

Fabricated Cinema: A Study on the Representation of Muslims in Selected Tamil Films Featuring Kamal Haasan

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Abstract

Cinema is one of the powerful and popular media that reaches the masses. Indian films represent the multidimensional nature of the country; the popular themes establish the various cultures, customs, castes, classes, politics, art, and religion of the sub-continent. The process by which the films interpret and construct the spectator's world or external reality is known as representation. Religious minorities, especially Muslims, are represented as kings, spies, friends, smugglers, gangsters who are transformed to terrorist in popular Hindi cinema. Similarly, Tamil films portray the image of Muslims from the pre-independence period, followed by the post-independence with conflicts of India and Pakistan, later with controversial issues like Kashmir insurgency, communal riots, 9/11 attack, Mumbai bomb blasts etc. This paper aims to analyze the portrayal of Muslim characters in Tamil cinema by examining material from selected three Tamil films featuring Kamal Hassan, released between 2009 and 2018. The result reveals that Tamil films predominantly propagate the negative image of Muslims and fabricate them as violent, terrorists, aggressors with the heavy stereotypical manner, and portray them as the destruction of peace.

Keywords: Cinema; Muslims; Tamil Films; Representation; Identity, Kamal Hassan, India.

Introduction

The 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center (Twin Towers) radically changed world politics; the entire world was pulled into the war against terrorism (Margolis, 2004). Post 9/11 incident majorly, the Muslims are accused as alien 'other' or rather 'enemy' and 'to be terrorists' all over the world irrespective of their age and gender (Khan & Bokhari, 2011). Many western media stereotyped and fabricated Muslim identity and displayed inaccurate preconceptions about the principles of Islam. Further, they proclaimed that Muslims are a unique entity having destructive, anti-rational, violent, and cruel mindset. Sobolewska and Ali (2015) in their study, identified that after the 9/11 incident, seventy-five percentage of media coverage in the West and America was about Islam, and about sixty percent of them were negative in nature. The western media resort heavily to their imaginative thoughts without having an empirical and ethnographical stance. In India, the 26/11 Mumbai attack also affected the Muslims (Raja & Ganeshkumari, 2015), and a notion of *Islamophobia* (Sengupta, 2015) has been created among the common public. Gottschalk *et al.* (2008) posits that *Islamophobia* is the fear, hatred of, or prejudice against Muslims and the Islamic religion, seen as a source of terrorism and violence, so Muslims become a target of suspicion and inspection (Bhat, 2019). After 2008, the Indian filmmakers predominantly started making films portraying Muslims in low light and negative shade. They started to portray Muslims in their films as terrorists, promoting extremism in India and worldwide (Khan & Bokhari, 2011). It is important to note that the feature films have a significant social impact; it has been not only entertaining but also persuaded the masses (Kumar & Rani, 2018). Cinema not only narrates the story but also showcase views of the cultural and traditional practices of people and their customs. Indian films, by and large, not only make opinions about race and community but also reshape the views of the people (Khan & Bokhari, 2011). Muslim community and Islam religion has been portrayed with a negative taboo with misrepresentation and typecast with Muslims as 'bad people,' and they act against peace, harmony, and humanity. Raja and Ganeshkumari (2015) argues that Muslims have been stereotyped as narrow-minded, militant, arrogant, Misogynist, fundamentalist, backward, and anti-national (Chowdhry, 2000) through popular films. Khan and Bokhari (2011) points out that Muslims have been currently portrayed as 'terrorist and gun-totting jihadis' degraded from the high status of 'Badshahs, Aristocrats and Nawabs'.

The Tamil film industry is one of the popular and ever-growing industry in India (Goenka, 2014); producing more number of films and plays a prominent role in film production (Kumar & Arulchelvan, 2018). The numbers of film-goers are considerably higher, and they enjoy the on-screen presence of their favorite actors enacting as ‘superheroes’ and ‘larger-than-life-characters’ (Kalorth, 2016). The popularity of the actors is not only confined to cinema halls but also *off-the-screen*. Tamil films have an excessive connection to politics. Unlike any Indian language cinema, here in Tamil, many actors and film personalities have become politicians, and a good number of ‘*film celebrity-turned politicians*’ have ruled the state for a long period. It is one of the few Indian states where the cinema became an ideological tool to do propaganda, to persuade masses, to establish power, and to fight and win in political battle (Hardgrave, 1973; Pandian, 1991). Tamil cinema replicates the feelings, opinions, philosophies, and aspirations of the Tamil people (Kalorth, 2016), its content has a great influence on their audiences, and it is playing a notable ‘macro’ role in making the negative imageries about Muslims in the past two decades. Butalia (2000) expressed that Kamal Haasan is a sensible actor of India cinema and a film personality who understands the need of socio-political knowledge and timing in cinema; holds a superior position in the Tamil film industry with path-breaking attempts (Ravi, 2008) and considered as one of the leading stars (Fernandez, 2018), Butalia (2000) further asserts “Kamal Haasan apparently got the better of the filmmaker in him”. It will be interesting to learn the real face of a popular regional media such as ‘*Tamil cinema*’ featuring Kamal Haasan by analyzing the films made after the 2008 Mumbai bomb blasts. A decade has past-by the representation, and the portraying of the Muslim community needs to be put-into scrutiny. In this scenario, the current study aims to investigate the portrayal of Muslim characters in selected Tamil films and the stereotypical representation of them.

Islam, Muslims, and Storytelling

The word *Islam* means *Peace* (Pal, 2011), and Muslims are *peace-lovers*, and according to their holy book *Quran*, they have ‘*submitted themselves to the will of God almighty.*’ Islam has made significant religious, artistic, philosophical, cultural, social, and political influences on Indian history (Ahmed, 2016). According to Indian-Census (2011) data, Muslims constitute the second-largest religious group in India, with 14.23 percent of the population, but they have a double burden of being labeled as ‘*anti-national*’ and ‘*downtrodden*’ (Hussein & Hussein, 2015). Representations directly affect social identities (Hall, 1997); collective representations are considered to be ‘*social facts.*’ With the Mughal Empire being a significant part of Indic history (Bayly, 1985), it is not surprising that the 1950s and 1960s Hindi cinema portrayed Muslims as princes, emperors and rulers (Endong & Essoh, 2013). This might be the only time the masses witnessed Muslims as positive protagonists and unbiased characters. With the start of the 1970s, until the beginning of the 1990s, Muslims are mostly stereotyped, and their roles are downgraded (Morey & Yaqin, 2011). Also, films started misrepresenting Muslims and Islam as a whole by focusing on and misinterpreting certain parts of the religion as negative aspects. By the mid-1990s, however, there is a shift where Muslims are now shown as a menace to the Indian society and as having an inborn violent nature. At the start of the 2000s, this view is globalized to show Muslims as enemies of not only India but to the entire world. Typically, Muslims are negatively represented in Hollywood films after the occurrence of the 9/11 attacks (Khatun, 2019), Hindi movies also represented the Muslims as negative and reprobates (Ali *et al.*, 2012). Nevertheless, misrepresentation is apparent, and the extremists are shown in movies with disregard to the majority of the Muslim population. Lately, Bhat (2019) identified in the last two decades, almost no Hindi film has portrayed lead Muslim characters according to the nearest originality and identity; Muslim characters may maintain the *Muslimness* for the narrative value, and the plot was mainly about socio-political power, either in serious (terrorism) or romantic (interfaith love) forms or in both ways.

Sociologists and film historian Jesudoss (2009) classified Tamil cinema history into four categories, the first phase (1931-1950) was entirely occupied by Hindu mythology and folk stories; second phase (1951-1975) was dominated with high melodrama; third phase (1976-1985) predominantly showed the realistic turn, anti-establishment and anti-sentimentality; and fourth phase (1985-1993) was the period of unlimited violence and sex. To elaborate in detail, from the 1930s, Tamil cinema started narrating the stories revolving around mythology and religion themes like *Ramayanam* (1932), *Valli Thirumanam* [Translation - Marriage of Goddess Valli] (1933), and *Bhakta Nandanar* [Translation - Devotee Nandanar] (1935) were created mutual meanings in the audience mind. The first Tamil film to have Muslim characters is *Ali Badhusha* (1936) produced by Universal Talkies (“Lakshman Sruthi,” n.d.). Later, several films started depicting Muslim identity as *Arabs of Middle East*. Filmmakers took reference from Arabian night’ tales and started misrepresenting Indian Muslims. In the 1940’s the films represented the ethnicity of Muslims, which traces the Mughals and beliefs signified culture of North India. 1950s described historical facts and myths with fabulous high budget performances with artwork in a grandeur manner, costumes, and music. In 1960s, films provided entertainment through stunning visuals glancing sufferings of war, and it promoted secularism. Tamil

cinema started focusing on social issues and community-based stories in the 1970s, and started to portray Muslims as good friends and modest human being. 1980's provided socio-economic turmoil and annihilating practical Muslim family problems with their melodramatic psychological and sociological ideologies. From the 1990s, after the Babri Masjid (mosque) demolition and related communal riots, the Indian film industry changed their outlook on Muslims and, more specifically, in Tamil Cinema the 9/11 attack and 26/11 Mumbai attack as added flavours to the disgrace narratives against Muslims and Islam community. To give few examples, *Roja* [Translation - Rose] released in 1992, showed militants as Muslims who destroy peace for their goods, According to Vasudevan (2002), Kamal Hassan's directorial venture *Hey Ram* released in 2000 highlighted Muslim atrocities, constructed the Muslim as 'other' in different forms and further he quoted that Kamal Haasan's stated that *Pakistan is not a country but a religion*. *Dasavathaaram* (Translation - The Ten Avatars) released in 2008, Kamal Haasan acted in ten different roles; displayed that Muslims are to be suspected when it comes to national security and world peace, more specifically post-2000, the Tamil cinema majorly represented Muslims as villains, terrorists, and extremists.

Conceptual framework, methods, and materials

Cultural Code is one of the prime factors that determine a personality (Fekete, 2004). White (1974) suggests that the “cultural code is nothing but a mapping operation of the places through which one might move in the effort to achieve the satisfaction of basic needs, food, shelter, clothing, sexuality, expression of aggressive instincts, and the like, and the rules for moving through such places.” Further, Rajan and Venkatraman (2017) insist clothing signifies the education, social status, prosperity and personality of a person. So in a narrative film, cultural code can be anything that signifies a fundamental nature of any character having a special focus on outfits, eating habits, lifestyle, expression of emotions, and overall attributes adds value to the entity. Additionally, Khan and Bokhari (2011) used ‘clothes’ and ‘motives’ as one of the parameters to study the representation of Muslims in Hindi cinema and provided meaningful discussion. Interestingly Peek (2005), in his research article *Becoming Muslim: The development of a religious identity*, cites the concept of *Religious Identity*. The religious identity of Muslims consists of beliefs, values, and attitudes (Haddad, 1993; Haddad & Esposito, 2000; Haddad & Smith, 2002). Additionally, Johansson (2005) posits the concept of *Anti-nationalism*. According to him, “anti-nationalism is a conflict dimension that reaches over several other spheres, like the civil society, media, judicial system, elections and campaigns, the debate has a substantial degree concerning the constitutions and laws.” This is primarily addressing the goodwill of a nation, not mainly addressing ‘group-against-group’ but ‘nationalism-against-nationalism’ (Hussein & Hussein, 2015).

From the above concepts and its attributes, it is implicit that a human personality and its representation may carry the *Cultural Code* and *Religious Identity*. In the context of Muslims, the concept of *Anti-nationalism* may also add-in to form a Muslim personality, also known as a Muslim character in a narrative film. Keeping the ongoing discussion, thus, we developed the construct of concepts for this research (refer to Fig 1) that incorporates the *Cultural Code*, *Religious Identity*, *Anti-nationalism* that contributes to make a *Muslim Personality*; that leads to creating *Muslim Representation in Cinema*.

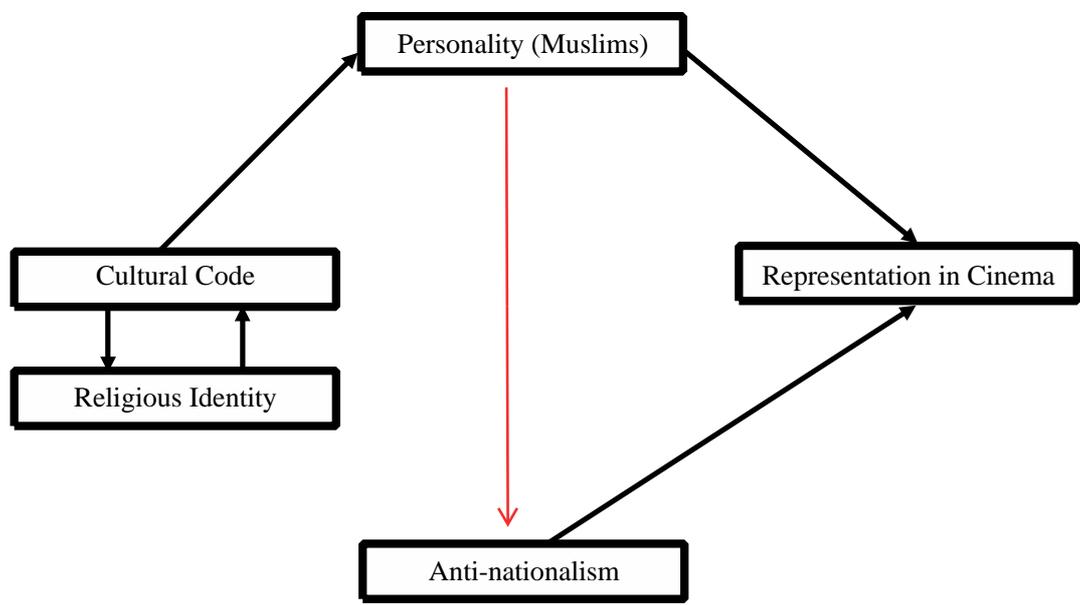


Figure 1: Construct of concepts for the research
(Source: Author's own)

A qualitative research approach was adopted by conducting a content analysis of selected three Tamil films featuring star actor-turned-politician Kamal Haasan in the lead roles, released between January 2009 to December 2018. The following are the film lists and vital details.

1. *Unnai Pol Oruvan* (2009) - Translation: Someone like you, a thriller film directed by Chakri Toleti. An official remake of Hindi feature film, *A Wednesday*, stars Kamal Haasan and Mohanlal in the lead roles.
2. *Vishwaroopam* (2013) - Translation: The magnificent incarnation, an espionage action thriller film. Scripted, directed and produced by Kamal Haasan, who also performed the lead role. The film has Rahul Bose, Shekhar Kapur, Pooja Kumar, and Jaideep Ahlawat in supporting roles. It is one among the top five Tamil films crossed the 100 crores revenue (Gayathri, 2013).
3. *Vishwaroopam II* (2018) - an action thriller; sequel to the Tamil feature film *Vishwaroopam* released in 2013. Scripted and directed by Kamal Haasan, featured him along with Rahul Bose, Shekhar Kapur, Pooja Kumar, and Andrea Jeremiah. *Vishwaroopam* was set in USA, but *Vishwaroopam II* takes place in India.

Results and discussion

Analysis of *Unnai Pol Oruvan*

Unnai Pol Oruvan is a film that revolves around an unidentified caller that demands a city police commissioner to release militants in exchange for information about many bombs planted across the city.

Cultural code - the analysis concentrates on five Muslim characters, and they frame the main crux of the plot, they are Arif Khan (Police Inspector), Ibrahim Abdullah, Inaiyudullah, Ahamadullah (Terrorists) and Rafiq (Bomb supplier). Arif Khan has been portrayed as a brisk and a loyal police inspector who is neat, brave, and straight forward. He has been shown wearing formal shirts and a jean. He is shown wearing the sacred Talisman with black thread (Thayathu) around his neck as a belief of his religion. According to the film, Rafiq is an Indian, who supplies Bombs for the terrorist activities. Rafiq has been shown with a long beard wearing a middle-class man's attire with a simple shirt and pants. He is portrayed wearing the sacred Talisman. Ibrahim Abdullah is an Indian shown wearing a long salwar kameez (traditional Muslim attire) with a scarf on the shoulder and a Kufi (short, and rounded cap). He is also portrayed with a long beard and having eyeliner.

At times Ibrahim Abdullah is shown with a turban kind Kufi. Ahamadullah is portrayed as a Taliban terrorist. He has been shown wearing a salwar kameez with a scarf on his shoulder and Kufi. He is also shown wearing a sacred Talisman. Ahmedullah has been revealed as he was trained in Kandahar as a terrorist. Ahmedullah is shown as an essential figure in the Ibrahim Abudullah gang, and he carries out distractive plans. Inaiytullah has been portrayed as an Indian terrorist. Inaiyutullah is shown wearing casual T-shirts and jeans. He is given a more youthful and modern look. These above mentioned three terrorists are portrayed in accessing different geographic regions.

Religious identity - *Unnai Pol Oruvan* doesn't have any scenes that put down any religious beliefs, values, and practices of Islam's rituals. There are no negative scenes involving any kind of religious practice that gives out a wrong message to the public.

Anti-nationalism - There are two characters in *Unnai Pol Oruvan*, who are portrayed to be disloyal to the country. Ibrahim Abdullah, who is an Indian revolt against the Non-Muslims in India as his wife and son, was killed in a communal riot. Ibrahim Abdullah has been portrayed as a member of the Al-Qaeda leaders. Abdullah is also presented as a terrorist who has given *Jihad* (a fight against the enemies of Islam) training for many young and new terrorists in and around twenty places in India. Inaiyutullah is shown as another Indian terrorist who is a software engineer. Inaiyatullah is presented as the area deputy commander of *Jama'at-ud-Da'wah* group, he is portrayed as a second-best Indian software engineer and a stenography expert. He is also shown as the website designer of many Terrorist organizations. He is also shown as the website designer of many Terrorist organizations around the world for money.

Analysis of *Vishwaroopam*

The story revolves around the suspecting wife of a classical dancer setting an investigator behind him, a series of unpleasant events are triggered, that reveals his true identity - as an undercover agent working against terrorism.

Cultural code - The main feature of the *Vishwaroopam* film are its costumes. The researcher's try to concentrate on both the protagonist and the antagonist of the film. There are about four main characters which form the crux of the story; Wisam Ahmed Kashmiri (the antagonist), Omar Qureshi (the protagonist), Nasser (head of the Afghan

Mujahideen) and Salim (first in command of Omar). Apart from these four characters, we also concentrate on the Afghan Muslim women who are portrayed in the film. Wisam Ahmad Kashmiri is an Indian Army soldier who disguises himself as a Mujahidin of Kashmir. Kamal Hassan plays a character named Wisam Ahmad Kashmiri, who has a second identity as Vishwanath. The identity of Vishwanath has been portrayed as a *Kathak* dance teacher, and Vishwanath is shown as an effeminate. Vishwanath is demonstrated with a moderate length of hair wearing casual T-shirts and regular fit pants. When Vishwanath reveals his original identity as Wisam Ahmad Kashmiri, he is shown wearing a salwar kameez with a jacket. He is also shown with a beard and a turban-like Kufi. He is portrayed as an Afghanistan Mujahidin. Rahul Bose plays Omar Qureshi, the role of Afghanistan Mujahidin. He is shown wearing a long salwar-kameez with a black jacket and a kufi. He is shown with a beard and wearing goggles almost all the time as he has lost his left eye. When Omar is shown in New York, he is shown wearing regular casual outfits with a jerkin. He is also shown without a beard and a mustache. All the other characters who are shown as Afghan terrorists are almost exhibited in similar traditional Afghanistan Muslim costumes. They are seen in the traditional men's Afghan clothing which includes a Pakol (hat), Lungie (turban), and Chapan (coat). This varies by province and by ethnicity. Few of the characters wearing long salwar kameez with a scarf and a standard short Kufi on their head. Dressing in Afghan style is distinctive and typical of the region. The pants worn by Afghans are loose but they are clasped at the ankles in the end. The women of Afghanistan were shown in traditional Islamic clothing of Afghanistan. They were depicted as wearing a long dress somewhat similar to salwar kameez. Women were dressed in burqa or abaya (to cover the body) and hijab (to cover the head), which was in line with the traditional Muslim clothing of other Islamic countries. The Afghan Muslim women shown in the movie was covered from head to toe. When Wisam is introduced in Afghanistan, Omar Qureshi, Nasser, and Salim are shown conversing in Arabic. Nasser welcomes Wisam to Afghanistan in Arabic language, and he claims that if Wisam reads the Quran in Arabic, then he'll definitely know to speak Arabic. When the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) attacks a small village in Afghanistan to rescue the American hostages, the Afghanistan terrorists converse in Arabic. A woman who was hurt in the air raid yells at Omar, Wisam, and Salim in Arabic saying, "First it was the British who came, then the Soviets, the Americans, and now the Taliban. Men are nothing but just monkeys with tails in the front". Some Quran verses yelled out while they prepare for the fight against the American soldiers in Afghanistan were also available. Nasser is shown yelling out the Quran verses as he picks up a few guns to shoot the American soldiers. In the end, Nasser yells out, saying, "Allahu-Akbar," and the rest of the terrorists joins him. In a particular scene where Omar cries out in pain over his dead family after the Americans attack over the Afghanistan terrorists, he asks Wisam why Allah has to make him suffer so much when he is a *Jihadist* who fights for Islam. Wisam answers him, saying fights war and violence always end with the loss of the loved ones, but the *jihadists* like us should not shed tears for the loss but blood. This dialogue conveys the indirect meaning to fight for Islam and be proud of being a *jihadist*.

Religious identity - Since the story of the film revolves around Muslims, there are many scenes that present their religious practice in the film. In one particular scene, one of the terrorists of Afghanistan is shown reading the Quran before he goes out to fight the American soldiers. He reads the verses of the Quran, and then he uses the gun to kill the soldiers. This scene triggered the protest by many Muslim organizations in Tamilnadu and the movie was delayed from release due to this reason. The film was released in Tamilnadu only after Kamal Haasan agreed to remove this particular scene. A common understanding has finally been settled with the Tamilnadu Muslims bodies, when Kamal Haasan agreed to mute five scenes in the film, which would hurt the sentiments of Islam. There are many scenes in the film where they show the terrorists detonate the bomb after praying (Namaz) and yelling out "Allahu-Akbar." There are two scenes that portray how Muslim women live in Islam. In one particular scene where Omar takes Wisam to his house, Omar finds an American woman (Non-Muslim doctor) treating his wife for Asthma. Omar stares at his wife and then the doctor. The doctor who was trying to help his wife explains to Omar about the treatment given to his wife, after explaining she asks Omar whether he knows English? Omar removes his goggles, looks down at her, and says, "Yes I do, Women! Now, cover your feet, cover your face and leave my place". The disappointed doctor gives him a dirty look and walks out of his house immediately. This scene incorporates a stereotypical mindset and dialogues that abusively smear the Muslim identity and their ethos. It tells about the strict Islam customs followed by Muslim women and the Muslim men's attitude towards Non-Muslim women. In another scene, when Omar walks into his house to meet his son along with Wisam and Salim, his wife, who hadn't covered her face, immediately covers it up after she sees Omar and his friends walking in. This particular act of covering the face in front of unknown men is shown a wrong example and opinion that Muslim women live a life that is more constrained. Further, they are considered to be the cultural and moral carriers, without any prominent role in decision making.

Anti-nationalism - There are no scenes in *Vishwaroopam* which portray Muslims as non-patriotic towards India, the major reason would be the entire film takes place out of the country. But Wisam Ahmed Kashmiri, the Antagonist in disguise, is shown helping India and the USA from the trap set by the Afghanistan terrorists.

Analysis of *Vishwaroopam II*

The film is a sequel of 2013 made Tamil film *Vishwaroopam*. The plot revolves around the Indian Intelligence agency - Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) agent Wisam Ahmad Kashmiri as a central character performed by Kamal Hassan. At the same time, Rahul Bose revives his original role as Al-Qaeda terrorist Omar Qureshi. Wisam prevents an Al Qaeda terrorist from executing a massive attack on New York. Then he wades through new traps and conspiracies to save the country and people.

Cultural code - In *Vishwaroopam II*, the majority of the costumes used are western wear. The analysis is concentrated on Wisam Ahmed Kashmiri (The antagonist), Omar Qureshi (The protagonist), Eshwar, and Salim (Henchman of Omar), an Indian woman (Wisam's mother). Wisam Ahmed Kashmiri is a soldier of the Indian Army who disguises himself as a Kashmir Mujahidin, as portrayed in the part one. He wore modern outfits and army uniforms. The protagonist also uses western wear. During New York scenes also, he is seen wearing regular and casual outfits with a jerkin. He is also shown without a beard and a mustache. There is no cultural references. All the other characters are shown as Afghan terrorists are almost shown in traditional Afghanistan Muslim costumes as it was in *Vishwaroopam* (Part one). Wisam's mother character is designed as a patient of Alzheimer's disease. So she uses regular patient cum senior citizen outfits. In the climax, the character Nirupama trapped in the hands of Omar, that time, she appears in the black hijab as represented as Muslim women by Hindu characters as per the script. In a particular scene, Wisam shows Omar's sons to Omar, and Wisam says he was studying medicine abroad. Wisam also says that don't spoil them because of your politics. Finally, Omar was saying "Allah," and he dies as this dialogue intimates to religion.

Religious Identity - Since the film revolves around Muslims, there are many scenes that present their religious practice in the film. In one particular scene, Eshwar and Wisam are engaged in an debate to kill the terrorist, rather than catching him. Eshwar broke his faith on Wisam but Wisam says he's a proud Muslim willing to sacrifice his life for his country. Wisam represented true to his religion, work, and to his country.

Anti-nationalism - There are no scenes in *Vishwaroopam II* that portray Muslims as un-patriotic towards India. Wisam Ahmed Kashmiri, the protagonist, is shown helping India. Wisam Ahmed Kashmiri, is portrayed strongly in the film as serving the Indian army for Indian people.

Findings

From the analysis of the films, the fabrication and stereotype of Muslims and their identity is observed in the Tamil cinema. In the film *Unnai Pol Oruvan*, the Muslims character roles projected as terrorist by emphasized on make-up and wardrobe as cultural code. The film portrays a balanced way of showing good Muslim (police) and bad Muslim (criminals). Antagonist Muslim characters revealed as an antinational though their dialogue which creates a misrepresentation or fabricated representation. In the film *Vishwaroopam* and *Vishwaroopam II*, the antagonist character is portrayed as an extremist who does unethical acts in the name of Islam. Muslim women were portrayed as more submissive and controlled by Muslim men in the name of religion. Some scenes are muted due to the forcing of Muslim community organizations in Tamilnadu, as it hurts the Muslim sentiments. Omar, who communicate well in English language and he is technologically competent, is a typical Muslim extremist and a symbol of Al-Qaeda.

The film had many stereotypical and fabricated elements associated with Muslims and Islam. The terrorists were shown having bearded, wearing skull caps and performing the Namaz (Prayer). Because of the above reasons, *Vishwaroopam* received worldwide protests and opposition from Muslim organizations (Endong & Essoh, 2013). John F. Kennedy said that "The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie, deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth, persistent, persuasive and realistic." When the audience is habituated to see repetitively persistent and recurrent images that show a community in an immoral nimble, they may believe it. The study brings to a close view on a celebrated star actor-turned-politician Kamal Hassan's socio-political outlook on Muslims, his broader vision of promoting peace is evident, but the way it has been portrayed is under trouble. Minor, supporting, and secondary Muslim characters have been taken into the task in his films. But filmmakers did not directly label Indian Muslims as 'terrorists' but gave an outlook that 'bad Muslims' akin 'extremist,' 'enemies,' and 'terrorists' come from other countries and supporters of them is Indian Muslims. Thus all the films taken for this study try to show

Muslims in an unfavorable light. Even though the overall initiation of the films does not harm Muslims and the religion Islam, but the characters, their motives, and traits display them in an offensive manner. It is true that the negative aspects create more impact on the audience mind, and it shapes the opinion about the Islam community. Thus, the Muslims are victimized in two ways, first by Islamic terrorism synonymic to Islam and second by the society at large (Bhat, 2019). Tamil films play a major role in creating the above-stated reasons.

Conclusion and recommendations

Whenever research embarks upon the task of analyzing the representation of minorities, especially Muslims in Tamil cinema, it is surprising to find there is a fabricated representation that is one aspect that has remained unchanged in most cases. The representation in cinema is a portrayal of the existence of a 'being' (Rajan & Venkatraman, 2017). From patronizing to terrorizing, the Muslims in Tamil cinema are regularly stereotypes with cliché images, which appear again and again to reinforce their misrepresentations' in the minds of the audience. This distorts the image of Islam and Muslims and to fix it in the viewers' minds that the Muslims are the 'bad gang,' and instigators of violence leads to terrorism. Muslims were depicted not because they are terrorist, but because of their religious affiliation. Any form of art, especially cinema, also need to provide fairness to them. In many instants, the images used to represent the Muslims are a reflection of the prejudices prevalent in India against Muslims. Compared to Hindi cinema, the Islamic based films, Muslims protagonist, and characters are comparatively less in Tamil cinema, because it is less available in Tamil, the audience may perceive that whatever is represented may think to be true. So, when it is less represented and offered, more the accurate it should reflect. This study identified how Tamil films are creating a dissimilar image of Muslims compared to their real life. It is important to note that cinema is a mirror of social images; a tool for social concern, and awareness. Indian cinema, more specifically, Tamil cinema has abundance of creative talents, stories, storytellers, and spectatorship compared to the Muslim countries. The Muslim nations do not have strong manifestation and audience support to show actual images of Muslims, Islam, and their religious identity. Thus, the filmmakers and the 'stardom' actors should not forget that they need to be responsible for producing content that pays heed to positive ideology and provides correct representation. Ahmad (2014) appraises that "Film relies on the mental state of the viewers, who are 'trapped' in a dark hall. The employment of images, words, and music together create an atmosphere that the audience are attracted to it. Each viewer may take home the same or different message after watching the film once or several times". Tamil films with fabricated Muslim identity should not disturb peace among the public, because in Tamilnadu, Muslims and other religious people have cordial relationship with each other. But the negative portrayal may create community conflict (Raja & Ganeshkumari, 2015). A good cinema will educate people through the form, and its content and its images are worth par with gold. We, the researchers, urge the dynamic youngsters to come forward to take over the Tamil cinema and to narrate stories without discrimination. More young and promising Muslim filmmakers need to venture and do films involving Muslim characters with factual representations. Overall the filmmakers need to concentrate on portraying humans as positive peace-lovers, irrespective of community, religion, gender, and caste. The film can avoid religious connotations and remarks, fostering peace-building among the diverse population of the nation.

Author's Profile

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Dr. V. Vijay Kumar is the Dean (Acting), School of Communications, Xavier University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. He is a seasoned media professional and a media educator, with ample years of industrial experience in audio-visual content development, supervision, and management. Right from television reality shows to non-fiction live broadcast, from television commercials to feature films, he worked in various projects in different capacities. He worked with Sun TV Network, Chennai; Shop CJ TV Network, Mumbai; Frames Entertainment, Chennai, India, in senior roles and he was the creative head and show director of an award-winning Tamil reality talent hunt show 'Naalaya Iyakunar' (Future Director) and South India's first reality television show for identical twins 'Iruvar' (Twins). He has completed his PhD from Anna University, Chennai, India. His doctoral research is on the topic 'Interactive Reality Television'. He is specialized in audio-visual content development, entertainment television programmes, digital film making and educational media design. His research interests are television programming, television

studies, film studies, social media, interactive digital communication, positive psychology, and educational media. Apart from teaching, he is actively involved in audio-visual content development in the forms of documentaries, music videos, television shows and educational video modules.

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