

When Will Media Learn?

Most, if not all, audiences seem to be fed up with the kind of dramas, soaps are being produced and shown on most of our entertainment channels. Only yesterday, sitting in the waiting area outside a hospital, my attention was caught by a conversation between two women. One was a known TV actor and the other seemed to be an avid viewer of TV dramas. The actor was explaining why she has stopped working in TV plays. According to her, she was done with playing a cunning mother-in-law or a pathetically emotional mother, “koi kab tak aisay fazool role karta rahay?” (for how long can one continue to play these absurd roles?). They both continued to rant about the deteriorating standards of Pakistani TV plays. This was not the first time I had heard people cribbing about our entertainment TV. And that’s the problem. The viewers/audience are full of complaints but it’s all within them, whereas we need to turn our dislike and disagreements into open debates and a discourse on:

- How to counter Ratings driven content that is not gender respectful?
- How and why women should be portrayed in diverse roles in a dignified manner? To find out how, why and to what extent do these news and entertainment content influence the viewers, male and female?
- How to identify and analyses hidden or visible gender biases in the content/context/nature of various serials telecast on different television channels.
- How and why to be mindful of damages done through the dialogues spoken by the characters as well as the acts of violence against women - including ‘honor’ crimes, and their influence on viewers’ behavior towards VAW?
- The tunnel-vision approach towards women’s development and the presence or absence of storylines that take up women’s participation in the political, economic or social spheres.

And last but not the least: How and why to turn passive viewers/audiences into active and active into proactive ones? Uks has been trying to raise awareness of what's wrong with the majority of the content of TV plays and soaps, but we haven’t been successful in effectively changing the viewers’ as well as content producers’ mindset. For that to happen we need each one of us to reject the gender-biased, sexist and misogynistic content being shown in the name of entertainment.

Tasneem Ahmar

