the primary concerns in my reading of Prasad. I have attempted, in my study, to explore the role and the significance of the element of rhetoric, imagery, allegory and other usages of literary technique which, like his repeated dependence on elements of 'chance' and 'escape' have lent ambiguity and weakness to his commitment as a socially aware writer.

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Language (In)Equality: a Critique of Language Planning in India

The parenthetical negative marker is a deliberate insertion in the title of the monograph that I hope to write when my research project is completed. Questions of justice, equality and such other 'ideals' become important and come to the surface usually when such ideals are perceived as being denied or withheld by those in power. In such times, injustices and inequalities have to be highlighted, and struggles have to be waged for getting justice and equality. These struggles can be waged through people's movements; they can also be waged through concerted academic efforts to analyse and understand 'how' and 'why' inequalities have come about. This project represents the latter type of effort. It is envisaged as an attempt to critique the whole language planning and language policy paradigm in post-independence India which, while proclaiming to preserve 'unity in diversity', has created more diversities and inequalities than ever before. So much so that whereas we used to have the good old distinction between languages and dialects (*bhasha*, the cultivated and standardised form and *boli*, the natural, spontaneous spoken form), now one gets, thanks to the strategy of naming or labelling, a whole set of distinctions, viz. standard : non-standard, major : minor, majority : minority, national : regional, scheduled : unscheduled and so on. This kind of nomenclature, to my mind, contains the very seed of inequality. This inequality has became more pronounced as a consequence of conscious language policies, the very crux of which is to be found in the constitutional provisions and the VIII Schedule which, as of date, includes eighteen languages that are further sub-categorised as National Official, State Official and other languages. This, when seen in conjunction with the linguistic reorganisation of states, has led to certain anomalies, e.g. Sindhi and Kashmiri are not the official languages of any state, while Sanskrit, the pan-Indian classical language, enjoys a kind of supra-schedule status. The case of English is still more curious – this ex-colonial, exoglossic language is not only the Associate National Official Language, but also serves as an inter-state link language and is promoted,

propagated and supported as the language of opportunity, the language of higher learning, the language of prestige and the language of power. Constraints of space do not permit any elaborate account of this aspect of language policy and language planning at this point. Just one point, however, that needs to be mentioned here is the justification given by the advocates of English, viz. that this language puts everyone at 'equal disadvantage' – a strange way of giving equality indeed. It can be argued that English tends to give 'unequal advantage' to those sections of the people who know it. Further, it can also be argued that the whole language planning strategy is aimed at giving 'unequal or disproportionate advantage' to a small number of Indian languages vis-a-vis the vast majority of other Indian languages. The planning strategies have resulted in a situation where it is possible to talk in terms of 'favoured languages', 'pampered languages', 'promoted languages', 'tolerated languages' and 'discouraged languages'. One might also mention here the interesting fact that while there are several movements afoot to save 'endangered species' all over the world, very little concern is being shown for languages that are facing imminent threat of extinction. On the contrary, language policies and planning strategies appear to be aimed overtly or covertly, to bring about their demise. Is it a case of 'euthanasia' or an insiduous attempt to 'assimilate' in the name of nation-building and development. The project is intended to probe these questions in some detail.

The notion of language equality inevitably involves a close, careful look at the educational-functionality of different languages. The current scene in India is one of differential and discriminatory use of languages in education. Of the 1652 mother tongues reportedly available, only 67 are used as media of instruction at the primary level. This number tapers off sharply as the pupils move up the educational ladder, till one reaches higher education in medicine, sciences, technology and professional courses, where English alone is considered a suitable medium of instruction. This again leaves out a host of minor/tribal languages which, despite the efforts of the Commission for Linguistic Minorities, are generally treated as being unfit even for the purposes of initiating literacy. It is patently obvious that this kind of dispensation has serious implications in terms of the socialisation process, attitude formation, economic opportunities and social mobility. The speakers/users of these languages that do not come within the ambit of 'favoured' or 'promoted' languages, feel marginalised, deprived and disadvantaged. Such perceptions lead to tensions and conflicts, for when a group's language is devalorised its very identity is threatened. This is another aspect of the issue the present research intends probing in detail.

The notion of 'mainstream' is an attractive one. It conjures up a nice picture of small streams and rivulets flowing into and merging with larger rivers which, in turn, flow into and merge with the seas. But in this case the sources or the springs and rivulets do not dry up or cease to be. When the same kind of process is visualised in terms of languages (planners do talk

about bringing people into the mainstream through language planning), however, the source – the little minor and tribal languages are left to dry up. Languages are not only sources; they have to be viewed as resources, as reservoirs of cultures, customs, usages and world-views. The research project plans to look into this aspect too.

Briefly, then, the present research is concerned with the following:

(a) An examination of the notion of equality, both natural and social;

(b) An inquiry into the notion of language equality;

(c) An overview of the current linguistic scene in India;

(d) A critique of the language polices, educational polices and their attitudinal, sociological and economic consequences;

(e) An examination of the fundamental right to 'freedom of speech' and its correlation with language equality, and

(f) A look at language as resource.

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Fans and the Limits of Stardom

Two recent studies by M.S.S. Pandian and Sara Dickey devote critical attention to the 'fan-phenonenon' in Tamil Nadu. Pandian's book (*The Image Trap*, 1992) deals with the numerous ways in which political subjects are constituted and deluded by the 'images' generated and circulated of the star-politician by agencies of popular culture. In other words, ways in which the MGR myth generates *consent*. Dickey devotes a chapter in her *Cinema and the Urban Poor in South India* (1993) to fans. She discusses, among other things, the 'politics of adulation' of MGR's fans association. She suggests that the so called 'hero-worship' empowers the fans in interesting, if seemingly minor, ways.

Fans associations in Tamil Nadu have attracted considerable attention largely because of the success of film-stars in the political arena and the significant part played by fans in the rise of MGR. NRT's success in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh has not generated a similar interest in the fans of this state, perhaps because it is conveniently assumed by scholars that fans all over the 'south' are exasperatingly similar. My study does not pretend to fill this gap and, therefore, does not examine the role of NTR's fans in his success. Instead, I wish to examine fandom as a sub-culture (of urban popular-culture) which provides, cultural space to predominantly young, male, literate members of the large and volatile 'lumpen-proletariat' of the state. Why do young men who belong to a wide cross-section of castes transform themselves into fans and organise themselves into 'associations' all over urban Andhra Pradesh? Fans' associations, historically speaking, have