

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-phenomenon' 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

been intricately (though at times invisibly) linked to the film industry not merely the 'star' whom they swear by. One journalist and critic, P. Narasaiah argues that they were actually created by the industry. Three phases can be traced in the growth of these associations till the present time. The present-day proliferation of the associations (3000 associations with a membership varying between 10 and 500 are devoted to the actor Chiranjeevi alone, accordingly to Mr. Vijaya Bapineedy film maker and editor of the fan magazine, *Megastar*) is a fall out of the changes in the tax-structure and spiralling costs of production, distribution and exhibition of films. The distributor begins to make a loss when cinema halls are less than half full because tax and the cost of exhibition remain the same regardless of the number of tickets sold.

The fact that fans' associations were encouraged, if not created, by the industry to act as low-cost advertisers of stars and their films does not necessarily reduce fans to puppets or employees of 'culture industry's' bosses. I wish to show how fans transcend the historical 'function' of their associations and the role assigned to them by the industry. In my two years of interaction with fans in Andhra Pradesh I learnt, first, that fans, despite their 'devotion' to their 'heroes' are not and cannot be controlled or disciplined by either the star or any other representative of the industry. Secondly, they quite often make demands on the industry which result in minor or major financial losses. Thirdly, fans have economic, social, cultural and political aspirations and these 'interests' are articulated in the vocabulary of adulation and hero-worship.

The 'mass culture' approach and the 'culture industry' thesis ignores or underplays the autonomy of the 'consumers' of mass culture and the ability of the victims of late-capitalism to actively subvert the messages of the media and turn them upside down. As some studies of popular culture – *Remote Control* (1992) and *The Adoring Audience* (1992), for example – have argued that the audience is not passive and do not merely consume spectacles dished out by the media but actively interpret and generate meanings from what is seen. I shall show how fans view films in the context of an elaborately woven network of expectations. Since fans are organised, they can force the industry to cater to what they argue are their legitimate demands. These demands are not necessarily 'progressive' and I do not wish to claim that popular culture is not saturated with the dominant ideology. But it is possible to decode the messages in ways which ignore or subvert their ideological implications and fans are fully capable of this.

I shall also examine the similarities in the modes of organisation adopted by political parties and fans' associations (even those which are devoted to stars with no known political affiliations). It is possible to argue that fans imitate, and indeed mimic, political parties: fans are known to have taken up poster campaigns, wall-writing pamphleteering etc.; they organise massive rallies (with tens of thousands of participants) and 'rig' box-office collections (by buying up tickets when collections decline). The codes of political parties

and members of fans' associations have socio-economic origins. I shall argue that fans' associations, which empower their members in different ways, are potentially political as they prepare the fans to enter the political sphere even if the stars in question do not do so. As a matter of fact, in the coastal Andhra city, Vijayawada, the most prominent fan-clubs interact very closely with Congress (I) and Telugu Desam Party. They even share members with these parties; many former fans are party cadres and former cadres are fans. This is by no means a coincidence. To illustrate this I shall focus on the fans of the most popular Telugu actor, Chiranjeevi, who has not, so far, declared his political affiliations. Beginning with the 'choice' of the star, a whole range of socio-political considerations influence the phenomenon of 'hero-worship'. If the 'image' traps gullible innocents, one cannot help wondering why the fan-following of a star has a specific caste composition which can be predicted fairly accurately.

Finally, far from being the worst victims of what Pandian calls the 'image-trap', my study hopes to show that fans demonstrate the limits of stardom.

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