CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF GENDER BIAS IN EKTA’S ‘K’ SERIALS

Gender Bias is the discrimination found in the treatment of a man and a woman of a society. It is treating the male superior to the female with respect to social status, financial status, education, politics and power. Women are considered as the "weaker sex". The great sages, who drew lines for the people to maintain some discipline and decorum in the society have criticized woman and ill-treated them. In Indian society woman are majorly ill-treated because of the misinterpretation of scriptures and rituals; that give a clear picture of how a woman must be treated in a society. Men have been dominating since ages they have been deciding on behalf of the women folk; whether she is a mother, daughter, sister, wife the role play is decided by these men. Even though women enjoyed equal status in Rig Vedic times they were subjected to ill-treatment during the medieval times by the male dominated society.

Vishnu Sharma defines, woman to be the superior as she is wiser than a whit, and is also scared of the vices like folly, deceit, monthly periods, her spirit, greed and lack of compassion. On the one hand he describes her to be the wisest and on the other, he speaks of her character; which to a greater extent is wrong. The above said vices are equally present in a man but this fact is not much expressed, because it
is a male dominated society. A woman’s body is considered to be impure on the days she menstruates but a man’s body is always dirty as he does not clean himself regularly. Such statements made by the great scholars were misinterpreted by the few learned scholars and began a fresh trend of ill-treating women and her existence.

The same concept is very often adapted in the serials during the celebrations of a festival, a heroine stays out of all the religious activities because she is menstruating and is not suppose to be in such prayer halls; as it brings misfortune to her family and religiously, she is treated to be impure. Such rituals are frequently entertained by the soaps. The roles played may either be positive or negative but both follow such rituals. Scientifically menstruating is good as it is an indication of a woman’s fertility. The bias arises when a woman’s fertility is treated impure in most of the scriptures and is outcaste from the important festive occasions.

The second half of Vishnu Sharma’s description is proved true in the serials by the negative characters. A character like Pallavi from ‘Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki’ is a representation of deceit, folly, greed and lack of compassion. This role won the best negative role female in Star Parivaar awards. Most of the female negative characters are a combination of these traits in them and one such character is common in all Ekta Kapoor’s serial.
Scriptures have quoted that women must take care of the household chores where as the men will look after the outdoor activities and will earn for the family. Woman is expected to be docile and subservient to her husband and his family. She is all the time cleaning, cooking, feeding and serving the elders as they lived in joint families. They are also found performing ‘poojas’, singing ‘bhajans’. The family appears male dominated, but actually it is completely dominated by the women and the cold war that takes place in a family is relayed through the serials.

Even in the family, a woman is ranked according to her marital status and the elderly ladies in the family demand respect and obedience from her. If she hurts another woman’s ego by not obeying, and then begins the indoor family politics of passing cheap comments that irritate each other. This paves way to the conspiracies. Such internal family politics is the main theme of Ekta Kapoor’s serials. In order to achieve the political dominion in the family one woman bosses over the other. Thus a woman is forced to be slave of another woman. The gender bias by women and not men is showcased is highlighted. Instead of flowering free she believes in following the strict rules of the society, and pass on the same to the next. She emphasizes the same policies through social stereotypes; hence she tries to bring in social
stigmas to keep her under her control. A woman has given more scope to her own ill treatment to a certain extent in the Indian society.

Here are a few rules made for women by Manu which have been followed without any objection. These rules have emphasized on the gender bias and are followed under the strong monitoring of women along with men.

By a girl, by a young women, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently.[1]

The above statement brings in a pressure on the society, and the men to take care of a woman and always stay with them in all the endeavors. In all the serials, there are a group of women who are not allowed to do anything independently; the serials also have projected women who are independent. The women in the serials are in complete ethnic wear. At the same time they are modern in thinking and decision making, they are completely independent. Such episodes win appreciation from the viewers because the women will have smartly handled a situation. The above statement remains true but there are slight changes adapted in the soaps and all the adaptations are justified without harming the age old beliefs. This strategy has lead to the continued bias and has won a great TRP for the producers.

She must not seek to separate herself from her father, husband, or sons; by leaving them she would make both her husband’s family and her own family contemptible.[2]
The above statement declares that a woman must not be left on her own and if she develops individuality in her then, as an independent woman; who chooses to lead a free life she will bring harm to the family and will not be respected, as she socializes. She may not pay heed to the age old trends which symbolize culture. Usually the negative characters in the soaps are independent and single. Thus they believe in what they feel is right, in the serial ’Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki’ ‘Shruti’ the only daughter of Om and Parvathi wants complete freedom and space in her life; which is not entertained by her family members. Shruti struggles because she finds it difficult to adapt the Eastern culture; which preaches self control; where as the Western culture does not promote self control and it is the latest attitude. There are episodes where Shruti takes hasty decisions and brings contempt to her family as well as her husband’s family. This is another example of gender bias at a superficial level.

She must always be cheerful, clever in management of the household activities, careful in cleaning her utensils, and economical in expenditure.[3]

This is a common bias observed and followed by women since ages and the acceptance of the bias in the soaps, is seen as the lead roles are focussed on their house hold chores. In few episodes the same concept is used in the form of the dialogues.

Him to whom her father may give her, or her brother with fathers permission, she shall always live as long as he lives and when he is dead she must not insult his memory. [4]

This bias has been opposed as well as justified in the soaps. In the serial ‘Kyun Ki Saas Bhi Bahu Thi’, Virani family is under an impression that Mihir is dead; hence they try to get their daughter-in-law remarried, but the daughter-in-law was not willing to marry. She accepts the offer in order to satisfy the elders of the
family. The episodes that highlight her denial promote the bias and the episodes in which her family tries to convince her are once again justified in the name of culture.

For the sake of procuring good fortune to brides, the recitation of benedictory texts and the sacrifices to the lord of creatures are used at wedding and the betrothal is the cause of husband’s dominion over wife. An oath taken in the marriage ceremony lets the husband Dominate his wife, this domination does not mean ill treatment, in Pavitra Rishta a character yields to domestic violence only because her husband and his family believes that he is her owner and can do anything with her such incidents are very common in the real lives to, such situations are very delicately handled without hurting the faith in their culture. [5]

Women in India have suffered because of the inequality propagated for all these years; it is very evident that, there is a lot of discrimination between the male and the female folk. From North to South, from East to West the status of woman does not change and the same is reflected in all the serials with subtle changes in the Indian society. Since age’s women are taught to cook, clean, take care of babies, husband, and the in-laws, hence her parents and family curb her whenever she tries to question or revolt and the punishments are severe so that, she may not think of questioning or revolting again. The soaps promote the same because the main leads of the serials are women and all of them give first priority to their family.

Woman has been portrayed as a person born, only for sacrifice and to serve others like an unpaid slave, she is asked to take care of every one like a mother, think and administer like a minister at home, and be as sensual as a prostitute in bed with her husband. The women
in the serials play the above said roles very sincerely. The serials exhibit a woman’s difficulty in playing all these roles very patiently. Male ego is successfully satisfied by the script writer and the directors because men are always found reading newspapers in the morning and women read the same newspaper in later half of the day, because in the mornings they are very busy cooking. Men are not seen in the kitchen; hence the bias remains the same. Since ages society finds kitchen to be the best place for women and the same persists in the serials too.

Another gender bias that has been exhibited is in the dress code. The men are not decked with jewels and heavy clothes; whatever ‘kurta’ and ‘pyjama’ men wear is very convenient and comfortable, but women in sari are not comfortable and the dress demands delicacy. So she is forced to be delicate and graceful which doesn’t help her walk fast and free. Women in the serials are also dressed in heavy saris and jewelry; find it too cumbersome; the question is that, men are in comfortable apparels; whereas women are not because of wrong assumptions. Worst part of the tradition is most of the women do not even know that they are not happy and comfortable with whatever they are doing. Working women in the serials do not lead a man’s life; they are more burdened because they are the ones, who manage both the home as well as the professional front. There is no compromise on the
work load on the either edge. The same thing is projected in the serials through characters like Prerna, Archana, etc.

‘K’ serials have always represented a status of women and its stand to the test of time, under the frame of womanhood designed by a man. It is irrational and ironical because a man will never know a woman’s problem. His assumption may be biased and prejudiced, as he would have, never stepped into a woman’s shoe, hence he would not know where it pinches.

The Genderbias in Marriages: All the ‘K’ serials have projected fight for discrimination, and inequality that has existed for ages in this ruthless world. Men are given a greater prominence then women. She is treated as an asset that could be disposed to a stranger in the form of an offer, keeping Lord Agni as their main witness. The ritual is proudly called as “Kanya Dana” in the marriage ceremonies. There are eight kinds of marriages in a Hindu society and most of them are biased, because a women’s willingness for marriage has never been a priority in this society. Rakshasa, Asura, Brahma, Daiva, Prajapatya, Gandharva, Paisach all of them just believe in taking her as their property, and do not treat her as an emotional human being. Whichever marriage she may be into, she has been dominated controlled and is not given freedom.
For a father, most of the times a daughter is a burden, he has to get her married else, the society will blame him. Marriage is not an easy affair, as it involves lot of money; hard earned money drains away in the Indian marriages. It involves costly gifts to the in-laws, this whole concept of marriage turns into a bottomless well for a woman; as she is the one who takes care of the whole family. If expensive gifts are not given, then the lifelong criticism begins; this does not mean that, the ones who have received lump sum dowry, honor their daughters-in-law. This fact of the Indian society has been screened in almost every serial, Tulsi, Archana, Vandita are a few best examples to show that woman have suffered because of the customs followed in a relationship.

The whole idea of marriage is biased, because we have not heard of Purush Dana or anybody asking men to lead an adaptable life at his wife’s place and never does anyone advise him to be subservient; where as women are asked to adapt, adjust, be subservient, and never let anyone complain against her and always be in good terms with her in-laws by pleasing them. So soaps continue to show the existing gender bias.

Kanya Dana means giving away daughter in charity. Among Hindus this is considered a noble form of charity. Parents feel proud of this ritual; which is an important responsibility for every householder
and brings him a lot of good fortune. Those who are not blessed with a daughter often help the others religiously.

Sapta Padi (saath fere): Amongst Hindus it is customary for the couple getting married to go around the fire seven times. This ceremony fulfils religious aspects of the marriage and is symbolic of the irrevocable faith a couple must have in each other. The couple walks clockwise, in the first four rounds, the bride leads and the groom follows, in the final three rounds the groom leads and the bride follows. During this ceremony the bride leads four times and the groom thrice. It indicates that in the entire house hold matters she shall lead, and the man will take care of the professional or the vocational fields.

Even if a women is seduced by force, instead of punishing that person she is married to him forcefully so that, she is falsely respected by the society. But in reality her heart would never accept that beast as her husband or a companion; but then there is no justice done to her. She has to forcefully tie knot with a person who dishonored her and may even dishonor many more. The same happens in the serial ‘Kyun Ki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi’ Ansh forcefully marries Nandini as he had raped her and there was no other option left for her to lead a dignified life in this biased society, similar incident has been shown even in ‘Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki’ Kushi one of Om’s cousin had been
raped on Holi and the victim could not identify the rapist as she was blind. But Parvathi fights for her dignity and finds the culprit, punishes him and ultimately gets her married to him as nobody else will marry her.

All believe that, justice is done to the victim; if she settles in her life with the accused. Is marriage, really a solution, to this problem? How is a raped woman given justice? She is advised to treat him like a god as she marries him. Instead that male egoistic beast is getting a free maid to serve him. Marriage becomes an unsaid truth and the ultimate destiny in a woman’s life. Rationally they would only make each other’s life hell, increasing the crime rates. So justice is not done either ways to a woman, as by birth she never gets prominence but is looked at as an object of desire, misery and helplessness and a free maid sent by god to serve the superior male breed with lot of obedience and sincerity towards her master. Such foolish thoughts of woman being inferior has been deeply rooted in the mindset of the society, Surveys have proved that women are more skilled, talented, sharp, clever, hard working, and are very good managers and tough task masters. In spite of all these truths she still assumes that marriage and family are her ultimate goals in life.

Purvi Deshmukh in the serial ‘Pavitra Rishta’ in spite of being a tough competitor in her professional world still believes that, her life is
going to take a different turn after marriage. Hence feels that, she should do justice to her family. As it is her first priority and her profession takes a back seat. The irony shown on screen is that an educated independent woman is ready to give away her identity to successfully play the other roles in her family. This is because it is instilled in women since their childhood that, they are the subordinate ones. Hence should be tough a family involves thousands of responsibilities, and she bows before everything only to be left like a doormat with no identity and status.

The irony is that woman; though creative, productive, useful and sacrificing, is a burden to her parents. Concept of marriage is the main source of gender bias. The parents start training their girls at a very young age and start instilling bias deeply in the minds of the girls, that they are not strong, they need to always depend on their brothers, father, and husband The men are licensed to treat them like punching bags and an instrument of pleasure as per the need of the time.

A girl child plays with vessels and stove made of clay and other metal and even while playing, she cooks and serves her family and cleans up the mess, they only imitate their mothers, while they play. As a woman nurses her baby, these young girls play with dolls assuming that dolls are their babies. The games that they are encouraged to play are also biased.
Fortunately or unfortunately men are given priority, because the scriptures say that, people attain salvation only if they have a son and he will continue the family lineage and will try to establish a greater name and fame for the family, where as a girl has to be given away in marriage to attain salvation (kanya dana) is an offer made in the presence of lord Agni. Hence people do not believe in doing anything good to this gender and is often considered as somebody else’s property.

Discrimination in the Family: ‘K’ serials established a fact among the viewers that, be it drama, play, stories, serials, novel, epics or movies, “women” are the major characters of the plots.

These Mega serials are a great entertainment for women. Indian epics represent humanity, family system, brother hood etc. Indian plots in dramas are attached to the Indian cultural value system. In a family, people are forced to live up to the expectations of society, to maintain tranquility around. This huge bias first begins in the family.

In the serial “Kutumb” Pratham’s elder sister Nandini’s marriage fails, Nandini eldest daughter of Mittals’ holds her family responsible for her miseries; her father Mr. Umesh Mittal is held responsible because he decides on his daughters behalf and gets her married to a person, who does not love her at all; he takes the decision because he too strongly believed that women should be taken care of, as said in the
scriptures and as followed by the ancestors, one of the great seers of Hindu mythology Manu says, very confidently in one of his verses that a “women must be taken care of by her father before she is married, her husband after marriage and her sons after her husband and in her old age”. Umesh Mittal had ruined his daughter’s life in a wed lock to an unsuitable suitor, in spite of it, no body blames him but her fate and bad luck seem to be the main reasons for her pathetic condition. There is a ‘silent rebellion’ that seems to have taken birth in Nandini’s heart and she advises her cousin to be an ‘independent woman’. Nandini’s husband seems to be very irresponsible and is happy abandoning his wife and son, the bias begins; when the serial highlights Nandini’s destined suffering as an Indian women, Nandini feels terribly hurt as her husband ditches her; the central theme, represented to the viewers is that, of a typical Indian woman, has a greater share of suffering and misery in her life. Instead of not caring these men, Indian women succumb to the society’s pressure and surrender themselves to this hypocrisy.

Nandini’s father Umesh Mittal feels terribly helpless because his son-in-law demands a divorce, it is engrained in his mind that daughters are a burden and they are assumed to be very happy if they are at their in-law’s place; whether the daughters are happy or sad it is left to their fate. But the only generally assumed truth of the Indian
society is that, if a woman stays at her in-laws place forever then, she is happy and settled. In a few episodes both Nandini and her parents cry and feel sad about the fact of their lives and still console each other with a greater philosophy of adjustment and adaptation in one’s life; a woman’s whole life just goes in compromises. But at the same time an Indian man never adjusts nor adapts himself to any changes in life because all the rules and regulations are only in favor of men in this society. It is only Nandini feeling sorry for the marriage but her husband easily shrugs off his shoulders, because he is a man and it is a patriarchal society and can do as he pleases. He does not regret that, he had broken all the promises, he made to his wife around the holy fire at their marriage. Only because he is a man; and he can take as many wives as possible, if he is not happy with the wives he has already taken. The same bias has been acknowledged by the masses in India and is the bitter truth.

Finally Nandini decides to divorce him as she believes that he does not deserve her anymore and begins a new life. These episodes win lots of laurels and appreciation from the women folk all over the society. Most of them secretly wish to get the same strength to teach their husbands a lesson and lead a happy independent life.

In the same serial “Kutumb” there is another character called Guari; a college student and is very revolutionary. She slaps a boy for
misbehaving with her friend in the college premises. All her friends though dressed modern, were not independent and asked Guari to ignore them for their foolish behavior. Most of the girls in the college believed that they should simply take all the nonsense these men did because the society has made them believe that, women are weak. Hence they should not fight for their dignity, instead bow before the men and ignore the nonsense to avoid further suffering. Guari is an extraordinary girl among the others. Each girl secretly wants to remind boys their manners, because most of the boys take cheap pleasure in passing comments over girls and when silently ignored feel a macho man. Guari in this serial has self respect and fights for her dignity throughout her life.

There are few common incidents taken up as subplots in the serials; love: is understood differently. Love is divine for women; they surrender their heart to men and expect the same. They crave for companionship. They treat their lovers as their life but it is not the same with men. They are not serious about their relationship and are scared of commitment and responsibility. They just believe in temporary companionship, fun, and frolic with the girl. Tanu is a disappointed lover; she loves Pratham Mittal; but he is not serious about it hence, she attempts suicide and misses a fatal death; she could
have ignored Pratham and moved on but she sticks to a myth that, she
should marry the one whom she loves.

This concept of marriage being the ultimate achievement in a
woman’s life has been portrayed in all the serials. It is one of the truths
of the Indian society even in the twenty first century. In spite of her
education and financial independence, an Indian girl strongly believes
that marriage and family is everything for her; under such wrong
assumptions many women have been found in the pool of miseries,
where they don’t share their miseries with their parents assuming that
their parents will suffer and will not be able to lead a peaceful life as
the society will only spit fire on them; and also cook up stories about
their daughters behavior and serve it as hot gossip in all the gatherings,
in turn defaming the girl and her parents for no reason. Guari being
rational believes that, a woman is responsible for the family’s welfare
so stays at home and is subservient; such concepts have been deeply
engraved in hearts.

Indian society practically has always been biased to women; as
she is susceptible to suspicion and is vulnerable to all kinds of
atrocities in a society. Her chastity stands as her dignity and people
easily sling mud at chastity in anger; nobody even thinks that it could
be a fake accusation instead she is victimized first by her own family
members and then the society. Pratham is successful in creating a
wrong impression among her family members and her would-be-in-laws that, she smokes and drinks. Indian society does not entertain such things as it is blasphemous. But a man may die because of boozing and smoking and still it is a pardonable crime or a mistake.

Suspecting Guari’s chastity her fiancé called off their relationship, her parents hold her responsible for it and feel that, she is a burden on them, why should women live in such immodest society where women are subjugated to harassment and men live their life to reflect a biased society. Guari was not trusted and her family comes to a conclusion that she has defamed them without even giving her a chance to defend her. In a biased crippled society of this kind, it is very easy for a man to play with a woman’s dignity as the society would take his words for granted and punish the woman.

If questioned as to why Guari had to go through this drudgery? Would the answer be, she was unlike others and boldly fought for her honor and dignity? This episode conveys a message that women should never be independent or will be a vulnerable prey in this society, Did Guari pay for modesty? Or did she pay for the truth remains a question mark. A society with such narrow inhibitions can never do justice or honor woman and there are several women struggling similarly with different circumstances of their life in their real life and not a reel life. Man’s world is always filled with opportunities and honor where as a
woman is always living at somebody’s mercy, hence she has to live in
obligation. Unfortunately similar incidents do happen with the people
from the real world and they helplessly succumb to the pressure as
Guari succumbs in the serial “Kutumb”. Family teaches the members
to discriminate between a man and a woman.

Gender Bias in Rituals, Traditions and ceremonies: The heroines of all
the serials have projected that; they are the cultural queens and carriers
of the profound culture. Hence represent truth, honesty, humbleness,
and selflessness and a principled life. All the serials represent an
unconscious support to the existing gender bias; a serial usually starts
with a introductory narration of a family and the characters of the
family; every story line has girls and women as their main subject of
discussion as well their plot, the story builds on the dreams of the girls
and the hindrances she has to face to make her dreams come true.

Parents in the serials never show inequality to girls when it
comes to education, food, dress, respect, independency, and decision
making factor; but still the bias continues, when the issue of her
marriage pops up because, in not a single soap, do we find men coming
to stay at their wives place, it is the woman who is taken away to her
husband’s home after her marriage and is advised from every elderly
person to treat her husband’s house as her home. Under estimation of
woman as an impure soul in the sociological as well religious
background is the first evaluation on which the rest of the rules were framed in the scriptures. In terms of science, a monthly period is a natural biological process. In spite of the scientific truth, women tend to disrespect themselves. Hence follow the code created by the superior folk (men) and are treated as untouchables.

Women are not involved in Havana or a Homa; they assist their husband to attain the fruits of the Havana. Otherwise they are allowed to offer prayers but are not allowed to chant a few mantras but can sing some songs in praise of the God or Goddess. The same has been projected in the ‘K’ serials, their day begins with Tulsi pooja and aarthi, one common bias to be observed is in all the serials, it is only the women who are performing Tulsi pooja and men just attend the ritual. One significant fact that needs to be observed is that men keep themselves off this ritual just trying to signify that, it is only women’s responsibility to take care of pooja, as well as issues related to kitchen and maintenance of the family. Gender bias begins with the onset of the day; in all the serials.

Five days in a month women are treated as untouchables and are not allowed to sit, eat, sleep, drink and walk around freely in the house but are restricted to a particular space, they are not touched by any one, food and water is served to them just like dogs are served, they are not allowed to bathe for four days as she is considered to be impure and
she not involved in any of the religious activities. Which is a silent wave of acceptance of the bias amongst masses and the same continues, and masses accept men to be the purest of the Gods manifestation in this world. There is a lot of irony throughout the lives of women in an Indian scenario and the same is depicted even in the serials, it is customary that women have to live, at their in-laws place, and quickly get to know the do’s and don’ts of the family, along with it, the daughter-in-law should keep a track of likes and dislikes of the family and live up to their expectations and such a women gets a great applaud in the society but the contrast is these sons-in-law never tend to treat their in-laws in the similar way, instead they demand, due respect from their family and everybody from the brides side is at the son-in-law’s service.

Both the parents of a bride and bridegroom are aged, and have showered the same love and affection to their daughter and son, even in such a case, a greater preference is given to the bridegroom’s parents than the bride’s parents. One strong unsaid message is that bride’s parents have to always bow before the bridegroom’s parents because they are taking away their burden permanently to their house, and their daughter will serve them forever in all the possible ways.
Festivals: There are several festivals which are celebrated together, but jobs are un equally divided in the family, on festivals women are terribly busy where as men are found lazing around with the other members of the family, any festival is an onset of double dose of work for women as everything is crucially done without missing even a single thing in the name of God, special delicacies are cooked, everybody is given oil bath and the whole house is cleaned. And all these chores are done only by women in the family.

Sindhoor and Mangala Sutra: In all the serials, these women strongly uphold their culture and tradition by following all the rituals. All the women characters wear sindhoor as a mark of their married life; sindhoor has a significant value in the lives of the married woman and are emotionally linked to it, sindhoor is applied on her forehead which signifies the long life of her husband, there are several myths with respect to sindhoor and married women never forget to apply it.

There is also a myth which says that vermilion in a married woman’s head always safeguards her husband from the evil eyes who secretly start doting on their husband; it is believed that sindhoor keeps all of it at bay and strengthens the relationship of husband and wife. It is also said in Devi Bhagwat that both Brahma and Bhagawathi reside in sindhoor and by applying this vermilion they will be blessed by Gods for rest of their life. Most importantly vermilion (sindhoor) is
considered very auspicious in all the serials women playing a negative role or a positive, if married then are decked with vermilion, but the widows are not allowed to wear this vermilion. In the initial episodes of ‘Kyun Ki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi’ Mihir meets with an accident and is declared dead and an unidentified body is bought home for the last rites to be accomplished; when Tulsi gets to know about it and rushes to the place, there are people who rub of vermilion from her forehead and break her bangles which are again a symbolizing the end of married life and then is dressed in a pale white sari signifying her widowhood. In the similar serial when Tulsi dies Mihir is hurt but there is no widower hood that he has to go as a woman goes through, and this discrimination prevails since ages and the same has been shown in the serials.

Along with sindhoor, mangala sutra is equally significant and is a symbolic representation of married woman. Mangala sutra is an auspicious thread tied around brides neck by the bridegroom which declares that a woman is married and the same is presented in the daily soaps, in every soap, marriages are a must and both sindhoor and Mangala sutra mean a lot to the woman characters and they wear Mangala sutra as they believe that, wearing it, will always prove lucky to their husbands and so women never depart from their mangala sutra and if they do it will be only after their husband’s demise. In the soaps,
whenever there is friction between husband and wife, there are instances that show mangala sutra breaks into two signifying a bad omen on their married life.

Similarly in ‘Kasauti Zindagi Ki’ before Prerna and Anurag are destined to depart, there is a scene were Prerna is hurriedly dressing up and the sindhoor box just slips and falls all over the floor indicating a bad omen, perturbed Prerna gets to know that both of them cannot live together. Even in the serials ‘Pavitra Rishta’ and ‘Kahani Ghar Ghar Ki’ we find women paying due respect to sindhoor and considering it to be a mark of their relationship status. In the serial ‘Kutumb’ we find Pratham forcefully applying vermilion to ‘Nandini’ but Nandini has no guts to wipe of the vermilion as she has great reverence to it.

Married women are easily identified because of their vermilion and Mangala sutra and a pair toe rings but married men do not wear a vermilion and a Mangala sutra for a good relationship. Hence it becomes practically easy for men to fall in to extra marital affairs, Mihir is the best example for it because when Mandira falls into love with Mihir, she is not aware that Mihir is married and has children. Society has always supported a marriage system which clearly makes a demarcation between a girl and a woman where it is very difficult to say whether a man is married or unmarried as he is neither seen wearing vermilion in/on his head or a mangala sutra around his neck.
She has never been allowed to think or question because this family system is mythically portrayed to be the best one and she should act like one of the superior ladies and her only concern should be her husband and her family, examples of Sati, are given to her and a desire to be an ideal woman, is filled in her by telling her stories of Sita, and many other mythical figures; unconsciously girls develop a liking to all these mythical figure and try their level best to be ideal mother, wife, daughter, sister, sister-in-law, mother-in-law, granddaughter, and an ideal human being. Parvathi, Tulsi, and Nandini are shown taking care of the family and managing the politics. Whereas Prema is a very good business women, she manages both house hold and the office front. This does not mean that the other leading characters in the serial are uneducated, but they give prior importance to family in spite of being well qualified, they preferred taking care of the family. Such episodes in the serials dilute the seriousness of the issue and promote women’s freedom.

Tulsi and Parvathi are the best examples of the Television serials that project gender bias and a revolt to it at a smaller scale, to begin with their name itself signifies that both the ladies know a lot about Vedas, smritis, puranas, Bhagwat Geetha, Ramayana, Mahabharata along with it they believe in their culture and also follow it. To go back to their names they are not stylish and modern and they are the names
of the mythical characters, hence consciously or unconsciously people tend to respect people with such names; these are the two characters that won a great appreciation and liking by all the viewers for more than a decade. Tulsi and Parvathi are very simple. They do not crave for luxury but for a peaceful life with a loving husband and family and both of them read one of the most revered epic of India “Ramayana” and Gita that has been often quoted in the serials.

Tulsi revolts at mother-in-laws decision to get Mihir married to Mandira after twenty years of her marriage and dedication to the family; she asks her mother-in-law, if she would accept Karan as her grandson, if he would be born out of an extra marital affair between Tulsi and some xyz!!!!!!!!! And if the answer is a no then she should not entertain Karan and get Mihir married to Mandira. She even asks Mihir if he would take her as a wife if she would have had an extra-marital affair.

Another bias that needs to be observed is that, while the men are going to office they are usually served by their wives and they apply ‘tika’ (a ritual in which the family member applies vermilion on the forehead of her husband and give him curds to wish him luck so that, he has a successful day.) but does anybody wish good day to the wives at home, or office, these good wishes matter to the women but is very often ignored and forgotten by the people. If she is staying at home
does not a women need good wishes? As she needs to manage and tackle various kinds of people at home by bearing their torture, nonsense and at times senseless demand, the worse of it is that they got to bear the dominance of the in-laws only to safeguard their marriage! Isn’t it necessary that, she to need’s equal amount of care and best wishes.

In comparison to wife, husband makes very rare attempts to adjust because it is a man’s world, so it is understood that, there is no extra effort put in by the husbands to make their wives life’s comfortable, they are extremely happy with whatever is happening, hence would be least bothered to look into the heart of a women.

Men are with their own family members even after their marriage where as for women she sees the new morning amidst the strangers and struggles to get along with them, a woman has no choice. Many a times, it is a puppets life, she is an unpaid servant in her own home where, she has to succumb to all the social pressures and the same is often telecasted in the serials. There is no serial that shows a blissful life of a daughter-in-law, she is treated as an outsider and is forced to work for the family members in the name of responsibilities, she keeps looking out for love. Nobody bothers to ask if she had her meals, asks her to rest. If the same happens to a man! Then his honor, family prestige and ego comes in first place than anything else, wife
would be a secondary thought. In spite of this greatest bias women still continue to adjust themselves into these relationships with no complains and also fall under the category of ‘masses’ who never think but do as the others do.

Archana in ‘Pavitra Rishta’ is one popular victim of this existing bias, it so much appears that women are married off only to be treated like slaves at their in-laws place. The bridegroom gets dowry or Vara Dakshina but a bride gets nothing. This is also an example for gender bias. It is a male dominated society hence women are found hogging and hopping all around. Savita has very often belittled Archana’s parents and her family members for not giving dowry and she just goes on yelling because her daughter-in-law comes in charity.

In the serial ‘Kutumb’ Guari and Pratham fight a lot and both of them are fighting for their existence and a very good representation of male chauvinism, he is proud and egoistic because he is a man and can do anything he wishes to and also believes in keeping women under control and strongly believes that women should be taken care of and must always live under a man’s control.

In the early episodes of the serial one can easily notice Pratham being a spoilt brat running around and passing cheap comments on the girls and most of the times nobody responds to his comments but then a new girl who joins the same college gives a tight slap on his face by
reminding him his manners; which is not withstood by Pratham and pledges to revenge her.

Summing up:

Gender bias and the trouble this male dominated world gives birth to is very closely picturized in these serials, all these serials portrayed that a woman is doing a thankless job. Women are accepted to sacrifice and the same is presented in Pavitra Rishta where Archana gives up her education to reduce her parents burden, so that, they can take care of the others and educate them but accept her parents, nobody acknowledges her sacrifice, instead all of them start treating her as a maid. So women an ‘epitome of sacrifice’ is portrayed through this serial which only appears to be a fatal mistake in one’s life; men can be mean, selfish, and egoistic but portray women as a symbol of sacrifice, selflessness, submissive and accept her to behave in the similar way.

A son has no restrictions, but a woman is accountable for everything and should report about everything that is happening to her parents and should always learn to be submissive and never answer back and be ready to serve men, as their main duty is to serve her husband and his family. Visnu Sarma says: that a woman must act as a minister while she is helping her husband administer things and should act like a prostitute in bed with her husband and should take care of her husband like a mother and should treat him like a doctor in his ill
health and nurse him. She must keep all his secrets and should always support him in his decisions and serve him like his maid and do everything thing for him, should be his companion and a best friend in his old age.

The same concept has been deeply engrained in the minds of women and the same has been followed by all the members of the society. The same bias prevails in all the generations and in all the communities of a society; as a result, it is accepted out of her to be a subordinate because her life just revolves around her family and not herself, of course there are reasonable changes in a society where women are given opportunity to work at home and office, she is getting educated in more numbers; in spite of it gender bias dominates.

A man can take rest from his work as many days as he wants but a woman has no holidays at all, she can never miss any duty at home because all of them at home are completely dependent on her, there is no rest at all for women; and people just cannot underestimate a household work because it involves maintenance of the family. If not taken care may turn out to be a huge trouble to the rest of the society, because it is always women, who instills values in her children and is the only one who restores the families welfare in all the worst of situations.