

This unique dictionary documents the language of the Koli community

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Today, on Koli Bhasha Divas (September 1), artists and researchers Parag and Kadambari Koli-Tandel reveal their four-year-project to document the slowly fading Koli language in the first dictionary of the language

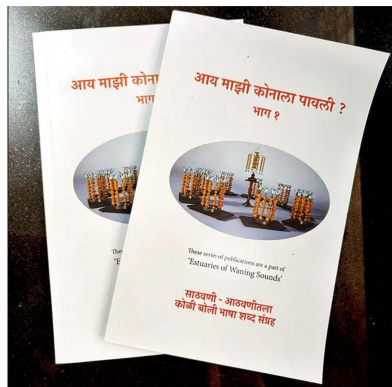


A mural of a Koli fisherwoman on a wall at Chendani Koliwada in Thane. File Pic/Satej Shinde

There is a comforting familiarity in sounds. Coming from an aspiring writer, it might sound pretentious; but it is true. Artist and researcher Kadambari Koli-Tandel terms it the 'last thread to the past'. Over the last four years, Kadambari and her husband, Parag Tandel, have been travelling to various koliwadass across Mumbai documenting culture, practices, objects and above all, language. This project, Estuaries of Waning Sounds (a series of projects to document the language that began in 2019), backed by their initiative The Tandel Fund Archives, will arrive with the publication of the first part of their series, Koli Bhasha Sangraha dictionary today.

History in spoken verse

The history of the koliwadass — the settlements of the [Kolis](#), the original inhabitants of the city — might date back to almost 10,000 years. However, the language itself has been amorphous. "Ours is a functional language. We vocalised these sounds for our daily use from fishing to cooking and activities on the shore," she explains. In 2019, the Tandel Fund Archives began as a project. The effort, Parag adds, was to revive the language, and its nuances.



The published dictionary titled Aay Majhi Konala Pavli