CHAPTER – 5

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5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study clearly demonstrated the coverage of Dalit issues particularly Dalits participation in politics. The case studies observed using content analysis revealed the extent of news coverage of Dalit issues in terms of space, frequency and placement. Chapter 1 clarified the status of the coverage of minorities in media in the international arena and then discussed the coverage of Dalits in Indian media. After reviewing the available literature on the subject in Chapter 2, the researcher clarified the scope and limitations of the study. Chapter 3 discussed the methodology to study the coverage of Dalit issues in Tamil press. Chapter 4 presented the data analysis for the study. After collecting the required data, a qualitative approach was followed to understand the significance of data and its analysis.

5.2 CASE STUDY 1: DISCUSSIONS

*Dina Thanthi* has devoted more space but less number of occurrences. It underplayed the Nellai massacre by not publishing photographs about police mishandling. The photos depicted the processionists as the victims. Their dead bodies are more significant than police attack. *Dina Thanthi* headlines portrayed the incident as violence. The choice of words used by journalists in *Dina Thanthi* to describe Tirunelveli incident suggests bias. There is a lot of difference between death and massacre. Even though the death toll was confirmed only after three days of the crisis, the journalists continued to report as *Nellai rebellion* or *riot* which denotes armed resistance. However the Mohan Commission...
Report, official sources, interpretative piece and editorial of Dinamani confirmed that the protestors were unarmed. It echoed the official views that the people are dead due to drowning in river. There is no space for the opinion of the protestors. The journalists repeated the views of official sources.

It was observed that Dinamani gave less attention to this issue in terms of frequency of occurrences. The data reveals that Dinamani has emphasized the Tirunelveli Massacre by publishing in the first six pages even in the Chennai edition. However, it was observed that most of the photographs were depicting the brutal police attack on the protesters. The headlines too proved that the protestors jumped into the river to escape from the police attack. It is inferred that the emphasis of the news stories and photographs did not coincide with the versions of the Public Inquest.

Even though Dinamani, exposed the police attack on the protestors in their photographs, it did not provide prominence to this incident. The first day news justified the police attack. The journalist narrated that the police indulged in pelting of stone just to retort to the stoning of the mob from the procession. Also it noted that the insulting of the women Police by the processionists made them to retort. Dinamani editorials and the news items validated that the police retorted only because of the misbehavior of the protestors. The protestors were portrayed as criminals and womanizers. The editorial also echoed the views of the government. According to Gorringe, “activists pointed to a history of police discrimination and argued that the police reflect the values of the caste society from which they are recruited. The police, for their part, pointed to prior violence at the Dalit demonstrations and insisted that the marchers had taunted police women and started to throw stones. In these contrasting accounts we get a sense of the collective antagonisms within which we can begin to understand why events transpired as they did. Rather than viewing events in isolation, it is clear, analysis must accord due weight to the social
environment within which violence occurs and the implications that it has. The readiness of the police to resort to violence cannot be explained by group psychology alone. We must enquire about the situation that meant police were prepared for violence and conceived of the Dalit groups as targets" (Gorringe, 2006).

Krishnaswamy, the leader of *Puthiya Thamizhagam* was underrepresented in both the newspapers. “While it is essentially a labour dispute involving 2,000 estate workers, an attempt is made to give a caste colour to the demands, simply because Krishnaswamy happens to be a Dalit leader championing the cause of Dalits. The Chief Minister’s statement indirectly questions the wisdom of TMC leaders joining hands with ‘casteist elements’” (Viswanathan, 1999). Krishnaswamy championed the Manjolai estate workers particularly the causes of Dalits. His interview did not accompany with the photograph. However the newspapers published the statements of Chief Minister and Law Minister which portrayed Krishnaswamy as instigator of violence and casteist element.

The real cause of the procession i.e., Manjolai estate workers’ demands was not given due consideration by both the newspapers. Either the stories or interpretations did not touch the working and living conditions of the estate workers. In the entire episode, the background of the problem was not focused. The incident was seen just as a violent outburst. This incident was covered from the news value of conflict and politics rather than from the angle of human rights or labor rights.

Among the dead, 11 are Dalits who belong to *Puthiya Thamizhagam* and remaining 7 are Muslims, other castes and from other organizations (Ravikumar, 1999). Also 80 percent of the Manjolai tea estate workers are the Dalits. But the newspapers did not declare the identity of them. They did not approach this incident as a Dalit issue. The government viewed this with a caste perspective. The Chief Minister rejected the appeal for the
transfer of the Collector and argued that if he accepts it, the backward class will oppose it. In addition, he warned the TMC leader not to join with the casteist element. The newspapers did not see it as a Dalit issue. The Constitution of India abolished untouchability and equality is ensured as a fundamental right. They are still discriminated in the name of caste. “The Dalit movements do not have any mass media to express their activities and demands. They don’t own any television media or newspapers. Also they do not have the same influence like other upper caste members. They do not have any caste background. They do have only man power. Using that only they can express their supremacy to the world; can catch the attention of the government; we should remember that the Processions are the mass media for the Dalits” (Ravikumar, 1999).

The journalists repeated the official views. The newspapers have seen the protestor’s problem only with the law and order frame. The police portrayed them as such, made preventive arrests before mass meetings and attended each demonstration in force. The media accorded them recognition but presented some of their protests as extreme (Gorringe, 1999).

The magazines, the social science researchers, human rights advocacies have viewed this as a Dalit issue. But the newspapers have seen it as a political procession. The data proved that the term ‘Dalit’ was absent in the news papers. They are excluded in the news items like their exclusion in the social order. The data analysis substantiate that Tirunelveli massacre coverage too confronted the similar coverage like The Keezhavenmani massacre.

The newspapers by focusing on one side of the story, several articles stimulate a feeling of insecurity ‘caused’ by the protestors. The government’s part in this problem was almost always ignored in news stories. The critical question is this: Does the government
create problems for the Dalits? Or, as presented, do Dalits create problems for the government? This is not sufficiently answered in the articles.

The findings of the study demonstrate that the coverage was an indirect tool of oppression and not considering it as an agency of change that challenged the prejudices and hostility towards the Dalits by the country' elites. In sum, the coverage of the two leading Tamil dailies has been discriminatory towards Dalits and is a degrading tone in describing them. These two newspapers downplayed the Tirunelveli Massacre.

The media reflects the ideology of the state and the upper caste. The media is used as a mass deception. In Marxist media analysis, media institutions are regarded as being 'locked into the power structure, and consequently as acting largely in tandem with the dominant institutions in society. The media thus reproduced the viewpoints of dominant institutions not as one among a number of alternative perspectives. The findings of the present study were in accordance with the study of Gorringe. According to him, "Media reports struggled to rationalize the events and painted harrowing portraits of protestors being truncheoned as they cowered in the water".

5.3 CASE STUDY 2: DISCUSSIONS

The findings disclose that the Dalits political participation is given less prominence by giving less space and fewer occurrences. The findings confirm that the news about the Dalits political participation is delimited within the official announcements of elections and political party protests. It confirms that Tamil dailies over rely on official sources. There is a selective omission on issues like PCR act, untouchability, the Panchayat act and the Constitution of India. The analysis reveals that the Tamil dailies didn’t report about the following:
The poll-booth and other meetings are conducted only in the dominant caste area.

In 2003, 9-member committee sent by the Government did not go to the Dalit area.

Not even a single member who hinders the election is arrested or punished.

No legal action is taken against the caste Hindus either as per the provisions of SC/ST (PA) Act 1989 or as per the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1994.

The data reveals that there is more inaccurate reporting in the Tamil dailies. They do not see this issue as a major news value. They do not give pressure to the government to put an end to this undemocratic action. They just inform about the happenings. But do not ready to take any other steps to solve this problem. Most of the reporting is mainly event based. It lacks in-depth reporting and also follow-up.

The poll-booth and other meetings are conducted only in the dominant caste area. In 2003, 9-member committee sent by the Government did not go to the Dalit area. Not even a single member who hinders the election is arrested or punished. No legal action is taken against the caste Hindus either as per the provisions of SC/ST (PA) Act 1989 or as per the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act 1994. This willful omission on the part of the officials has emboldened the Caste Hindus to continuously practice untouchability in the name of boycotting the elections (National Public Hearing on Pappapatti, Keeripatti, Nattarmangalam and Kottakachiyenthal Juri Kit, 2005). But it is not reflected in the coverage of Tamil dailies.

According to B.R.Ambedkar the roots of democracy lie not in the form of government, parliamentary or otherwise. A democracy is more than a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living. The roots of democracy are to be searched in the social relationship, in the terms of associated life between the people who form a society.
In this issue too, the caste is the major reason for the problem. The existence of the caste system is a standing denial of the existence of those ideals of society and therefore of democracy (Panikkar, 2000).

So the media should consider decreasing the oppression of caste system as a major news values in the reporting. The media too does not escape from the casteism. In Tamil Nadu, there are only few Dalit journalists (Robin Jeffrey, 1996). The media reflects only the social and cultural conditions, which prevails in the society. So the media should think seriously about this issue.

5.4 CASE STUDY 3: DISCUSSIONS

The coverage of Dalits political participation in Tamil dailies namely Dina Thanthi and Dinamalar with reference to the 14th Lok Sabha election concludes that the Dalits political participation was not given more attention. The media speaks in one voice and they keep mum in many issues. There is uniformity in reporting stories in the Tamil dailies. In terms of space, occurrences and placement, the Dalits political participation is not considered significant. Both the dailies covered the news which have negative angle about the Dalit political parties. But the social, political and economic sphere of the Dalits was not discussed in the news reports.

The coverage of the Dalit issues has more coverage during April and May. As the election campaign for 14th Lok Sabha elections was peak during this period. They have given less space to the development issues of Dalits.

The news concerning the Dalits which are normally covered is political news. The types of news which are not being covered include untouchability, PCR, manual scavenging,
education and human rights violations. The name of Dr. Ambedkar appeared during the sample period since his birthday falls on April 14th. He is normally remembered only during his birth and death anniversary. The newspapers ignored the human rights violation of the Dalits, their educational, cultural, development and welfare interests of the socially and economically oppressed castes. The newspapers excluded the real message of the human rights violations of Dalits particularly Kalapatti incident. It lacks in-depth reporting. Even the event reporting is very vague and ambiguous. There is no explanation of the Kalapatti incident.

The media speaks in one voice and they keep mum in many issues. There is uniformity in reporting stories. The media remains the source of information. If they neglect any issue, it’s also neglected by the people. The issues that have a social debate are not being grasped by the media. If newspapers do not focus important issues, then people also won’t get awareness about those issues. Today’s newspapers are also not following the UNESCO’s strategy. The newspapers must serve the humanity. But they are avoiding the oppressed people.

5.5 CASE STUDY 4: DISCUSSIONS

The findings reveal that the Dalits political participation with special reference to 14th Lok Sabha elections is given less prominence by giving less space and fewer occurrences. Dina Thanthi had allotted more space for the coverage of the Dalit’s participation in politics than Dinamalar and Dinamani. But Dinamani has given less space when compared with other two dailies. Also the frequency of news occurrence is higher since the birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar falls on April 14th i.e. sample period. Even in that
coverage, the Dalit political parties face discrimination from the Tamil dailies. The homage of other political parties has given more space and prominence than the Dalit political parties.

Big size news items were rare regarding the coverage of the Dalit political participation in the three newspapers Dinamalar, Dinamani and Dina Thanthi during the sample period. Most of the stories published in the three dailies were mainly one column stories. Dina Thanthi and Dinamani have published only one 5 column story. In Dinamalar, most of the news stories published were of one column stories. In all the three newspapers, not even a single news item concerning the Dalit political participation was published in the front page. Not even single news was published in the front pages. They are symbolically annihilated from the front pages. In regard to publishing the news stories concerning the Dalit political participation, there was no editorials and letters to the editor was published in all the newspapers within the sample period. Although Dinamani is the only Tamil daily which publishes editorial, there is not a single editorial regarding the Dalit political participation. Interpretative pieces were rarely published in the sample newspapers. General news items only dominated in all the three newspapers during the one month sample. Tamil dailies did not consider news regarding the Dalit political participation worthy of analysis.

Most of the news items regarding the Dalit political participation were published under the heading of “election” during election period. Next most of them are published in the local and regional pages. Only a least number of stories published in the state page. Dalit news is often confined within the local pages. Rarely would they become statewide or national issue. Totally 26 news items had no specific geo header in all the three dailies during the sample period. Only few photographs regarding the Dalit political participation was published in the sample dailies. The data shows that the dailies have given less
prominence in terms of occurrence and space of photographs. Even the photographs regarding Dalit political participation published during the election period was dominated by the allies. During 14th Lok Sabha election, the Dalit political parties have formed alliance with Janata party and formed third front. Most of the stories regarding Dalit political participation filed by the Tamil dailies were mostly of the alliance parties. Dina Thanthi and Dinamalar have given equal number of photographs for Dalits political participation. Only 4 photographs were published in Dinamani regarding Dalits political participation. Though most of the photographs published were of the political leaders who formed alliance with the Dalit political parties.

In all the three Tamil dailies, they have published the election campaign schedule of the political party leaders under the header “Thalaivargal pesukiragal” (Leaders speak). But there is not a single indication of the campaign of the Dalit political party leaders. In majority of news items, they were not identified as Dalits. Most of the news items were event based. Dinamani have used more quotations of Dalit political leaders when compared with Dinamalar and Dina Thanthi. Also majority of those quotations were of Mayawathi, the leader of BSP. They have not given importance to Dalit political leaders in Tamil Nadu. Even the news items published were not of positive note to the Dalit political leaders. They were mostly of crime news which involves the Dalit political leaders and cadres, debates about the wealth of the Dalit political leaders mainly Mayawathi, the struggle of DPI to win symbol for their alliance. Only once they have mentioned about untouchability in the news coverage. The Dalit issues which includes education, culture, untouchability, reservation, literature, human rights violation, spiritual and art were not discussed in the news coverage.
5.6 FOCUS GROUP STUDY: DISCUSSIONS

The focus group study revealed that most of the participants felt that while covering caste conflicts, the Dalits are represented as victims, instigators of violence and immoral people in Tamil dailies. They also feel that there is subtle casteism in the news coverage.

Generally the participants felt that most of the Dalit issues were neglected by the Tamil press. Most of the research scholars felt that the Dalits are under represented and misrepresented in the Tamil dailies. Participants articulated that the Dalit issues that covered were only caste conflicts and reservation issues. The major Dalit issues like Human rights violation, Education, Dalit Literature, Culture and Manual Scavenging were neglected by the Tamil dailies. Tamil dailies never mind about the land reformation, Labour welfare, Employment, Bonded labour, Informal sectors, scavenging which were the important economic rights of the Dalits. They used to cover only about reservation that too against the Dalits.

Many of the participants were of the view that the Tamil dailies engaged in stereotyping Dalits. They emphasized that in the coverage of caste conflicts, The Dalits were frequently reflected as victims, instigators of violence and immoral people. When the Dalits who were experiencing the cruelty of untouchability, retaliate it was portrayed as crime. The retaliated Dalits were represented as criminals and immoral people. If the same Dalits did not react to the violence of the dominant castes and accept the pain, they were represented as victims. Their dead bodies, pain, losing and sufferings were converted into the item for consumption of commercial media.
Most of the scholars opined that the Tamil newspapers engage in a conspiracy on reporting Dalit issues. The Dalit issues are covered secluded from the mainstream. The Tamil dailies never mention about Cheris where the Dalits are physically isolated.

Nearly every one of the participants declared that the Dalit political parties and the Dalit politicians were not considered by the Tamil dailies. The Dalit political parties were portrayed as caste parties and Dalit politicians were casteists. They were misrepresented by the entire Tamil media. The attitude towards the coverage of the Dalit leaders was unfavorable. The tone of the coverage of the Dalit political parties and Dalit politicians was negative.

In addition to their views, they furnished details for the grounds of media representation of Dalits. They emphasized the societal factors other than caste. They were the absence of editorial in Tamil dailies, the media ownership, and social composition of newsroom and the thorny position of the journalists.

5.7 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS: DISCUSSIONS

The in-depth interviews revealed that Dalit political leaders feel that they were discriminated in the coverage of Tamil dailies. Ravikumar, MLA opined that Dinamalar deliberately blackout efforts and achievements of Dalit political parties. Tamil dailies tend to link the personal affairs of Dalit politicians with party politics. The atrocities against Dalits were covered if and only it has political value. The coverage of the Dalits political participation also depends upon the alliance. He also viewed that although he was a MLA elected by people, Tamil dailies consider his a representative of a particular caste. He said that if Dalit political parties give advertisement in the Tamil newspapers,
they will be given coverage. He believed that *Dina Thanthi* is giving more space and coverage when compared to other dailies. *Dinamani* gives fair coverage but least page since they have less space allotted for local area.

Dr. Krishnasamy considered that Tamil dailies were sidelining and marginalizing the Dalit political parties and the Dalit issues at critical periods. The Tamil press was repeating the views of the Police officials and reports. Coverage of election campaign by the Dalit political parties is zero in the Tamil dailies. Even the least coverage is pessimistic against the Dalit political parties get coverage. Tamil dailies give more space for film actors turned politicians. Tamil dailies are continuing to throw a bad light on the Dalit parties rather than attempting to study reality.

All the editors believed that they are giving fair coverage to the Dalit political participation. They confessed that they are following only F.I.R filed by the Police department. They follow this to avoid unnecessary problems. *Dina Thanthi* editor feels that if they find any loop holes in the F.I.R, then they will expose the truth by alternate views through statements of Political leaders and victims. They believed that if they give follow-up to caste atrocities against the Dalits, it will ignite the problem.

The media persons observed that there is no need of allotting special space for Dalit issue. As they are giving fair space to the Dalit issues, there is no need of exclusive space for the Dalit news coverage. Although the management decides to give special space, then they can allot for the Dalit issues.

The editors refused the presence of discrimination against the Dalits in the newsrooms. The selection of reporters and editors is based on entirely talent. The Dalit journalists said that there are only few Dalit reporters in the field. They also declared that they face discrimination in the newsroom.
A publication by Human Rights Watch called, Broken People: Caste Violence Against India's "Untouchables" in 1999 demonstrates, more than 160 million people in the "world's largest democracy" remain at risk of systematic human rights violations on the basis of the caste into which they are born. Dalits were denied access to land, forced to work in degrading conditions, and routinely abused at the hands of the police and of higher-caste groups that enjoy the state's protection. The collected literature confirmed the discrimination of Dalits in each and every sphere of the social life. The Dalits face exclusion in terms of socio, economic and political aspects. A majority of the Dalit rural workforce subsists on the menial wages of landless agricultural labourers, earning less than $1 a day. Statistics compiled by India's National Crime Records Bureau indicated that in year 2004, every twenty minutes crime is committed against the SCs. Dalits even faces political untouchability. Dalits right to vote, right to contest and right to campaign are always ignored and dishonoured. The discrimination faced by the Dalits in society is carried over to the media too.

The findings of the study substantiate that the coverage given to the participation of Dalits in politics in Tamil dailies is very minimal. The findings reveal that the extent of news coverage in terms of space and frequency is very low. The news concerning the Dalits which are normally covered is about crime and violence against the Dalits. The types of news which are not being covered include untouchability, PCR, manual scavenging, education and human rights violations. The data show that the Dalit news seldom appears in front page. Dalit news are often given less prominence by burying them in the inside pages of the Tamil dailies. The vocabulary and lexical choice in the text of the news being covered about Dalits are evidence for bias. Hence the news concerning Dalits are
given less space, less number of frequency of occurrences and considered insignificant in Tamil dailies.

The participation of the Dalits in politics is not given due prominence by the Tamil dailies. The interviews with the Dalit politicians revealed that Dalits’ opinions are never included in the news reports. Dalit leaders are never asked for opinions and views. The coverage of Dalits political participation also depends upon the alliance. They give more importance to the leaders of alliance parties. The Tamil press shies away from studying the values of the Dalit political parties’, their strength and weaknesses. Tamil dailies tend to black out the participation of the Dalits in politics.

Dalit issues are not considered significant by the Tamil dailies. The findings of the content analysis, the focus group Discussions and the in-depth interviews validate that Dalit issues particularly Dalit political participation is not measured as a news value. The Indian media did not consider caste as a news value. The reporters feel that there is nothing new in untouchability. It is a usual one and it is unworthy of becoming news. “In the urbanized space of the newsroom, then, where ‘beats’ are allotted to reporters to cover crime, political parties, education, power, health, environment, gender issues, cinema, foreign affairs, information technology, the stock market, different kinds of sport, etc; none is allotted to ‘caste’, though indeed caste as a category has the potential to operate in almost all the ‘beats’. This denial of space, or rather the selective manner of offering space for ‘caste issues’, by the Dalit-free media owes a great deal to the tendency to treat caste as a pre-modern category” (Anand, 2005).

Dalit issues are confined within the news value “proximity”. The Dalit news is considered only as local news and the atrocities against the Dalits find difficulty to reach other places. The in-depth interviews with the Dalit politicians revealed that Dalit news are often covered as local news.
The findings of content analysis prove that the Dalit news regarding atrocities lack in-depth reporting. The Dalit scholars and the Dalit politicians too have similar opinions. The interviews with the editors and reporters reveal that news reporting in Tamil dailies has some constraints. The media persons confess that they fear detailed reporting would lead to a caste conflict. As the competitors are not considering this as an important issue, they too are unconcerned.

Advertisement plays a major role in the coverage of participation of Dalits in politics. The interviews with the editors and the reporters revealed that the significance of political party is considered by the advertisement. If the Dalit political parties give full page advertisements, then they will receive prominent coverage in the newspapers.

The Dalit issues also face social exclusion in the media. The Dalit news which is often included in the coverage is about crime and violence against the Dalits. The issues like untouchability, PCR, manual scavenging, education and human rights violations are excluded from the mainstream Tamil dailies. Also the Dalits are excluded from the newsroom.

In Tamil dailies, the newsroom is mostly dominated by the Backward Caste. The interviews with the journalists, editors and Dalit politicians confirmed that the Dalit journalists are seen rare in the newsrooms of Tamil dailies. But it is important to note that newsrooms lack diversity. The Dalit journalists and editors are intentionally or unintentionally missing from the newsrooms. The Dalit news and the Dalit journalists experience social exclusion from the Tamil dailies. Newsroom composition plays a major role in the news coverage. In Tirunelveli, there are only two Dalit photographers in the Tirunelveli. There is not a single Dalit journalist in *Dinamani, Dinamalar* and *Dina Thanthi* at Tirunelveli.
Gatekeepers are known for filtering out news content. Gatekeepers are the determining and decisive authority of news selection. The focus group discussions and the in-depth interviews authenticate that the Dalits are not at the gate keeping positions in the Tamil dailies. The Dalits are in the lower position of Tamil dailies which is similar to their position in the caste hierarchy prevailing in the society. The Dalits are present in the printing and circulation section and also a lot as rural reporters. There is not a single Dalit as Editor in any of the Tamil dailies.

Ownership also plays a major role in the discrimination of news coverage of Dalit issues. None of the Tamil dailies are owned by the Dalits. All the largest circulated Tamil dailies are owned by Forward and Backward caste. Ambedkar too once pointed out ownership as a factor for under representation of the Dalits in media. “The untouchables have no press. The congress press is closed to them and is determined not to give them the slightest publicity. They can not have their own press and for obvious reasons. No paper can survive without advertisement revenue” (Ambedkar, 1946).

The very invisibility of Dalit issues and the Dalits in Indian media contributes to a sense of “otherness” for minority Dalits. The absence of the Dalits in the newspaper pages could be compared with the Ammu Joseph’s thoughts on the coverage of women issues. Ammu Joseph named the absence of women from the newspaper pages as “symbolic annihilation”. So one could also call it as symbolic annihilation of the Dalits in the coverage and also the newsrooms of the Tamil dailies.

According to Van Dijk, “The New Racism of Western societies is a system of ethnic or racial inequality consisting of sets of sometimes subtle everyday discriminatory practices sustained by socially shared representations, such as stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies. This system is reproduced not only in the daily participation of (white) group members in various non-verbal forms of everyday racism, but also by discourse. Text and
talk about the others, especially by the elites, thus primarily functions as the source of
ethnic beliefs for in-group members, and as a means of creating in-group cohesion and
maintaining and legitimating dominance. This is especially the case for media discourse
in general and the news in particular. Systematic negative portrayal of the others, thus
vitally contributed to negative mental models, stereotypes, prejudices and ideologies
about the others, and hence indirectly to the enactment and reproduction of racism” (Van
Dijk, 1989).

Hence it reminds the views of Van Dijk regarding new racism in the form of news.
Traditionally the Dalits experience untouchability in a number of ways in the society. It is
carried over to the coverage of Dalit news in the Tamil dailies too. Here the Dalits are
experiencing a new form of untouchability in the society in the news coverage. The Dalits
are placed at the bottom of the caste hierarchy in the society. It gets reflected in the
media. The Dalit issues are not given due importance in the news coverage. The
placement of the Dalit news in the Tamil dailies is a standing evidence for this. The Dalits
are in the lower positions in the Tamil dailies like printing and packing sections. Very few
are at reporting level but none in the gate keeping positions. The Dalits position in the
society correlates with their position in the media. Hence one can say that casteism is
operating in the media in the form of news coverage and newsroom composition. Dalit
issues are seen with the dominant caste angle which is against the interest of Dalits. Tamil
dailies enact and reproduce casteism by the systematic negative portrayal of Dalits. The
findings authenticate the presence of subtle casteism in the news coverage. Here new
casteism operates in the media in the form of news.