CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Conceptual framework:

1.1.1. Celebrity journalism:

"Since the late 1990s, celebrity has become a particularly intense object of interest in media. It seems to have increasingly provided a focus not only for features and publicity, but also for news and current affairs coverage" (Evans and Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 2). In twentieth century the demand for celebrity news and gossips gave rise to gossip columns, tabloids, papparazi, and celebrity blogging. Celebrity coverage has had intoxicating effect on society, especially the youth and has made the youth, in particular, the media savvy people. Public have historically been overwhelmed with celebrities and are engaged in a continual search for opportunities to glimpse into their lives through media which they believe can bring them closer to their idols. Jessica Evans and David Hesmondhalgh (2005) point out that celebrity is a resource created by a range of interlocking media and "Celebrity has been a product of mediation .............. the promotion of the film star persona by the film industry, combined with the earlier interest of popular journalism in the private lives of celebrities have created an idea of celebrity persona...." (Ibid, p. 50). Celebrity journalism reflects media's sheer encouragement to the process of celebritisation or celebrification.

Celebrity news is all about making the famous person more real and the media try to offer a sense of commonness with people. Celebrities provide a constellation of recognizable and familiar people to reconnect both with celebrities and with each other (Marshall, 1997). Celebrity journalism creates an 'aura of greatness' about the celebrity, bring out their ordinariness along with their extraordinariness and bridge the gap between celebrity and their fans by providing intimacy with their everyday lives. Celebrity journalism refers to usually to the news coverage of celebrities, their personal details, scandals, vacuous discussions, gossips, profile of celebrity, public
moments involving celebrities, sensational news, famous personalities to speak on their programmes and promotional events, individual achievements and news about their ordinariness along with extraordinariness.

The newspaper coverage on celebrity can be categorised as these components which is shown in figure 1.1.1(a):

![Diagram showing Celebrity Journalism components]

Figure 1.1.1(a): Celebrity journalism

1.1.2. Defining celebrity:

Marshall (2011) defines celebrity as “a cluster of individuals are given greater presence and a wider scope of activity and agency than are those who make up the rest of the population. They are allowed to move on the public stage while the rest of us watch. They are allowed to express themselves quite individually and idiosyncratically while the rest of the members of the population are constructed as demographic aggregates. We tend to call these overtly public individuals *celebrities*” (p. ix).

Howard Altman (2005) argues, “Celebrity, as we know the term, begins to appear in the eighteenth century with the increasing importance of the public sphere”. A celebrity is a person who is easily recognised in public and also has a prominent
profile in media. A celebrity is a person who is known for his ‘well knownness’ (Boorstin, 1961). The status of celebrity can come with certain profession and this can be determined by their appearances in the media. Here in the study celebrity is categorised as political celebrity, media celebrity, social celebrity, sport celebrity, celebrity from entertainment media.

1.1.3. Blurring of domains:

Media exert its power in educating masses, shaping their beliefs, values, understanding of the surrounding world. Media are assumed as powerful because of its capacity to mould the thinking of people into new directions with framing messages and representing particular cultures. In its operation of power and competition from new media, the Print media often loses its battle in shifting journalistic structures and assume role of journalism is to entertain the masses. Press is believed to publicize the information about the powerful which reproduces social inequality in Indian context. Role of public relation exercise is gradually spreading its web within journalistic discourses. Richardson (2007) introduces three different approaches to journalism- “Journalism as entertainment, as a loudhailer for the powerful and privileged and as a commodity produced by profit-seeking business……….. journalism is often entertaining, it regularly reproduces the opinions of the powerful and……….. is a saleable commodity” (Ibid, p. 7). In its propagation for the powerful people, media mix its genres and various domains- hard news and tabloid news, private information and public information, political news and entertainment news. The newspapers are following the trends of tabloids which are filled with catchy photographs of celebrities, spicy stories written on them. Marshall (2011) argues on the nature of celebrity news in tabloid press, “Tabloid press provides a scandalous turn on the meaning of the celebrity and presents us with the possibility that the supposed unique talents of celebrities are vulnerable and subject to dramatic falls as well as equally impressive moments of contrition and resurrection” (Ibid, p. 3).

1.1.4. Tabloid & tabloidization of contents in newspaper:

In the opinion of media critic Frank Esser (1999), the phenomenon of tabloidization started developing around the end of the nineteenth century and the
beginning of the twentieth century when sports and entertainment received their own sections in the printed press. Advertisers, who were becoming the financiers of newspapers, forced a media culture which considered the readers to be not an audience, but customers. This catering for the popular tastes of the public, is often spoken of through the context of celebrity media coverage.

As quoted in Esser's (1999) article, Howard Kurtz (1993) defines tabloidization as partly a decline in the amount of hard news, such as politics and economics, along with an increase in soft news, such as sensation, scandal and entertainment. Tabloids handle celebrity stories by identifying their claim to relevance, affirmation of glamour, engagement of common human emotions and their spicy incitement to criticise the objects of admiration. Martin Conboy (2006) has amply demonstrated the way in which recent developments in tabloid journalism are directed towards furthering the economic interests of the press barons. The print press industry, specifically newspapers, follows two different approaches taken by the tabloids and the broadsheets. The more celebrity culture oriented tabloids (The Sun, The Mirror) often run such stories as a front page lead, while the majority of the rest of the paper is also made up by similar celebrity based articles, which are written in a casual gossipy style. This is in stark contrast to the approach taken by broadsheets (The Guardian, The Independent) that tend to deliver factual hard news stories, written in a manner that appeals to its educated target audience. If a story has to revolve around a celebrity in a broadsheet newspaper, it is likely that the article will be written to inform, rather than adopting an entertaining style like their tabloid counterparts.

1.1.5. Discursive practices and celebrity power:

Discourse is a concept used to refer to spoken or written language use. Discourse analysis is an approach to analyse language of text in its social and cultural context. Brian Paltridge (2006) provides definition of Discourse Analysis as “Discourse Analysis looks at patterns of language across texts and considers the relationship between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used.” (Ibid. p.2). Discourse analysis shows how a particular way of using language
can provide different views of the world and different understanding. Norman Fairclough (1995) said that discourses include representations of how things are and have been, as well as imaginaries, representations of how things might or could or should be. Critical discourse analysis tries to find out the negotiation between the dialectical relationship of language, i.e. social relations, social identities, systems of knowledge and belief of society. The combination of text- ideational function, interpersonal function and textual function work within discourse practice of media text, ‘daily doses of news are significant factors of social control’ and ‘social control is increasingly practiced’ (Fairclough, 2001, p. 30). Discourse as a vehicle of ideology has dialectical relationship with the societal structures which assumes that social change is contributed in terms of power struggle and power relationships. Discourse assumes to “control over orders of discourse by institutional and societal power-holders is one factor in the maintenance of their power (Fairclough, 2001, p. 31). Fairclough (2001) describes the interrelational process of social structure, discourse and social practice- “As far as the social world is concerned, social structures not only determine social practice, they are also a product of social practice. And more particularly, social structures not only determine discourse, they are also a product of discourse” (Ibid, p. 31).

![Diagram of Social Structures and Practice Discourse](image)

Source: Norman Fairclough (2001, p. 31)

Celebrity in a society has specific ‘structuring of social space into a set of situations’ where celebrity discourse occurs for example in various media events, film release, and promotional events. Any institution has “a social order and order of discourse which involves a distinctive structuring of ‘social space’ into a set of situations where discourse occurs……, a set of recognised ‘social roles’ in which people participate in discourse……and a set of approved purposes for discourse……maintaining social control as well as a set of discourse types” (Fairclough, 2001, p.
31). Media as an institution have certain order of discourse and journalistic discourse for celebrities focus upon their ‘social roles’ what Fairclough (ibid) terms as ‘subject position’ i.e., the story tries to provide the idea of what the celebrities do and in course of discourse practice determine discourse. Celebrity positioning in a particular journalistic discourse is part of a social structure and thus, celebrity discourse determines and reproduce social structure with its hidden power struggles as to control non-powerful masses. Celebrities exercise their power by positioning them in a story the way they want to and presenting any event the way they want to represent and hence, the power exercise by celebrity and media are hidden. Language is used as a powerful tool to provide understanding of the celebrity world. For example, use of indirect requests, presuppositions, sentences with deleting the agents, use of modal verbs, use of conversationalisation, collocation, rhetorical tropes are linguistic tools employed by the media to exert power which help to shape order of the discourse of a society. These linguistic tools are ideologically placed in a text and work as tool for ‘power behind discourse’. This exercise of power is assumed as ‘professional practices’ by the ‘power holders’.

Celebrity as a cultural icon works for production and consumption of cultural commodity through the levels of construction of identity. Marshall (2011) argues, “...the public personality or celebrity is the site of intense work on the meaning of both individuality and collective identity in contemporary culture. It is the capacity of these public figures to embody the collective in the individual, which identifies their cultural signs as powerful” (Ibid, p. 241).

Marshall (2011) describes celebrity discursive power, its representation of capitalism and its identity construction as “......the celebrity as public individual who participates openly as a marketable commodity serves as a powerful type of legitimisation of the political economic model of exchange and value- the basis of capitalism................. Celebrity status also confers on the person a certain discursive power: within society, the celebrity is a voice above others, a voice that is channelled into the media system as being legitimately significant............... The power of celebrity, then, is to represent the active construction of identity in the social world. Studying the celebrity offers the reader of culture a privileged view of
the representative forms of modern subjectivity that pass through the celebrity as discourses” (Ibid, p. x-xi).

1.1.6. Celebrity culture:

It has been argued that “Celebrity and culture are mutually constitutive” (Evans and Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 2). Celebrity functions its power by driving media both ‘ideologically and economically’ as well as it exerts its power over its audience by creating social meanings with portrayal of triumphant individuality, player of fame game, conveying social values, creating perception of the world. Celebrity culture mainly talks about culture of consumption- how a celebrity is worshipped, loved, adored by the media and fans. Celebrity culture shows configuration of celebrity at two levels- production and consumption of celebrity texts. At the production level, celebrity images, stories are created by the media which can be called as celebritised superficial texts and consumption by its audience at consumption level. Celebrity as a mediatised persona is created in ‘pseudo-events’ by the media. Thus celebrity images at the production and consumption level are superficial images, texts. According to Boorstein (1961), celebrity is ‘the quintessential media pseudo-event’ (Ibid, p. 75) and celebrities depend on publicity machines, media agencies to become ‘publicisable personality’ (Ibid, p. 85). Turner (2004) opines that celebrity as a part of culture of production is professionally managed, discursively deconstructed and consumption of celebrity is a productive social activity due to consumer’s access to forms of power. Celebrity culture creates a metadiscourse which shapes the social life, benefits capitalism and create intimate bonding of fan-celebrity network. It creates desire for those commodities celebrities endorse for having better lifestyles. “Adulation, identification and emulation are key motifs in the study of celebrity culture. The desire for fame, stardom, or celebritification stems from a need to be wanted in a society where being famous appears to offer enormous material, economic, social and psychic rewards” (Gamson, 1994; Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2004; as cited in Su Homes and Sean Redmond, 2006, p. 2). Nick Couldry (2000, 2003) opines, “In the modern world, being famous gives one access to a social space that sits at the centre of meaning generation and belonging” (as quoted in Homes and Redmond, 2006, p. 2). Hence, desire of fame becomes an influential force in celebrity culture in creating social relations, social inequalities and
leaves scope for debate. Celebrity culture represents the negotiation or tension of redrawal of boundaries between ordinary-extraordinary self, real-unreal self, private-public self, mythic construction of fame or authentic self.

1.1.7. Theoretical framework:

1.1.7.1. Encoding/decoding:

Celebrity texts contain certain preferred meanings representing specific ideologies. It produces coherent and preferred meaning in the text. Celebrity text is part of meaning making process, a practice of social meaning production through language –‘a set of professional codes’ and symbols of the text. “Meaning is a discursive process that operates within a language system loaded with ideological significance” (Hall, as cited in Laughey, 2007, p. 61). Hall argues that media messages are produced and circulated which have ‘complex structure of dominance’ as messages are ‘imprinted by institutional power relations’. “Language is encoded (made to mean something) by those with ‘the means of production’ (i. e. producers) and is then decoded (made to mean something) by audiences (Hall 1982: 68)” (Laughey, 2007, p. 61).

![Diagram of Encoding/Decoding process]

Source: Dan Laughey (2005, p. 62)
Media represent ideological meanings through certain professional codes which are structured by selection of certain words, images, values. Media languages are articulations of hegemonic ‘dominant codes’ and discursive practices. Laughey (2007) describes, “What news stories are selected, how each of them are edited, and how they are arranged in a particular order (of importance) are just some of the ways in which the ideology of media professionalism is constructed. Newsworthiness is highly subjective and differs from institution to institution; it exerts its preferred meanings upon its audience” (Ibid, p. 63). Thus media try to imprint the dominant meanings by power relations and in decoding, meanings are negotiated, in fact oppositional, the way audiences consume the messages; it may not ‘determinate’. Celebrity texts can be seen as entangled site of negotiated meanings or binary oppositional meanings which have polysemic texts; readers are served with multiple meanings in celebrity news with a clever use of linguistic codes like metaphor, metonymy and images. Celebrities represent social values, relationships, certain economic order, ideological positions as preferred dominant meanings, negotiated and oppositional meanings. The kind of entangled meanings of celebrity texts are analysed to explore the negotiated and binary oppositional meanings which Indian Press tries to exert as preferred meanings to the readers. Star images create binary expressions of public images and private images of celebrity persona. Celebrity texts represent the site where desires, manufacturing of individuals, fame game are variedly played out. “The celebrity sign effectively contains this tension between authentic and false cultural value. In its simultaneous embodiment of media construction, audience construction, and the real, living and breathing human being, the celebrity sign negotiates the competing and contradictory definitions of its own significance” (Marshall, 2011, p. xi).

1.1.7.2. Media consumption as playing with time:

The celebrity news provides mostly personal information of celebrity with catchy photographs to provide entertainment to its readers. Play Theory of mass communication can be cited to get the idea why celebrity gossips and tabloidised contents find space in the newspapers. The basic premise of play theory is to assume that media provide entertainment and audience uses media primarily for
entertainment. This William Stephenson (1967) theory states that the media provide communication pleasure which means enjoyment, contentment, delight as found in entertainment and the daily absorption and immersion of people into the mass media in their after-hours is a matter of subjectivity or 'existential direction.' 'Playing' means to step outside the world of responsibility. Newspapers are read for pleasure rather than information and enlightenment. Media provide communication-pleasure and aim to focus on converting certain negative conditions into positive. Play theory assumes that audiences are extremely active and engaged in media consumption process. Stephenson’s (1967) theory analyses the reception of communication process by audience from a subjective perspective. He shows that people need to talk about something to fulfil their need of entertainment. This theory suggests that the most significant function of mass communication is to facilitate ‘subjective play’, to give pleasure (Arthur Asa Berger, 1995). Mass communication serves purpose of maximising the communication pleasure in the world and also showing the extent of autonomy achievable from an individual respect to the social control performed by his socio-cultural system. ‘Social control’ can be understood in the context of celebrity news is the way media institutions provide information regarding celebrity so that the readers can internalise the elements of celebrity culture. Arthur Asa Berger (1995) notes that play theory assume that mass communication can play a role in shaping people’s convergent or momentary desires and many relatively unimportant decisions of individuals. The readers can select the celebrity news to feel connectedness with the individual projected in the celebrity news. Thus celebrity news can affect readers’ beliefs and values. As a key part of entertainment industry, celebrities are uniquely placed to embody the fantasies of the population as a whole and represent the kinds of individual the audience should be (Jessica Evans and David Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Individuals can identify with the celebrity and accordingly they can shape up their own world. The media flooded with celebrity stories try to provide pleasure to its readers, fans of celebrities. Celebrity stories offer readers an escape from anxiety, day to day tensions and plunge into the luxury of glamorous world. Celebrity texts offer readers a scope to spend time with their favourite stars and readers can experience the company of the ‘overtly public individual’ (Marshall, 1997) which results from ‘pervasiveness of celebrity culture that marks out the contemporary version’ (Turner, 2004, p. 15).
1.1.7.3. Para-social interaction:

For a mere glimpse of real celebrity world, the media help to form celebrity-fan discursive network with its excessive celebrity loaded stories. "....The fan is often conceived as an isolated individual who substitutes star or celebrity attachment for actual social interaction" (Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2004, as cited in Kristina Busse, 2006, p. 255). Horton and Wohl's (as cited in Laughey, 2007) theory of para-social interaction in terms of radio and television can be used to understand the production and consumption of celebrity text by the Press and its readers. "Different but not dissimilar to ordinary social interaction of the face to face kind, para-social interaction refers to the apparent familiarity between media personalities and audiences that can be established through routine use of radio and television................. This familiarity can become a substitute for or may complement more traditional sources of familiarity, such as interactions between family members, relatives and friends. An 'illusion of intimacy' (Horton and Wohl, 2004) can be fostered in the performance features of these media, such as their conversational style...." (Laughey, 2007, p. 86). Concept of 'personae' i.e. personalities are coupled by the para-social interaction to form relationship with readers through media (Horton and Wohl, 2004, as cited in Laughey, 2007, p. 87). This creates an intimacy and 'a continuing relationship' with the readers/audiences. Joshua Meyrowitz (1985) mentions, "The para-social framework may explain why many singing stars turn to more and more personal lyrics and themes as their careers develop and why public officials often add more private information to their public speeches as they become more widely known" (as quoted in Jessica Evans and David Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 44-45). Hence, celebrity news gives more personalized information and entertainment through construction of illusion of interaction between the celebrity and their readers so that the readers feel intimate with the celebrity.

1.2. Statement of the problem:

Media in society are considered as one of the important negotiators between different discourses in addition to having its own discourse. Media also become important as a trend setter in any society and serve as a barometer of societal changes.
in its internal redrawing of boundaries as well as circulating new ideas and changes. Norman Fairclough (1995) argued that any discourse can essentially be divided into communicative events and an order of discourse. Media on the whole have their own discourse and each different medium has got its own discourse. The discourse of visual medium is essentially different from the print as well as television. The communicative event is the production of news and the chain events it goes through from the stages of production to stages of consumption and this chain of events is determined by the political economy, ideological position of the people responsible for production and is continually shaped by the prevailing socio-cultural dimension of the immediate environment. The principal responsibility of the media are to negotiate between the private order of discourses and public order of discourses and how the public truth can be used in the private discourses. Any set of discourse analysis essentially tries to analyse the tension between the social shaping and socially constitutive acts in the formation of knowledge. The truth essentially is a dialectical proposition and this tension determines the position of a set of knowledge in a given societal hierarchy. “Language use- any text- is always simultaneously constitutive of (1) social identities, (2) social relations and (3) systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 55). In certain social situation, or for that matter in any kind of socio-political situation, one or the functions of language becomes important. While language is constitutive of a socio-cultural practice, text itself is also shaped by the society.

The discursive practices of the field of journalism have an indelible impact on the formation of the order of media discourse. Institutional practices of news making and the economic and social environment within which the institution operates play an important role in the formation of media discourse. Teun van Dijk’s analysis of media (1988, 1991) showed the interrelationship among the three levels of text production, namely the structure, production and consumption and how they are constitutive of wider social context. The discourse analysis has a responsibility to ascertain how the textual interpretation, discourse practices or the practices of consumption of text in a private situation and socio-cultural situation get engaged in a dialectics and give birth to a new set of discourse. According to Teun van Dijk (1998), discourse relates to the structures and strategies of the personal and social
mind and also it has connection with social situations, social interactions and societal structures.

1.3. Objectives:

The main objectives of the research project are to locate the discursive elements like celebrity status, power symbol, sophistication, iconisation, marketability, personality cult and symbolism that are emerging in the context of celebrity reports.

1.3.1. The specific objectives of the research effort are:

1. To find out the inter-relation among power elements which are discursive to the text.

2. To assess the discoursal nature of the celebrity news.

3. To find out the language use in the celebrity reporting in India.

4. To assess if there is any presence of the ideological square in the celebrity news.

5. To find out the pattern of representations of celebrities in the select news.

1.4. Significance of the study:

Media discourse is essentially a journey from the beginning of the practice of a genre to the formation of a discourse based on the sustainability of a genre to evolve into something capable of formulating a new knowledge pool. Discourse analysis essentially discusses the ways of knowledge creation and since journalism is considered to be performing the role of contemporary historian, it takes within its ambit the contemporary upheavals and the negotiation and renegotiation of boundaries of existing discourses which are operating at tandem at any given
moments of society. Celebrity journalism began its journey as a genre but the contemporary political and social situations of late capitalism (Jameson, 1983) have been able to turn it into an order of discourse especially in the Western societies. Fairclough (1995) points out that 'the relationship between the institution and discursive practices is not a neat and simple relationship' and 'different institutions come to share common discursive practices, and a particular discursive practice may have a complex distribution across many institutions'. The pervasive influence of technological advances especially in the context of boundary less communication system has made it impossible that the basic formulations of a society can remain insulated from the winds of changes. Indian society has undergone considerable changes in the last twenty odd years under the influence of new economic policies of liberalisation and globalisation which have influenced the redrawal of the order of discourses of journalism in India. This continuous shifting of socio-cultural situation is also interestingly conducive to the formation of a new order of discourse. Thus, the study tries to understand the celebrity texts and their discursive practices, power relations through the language use by the Indian Press.

In West, several studies were conducted employing different methodologies to understand celebrity culture, specially the consumption and production of the celebrity texts. But in India, research works on celebrity journalism are too few. Hence, most of the books and research articles reviewed in the following chapter 'Review of Literature' are works done by Western authors and researchers including the single book written by Indian author Pramod K. Nayar on celebrity culture. The study tries to understand the ideological positions of the celebrity texts, positioning of the celebrity in a particular story in The Times of India and The Telegraph. The study analyses the language pattern used by these two Dailies to shape the understanding of the readers. The study employs the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis to analyse micro and macro level of celebrity texts. So, this work will help future studies for a better understanding of the celebrity texts and media power relations employing the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis.
Reference:


CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE