

The Question of Gender in Mainstream Pakistani Drama:

Pakistani Drama Industry has gone deep and beyond in search of themes and subjects for serials that not only mirrors life but also explore the meaning behind it. It has produced serials depicting life in its every form and the pros and cons that come with it.

But, one thing the industry is still struggling with is the question of gender in Drama Serials. Past some decades it has been following the same pattern of the deeply defined and rigid gender roles where the actions and everyday roles are specific to genders and no one dares to break it.

- **Portrayal of Women:**

The assigned role to women in the mainstream Pakistani Drama is either the crying damsel in distress who is just helpless and bound in a million ways by everything and everyone around her. She is always expected to sacrifice her own happiness and choices for others while performing emotional and physical labor for the family. These roles reinforce damaging stereotypes about women and project a highly negative image of women where the woman is to be blamed for whatever is wrong in her own life, or even in the life of her family and people she interacts with or is related to.



Or it is the other way around and the women are portrayed as the nasty evil human beings who are always plotting and scheming to bring other women down. They just seem to know how to wreck homes and other peoples' happiness by casting spells.



Although, with the rise of women empowerment there are some roles where women are shown empowered and somehow in control of their own lives but throughout the serial they are being looked down upon for defying the defined norms of society and families. They're often described as "Azad Khayals" and they are considered unable to keep a family or to raise kids. They reinforce the notion of women belonging at home, hidden from the rest of the world in the domestic sphere. They strengthen the idea that to avoid these problems, the best solution is simply to remove the woman from the public sphere since that is the man's realm. Most of the time these working women seem to endorse patriarchal values by their demeaning attitude towards their maids and workers.

Exceptions are there for sure but most of the serials are found reinforcing the same damaging stereotypes which are a part of an over the top commercial package.

- **Portrayal of Men:**

The role assigned to men is either of a dashing smart hero who is successful and ready to fall in love, and when he does he just would not take no for an answer. He is adamant to marry her and despite the girl downright refusing his advances he persists and, twisting his inflexibility into something romantic which is extremely problematic.

The other dimension of men's role in Dramas is of a workaholic husband who never seems to have enough time or capability to talk about anything else except work. So men in Pakistani Dramas are either pursuing girls or just working at a desk which is demeaning at their part too.



- **The Third Gender:**

Often there is zero representation of transgender in mainstream drama but wherever they are present, they are seen in the stereotypical role of a prop only to sizzle the scene.



Media and especially Drama Industry is often responsible for changing our opinions, the portrayal of both genders has set a mold in which we are desperately trying to fit and that is problematic and unrealistic. It puts a lot of pressure on men to be successful in their 20's and on women to muffle their voices and opinions. It's time to paint a healthy portrayal of genders and humanity.