhajanas and kirtanas, serves as a pedagogical platform wherein the teachings and moral precepts of eminent saints and poets are imparted, nurturing ethical consciousness and civic responsibility amongst the pilgrim community.

In essence, the *Aṣāḍh* pilgrimage emerges as a cultural odyssey, uniting pilgrims in a sacred communion of faith, tradition, and shared spiritual fervor. As devotees traverse the hallowed pathways of *Paṇḍharpu*r, they partake in a collective journey of self-discovery and spiritual renewal, enshrining the enduring legacy of Maharashtra's rich religious heritage amidst the sacred confluence of tradition and transcendence.

5. Address Terms: Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Address terms, as elucidated by Swann et al. (2004, p. 5), encapsulate multifaceted interactional phenomena that signify not only the relative status of speakers but also convey nuances of intimacy, social distance, politeness, and broader social or cultural values inherent within a linguistic community. They serve as linguistic labels employed by individuals to address others, taking into account various socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, education, occupation, and relational closeness. Scholarly inquiry into address terms spans disciplines, with sociolinguistic and anthropological investigations shedding light on their intricate sociocultural dynamics and implications.

According to Ball (2010) and Clayman (2012), address terms serve as linguistic mirrors reflecting the underlying social structures and relational dynamics within a community. Wardhaugh (2006) emphasizes that diverse sociolinguistic factors contribute to the variations observed in the utilization and interpretation of address terms across different linguistic and cultural contexts. For instance, Rajabul's (2023, pp. 54-56) exploration of the Sasak language spoken in Indonesia reveals intricate patterns of address terms, including religious patterns, underscoring the profound interplay between language, culture, and religious identity.

In the realm of address terms, kinship terms and honorifics emerge as pivotal constructs intertwined with broader sociocultural dynamics. Kinship terms delineate familial and societal relations based on blood ties and social affiliations, as expounded by Britannica (n.d.). Conversely, honorifics, as delineated by Kresnantara et al. (2022, p. 250), represent a system of relational hierarchy and respect between the addresser and addressee. Both systems serve as organizational principles governing intimate and

hierarchical relationships within a society, underscoring the intricate interplay between language, culture, and social structure.

Despite the plethora of studies examining the functions and variations of address terms within various linguistic communities, a significant research lacuna persists concerning the exploration of address terms within religious contexts and the influence of religion on everyday language usage (Alsohaibani, 2017). This paper endeavours to address this gap in scholarship by delving into the intricate dynamics of address terms within religious frameworks, shedding light on how religious beliefs and practices shape linguistic conventions and interpersonal communication patterns.

In essence, the study of address terms transcends linguistic boundaries, offering invaluable insights into the complex interplay between language, culture, and society. By unravelling the sociocultural intricacies embedded within address terms, scholars can deepen their understanding of human interaction and social dynamics across diverse linguistic and cultural landscapes.

6. Linguistic Distribution of the Term "*Māuli*" in Religious Discourse

The address term *"Māuli"* holds significant sociolinguistic relevance, serving as a linchpin for social, religious, and linguistic interactions among devotees during their pilgrimage journey and participation in the fair. Despite the vast congregation of attendees, individuals exhibit a profound sense of familiarity and camaraderie facilitated by the shared usage of the term. Primarily, "*Māuli"* functions as a means to capture attention or summon individuals within the religious community.

This address term assumes multifaceted connotations and functions, imbuing it with emotional intimacy and pleasantness. Its extensive utilization stems from two principal factors: the necessity to address others respectfully amidst dialectal variations within the congregation and the longstanding familiarity with the term among pilgrims, spanning generations of familial succession. Novice devotees assimilate the norms associated with the term en route to the pilgrimage, observing its exchange among their peers.

A semantic analysis reveals the diverse functions attributed to the term "*Māuli"*, ranging from its role as an alternative term for mother in Marathi to symbolizing love, affection, equity, and selflessness. It embodies forgiveness, tolerance, and camaraderie, mirroring the shared ethos of the pilgrim community. Despite social and linguistic diversity, participants converge towards a common objective, forging a collective identity rooted in the sect's values and discourse.

Table 1: Semantic distribution of *māuli*

Sl no	Semantic distribution
1	alternative term for mother in Marathi
2	inclusiveness or motherly qualities
3	term attributed to *Saint Jñyāneswhar and Lord Viṭhal*
4	given male name
5	brother, sister or friend
6	any devotee who partakes in the fair
7	chanting the name of *Saint Jñyāneswhar*

10	symbol of love and affection
11	symbol of equity and selflessness
12	equivalent of the English expression 'sorry'
13	equivalent of the English expression 'excuse me'
14	forgiveness and tolerance

Table 1 outlines the semantic distribution of *"Māuli",* encapsulating its multifaceted meanings within the religious context. The majority of pilgrims adhere to a shared code centred on love, spirituality, and mutual respect, fostering a collective bond and sense of camaraderie reflective of the speech community's norms and values.

In conclusion, the linguistic distribution of the term *"Māuli"* underscores its pivotal role in facilitating interpersonal communication, fostering a shared sense of identity, and reinforcing communal bonds within the religious pilgrimage setting. Its nuanced meanings and functions epitomize the intricate interplay between language, culture, and religious expression among devotees.
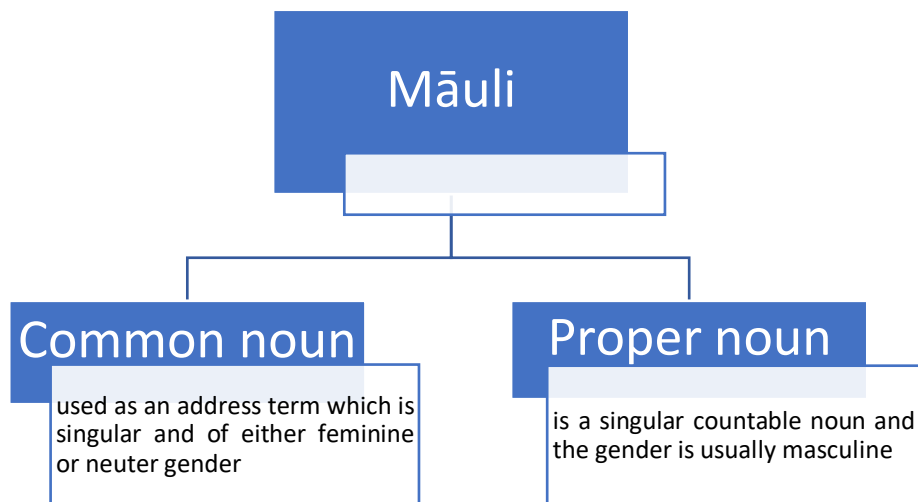
Māuli

Common noun
used as an address term which is singular and of either feminine or neuter gender

Proper noun
is a singular countable noun and the gender is usually masculine

Figure 1: Morphosyntactic distribution of *māuli*

Morphosyntactic Analysis of the Address Term *"Māuli"*

The address term "*Māuli"* exhibits intricate morphosyntactic features, underscoring its nuanced usage and societal connotations within religious discourse. Morphologically, *"Māuli"* functions as a countable noun, manifesting solely in its singular form, thus emphasizing its individualized reference within linguistic interactions.

The honorific implications of "*Māuli*" are contingent upon the accompanying verb, reflecting the level of social solidarity and distance between the addressor and addressee. The initial particle, particularly 'ye' or 'ow', serves as a determinant of social dynamics, akin to the 'v' in the t/v distinction observed in certain languages. Consequently, "*Māuli"* assumes a grammatical and social gender, predominantly feminine, attributed to its plural pronoun form in constructions such as 'ow *māuli'*. Despite its feminine grammatical gender, the term retains a neutral form when referencing individuals embodying maternal qualities, underscoring its adaptability and semantic versatility.

Furthermore, *"Māuli"* functions as a proper noun, referencing a male-given first name with inherent religious connotations associated with *Saint Jñyāneswhar* or his revered qualities. Interestingly, it is noteworthy that *"Māuli"* does not occur as a female-given first name, thereby eschewing any explicit association with feminine attributes in this specific context.

Figure 1 illustrates the morphosyntactic distribution of the address term "*Māuli",* delineating its grammatical structure and social implications within linguistic discourse.

In conclusion, the morphosyntactic analysis of *"Māuli"* elucidates its dynamic linguistic properties and socio-cultural significance within religious contexts. Its grammatical gender, honorific implications, and semantic associations underscore the intricate interplay between language, culture, and religious identity among devotees.
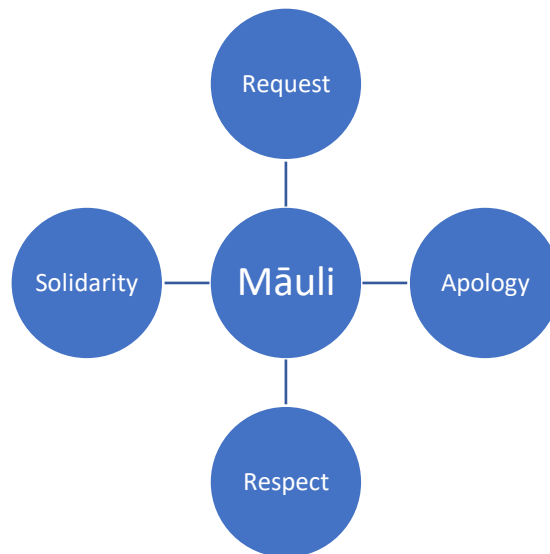
Figure 2: pragmatic distribution of *māuli*

Figure: Pragmatic Functions of the Address Term *"Māuli"*

The address term "*Māuli"* assumes paramount significance within the intricate dynamics of pilgrimage discourse, particularly in mediating conflicts and fostering social cohesion among pilgrims hailing from diverse social and regional backgrounds. Its pragmatic functions, rooted in linguistic politeness and conflict resolution, underscore its pivotal role in interpersonal interactions within the pilgrimage community.

Pragmatic analyses, as posited by Kadar (2013) and Culpeper (2017), emphasize the contextual nature of linguistic expressions, refraining from classifying them as inherently polite or impolite without due consideration of the situational context. In the context of the pilgrimage, the pragmatic usage of "*Māuli"* transcends linguistic conventions, embodying ideals of inclusiveness, generosity, and love. When employed within expressions, the term epitomizes politeness, serving as a linguistic marker of respect and deference.

Moreover, "*Māuli"* functions as a mitigating agent in conflict resolution scenarios, wherein its semantic connotations of inclusivity and benevolence are leveraged to de-escalate tensions and restore harmony among disputing pilgrims. Observing the nuances of its usage, bystanders intervene in conflicts by addressing the involved parties with the *term "Māuli*", redirecting their attention away from confrontation towards reconciliation.

The pragmatic functions of "*Māuli"* extend beyond mere linguistic politeness, encompassing broader socio-cultural implications within the pilgrimage community. Its multifaceted role in conflict mitigation and

social cohesion highlights the intricate interplay between language, culture, and social dynamics within religious discourse.

In conclusion, the pragmatic analysis of the address term "*Māuli*" illuminates its multifunctional significance as a catalyst for linguistic politeness and conflict resolution within the pilgrimage setting. Its pragmatic versatility underscores its indispensable role in fostering communal harmony and solidarity among diverse pilgrims.
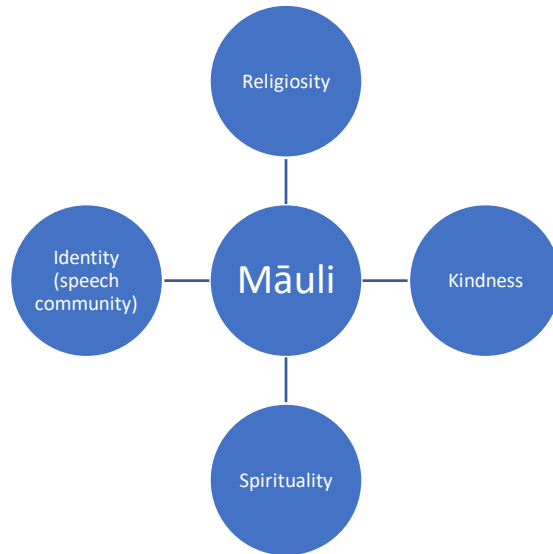

Figure 3: Sociolinguistic distribution of *māuli*

Figure: Sociolinguistic Distribution of the Address Term *"Māuli"*

The sociolinguistic exploration of the address term *"Māuli*" unveils its profound significance within the intricate tapestry of religious and cultural discourse. Rooted in notions of intimacy, solidarity, and religiosity, the term serves as a linguistic emblem of communal identity and spiritual reverence among pilgrims partaking in sacred rituals and gatherings.

Sociolinguistically, *"Māuli"* embodies a myriad of symbolic attributes, encompassing qualities of kindness, patience, and forgiveness that resonate deeply within the pilgrimage community. Its versatile usage transcends social and geographic boundaries, fostering a sense of inclusivity and camaraderie among individuals from diverse backgrounds. As pilgrims address one another with *"Māuli,"* they reaffirm their collective identity and allegiance to a common religious faith, forging bonds of kinship and spiritual kinship.

The widespread adoption of *"Māuli"* underscores its role as a unifying force within the pilgrimage milieu, accentuating the interconnectedness of linguistic expression and social cohesion. Participants, irrespective of age or status, embrace the term as a testament to its inclusive nature, transcending generational and hierarchical barriers.

Notably, the sociolinguistic distribution of *"Māuli"* reflects its sacred resonance within religious contexts, diverging from conventional linguistic paradigms of linguistic change and evolution. Unlike linguistic phenomena subjected to ongoing change, *"Māuli"* retains its sanctity and cultural significance within the sacred spheres of religious discourse, embodying timeless traditions and beliefs.

Furthermore, the appropriation of religious terminology beyond the pilgrimage setting underscores its transformative potential within broader societal contexts. However, such linguistic extensions are contingent upon prevailing social and cultural norms, with certain phonological and morphological patterns assuming heightened sacredness and significance within specific communities.

In conclusion, the sociolinguistic analysis of the address term *"Māuli"* unveils its multifaceted role as a catalyst for communal solidarity and spiritual expression within the pilgrimage community. Its enduring resonance within religious discourse underscores the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and spirituality in shaping collective identity and social cohesion.

7. Lingua Franca Term:

The term "*māuli"* emerges as a pivotal linguistic phenomenon within the pilgrimage community, serving as a unifying lingua franca amidst the diverse linguistic landscape of Marathi dialects. Pilgrims from various regions converge upon the sacred grounds, bringing with them a rich tapestry of linguistic diversity. As articulated by one pilgrim*, "māuli"* provides a common linguistic ground, transcending regional dialects and mitigating potential misunderstandings arising from semantic and sociolinguistic variations inherent in address terms.

For instance, the *term "bāi,"* while universally used across the state, may assume divergent meanings in different Marathi dialects, ranging from denoting one's mother or sister to signifying one's wife. Such semantic nuances pose challenges for effective communication, especially among pilgrims hailing from disparate linguistic backgrounds. In this context, *"māuli"* assumes the role of a lingua franca, offering mutual intelligibility and fostering harmonious interactions among pilgrims.

Even pilgrims from neighbouring states, such as Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, find solace in the universality of "*māuli"* despite their limited proficiency in the dominant language. Through contextual cues and repeated usage, non-native speakers discern the nuanced meanings embedded within the term, facilitating cross-cultural communication and communal solidarity.

8. Expansion of *"Māuli"* as a Generic Term:

The semantic evolution of *"māuli"* transcends conventional gender norms, defying linguistic conventions to embody a broader spectrum of meanings and connotations. Traditionally feminine in nature, the term has expanded its semantic boundaries to encompass diverse gender identities and relational dynamics within the pilgrimage community.

In linguistic theory, unmarked terms typically assume a masculine gender and serve as generic references across languages. However, *"māuli"* deviates from this norm by retaining its feminine essence while accommodating diverse gender expressions. This departure reflects the cultural reverence bestowed upon motherhood, symbolizing sacrifice, compassion, and unconditional love within Marathi culture.

Contemporary linguistic trends, such as the adoption of English borrowings like "mummy" or "mumma*,"* have supplanted traditional address terms like *"āi"* for mother. Nevertheless, the enduring resonance of *"māuli"* persists as a metaphorical embodiment of inclusivity, selflessness, and maternal care.

In essence, the semantic elasticity of *"māuli"* underscores its cultural resilience and adaptability within evolving linguistic landscapes, reaffirming its status as a cherished symbol of communal identity and spiritual reverence among pilgrims.

9. Methodology:

The methodology employed in this study aimed to comprehensively investigate the usage and implications of the address term "*māuli"* within the socio-religious context of the *Aṣāḍhi* fair held in *Paṇḍharpur.* Drawing upon established frameworks in sociolinguistics and discourse analysis, the research design incorporated direct observation, participant observation, and interviews to elucidate the multifaceted dynamics surrounding the utilization of the term.

Central to the investigation was the exploration of the t/v distinction as a marker of solidarity alongside the concept of speech community as delineated by Labov (1972). The study diverges from conventional perspectives, challenging prevalent notions posited by Holmes (2013) and Wardhaugh (2015) by examining the pragmatic functions of "māuli" beyond mere social and economic identities, emphasizing its role in fostering communal cohesion and religious affiliation.

Data collection occurred during the *Aṣāḍhi* fair on July 23, 2018, encompassing direct observations within the *Paṇḍharpur* vicinity and extensive interviews with pilgrims. Despite challenges in sample diversity, efforts were made to engage participants across various demographic profiles, including age, gender, and socioeconomic status. However, limitations in female and young adult participation underscored broader sociocultural dynamics pertaining to gender norms and religiosity.

10. Data Analysis:

The collected data underwent rigorous qualitative and quantitative analysis to discern underlying patterns and meanings associated with the usage of "*māuli"* within the pilgrimage context. Utilizing a combination of manual coding and computational techniques, the study aimed to elucidate the semantic nuances and sociolinguistic implications embedded within the address term.

Interview transcripts, audio recordings of religious discourse, and online media content served as primary sources for data analysis, providing rich insights into the religiosity and social dynamics shaping linguistic practices during the *Aṣāḍhi* fair. Notably, the qualitative analysis prioritized the exploration of underlying religious sentiments and communal affiliations encoded within the usage of *"māuli."*

The quantitative analysis involved the systematic tabulation and categorization of instances where *"māuli"* was employed, allowing for the identification of frequency distributions and contextual variations across different pilgrimage settings. Graphical representations further facilitated the visualization of data trends and patterns, enhancing the interpretive depth of the findings.

10.1 Interviews:

Personal and semi-structured interviews conducted in Marathi formed a cornerstone of the data collection process, engaging eighty-three pilgrims representing diverse demographic backgrounds. While challenges in female and young adult participation were noted, the sample composition encompassed a spectrum of age groups and geographic regions within Maharashtra.

Among the respondents, a nuanced exploration revealed varying degrees of engagement with the term "*māuli"* both during and after the fair. While a minority abstained from its usage entirely, the overwhelming majority acknowledged its pervasive presence as a hallmark of communal interaction and religious fervour. The interview questionnaire encapsulated inquiries pertaining to linguistic practices, religiosity, and sociocultural affiliations, fostering a holistic understanding of the address term's significance within the pilgrimage milieu.

Table 2: Interview Questions

Serial number	Question
1	What is your name?
2	How old are you?

3	What is your level of education?
4	What is your occupation?
5	How long have you been participating in the fair?
6	What terms you used to address the fellow beings around in the fair? Or
7	Did you use the term māuli to address the people around?
8	Did they also address you back using the same term?
9	What is the meaning of the term *māuli, in* your opinion?
10	Do you continue using this term when you go back to your native place?

Table of interview questions asked to the participants in the fair.

10.2 Speech Data:

The speech data analyzed in this study comprises nearly five hours of audio recordings capturing natural interactions among pilgrims, street merchants, and local residents during the *Aṣāḍhi* fair. These recordings were collected through participant observation, offering an authentic glimpse into the linguistic landscape of the pilgrimage site. Additionally, recorded snippets of advertisements and announcements disseminated across the city were included to provide a comprehensive overview of linguistic practices within the pilgrimage milieu.

Given the dynamic nature of spoken interactions, particular attention was devoted to ensuring the fidelity and accuracy of the recorded data. In instances where clarity was compromised, the researcher intervened by verbally transcribing the speech samples on-site, mitigating the risk of data loss while preserving the integrity of natural discourse. Ethical considerations regarding data collection in public settings were meticulously addressed to uphold participant anonymity and privacy.

The speech data encapsulates a plethora of commonplace expressions featuring the *term "māuli,"* each imbued with nuanced meanings and socio-cultural connotations. Transliterated excerpts, contextualized within their respective discourse contexts, offer insights into the multifaceted usage of the term:

भाग्य असल्यास असंधा आठवत नाही माऊली

(If fortune favors, one doesn't forget, *māuli)*

जय माऊली जय माऊली बोलवा, विठ्ठल वेडा पोलवा

(Chant *māuli'*s victory, make Viṭhal rejoice)

आई विठ्ठल पण माऊली असते, आपल्या नावाचे पार्थ असतात

(Mother is *Viṭṭhal,* but māuli exists, they are the custodians of our name)

These transliterations, accompanied by contextual translations, offer a glimpse into the rich tapestry of linguistic expressions observed during the *Aṣāḍhi* fair. The interpretations provided by the researcher are

informed by socio-cultural nuances and situational contexts, reflecting the intricate interplay between language, religiosity, and communal identity within the pilgrimage setting.

Serial number	Expression	Meaning
1	*chalāmāulichalā*	go ahead *māuli,* please
2	*ikaḍyāmāuli*	come here *māuli,* please
3	*chalā, puḍhchalāmāuli*	please keep walking, *māuli*
4	*oh māuli, ikḍeyā*	*māuli,* please come here
5	*chalāmāulisahkāryakarā*	come *on māuli,* please cooperate with us
6	*yāmāuli*	please come here, *māuli*
7	*ghyāmāuli*	please buy it or take this, *māuli*
8	*chalā o chalāmāuli; thāmbunkāchalā*	please move on, *māuli*; don't stop here, please
9	*panḍharpurnagarimadhe āple swāgat āhe māuli, māuli pānyachi bāṭlif akt dahā rupaye*	you are welcome to Panḍharpur, *māuli. māuli,* water bottle only ten rupees (Advertisement)
10	*bolāmāuli*	yes, *māuli(*place your order)(Hotel)
11	*māuli- māuli*	excuse me
12	*eymāuli*	hey *māuli* (street sellers)
13	*damān, damān, ḍhaklunkāmāuli*	easy, easy, please don't push me, *māuli*
14	*thāmbāthāmbāmāulithāmbā*	wait, wait *māuli,* please wait
15	*chalāmāuli, māulichalā*	please keep moving, *māuli*

Table comprising corpus of utterances which included the address term māuli.

10.3 Slogans and Songs:

Slogans and songs serve as potent vehicles for the propagation of cultural and religious sentiments, offering profound insights into the intricate interplay of linguistic expression and socio-cultural symbolism within the pilgrimage context. The analysis presented herein delves into the pragmatic and metaphorical dimensions of select slogans and songs contextualized within the broader framework of the address term "*māuli."*

10.3.1 **Slogan: *Jñyāneswharmāuli, JñyanrājmāuliTukārām***

> *Jñyāneswhar **māuli**, Jñyanrāj **māuli** Tukārām or*
>
> *Jñyanobā **māuli** Tukārām (slogan)*

This evocative slogan reverberates with historical resonance, encapsulating the reverence and devotion of pilgrims towards *Saint Jñyāneswhar.* The incorporation of *"māuli"* in conjunction with the saint's name underscores his maternal role in nurturing and safeguarding his followers. The metaphorical invocation of maternal attributes is a poignant reminder of the saint's enduring sacrifice and unwavering commitment to societal welfare, elevating his stature as a spiritual luminary.

10.3.2 **Song Extract (Movie: *Ghaat): Jñyānrājmāzimāuli***

> *Jñyānrāj māzi **māuli***
>
> *Jñyānobā **māuli**, chita tuzyā pāuli*
>
> *Jñyānobā **māuli***
>
> *chandanāchi sāvali*
>
> ***māuli**, **māuli**, **māuli** ho **māuli***
>
> ***māuli**, **māuli**, **māuli** ho **māuli**   (Source: Youtube; movie: Ghaat)*

In this lyrical composition, the fusion of poetic imagery and religious devotion culminates in a poignant portrayal of divine reverence. The designation of *Saint Jñyāneswhar as "māuli"* embodies the essence of maternal care and spiritual solace, evoking sentiments of unwavering devotion and surrender. The lyrical progression, culminating in the repetitive invocation of *"māuli,"* reinforces the profound emotional resonance associated with the address term, underscoring its centrality within the pilgrim's spiritual lexicon.

10.3.3 **Song Extract (Movie: *Are SansārSansār): Viṭhumāulitu,māulijagāchi***

> *Viṭhu **māuli** tu, **māuli** jagāchi*
>
> ***māulit** murti viṭhalāchi   (Source: Youtube. Movie: Are Sansār Sansār)*

In this melodic tribute to Lord *Viṭhal,* the invocation of *"māuli"* transcends mere linguistic convention to embody profound spiritual reverence. The metaphorical designation of the deity as "mother" underscores the divine's nurturing and protective role, eliciting sentiments of filial devotion and spiritual sustenance among devotees. Through lyrical parallelism, the song extols the deity's omnipotent presence, ensconced within the universal fabric of existence.

10.3.4 **Song Extract (Movie: *LaiBhāri): jaribāpsāryājagāchāparitu…***

> *jari bāp sāryā jagāchā pari tu…..*
>
> *āmhā lekarānchi Viṭhu **māuli**……*
>
> ***māuli māuli māuli***
>
> ***māuli māuli māuli***
>
> ***māuli** roop tuze (Source: Youtube. Movie: Lai Bhāri)*

This lyrical excerpt from the movie *"LaiBhāri"* evokes a poignant portrayal of divine compassion and maternal solicitude embodied by *Lord Viṭhal.* The metaphorical juxtaposition of paternal and maternal attributes underscores the deity's multifaceted role as creator and nurturer, engendering sentiments of profound reverence and filial devotion among devotees. The repetition *of "māuli"* amplifies the lyrical cadence, accentuating the divine presence suffusing every facet of existence.

10.3.5 Song Extract (Movie: *LaiBhāri): dekhilākaḷasḍoilātuḷasdhāvitochandrabhāgeshi*

> *dekhilā kaḷas ḍoilā tuḷas dhāvito chandrabhāgeshi*
>
> *samipahi dise paṇḍhari*
>
> *yāch mandiri **māuli** māzi*
>
> *tuze darshan vhāve ātā*
>
> *tu sakaḷ jagāchā trātā*
>
> *ghe kushit gā **māuli***
>
> *tuzyā pāyari thevato māthā*   *(Souce: Youtube. Movie: Lai Bhāri)*

In this lyrical ode to Lord *Viṭhal,* the invocation of *"māuli"* embodies the essence of maternal solicitude and divine compassion, underscoring the deity's omnipresent benevolence and protective embrace. The lyrical imagery juxtaposing maternal tenderness with celestial grandeur evokes a profound sense of spiritual awe and reverence among devotees. Through metaphorical invocation, the song encapsulates the divine essence of Lord Viṭhal, ensconced within the sacred precincts of devotion and piety.

In essence, the slogans and songs analyzed herein serve as poignant manifestations of collective devotion and spiritual reverence, transcending linguistic boundaries to evoke profound sentiments of filial piety and divine adoration among pilgrims and devotees alike.

11. Findings

This section encapsulates the empirical findings derived from the comprehensive analysis of data collected and scrutinized within the purview of this study. The findings are categorized into two distinct subsections: the frequency count of the address term *"māuli"* and the multifaceted functions associated with its usage.

11.1 Frequency Count of the Address Term *"māuli"*

The frequency count analysis of the address term *"māuli"* unveils intricate patterns of linguistic usage and cultural significance among pilgrims. The bidirectional employment of the term emerges as a salient feature, indicating a reciprocal exchange of linguistic reverence and social acknowledgement among devotees. Noteworthy is the utilization of the term both during and after the event, underscoring its enduring relevance and socio-cultural resonance beyond the confines of the pilgrimage. Conversely, the absence of usage by certain pilgrims elucidates nuanced variations in linguistic behaviour and cultural adaptation within the pilgrimage context.

11.2 Functions Associated with the Address Term *"māuli"*

The functional analysis of the address term "*māuli"* delineates its diverse sociopragmatic, kinship, social relations, and religiosity dimensions. Within the sociopragmatic domain, subcategories such as politeness, respect, solidarity, lingua franca, and formality assume paramount importance, reflecting the nuanced interpersonal dynamics and communicative norms prevalent among pilgrims. The entwined concepts of kinship and social relations underscore the emotive and relational underpinnings of the term, encompassing a spectrum of familial and communal bonds characterized by inclusivity, equity, and selflessness.

Religiosity emerges as a central theme, encapsulating devotees' spiritual devotion, reverence, and existential significance attributed to the divine. However, a notable subset of participants expressed uncertainty regarding the term's usage, highlighting potential variations in linguistic familiarity and cultural interpretation among pilgrims.

The comprehensive analysis, based on 147 responses from 83 respondents, elucidates the nuanced interplay of linguistic expression and socio-cultural symbolism inherent within the pilgrimage context. Through

meticulous quantitative and qualitative scrutiny, this study sheds light on the multifaceted functions and socio-linguistic dynamics associated with the address term *"māuli,"* thereby enriching scholarly discourse and deepening our understanding of linguistic practices within religious pilgrimage contexts.
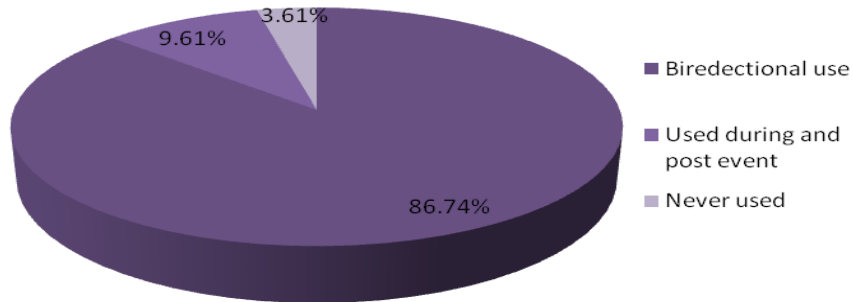

Figure 4: Frequency Count and Pattern of the Address Term "*māuli"* Usage Among Pilgrims

The figure below illustrates the frequency and pattern of the address term *"māuli"* used by pilgrims during or after the fair, or both, or never.

| Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Bidirectional Usage	72	86.74%
Continued Usage Post-Fair	8	9.63%
Never Used	3	3.61%

Key Observations:

Bidirectional Usage: The bidirectional use of the term *"māuli"* emerged as the most prevalent pattern, with 72 participants (86.74%) affirming its mutual usage. This reciprocal exchange of the term underscores its integral role in fostering social acknowledgement and linguistic reverence among pilgrims.

Continued Usage Post-Fair: A notable subset of participants, comprising 8 individuals (9.63%), reported continued usage of the term even after the conclusion of the fair. This sustained linguistic practice highlights the enduring significance of religious beliefs and communal ties among devotees.

Never Used: Three participants (3.61%) indicated non-usage of the term altogether, with two identified as non-Marathi speakers. Their linguistic limitations precluded them from employing the term within the context of pilgrimage.

The data depicted in Figure 5 elucidate nuanced patterns of linguistic behaviour and cultural adaptation among pilgrims, underscoring the multifaceted nature of the address term *"māuli"* within the pilgrimage milieu.

Figure 5: Functions associated with the term *māuli*
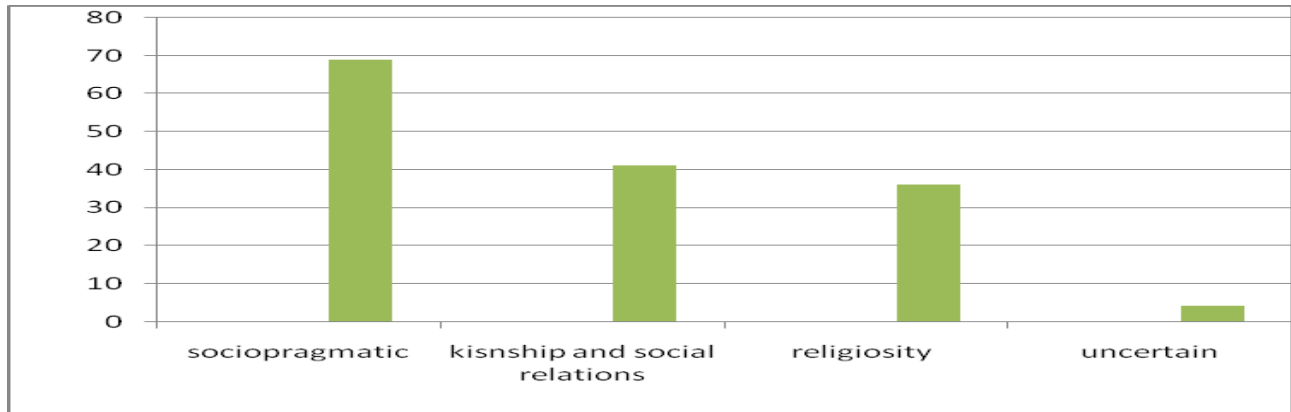
The figure below delineates the functions of the term *"māuli"* as perceived by participants, categorized into sociopragmatic, kinship and social relations, religiosity, and uncertainty.

Function Categories	Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Sociopragmatic	69	46.94
Kinship and Social Relations	41	27.89
Religiosity	36	24.49
Uncertainty	1	0.68

Key Takeaways :

Sociopragmatic Function: The sociopragmatic dimension of the term *"māuli"* garnered the highest number of responses, with 69 participants (46.94%) endorsing its role in facilitating politeness, respect, solidarity, lingua franca usage, and formality. The broad applicability of this function underscores the term's versatility in navigating social interactions within the context of pilgrimage.

Kinship and Social Relations: Participants identified the term's association with kinship and social relations, attributing familial and relational qualities to its usage. 41 responses (27.89%) underscored the term's significance in expressing inclusivity, equity, and affectionate bonds akin to those found in familial relationships.

Religiosity: The religiosity aspect of the *term "māuli"* emerged prominently, with 36 responses (24.49%) highlighting its role in expressing devotion, spirituality, and reverence towards the divine. Participants acknowledged its significance in invoking religious sentiments and fostering a connection with the divine realm.

Uncertainty: A single response (0.68%) reflected uncertainty regarding the term's function, suggesting a marginal proportion of participants who may have lacked clarity or familiarity with its contextual usage.

The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of *"māuli"* within the pilgrimage context, encompassing sociopragmatic, kinship, and religiosity dimensions. The data elucidate the diverse roles attributed to the term, reflecting its nuanced significance in interpersonal communication and religious discourse among pilgrims

12. Conclusion: Unveiling the Linguistic Tapestry of "*māuli"* in Religious Discourse

Religion and language, intertwined in a symbiotic relationship, manifest a nuanced linguistic landscape within the context of religious pilgrimage. The term "*māuli,"* a linguistic expression rich in religious connotations, emerges as a focal point for fairgoers to articulate their profound devotion and intricate emotions, assuming multifaceted roles in the pilgrimage setting.

The *Aṣāḍhi* pilgrimage serves as a crucible, providing a contextual backdrop wherein the diverse meanings and purposes of *"māuli"* unfold. Pilgrims, cognizant of its paramount importance, actively contribute to the evolution and development of this linguistic resource. However, the post-fair scenario witnesses a discontinuation of this address term, attributed to the plethora of linguistic varieties prevalent in different regions. Each linguistic enclave boasts its unique address phrases, intricately woven with nuances of distance, closeness, authority, and identity in communication. The cessation of *"māuli"* usage beyond the fair is further motivated by the cleansing rituals embedded in religious practices, demanding a clear demarcation between the sacred code and common language. This demarcation, reinforced through distinct pronunciation, rhythm, and religious terminology, delineates a linguistic register exclusive to religious discourse governed by psychological and cognitive variables.

Regrettably, the idealistic principles of fairness and inclusivity cherished within the sacred sites find limitations in transcending beyond their boundaries. Pilgrims, acknowledging this discrepancy, grapple with the temporal and spatial confinement of initiatives addressing social prejudice within *Wārkari* meetings. Each pilgrimage, rather than dismantling social hierarchies, inadvertently solidifies existing structures.

In navigating the complex interplay of religion and language, individuals stand at the crossroads of reconciling idealistic aspirations with the pragmatic realities of societal dynamics. The pilgrimage, a microcosm of religious fervor, mirrors the broader challenges in bridging the gap between lofty ideals and societal actualities. As linguistic expressions like *"māuli"* continue to weave themselves into the fabric of religious discourse, the pilgrimage serves as a crucible for introspection, prompting individuals to contemplate the broader relevance of religion in societal frameworks.

Notes

1. *Paṇḍharpur*-Pilgrimage and holy city located in the *Solapur* district of Maharashtra, India
2. *Saint Jñyāneswhar* -12th Century Hindu poet-saint and the author *of Jñyāneswhari*
3. *Saint Tukārām-17th* Century Hindu poet-saint known for *Abhangās*, a kind of poetry in praise of Lord *Viṭhal*
4. *Saint Nāmdeo* -13th Century Hindu poet-saint also famous for *Abhangās*
5. *Shabudana Khichdi*- Indian dish made from tapioca pearls or sago
6. *Samadhi*- Eternally entombing oneself alive to unite with higher powers of human life

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