

## A Study on the Representation of Islam and Muslims in Tirunelveli Edition of Tamil Dailies

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### Abstract

This study examines the coverage of Muslim news and issues in Tamil dailies and hence the representation of Islam & Muslims with special reference to Tirunelveli district. The Muslim people are considered and treated as a minority community in our nation, India. The media play a large part in the formation of positive and negative images and self-images of minorities. In Tamil Nadu portrayal of Islam and Muslim by Tamil media since the post Coimbatore bomb blast, created some negative impact among people about Islam and Muslims, and Muslims are being looked as suspicious people and portrayed as terrorists. This research is being carried out to scientifically explore the frequency of occurrences of Muslim news and issues in Tamil dailies and what images of Muslims are portrayed in the news. To meet the objectives, this study tests by using content analysis of four Tamil dailies Dinakaran, Dinamalar, Dinamani and Dina Thanthi. And these were selected in view of their popularity and circulation. The reference period of the study was taken from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009 to keep the findings free from any impact of news. Newspaper content analysis results based on a 12-day sample would be quite similar to those available from a sample of more than 12 days [1]. Keeping this in view, 12 issues of each newspaper drawn from the universe of 120 copies published during the reference period (a total of 48 newspapers) were selected randomly to make a representative sample. Ten variables were developed to test the hypothesis. Code sheets have been made to get the results in statistical form. Number of articles, Geographic Header, Page placement, visibility on the page, photographs and its size, column spread and number of words used for the article, and finally attitudes created towards Muslims i.e., positive, negative, mixed and neutral were the slants through which the contents analyzed. The word slant refers to the stance taken in the news articles. These slants show, whether the Tamil dailies portray Muslims as favorable, unfavorable and neutral. The overall results of these slants showed that out of 143 articles in all the four major newspapers, 47% of articles were given with negative attitude towards Muslims. Only 15% of articles were presented with positive attitude, 14% with mixed attitude and 24% of articles were given with neutral attitude towards Muslims [2].

### Introduction

The word 'Islam' means 'Peace', and also 'submission to the will of God, the Almighty'. People who follow the Islamic faith are called Muslims. But now a days people perceive and started to believe that Islam and Muslims not as peaceful or humble, but full of violence and barbaric. This is not only in India or Tamil Nadu but across the world. How have these kinds of negative perception and attitude towards Islam i.e., ISLAMOPHOBIA (is a neologism that refers to prejudice or discrimination against Islam or Muslims) been created? [3]. The answer according to scholars and researchers is media. In June of 1995 an event seen as an international tragedy took place when an American government building, in Oklahoma City was bombed. This atrocious act of terrorism killed many innocent people, including children. The following day a British newspaper, TODAY, carried the headline, "In the name of Islam", accompanied by a picture of a fireman carrying the charred remains of a dead baby. It was then very quickly established that the bombing had, in fact, been carried out by Christian militants this incident illustrates a trend which has emerged in the media - the demonization of Islam and Muslims. The Islamic religion and way of life is essentially one which provides total harmony and fulfillment to its followers, yet the media do not portray this image. In television, films, books, newspapers and magazines Islam is presented as being a backward and barbaric religion [4].

Muslims were under-represented and issues involving Muslims usually depicted in a negative light. Such portrayals, according to Poole, include the depiction of Islam and Muslims as a threat to Western security and values [5]. The Indian as well as the Western media, television as well as print, devote reams of paper and time slots to report incidents ranging from stories of conversion to Islam

and the booming sales of copies of the Quran. Somewhere along this line, Muslims and the media have become a hot topic of discussion at various forums. So, there is a need to take a fresh look at the projection of Muslims in the Indian and Tamil media.

### Background of the Study

In India, Islam is the second-most practiced religion. There are approximately over 151 million Muslims in India's population as of 2007 [6] i.e., 13.4% of the population (Table 1). Currently, India has the third largest population of Muslims in the world (the largest being Indonesia and Pakistan). Since its introduction into India, Islam has made significant religious, artistic, philosophical, cultural, social and political influences to Indian history. Islamic influence first came to be felt in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century with the advent of Arab traders. Trade relations between Arabia and the subcontinent are very ancient. Arab traders used to visit the Malabar region, which was a link between them and ports of South East Asia, to trade even before Islam had been

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established in Arabia. According to Historians Elliot and Dowson in their book *The History of India as told by its own historians*, the first ship bearing Muslim travelers was seen on the Indian coast as early as 630 A.D. HG Rawlinson, in his book: *Ancient and Medieval History of India*, claims the first Arab Muslims settled on the Indian coast in the last part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The first Indian mosque was built in 612 A.D., at the behest of Cheraman Perumal, during the life time of Muhammad (c.571–632) in Kodungallur by Malik Bin Deenar [7]. In Malabar the Mappilas may have been the first community to convert to Islam because they were more closely connected with the Arabs than others. Considerable controversy exists both in scholarly and public opinion about the conversions to Islam typically represented by the following schools of thought:

- The bulk of Muslims are descendants of migrants from the Iranian plateau or Arabs.
- Muslims sought conversion through jihad.
- Conversions occurred for non-religious reasons of pragmatism and patronage such as social mobility among the Muslim ruling elite or for relief from taxes.
- Conversion was a result of the actions of Sunni Sufi saints and involved a genuine change of heart.
- Conversion came from Buddhists and the en masse conversions of lower castes for social liberation and as a rejection of the oppressive Hindu caste structures.
- A combination, initially made under duress followed by a genuine change of heart.
- As a socio-cultural process of diffusion and integration over an extended period of time into the sphere of the dominant Muslim civilization and global polity at large.

Embedded within this lies, the concept of Islam as a foreign imposition and Hinduism being a natural condition of the natives who resisted, resulting in the failure of the project to Islamicize the Indian subcontinent and is highly embroiled within the politics of the partition and communalism in India. India has always claimed to maintain a constitutional commitment to secularism. Since the colonial period, Hindu-Muslim relations in India have been marred by communal violence. The consequence of the partition of India in 1947 saw large scale sectarian strife and bloodshed throughout the nation. Since then, India has experienced periodic large-scale violence sparked by underlying tensions between sections of the Hindu and Muslim communities. These conflicts also stem from the ideologies of Hindu Nationalism versus Islamic Extremism and prevalent in certain sections of the population. More Muslims have usually been killed than Hindus in inter-community violence in India, while many Hindus have been persecuted in neighboring Muslim states and in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. In all the communal riots since 1947, factually contested official police records reveal that three-quarters of lives lost and properties destroyed were Muslim, a figure that climbed to 85% during the 2002 riots in Gujarat. Likewise many communal violence were happened in Tamil Nadu, in which people of both Hindus and Muslims lost their lives and belongings equally. Elizabeth Poole in the *Encyclopedia of Race and Ethnic studies*, criticized media for perpetrating Islamophobia. She cites a case study examining a sample of articles in the British press from between 1994 and 2004, which concluded that Muslim viewpoints were under-represented and that issues involving Muslims usually depicted them in a negative light.

Various studies have examined the specific relationship between media and Islam [4,8] the representations of Muslim minorities in the West [1]. Ideologically, these constructions can be traced back the expansion of Western imperialism where a dichotomy of 'West' versus 'East' was constructed [1].

The findings and comments of various scholars regarding the portrayal of Islam & Muslim in the Western and in Indian media are very pathetic and painful.

## Literature Review

According to BS Greenberg, "researchers have found that communication about minorities is value laden and that audiences internalize these values in a number of ways" [9]. Therefore, it is important to ask what minority and majority audiences learn about themselves and each other from the media. How are minorities portrayed in the mass media? What effects do those portrayals have on minority and majority groups? [10] says that Muslim representation in the Indian media is dismal, while Muslims' share in media ownership is even more pathetic. Muslims do not have any considerable hold over the media. Also he says that the role, the Indian Muslim media is playing, and can play, in both combating these negative stereotypes and disinformation about Islam and Muslims in the 'mainstream' media, as well as helping in the process of the overall empowerment of the Muslim community.

A recent Report by Anil Chamaria (June 2006), Freelance Journalist; Jitendra Kumar, Independent Researcher; Yogendra Yadav, Senior Fellow, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi examined the social profile of media-persons working in 40 media organizations (Table 2). These findings are based on a survey of the social background of 315 key decision makers from these media organizations. Its key findings reflect the sources of bias: Muslims are severely under-represented in the national media: they are only 3% among the key decision makers, compared to 13.4% in the country's population. Sairra [4] says that, the Islamic religion and way of life is essentially one which provides total harmony and fulfillment to its followers, yet the media does not portray this image. In television, films, books, newspapers and magazines Islam is presented as being a backward and barbaric religion (Table 3-5). These various forms of media misrepresent Islam in different ways, but overall achieve the same negative result - the creation of 'otherness' and from this a growing barrier of misunderstanding and hostility between Islam and its followers, and the West. The other and more common stereotype is that of the violent religious extremism. In current affairs programmes, the constantly image of Muslims as savage terrorists, killing innocent people with no guilt is shown repeatedly. No insight is given as to why some Muslim organizations carry out acts of violence. What results from this is that the common people, the viewers of these programmes, recognize and accept only the labels - and therefore with 'Islam' they immediately associate negative images.

In an interview with Mushtaq Ul Haq Ahmad Sikander, President

S.No	Newspaper	Total No. Of Articles
1.	Dinakaran	41
2.	Dinamalar	40
3.	Dinamani	28
4.	Dinathanthi	34
	Total	143

**Table 1:** Number of articles that appeared in the newspapers surveyed in the sample period.

S.No	Newspaper	News Type	
		GN	CLM
1.	Dinakaran	32	8
2.	Dinamalar	34	6
3.	Dinamani	22	5
4.	Dinathanthi	30	4
	Total	118	23

**Table 2:** Number of articles that appeared in the newspapers under the different generic categories.

S.No	Newspaper	Categories Of Issues Covered						TOTAL
		POL	CUL	CRI	TRR	SPR	OTHERS	
1.	Dinakaran	14	2	6	12	2	5	41
2.	Dinamalar	14	3	2	17	2	1	39
3.	Dinamani	10	2	1	11	2	0	26
4.	Dinathanthi	11	4	2	14	1	2	34
	Total	49	11	11	54	7	8	140

The articles published were classified under ten different specific issues, like Education = EDU; Politics = POL; Culture = CUL; Reservation = RSR; Crime = CRI; Terrorism = TRR; Spiritual = SPR; Art = ART; Human Rights Violation = HRV; Others

**Table 3:** Number of articles that appeared in the newspapers under the different types of Muslim issues.

S.No	Newspaper	Geographic Header				Total
		International	National	State	Local	
1.	Dinakaran	6	8	11	16	41
2.	Dinamalar	9	15	10	6	40
3.	Dinamani	9	10	7	2	28
4.	Dinathanthi	16	5	5	8	34
	Total	40	38	33	32	143

**Table 4:** Number of articles related to Muslim news and issues that appeared in the newspapers under the different Geographic Header.

S.no	Newspaper	Different Geographic Header	Types of Muslim issues										Total	
			Edu	Pol	Cul	Rsr	Cri	Trr	Spr	Art	Hrv	Others		
1	Dinakaran	International						4	1				1	6
		National						8						8
		State			9		2							11
		Local			5	2	4		1			4		16
		Total no of articles	0	14	2	0	6	12	2	0	0	5		41
2	Dinamalar	International						7	1				1	9
		National			3		1	10	1					15
		State	1	8	1									10
		Local		3	2		1							6
		Total no of articles	1	14	3	0	2	17	2					40
3	Dinamani	International						6	3	0	0	1		9
		National			4		1	5						10
		State			6					1				7
		Local				2								2
		Total no of articles	0	10	2	0	1	11	3	1	0	0	0	28
4	Dinathanthi	International			4		1	9					2	16
		National						5						5
		State			5									5
		Local			2	4	1		1					8
		Total no of articles	0	11	4	0	2	14	1	0	0	0	2	34

**Table 4.1:** Number of International, National, State and Local news articles that appeared in the newspapers under the different types of Muslim issues.

of the All India Muslim Majlis-e Mashawarat (AIMMM) [11], about how the media project Muslims, he responded that Indian media is manufacturing hate against Muslims on the basis of rumors and baseless reports spread by communal elements. Regarding the explosion in Margao, Goa, in which Malgonda Patil, a Sangli-based Sanatan Sanstha member was killed, he retaliated that the bomb exploded on the eve of Diwali and then as usual, Muslims were accused for the same. He also stated the facts of the Sanathan Sanstha office has been raided by the police and it was found that the place is used for manufacturing bombs. This ground-breaking revelation has been blacked out by the electronic media. But the media are concentrating mostly on terrorism in Pakistan and Afghanistan or the Taliban threat while ignoring these types of real domestic threats. Scholars are of the opinion that the medium kill Muslim stories or buries them somewhere inside where nobody will read them while on the front page they create the myth of Muslim terrorism. The labeling of Muslims as terrorists got a boost after 9/11 when President George W Bush used the word "Crusade" for his war against Muslims and this western label was lapped up by our journalists here to malign Muslims who have nothing to do with terrorism or Taliban (Table 5.1).

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to examine the frequency of occurrences of Muslim news and issues in Tamil dailies and what images of Muslims are portrayed in the news. Especially after the Coimbatore bomb blast and 9/11 incident [12], Muslims are being presented negatively in Indian media and newspapers. The literature review exemplifies that the news dailies gives negative portrayals of Islam and Muslims and they cultivated a strong impact on its readers (Table 6). News dailies are very effective medium to construct public opinion and they affect the societies [13]. The images given to Muslims are as terrorists, disloyal, and criminal people. This new trend changes the thoughts, attitudes and opinions of general public. To understand the phenomenon of

negative portrayal of Muslims, this research has been carried out, so that we can clearly see that whether Muslims are portrayed negatively or it's just a fact less perception. So, there is a need to take a fresh look at the projection of Muslims in the Indian press (Table 6.1,7,7.1,7.2,7.3).

Following research questions and hypothesis have been developed to study the issues:

### Research questions

- What is the extent of Muslim news in Tamil dailies?
- What are the various types of Muslim news being covered?
- What kind of placement is accorded to Muslim news?
- In what generic categories is Muslim news published?
- What images of Muslim are portrayed in news?

### Hypothesis

Image given to Islam and Muslims will be more in negative portrayal than positive in the news articles.

### Research Design

To study the above given research questions, a content analysis was carried out. Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context. Content analysis is fundamental empirical orientation, exploratory, concerned with real phenomenon, and predictive in intent [14].

### Newspaper Selection

For the study, four newspapers, Dinakaran, Dinamalar, Dinamani and Dina Thanthi were selected in view of their popularity and circulation. The reference period of the study was taken from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009 to keep the findings free from any impact of news (Table 8.8.1,9,9.1,10).

### Sample selection

Newspaper content analysis results based on a 12-day sample would be quite similar to those available from a sample of more than 12 days [15]. Keeping this in view, 12 issues of each newspaper drawn from the universe of 120 copies published during the reference period (a total

S.No	Newspaper	Page Placement			
		FP	IP	BP	Total
1.	Dinakaran	4	30	7	41
2.	Dinamalar	2	36	2	40
3.	Dinamani	0	27	1	28
4.	Dinathanthi	0	32	2	34
	Total	6	125	12	143

Table 5: Number of articles related to Muslim news and issues that appeared in different page place placement category in the four major newspapers.

S.No	Newspaper	Different page placement category	Types of Muslim issues										
			EDU	POL	CUL	RSR	CRI	TRR	SPR	ART	HRV	OTHERS	Total Scoring
1	Dinakaran	Front Page (3pts.)		2				2					12 pts.
		Back Page (2pts.)		2	1		2	2					14 pts.
		Inner Page(1pt.)		10	1		4	8	2			5	30 pts.
		Total no of articles	0	14	2	0	6	12	2	0	0	5	56 pts.
2	Dinamalar	Front Page (3pts.)	0					2					6 pts.
		Back Page (2pts.)						2					4 pts.
		Inner Page(1pt.)	1	14	3		2	13	2			5	36 pts.
		Total no of articles	1	14	3	0	2	17	2	0	0	5	46 pts.
3	Dinamani	Front Page (3pts.)											0 pts.
		Back Page (2pts.)								1			2 pts.
		Inner Page(1pt.)		10	2		1	11	3				27 pts.
		Total no of articles	0	10	2	0	1	11	3	1	0	0	29 pts.
4	Dinathanthi	Front Page (3pts.)											0 pts.
		Back Page (2pts.)		1				1					4 pts.
		Inner Page(1pt.)		10	4		2	13	1			2	32 pts.
		Total no of articles	0	11	4	0	2	14	1	0	0	2	36 pts.

Table 5.1: Number of articles related to Muslim news and issues that appeared in different page place placement category in the four major newspapers.

S.No	Name of the Newspaper	Visibility on the Page				
		A	B	C	D	Total
1.	Dinakaran	9	10	10	12	41
2.	Dinamalar	15	2	15	8	40
3.	Dinamani	8	8	8	4	28
4.	Dinathanthi	12	14	7	1	34
Total		44	34	40	25	143

Table 6: Number of articles that appeared in the four visibility quadrant of a page in the four major newspapers.

S.No	Newspaper	Different page placement category	Types of Muslim issues										Total Scoring	
			EDU	POL	CUL	RSR	CRI	TRR	SPR	ART	HRV	OTHERS		
1	Dinakaran	A (4 pts.)		3					4				2	36 pts.
		B (3 pts.)		4	1		2	1					2	30 pts.
		C (2 pts.)		4			2	2	1				1	20 pts.
		D (1 pt.)		3	1		2	5	1					12 pts.
		Total no of articles	0	14	2	0	6	12	2	0	0		5	98 pts.
2	Dinamalar	A (4 pts.)		6				5	1					64 pts.
		B (3 pts.)		1				1						6 pts.
		C (2 pts.)		4			2	8	1		1			30 pts.
		D (1 pt.)	1	3				3					1	7 pts.
		Total no of articles	1	14	3	0	2	17	2	0	0		1	107 pts.
3	Dinamani	A (4 pts.)		4	1			2			1			32 pts.
		B (3 pts.)		4	1			2						21 pts.
		C (2 pts.)		2			1	4	1					16 pts.
		D (1 pt.)						3	2					5 pts.
		Total no of articles	0	10	2	0	1	11	3	1	0		0	74 pts.
4	Dinathanthi	A (4 pts.)		3				8						48 pts.
		B (3 pts.)		5	2		1	5						42 pts.
		C (2 pts.)		2	2		1	1	1					14 pts.
		D (1 pt.)		1										1 pt.
		Total no of articles		11	4	0	2	14	1	0	0		2	105 pts.

Table 6.1: Number of articles that appeared in the four visibility quadrant of a page in the four major newspapers.

S.No.	Name of the Newspaper	Total no. of Articles	Photographs				Scoring on the basis of colour
			Total no. of photos present	Colour photographs	Black and white		
1.	Dinakaran	41	17	13	4	13x2 and 4 x1 = 30	
2.	Dinamalar	40	9	0	9	9 x 1 = 9	
3.	Dinamani	28	14	1	13	1x2 and 13x1 = 15	
4.	Dinathanthi	34	8	2	6	2x2 and 6x1 = 10	
Total		143	48	16	32		

Table 7: Number of articles that appeared in different page place placement category with photographs in the four major newspapers.

S.No	Newspaper	Categories of issues covered with Photographs											Total
		EDU	POL	CUL	RSR	CRI	TRR	SPR	ART	HRV	OTHERS		
1	Dinakaran	0	4	1	0	3	6	2	0	0	1	17	
2	Dinamalar	1	5	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	9	
3	Dinamani	0	5	1	0	1	4	1	2	0	0	14	
4	Dinathanthi	0	2	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	8	

Table 7.1: Number of articles related to Muslim news and issues that appeared with photographs in the four major newspapers.

S.No	Newspaper	Type, Size and scoring details of Photographs appeared	Categories of issues covered with Photographs											
			EDU	POL	CUL	RSR	CRI	TRR	SPR	ART	HRV	OTHERS	Total	
1	Dinakaran	Size of the photographs with scoring (CP1=5pts, CP2=3pts, CP3=1pt. and P1=3pts, P2=2pts, P3=1pts.)	CLR	0	CP3 CP1	CP1	0	CP1, CP2, CP3.	6 CP3	CP1	0	0	0	33
			BW	0	P1 P1	0	0	0	0	P1	0	0	P2	11
2	Dinamalar	Size of the photographs with scoring (CP1=5pts, CP2=3pts, CP3=1pt. and P1=3pts, P2=2pts, P3=1pts.)	CLR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
			BW	P1	P3 3P1 P2	P2	0	0	P3	P2	0	0	0	26
3	Dinamani	Size of the photographs with scoring (CP1=5pts, CP2=3pts, CP3=1pt. and P1=3pts, P2=2pts, P3=1pts.)	CLR	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	CP2	0	0	3
			BW	0	P3 2P2 2P1	P1	0	P3	2P3 2P1	P3	P1	0	0	29
4	Dinathanthi	Size of the photographs with scoring (CP1=5pts, CP2=3pts, CP3=1pt. and P1=3pts, P2=2pts, P3=1pts.)	CLR	0	0	CP1	0	0	0	CP2	0	0	0	8
			BW	0	P3 P1	2P1	0	0	P3 P2	0	0	0	0	13

Table 7.2: Number of articles related to Muslim news and issues that appeared with colour photographs and black and white photographs and in the four major newspapers.



S.No	Newspaper	Categories of issues covered with Photographs										Total
		EDU	POL	CUL	RSR	CRI	TRR	SPR	ART	HRV	OTHERS	
1	Dinakaran	0	4	1	0	3	6	2	0	0	1	17
2	Dinamalar	1	5	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	9
3	Dinamani	0	5	1	0	1	4	1	2	0	0	14
4	Dinathanthi	0	2	3	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	8

**Table 7.3:** Number of articles related to Muslim news and issues that appeared with colour photographs and black and white photographs of various sizes in the four major newspapers.

S.No.	Name of the Newspaper	Column spread of articles related to Islam and Muslim in different issues					Total
		5C	4C	3C	2C	1C	
1.	Dinakaran	4	4	12	7	14	41
2.	Dinamalar	1	3	7	10	19	40
3.	Dinamani	0	1	6	11	10	28
4.	Dinathanthi	0	0	13	10	11	34
Total		5	8	38	38	54	143

**Table 8:** Articles with number of columns that appeared in the four major newspapers.

S.No	Newspaper	Column spread of articles related to Islam and Muslims id different issues with scoring	Types of Muslim issues										Total Scoring
			EDU	POL	CUL	RSR	CRI	TRR	SPR	ART	HRV	OTHERS	
1	Dinakaran	5 Column (5 pts.)	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	20
		4 Column (4 pts.)	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	17
		3 Column (3 pts.)	0	2	1	0	3	4	1	0	0	1	36
		2 Column (2 pts.)	0	4	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	14
		1 Column (1 pt.)	0	6	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	4	14
2	Dinamalar	5 Column (5 pts.)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
		4 Column (4 pts.)	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	12
		3 Column (3 pts.)	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	1	0	0	21
		2 Column (2 pts.)	0	2	1	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	20
		1 Column (1 pt.)	0	10	2	0	0	6	0	0	0	1	19
3	Dinamani	5 Column (5 pts.)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
		4 Column (4 pts.)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
		3 Column (3 pts.)	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	15
		2 Column (2 pts.)	0	2	0	0	0	6	2	0	0	0	20
		1 Column (1 pt.)	0	6	1	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	11
4	Dinathanthi	5 Column (5 pts.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		4 Column (4 pts.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		3 Column (3 pts.)	0	3	3	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	39
		2 Column (2 pts.)	0	4	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	20
		1 Column (1 pt.)	0	4	1	0	1	4	0	0	0	1	11

**Table 8.1:** Articles with number of columns related to Muslim news and issues that appeared in the four major newspapers.

S.No	Name of the Newspaper	Number of articles appeared according to the number of words					Total
		<50	51 to 100	101 to 150	151 to 200	200<	
1	Dinakaran	11	7	9	6	8	41
2	Dinamalar	8	15	6	5	6	40
3	Dinamani	11	12	5	0	0	28
4	Dinathanthi	11	3	7	8	5	34
Total		41	37	27	19	19	143

**Table 9:** No of words in the articles that appeared in the four newspapers.

S.No	Newspaper	Word spread of articles related to Islam and Muslims id different issues with scoring	Types of Muslim issues										Total Scoring	
			EDU	POL	CUL	RSR	CRI	TRR	SPR	ART	HRV	OTHERS		
1	Dinakaran	Less than 50 words (1pt.)	0	4	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	3	11
		51 to 100 words (2pts.)	0	3	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	14
		101 to 150 words (3pts.)	0	3	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	0	0	27
		151 to 200 words (4pts.)	0	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	24
		More than 200 words (5 pts.)	0	3	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	40
2	Dinamalar	Less than 50 words (1pt.)	0	2	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	7
		51 to 100 words (2pts.)	0	6	2	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	30
		101 to 150 words (3pts.)	0	3	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	18
		151 to 200 words (4pts.)	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	20
		More than 200 words (5 pts.)	1	2	0	0	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	35
3	Dinamani	Less than 50 words (1pt.)	0	4	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	11
		51 to 100 words (2pts.)	0	4	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	0	24
		101 to 150 words (3pts.)	0	2	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	15
		151 to 200 words (4pts.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		More than 200 words (5 pts.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	Dinathanthi	Less than 50 words (1pt.)	0	4	1	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	1	11
		51 to 100 words (2pts.)	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	6
		101 to 150 words (3pts.)	0	4	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	21
		151 to 200 words (4pts.)	0	2	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	32
		More than 200 words (5 pts.)	0	0	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	25

Table 9.1: Number of words in the articles that appeared related to Muslims news and issues that appeared in the four newspapers.

S.No.	Name of the Newspaper	Attitudes Towards Muslim				Total No. of Articles
		Positive	Negative	Mixed	Neutral	
1.	Dinakaran	10	15	7	9	41
2.	Dinamalar	5	20	3	12	40
3.	Dinamani	1	13	7	7	28
4.	Dinathanthi	5	19	3	7	34
	Total	21	67	20	35	143

Table 10: Number of articles that creates Positive / Negative / Mixed/ Neutral attitudes towards Muslim news and issues that appeared in the four newspapers.

S.No.	Name of the Newspaper	Number of Times The Following Words Used				
		Muslims	Islamiargal	Muslim Theeviravadhigal	Islamia Payangaravadhigal	Theeviravadhigal
1.	Dinakaran	104	12	14	9	41
2.	Dinamalar	76	2	35	11	0
3.	Dinamani	49	0	22	2	4
4.	Dinathanthi	57	9	26	25	17
	Total	286	23	96	47	62

Table 11: Number of words like Muslims / Islamiargal / Muslim Theeviravadhigal / Islamia Payangaravadhigal / Theeviravadhigal used to describe Muslims in the four major newspapers.

of 48 newspapers) were selected randomly to make a representative sample.

## Categories and Variables of the Study

### Terminology

The term “Muslim news and issues” [10,16] has been defined as events and developments about Muslim. It included news articles, editorials, features, pictures, syndicated columns and business news, except stock exchange listings, sports and advertisements. A news item was the unit of analysis as it can be easily counted and assigned to different categories.

- The extent of news was measured in terms of the frequency of Muslim news in newspapers and the columns devoted to it (Table 11).

- The placement of Muslim news was traced on different pages: front page, inner pages and the back pages.
- Types of news were placed in mutually exclusive categories. Some of these were merged together for the purpose of analysis. News includes political, crime-related, terrorism news, development, Muslims problems and culture. Development news refers to the participation of Muslim in the development process and news about achievements of Muslim.
- Images of Muslim portrayed in newspapers may be as active newsmakers, passive object of news and Muslim as victim of events. Generic categories of news were considered in terms of straight general news stories, editorials and column news.

Five content categories were developed drawing from previous studies. The content analysis identified the content categories and their variables. The content categories were frequency of news, space,

placement, photographs and themes.

### Data collection

Data collection for the content analysis was achieved by coding each item within a sample newspaper directly into a Microsoft Word as tabulation across each of the categories of the content analysis. The direct application of coding into a computer limited errors in transferring data for analysis.

### Data analysis

The coded data were tabulated and interpreted.

### Findings

## Findings and Conclusion

### Major Findings:

1. The frequency of occurrence of Muslim news and issues by all the four major Tamil dailies is low.
2. Among the four newspapers, the coverage of Muslim news and issues are comparatively high in Dinakaran, Dinamalar and Dinathanthi respectively. But in Dinamani the frequency of occurrence is very low.
3. More number of news articles is given under general news categories and only two editorial articles were found in Dinakaran and Dinamani. No editorial article is found in Dinamalar and Dinathanthi. This finding shows that none of these four newspapers give priority to editorial article in relation with Muslim news and issues.
4. None of the four Tamil dailies has covered news under the categories of Human Rights Violation and Reservation in accordance with Islam or Muslims.
5. An item on education has been covered only in Dinamalar (one article) and art news has been covered only in Dinamani (one article).
6. The occurrence of terrorism news and political participation of Muslims were found to be very high in number as the nation was approaching the parliamentary election in the next month of sample period. The frequency of occurrence of terrorism news was high in all the four Tamil dailies which demonstrate that all the four Tamil dailies give priority and preferences to terrorism news and crime news in relation with Muslims.
7. It is found that all the four news papers presented terrorism news exclusively in the international news and national news pages and nothing of that category was found in the state and local geographic headers of the four major dailies. This approach leaves a stereotypical view on the Muslims from all over the world that they indulge in terrorism activities and as terrorists. The fact is also proved from the analysis that the other category news were not found in the international and national geographic header.
8. This study confirms that none of the four Tamil dailies has given priority and preference to publish news articles in relation with Muslims in the front page and in the back page. They prefer only inner pages for the news articles related with Muslim news and issues. Very few articles were given in the front page and

back pages of Tamil dailies and which were also on terrorism.

9. From the study it is found that visibility preferences for the terrorism news in relation with Muslims are too high in all the four newspapers. But among the four newspapers comparatively Dinamalar and Dinathanthi were trying to portray Muslims as terrorists. And it is understood that terrorism related news in the front page and inner pages have high visibility preferences.
10. It is found that except Dinamalar, the other three newspapers Dinakaran, Dinamani and Dinathanthi give photographic preferences for terrorism news and crime news. But among these three newspapers, Dinakaran gives more preferences for terrorism and crime related news with colour photographs in relation with Muslims.
11. The analysis proves that all the four newspapers give more number of spaces and more number of words to present and describe the terrorism news in relation with Muslims.
12. Though it is common to devote more spaces and more number of words to crime news in the Tamil dailies, crime news related to Muslims was found to be high. But as pointed in the previous points, the frequency of occurrence of Muslim news is very low, hence it is understood that the Tamil dailies do not show interest to present news related to education, reservation, human rights violation, development in the socio economical condition in India as well as in the world of the Muslim, which is a negative or low representation.
13. Since the representation of Muslims is in the negative aspect, it is very obvious that the attitude created by Tamil dailies among the public is also negative and it will lead to hatred towards Islam and Muslims.
14. To emphasize the negative portrayal, the Tamil dailies commonly use the terms like Muslim Theeviravadhigal, Islamia Payangaravadhigal and Theeviravadhigal. The term Muslim theeviravadhigal and Islamia payangaravadhigal has been repeatedly used in Dinamalar, Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamani.
15. The study shows that imitating the Western media and the other Indian media, the Tamil dailies especially in Tirunelveli editions try to portray Islam as violence and Muslims as evil elements like terrorists, merciless killers and as fundamentalists [17].
16. None of these four Tamil dailies have given importance to their contribution and status on education, science and technology, literature, philosophy, socio-economic development in India and in the world arena.

## Conclusion

The study examined the coverage of Muslim news and issues in Tamil dailies and the representation of Islam & Muslims with special reference to Tirunelveli district. Based on the findings it is clearly evident that the Tamil dailies represent Islam and Muslims in the negative way and overall they achieve the same negative result – the creation of otherness and hatred towards Islam and Muslims [18]. The Islamic religion and way of life is essentially one which provides total harmony and fulfillment to its followers, yet the media do not portray this image. In television, films, books, newspapers and magazines, Islam is presented as being a backward and barbaric religion [4]. The writings of Sairra [4] prove to be right that, the Tamil dailies too are



not willing to present the news on the contribution and status on education, science and technology, literature, philosophy, socio-economic development of the Muslims in India and in the world arena. Though the frequency of occurrence of news associated with Muslims is very low among the sample newspapers, the terrorism and crime related news in relation with Muslims is high. And some terms like Muslim theeviravadhigal, Islamia payangaravadhigal, theeviravadhigal, jihad poraligal and adipadaivadhigal are used extensively in the Tamil dailies. Relatively new terms are often attributed to describe a variety of violent actions or extremist statements in association with Muslims. These terms appear to be inaccurate and tend to generalize on the overall Muslim population by taking stance against them. Dr. Aslam Abdullah, Editor, The Minaret and the Muslim Observer said "almost every religious community has produced its own terrorists, violence mongers, hate speech promoters and extremists. Yet, disproportionate shares of epithets ascribing the source of such terror are lobbied against the Muslim community. During the last five decades, hundreds and thousands of acts of violence have occurred all over the world. These incidents involved Tamil Tigers professing Hinduism, Sinhale retaliators embracing Buddhism, Shiv Sena and Bhartiya Janata Party workers invoking Hinduism, the Irish Republic Army involving Catholics, Ulster Union followers practicing Protestantism, and Jewish Defense League members proclaiming Judaism as their faith. In these cases, however, the American media, Western media and Indian media rarely used terms such as Hindu terrorist, Catholic killers, Protestant violent mongers or Jewish extremists to report events that involved the followers of these religions. One rarely found a discussion in the media about the relationship between violence and religion. One rarely noticed a debate on religious scriptures on terror [19]. One rarely found scholars linking the Tamil Tiger's act of suicide bombing to early Hindu warriors who promoted violence against people belonging to low castes. One rarely found a scholar relating an act of terror committed by a Jewish extremist to early Biblical stories where prophets were reported to have been responsible for the massacres of innocent people" [20]. Violence or terror is not the only issue where Muslims and Islam have been designated as villains. On issues pertaining to women, human rights, child welfare, and relations with non-Muslims, patriotism, and democracy, the media have also given Islam and Muslims a disproportionate criticism, often-compromising objectivity and fairness. Islam has been projected in the media as a faith that needs to be changed if it is to exist in the modern world. Neither Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism nor Buddhism has ever been exposed to such harsh criticism, even if the members of these communities were involved in violent acts. The main reason for this is the vast majority of media rely on a very few number of "experts" in Islam and the Muslim world. The lack of diversified sources of information tends to limit the common people into a unique immutable mode of understanding Islam. Self-styled experts do their best to inculcate ordinary people's minds with their concern [21].

The researcher recommends the following so as to prevent these kinds of misrepresentation, depiction and portrayal and to advocate for neutrality in presenting news:

1. Every Muslims should have the habit of reading and watching news given by various media.
2. If anyone found the news to be as misrepresented or to be wrongly presented in relation with Muslims, they should make an analysis of the content and should advocate for the neutrality in the fair manner.

3. Every Muslim should spare at least minimum hours to wipe out this kind of portrayal by media and hence to make the people understand that "What the people have seen and what we are seeing every day in and through media may be true, but those are not the only things happening in and around the Islamic countries and among the people."
4. It is the duty of every Muslims to have good rapport with every other people and not to listen to the words which tries to alienate them from others.

The researcher also agrees the following recommendations put forth by Nigar Ataulla [10]:

1. Career counseling of Muslim students should be arranged by Muslim community organizations, seeking to attract them to take up a career in the media [22-26].
2. More media scholarships should be instituted by Muslim community organizations and business houses.
3. Centers for media documentation should be set up in different parts of the country, where special emphasis should be placed on documenting material related to Muslims and Islam that appears in the press.
4. Efforts should be made to place trained Muslim journalists in key places through a network of contacts.
5. Adequate and immediate responses should be developed to issues that the biased press uses to malign Muslims.
6. Myths about Islam and Muslims should be debunked by proper research.
7. Efforts should be made to seek a fair representation of Muslims, and other marginalized communities, in the already established media. This requires lobbying with agencies of the state, with social movements and with NGOs.
8. Orientation workshops should be held frequently to develop informed discussion on a range of issues, from new media technologies to issues relating specifically to Muslims. Invitees can be both Muslim and non-Muslim media persons.
9. Muslims writers and journalists who write on Islam and community-related issues should be encouraged and appreciated by the community, though the fact remains that most of them write for the cause for the community and do not really crave for fame or glory.
10. A network of Muslim journalists and writers in different parts of India should be formed.
11. Muslim organizations need to develop proper media policies. As of now, this vital issue is woefully neglected. Frequent meetings of leaders of Muslim community organizations with the editorial chiefs of non-muslim newspapers and television channels will help develop a healthy rapport with them. It is often the case that whenever a Muslim group organizes a press meet, it is only Muslim journalists who are invited, leaving out the non-Muslim journalists. This ghetto mentality has to be changed.
12. Muslim community organizations must seriously consider establishing research centres that specialize in social science research on the Indian Muslims, something that is woefully lacking today.

13. A directory of Muslim-owned newspapers, magazines and television channels across India should be compiled. Names and contact details of Muslim journalists can be included in this.

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