

## Representation Matters: Analyzing the Portrayal of Women Politicians in Indian OTT Series Maharani Season 1 and its Impact on Public Perception

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### Abstract

This study looks at how women are portrayed in Over-the-Top (OTT) television shows and how that affects public opinion. To properly analyse how Indian OTT series alter the way women are portrayed on TV by offering them parts that are realistic, but also demonstrate how they provide new opportunities and professions to support the advancement of women's careers. By a critical content analysis of the popular OTT show Maharani, a political drama, we investigate how women politicians are portrayed, particularly the character of Rani Bharti, what storylines are explored, and what stereotypes are challenged or upheld. With this, we also study how OTT breaks certain stereotypes related to different fields, professions where women should join or not. In order to determine how the public views women politicians and how OTT series affects their opinions, we also interview participants in focus groups. Our study attempts to pinpoint representational patterns and trends, evaluate the effect on public opinion, and investigate how OTT series could influence cultural narratives concerning women in political leadership. This study adds to a better understanding of how the media shapes our perceptions of women's political agency and informs tactics for fostering more inclusive and equitable representation in the media by examining the relationship between public perception and media representation.

**Keywords:** OTT, Women, Politics and Feminism.

### Introduction:

There has long been criticism of how women politicians are portrayed in the media due to issues with stereotyping, marginalization, and underrepresentation (Harrington, 2024). The emergence of Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has revolutionized media consumption patterns by providing novel avenues for diverse storytelling and representation (ONO & ENDO, 2024). Still, there is plenty to learn about how women politicians are portrayed in OTT programs. Studies have indicated that the way the media portrays women can have a big impact on public opinion and how people feel about women in leadership roles and politics (Saville, et al., 2024). Gender biases can be reinforced by the underrepresentation and stereotyping of female politicians in the media, which might hinder their chances of winning office and strengthen the status quo (Clots-Figueras, 2011).

On the other hand, accurate and nuanced depictions have the power to dispel myths, humanize female politicians, and motivate upcoming generations of leaders. Examining the portrayal of female politicians in these shows, including how they are portrayed, what plots are explored, and the effect this has on public opinion, is crucial as OTT platforms continue to gain popularity. We may gain a better understanding of how the media shapes our perceptions of women in political leadership and find ways to encourage more inclusive and fair representation by examining these depictions (Rodrigues et al., 2020), (Alam, 2015).

### **The representation of women in politics and the media:**

Over the past few decades, women have participated in politics to a greater extent than ever before, yet there is still worry about how they are portrayed in the media. The media's portrayal of female politicians has the power to affect public opinion, their chances of winning elections, and their capacity to lead effectively (Saville et al., 2024). Studies have indicated that media portrayals have the ability to sustain gender norms, suppress the voices of women, and uphold established hierarchies of power. Sexist remarks, criticism of their appearance, and denigration of their policy contributions are commonplace for female politicians (Bhandari & Sriram, 2024). On the other hand, realistic and nuanced depictions might help dispel preconceptions, humanize female politicians, and motivate upcoming generations of leaders.

Social media's ascent has given female politicians new ways to communicate with voters, tell their experiences, and get past conventional media gatekeepers. Online forums, however, also magnify hate speech, misogyny, and harassment, making the political landscape unfriendly to women. Media outlets must prioritize varied narrative, confront gender prejudices, and elevate the voices of women in order to advance inclusive representation (Deo, 2012). By doing this, we may develop a media environment that is more egalitarian and accurately represents the richness and complexity of women's experiences in politics and leadership (Harrington, 2024). In the end, representation counts, and the media is vital in influencing how we perceive women's political agency and advocating for gender parity in politics (Anderson, 2024).

Beyond specific politicians, the influence of media depiction on women in politics shapes societal myths about women in leadership. Politics is perceived as a male domain when women are absent or sidelined in media coverage. On the other hand, inclusive and diverse representation can encourage girls and women to seek political careers, question established gender stereotypes, and legitimize the participation of women in politics (Sharma, 2020). Furthermore, studies reveal that media coverage of female politicians frequently concentrates on "soft" matters like healthcare and education, whereas men are typically linked to "hard" concerns like national security and the economy. This suggests that media representation can have an impact on policy discussions (Klanjšek)

This upholds gender stereotypes regarding the knowledge and leadership skills of women. Media representations of female politicians that are complex and multifaceted, highlighting their knowledge of policy, their capacity for leadership, and their range of experiences, are essential to tearing down these barriers (Katini et al., 2024). Media outlets should also actively seek out and elevate the voices of varied female politicians, such as women of colour, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities (Zaiats et al., 2024). By doing this, we can build a media environment that is more equal and inclusive and that accurately portrays the richness and diversity of women's experiences in politics and leadership. In the end, how women are portrayed in the media can affect how we see women in politics, change public opinion, and advance gender equality (Bhowmick, 2024).

### **Many obstacles face women in politics, such as:**

- Stereotypes and gender bias: Women are frequently thought to be less competent or suited for positions of leadership.
- Lack of representation: It is challenging to effect change since women are underrepresented in political institutions.
- Sexism and harassment: Violence, harassment, and sexism are commonplace for women in politics.
- Juggling job and family: Women in politics frequently find it difficult to reconcile their professional pursuits with their familial obligations.
- Fundraising and support: Women frequently lack access to political support and fundraising networks

### **Research questions:**

1. In terms of character development, plot, and dialogue, how do over-the-top television shows depict female

politicians? What clichés or cliches are either upheld or refuted by these depictions?

2. How do these depictions affect the public's opinion of female politicians in terms of their electability, leadership potential, and policy choices?

#### **Research objectives:**

- Firstly, a critical analysis of how women politicians are portrayed in popular OTT series will be conducted. Trends and patterns in character development, plot, and dialogue will be noted, and the degree to which these depictions support or contradict preexisting gender stereotypes will be evaluated.
- Using audience interviews, focus groups, or surveys, as well as public perceptions of women politicians in terms of their electability, leadership potential, and policy choices, examine the effects of these representations.

These objectives can guide a comprehensive study that examines the representation of women politicians in OTT series, its impact on public perception, and the broader social and political implications, ultimately informing strategies for promoting more inclusive and equitable representation.

#### **Review of Literature:**

##### **Women's current standing in Indian politics:**

(Harrington, 2024) comments that Women in Indian politics now face a variety of obstacles in addition to their successes. Women have come a long way in the last few years; in 2019, 78 women were elected to the 17th Lok Sabha, accounting for 14.3% of the total membership. (Bharadwaj, 2024) analysed that Prominent cabinet roles in Defence, Finance, and External Affairs have been held by women such as Smriti Irani, Nirmala Sitharaman, and Sushma Swaraj. In addition, a number of women, notably Mamata Banerjee, Sheila Dikshit, and Vasundhara Raje, have assumed the position of Chief Minister in state governments. But even with these advancements, women's representation in Indian politics is still low, with only 12% of Lok Sabha seats and 11% of state legislature seats going to women.

(Anderson, 2024) argued that Significant obstacles also stand in the way of women's advancement, such as financing shortages, gender bias, and restricted access to positions of party leadership. Furthermore, discrimination, harassment, and stereotyping are commonplace for female politicians, which may discourage them from pursuing careers in politics. (Hussain et al., 2024) comments that the Women's Reservation Bill, which was presented in 1996 and seeks to reserve 33% of seats for women in state legislatures and Parliament, is still pending. Initiatives like the Women's Political Empowerment Network and the All-India Women's Conference aim to enhance women's participation in politics in order to address these issues.

(ONO & ENDO, 2024) suggest that social media has given women new ways to engage with voters and build their profiles, and some political parties have implemented quotas for female candidates. Overall, despite the advancements, there is still much work to be done to bring gender equality among politics.

##### **Public Perception and Media Representation**

(Bhandari & Sriram, 2024) Public perception is greatly influenced by media coverage, which can change people's thoughts, feelings, and actions toward particular groups or people. Stereotypes can be challenged or reinforced by the way different groups, cultures, and identities are portrayed in the media, which can affect how the general public feels and behaves. (Reshma & Manjula, 2024) suggest that Empathy, comprehension, and acceptance can be fostered by portrayal that is truthful, considerate, and inclusive. On the other hand, unfavourable or insufficient representation can support social injustices, stigmatize oppressed groups, and propagate negative stereotypes.

(ONO & ENDO, 2024) argues in the context of social justice movements, where proper representation may

amplify minority voices and encourage societal change, the influence of media portrayal is especially noteworthy. (Anderson, 2024) comments that Furthermore, the way we see ourselves and our role in society can be shaped by media representation, which can have an impact on our feeling of identity, belonging, and self-worth. Because of this, media creators, viewers, and critics must place a high priority on inclusive, varied, and nuanced portrayal, understanding its significant influence on public opinion and social dynamics.

(Khanna, 2009) found that the impact of the media on public opinion is significant and has wide-ranging effects. Depending on the narrative that is created, representation can either humanize or dehumanize. (Kasturi, 1995) said that Stereotypical depictions reinforce negative attitudes and behaviours by feeding prejudices. On the other hand, genuine portrayal has the power to subvert prevailing narratives and foster compassion and comprehension.

In the end, how we perceive ourselves and others is shaped by the coverage of certain issues in the media. We may promote a more compassionate, just, and equitable society by placing a high value on accurate, nuanced, and inclusive depiction (Rodrigues et al., 2020).

### **Indian Women Politicians' Media Representation:**

An important component of India's democratic environment is how women politicians are portrayed in the media, which both reflects and shapes public perceptions of women in leadership roles (Bathla, 2004). The media frequently stereotypes Indian women politicians, focusing more on their emotional responses, physical attributes, and family relationships than on their political beliefs and policy proposals (Goyal, 2024). The media regularly presents female politicians as tokens or exceptions, which upholds patriarchal standards and reinforces gender biases. Furthermore, the identities and experiences of female politicians from underrepresented groups, such as Dalits or Adivasis, are frequently erased or minimized in media portrayal, posing intersectional issues (Patel et al., 2024)

Positive representation does exist, though, as evidenced by the widespread media attention given to female politicians such as Sushma Swaraj, Mayawati, and Mamata Banerjee for their accomplishments in politics (Goswami et al., 2023). Indian women politicians now have a greater platform to speak out against traditional gender stereotypes and engage directly with the public thanks to social media. However, there is still room for improvement in the Indian media's portrayal of female politicians (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Continued efforts are needed to encourage inclusive, complex, and fair coverage that takes into account the diversity and complexity of women's political experiences (Krook et al., 2020).

Lack of variety and inclusivity is another characteristic of how women politicians are portrayed in Indian media, with women from powerful castes and classes receiving disproportionate attention (Hessami et al., 2020). Opposition party women politicians frequently experience biased reporting that either misrepresents or ignores their actions and opinions. Moreover, objectification and trivialization are sustained by the media's emphasis on the personal life, attire, and physical attributes of female politicians (Kinnvall, 2023)

There are, however, some exceptions. For example, coverage of women-led movements and protests, such as the farmers' or anti-rape demonstrations, has emphasized the agency and leadership of women (Kinnvall, 2023). Furthermore, social media and online platforms have made it possible for female politicians to communicate directly with voters and go beyond conventional media gatekeepers, opening up new avenues for involvement and representation (Rodrigues et al., 2020). Notwithstanding these encouraging advances, there is still more work to be done in the Indian media's portrayal of female politicians. More diversity, inclusivity, and nuance must be incorporated into reporting and depiction ((Patel et al., 2024).

### **Overview of Episodes of Maharani season 1:**

- Part One: "Rani Ka Khel"  
Presents Rani Bharti (Huma Qureshi), a modest homemaker and the spouse of Bheema Bharti, the chief minister

of Bihar.

Following Bheema's abrupt departure, Rani is sworn in as CM without warning.

Rani's naiveté and dearth of political background are emphasized.

- Part Two: "Ghar Ki Rajniti"

Rani faces Navin, her husband's mistress, while navigating palace intrigues. She gets to know her new advisors, which include the sly and devoted Kaveri.

Rani's first choices as CM are shaped by her husband's supporters.

- Part Three: "Bihar Ki Beti"

Rani challenges the patriarchal society and speaks up on women's issues. She goes to a village where she makes friends with the local women and gains insight into their challenges.

- As Rani's fame increases, her husband's supporters get concerned.

- Part Four: "Rajneeti Ki ABCD"

Even members of Rani's own party are against her. To stay in power, she has to make difficult choices, such as selecting a new cabinet.

As Rani's confidence in Kaveri rises, her allegiance is put to the test.

- Part Five: "Chunav Ki Raat"

The election results are declared, and Rani's ability to lead is examined.

She is able to secure her place as CM by winning an important by-election. The plans that Navin has to depose Rani are disclosed.

- Part Six: "Maharani Ka Muqabla"

Rani faces up against Navin and her husband's erstwhile allies. She makes audacious choices, such as moving dishonest officials. Alok, Rani's son, is getting more and more active in politics.

- Part Seven: "Rani Ka Faisla"

Rani takes important choices that affect law and order and affect her popularity. She is under fire for the way she handled a riot in the community.

The past of Kaveri is made known, illuminating her devotion to Rani.

- Part Eight: "Ghar Ka Bhedi"

The dynamics of Rani's family are examined, disclosing conflicts and secrets. She has a poor relationship with her son and spouse. The real motivations of Navin are revealed.

- Part Nine: "Rani Ka Raag"

Rani's leadership is challenged by internal conflicts and external threats. She faces opposition from her own party and the opposition. Alok's involvement in politics deepens.

- Part Ten: "Maharani Ka Mukut"

As the season comes to an end, Rani has cemented her role as CM. She outwits her rivals, guaranteeing her hold on power. Rani's journey from a humble housewife to a strong politician is complete.

Themes of Maharani Season 1 include:

Democratic systems; - Politics and power struggles; - Corruption and governance; - Women's empowerment. Family dynamics and relationships

## 1. Research Methodology:

For this paper two types of approaches used one is qualitative and another one is quantitative version and under this version there are 4 types of ways used in which firstly In depth interview is planned among one focus group

comprising of 4 person to whom where researcher asked certain questions to interviewees related to webseries Maharani season 1 to know their individualistic perception related women role in politics before and after watching the webseries and after analysing the role of Rani Bharti. After that the second method is named as the comparative analysis of Rani Bharti character with the real Indian women who comes into politics by mistake that is Rabri Devi who is the wife of Lalu Prasad Yadav. Now the Third approach is qualitative for this content analysis is selected and in which whole Webseries is analysed on different criterion like Discourse analysis, Textual Analysis where the whole text judged under different operations definitions which fulfils the objective of study. Also to know the viewers feedback related to this Webseries is neutral, highly satisfied and disagree the reviews are collected from IMDB (International Movie Data Base) which rates the content according to user's feedback.

**Focus Group Discussion:**

The sample choose for interview method is under the process of stratified sampling where one stratum is selected that the person involved in Focus group must watch the Maharani season 1 webseries earlier so that they know about the core of story and an idea about the character of Rani Bharti so that they can answer the questions asked by researchers. Also, the main aim behind the question framing related to this particular webseries is to know about their individualistic perception related to women role in Indian politics and also to know their thinking about women in politics confront or same through this webseries.

The persons present in the group have different viewpoints and perception related to this webseries some say that their perceptions regarding women in politics change and they like Rani Bharti character while another one say that their perception don't change because this is just a piece of fantastical story line only. Following are the detailed comments given by the persons present in focus group.

With an emphasis on the Maharani web series, the following ten questions are intended for an interview or focus group regarding gender stereotypes surrounding women in Indian politics:

1. In what ways did Maharani's depiction of female politician's support or contradict your preconceived notions about the role of women in politics?
2. What prejudices or stereotypes did you observe in the series' portrayal of female politicians?
3. How did the main character, Rani Bharti, adhere to or defy conventional gender norms and expectations?
4. How did the show draw attention to the challenges and hardships that Indian women in politics face?
5. In what ways did the interactions between female lawmakers and their male counterparts reinforce or contradict gender norms?
6. In your opinion, what lesson did the show teach viewers about the place of women in leadership and politics?
7. How was the interaction of gender with caste, class, and religion portrayed in the series?
8. Did any parts of the series touch you personally or made you reevaluate your beliefs on women in politics?
9. How did the show's depiction of female politicians compare to or contrast with your personal encounters with or views of women in Indian politics?
10. How might the series affect views or perceptions of women in Indian politics, in your opinion?

These questions are aimed to study how the Maharani web series depicts and challenges gender stereotypes connected to women in Indian politics, and how it resonates with audiences.

**Findings and Conclusion:**

Sr. no	Coder 1 and 2	Coder 3	Coder 4
1	They said that in real life they don't see the women in politics strong character like the Rani character portrayed in series. Also, they said the women present in politics don't take stand properly for their state in reality while	In this the person mentioned in group said that his perception doesn't change because accepting women in politics is not everyone's cup of tea as in real politics women not take decisions from brain but they tackle all the problems from their	Next in the group said that her perception totally changes that women cannot join politics as this series shown that if a woman wants and desires to work professionally in any field, they can go for it and this thing shown in series very well

	<p>this approach clearly seen in webseries related to Rani.</p>	<p>heart but in series the whole approach seen to be opposite and if Rani character seen in reality, it might not be acceptable by all the persons in the society.</p>	<p>where a rural woman by mistakenly becomes the CM but after this with her will she succeeded in winning the hearts of their citizens. And she said her existing believe changes and now she definitely believes that women can handle their both lives at very well level.</p>
2	<p>They also said that in their opinion Rani Bharti character breaks the traditional gender roles and expectations. She enters into politics by mistake but with the time she breaks all the set narrative and shows how a women can handle politics very well.</p>	<p>Gender stereotype shown in webseries at many levels related to rani as she is not accepted as CM of state by many persons whether we talk about citizens or party mates but in the opinion of Person present in research said Rani character shown here that how selfishly she takes decisions just to save her political career and not even think about personal life at any level.</p>	<p>She also comments that yes there is lot of gender stereotype shown in series at various level in the episodes but in this series there are two type of women characterization shown in webseries like one women named kirti used gender stereotypes for her benefits like she uses her physical appearance to attract male gaze but on the other hand Rani and her secretary show their inner ability by working hard in their sectors by not taking any help from men or attract their male gaze in order to succeed in their respective careers.</p>
3	<p>Also, biasness related to gender stereotypes shown when Mahamahim declared Rani as a Gungi Gudiya when she appointed as CM of state because here everyone thinks that she is only the Puppet in the hands of Bheema Bharti.</p>	<p>He also comments that Rani character proves almost at every scene that she always takes decisions from her heart not from brain and this shows that how emotionally she handles situations and in real life women in politics if they take decisions emotionally this will ruin whole political system.</p>	<p>She also comments that no doubt there is a level of gender stereotype shown in various part of webseries but on the other hand the strong character of women also shows like in character of Rani Bharti she is a normal house wife but accidentally she becomes the CM of state and after this she changes her thinking level and gives her state at utmost importance by arresting her husband In Dana Scam but on the other she doesn't leave her background, her values ,her real identity.</p>
4	<p>They also comment that how series shows two types of women in one go where one woman proves her ability in men's world without taking help from any men, where as other women named as Kirti takes the help of many men at various sectors to succeed in their life.</p>	<p>He also comments that women who goes out of their home to work professionally their safety is at utmost level of everyone's concern and this safety issue restricts women to go outside and work in outer world and also with this he also told tat women are always considered as low as compared to men at every level whether we talk about professional or personal front</p>	<p>She also comments that women in real life in any kind of profession whether it relates to public job like politicians or related to private job in various sectors like in MNCs and other formats they face lot of discriminations related to different phases like societal pressure, family utmost interference, gender intolerance, education disparity and other women crime they face.</p>
5	<p>They also comment that Rani Bharti Character challenges their set perceptions related to women in politics as earlier they think that women don't get space in politics in real life and no doubt in webseries Rani fight mentally not physically with so many characters in series to setup her identity as powerful. Same in real</p>	<p>He also comments that in media it is always shown that how women always take advantage of male gaze in order to achieve her set goals and desires and this series also shows women in that character which takes advantage of men by giving them physically and emotionally offerings and these things always happen in media forms just to attract the audiences.</p>	<p>Nextly, she said that men will be men whether in real life or reel life and to get this many directors and makers now a days take undue advantage of female actors to showcase in bold and seductive roles just to attract male gaze so that their content get more popularity and TRP. But in this webseries directors show the true ability of women in front of viewers that in order to</p>

	life women in real politics face many challenges to preserve their place in politics.		achieve their goals they don't need to attract male by using their physical appearance.
6	They also suggest that women in real life should learn that in practical life a women should learn how to balance her life properly and if her personal life duly affects her professional front she should tackle enough and in a life of women politician women should side her personal life and if needed one must forget her personal life to keep safe their country first	He also suggests that in real life women earlier chooses her family first but now after the series and in real life it is also witnessed that women now can easily handle their personal and professional life whether we talk about any kind of profession like politics, doctorate, engineering or any other profession.	She comments that after watching the series she thinks that society needs lot of awareness and education related to women's profession and she clearly defines that Politics is considered as good and better profession for women also.
7	Yes, it is somehow correct that with gender biasness caste, class disparities also shown in abundance level as at many scenes the difference between lower caste and higher caste shown properly that how in government and police offices people faces caste and class discrimination at higher levels. But if we talk about religion there is no disparity shown in relation to it shown in webseries.	In this question he also comments same with other persons present in group and said that with gender biasness caste, class disparities also shown in abundance level as at many scenes the difference between lower caste and higher caste shown properly that how in government and police offices people faces caste and class discrimination at higher levels. But if we talk about religion there is no disparity shown in relation to it shown in webseries.	She comments that there is higher level of casteism and class disparities shown when she dictates one example from selected series like in a scene when DGP of state said to Naveen Kumar a higher popular politician that even in police department there are two mess are in working condition where a people eat according to their caste differentiation like a inspector from a lower caste and constable from a higher caste don't eat at same table.
8	They also suggest that how at some levels whether we talk about webseries or talk about real life women characters show some respect to themselves and if they want to succeed in their life, they should cross limits which are un-doubtly not needed in their life.	He also comments that this series give 50% challenge to his perception that whether women can run their personal and political life well as this series show the characterization of women in a very strong and bold character.	She suggests that her perception related to women in politics totally changes as in the series when Rani finds her husband involvement in Scam case, she thinks that like other women presented on screen she also makes her husband safe but in contrary to this she makes her state at first place and then she arrests her husband in Scam in order to safeguard the justice of the state.
9	Real women in politics also should learn from Rani character that if they enter in politics, they should work for their country first and should forgot their family and personal agenda too.	He also comments that in real life he doesn't know about strong women characters in Indian politics though there are some women present and perform their duties as a proper politician but their real-life stories not properly acknowledged by many persons because though they were entering into politics but they are not popular enough like Rani Bharti character gain so much popularity in series. Also, he said that the reason behind this woman in real politics doesn't prove their true potential and only works under the leadership of men.	She comments that she never seen women in any profession in upper level and if they reach they must from a higher background or have sound education though in series also Rani is from good background she don't take advantage of her background in order to achieve something also she is not educated enough but here with no education, no taking advantage of her wise background she proves herself as the queen of Bihar political world who tackles all the problems with her witty ideas and diligence.
10	They also commented that yes, their perception is totally changing that education is necessary for women to enter in politics but this perception	He also comments that his perception doesn't change because it whether educated or non-educated it not signifies the concept of that women can handle the	She also comments that her perception is basically divided into two formats in one way she thinks that being a citizen of country she thinks what rani Bharti did in

<p>changes in webseries that education is not necessary the Raj Dharam and dignity and respect to their profession is mostly important. They also said that OTT proves as strong platform which not give benefits to their user and makers but also give benefits to performers specially to women actors to showcase their real talent on screen which earlier missing on other media platforms like in films and tv daily soaps.</p>	<p>politics well or not. The base of women in politics is totally depends upon one factor which is said to be their will and practicality to work strongly in political field. Also, he said if we talk about whether OTT platforms show women in politics in strong character only so this phrase is wrong that as he finds that all media forms show women in same position and there are many films earlier made which show the different colors of women on screen also show that how women portrayal in Indian politics.</p>	<p>series if any women politician in real world did this than the whole country will proud on her who makes her state at first important level and makes her family at last. Also, as a youth she thinks that she thinks that this is a wonderful decision ever a politician made. But in older ways she comments that many citizens will not accept this face of Indian women as this is against the set stereotypical role of women, they watch earlier on other media forms but OTT gives an advantage to viewer to think higher and larger than their set stereotypes.</p>
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A Comparative Analysis of Rabri devi political career route in relation to Rani Bharti role in Maharani web series season 1

The first season of the Maharani web series features a fictional figure named Rani Bharti, who draws heavily from Rabri Devi's political career. Rabri Devi, the spouse of renowned Bihar politician Lalu Prasad Yadav, set out on a political adventure never seen before in India. Rabri was raised in a rural household, but her life changed when she married Lalu, who was at the time a rising political star in Bihar. Rabri remained a homemaker as Lalu's influence increased until destiny had other plans.

After Lalu Prasad Yadav was imprisoned in 1997 over the fodder fraud, Rabri abruptly entered politics. Rabri was the nominee of the Lalu-founded Rastriya Janata Dal (RJD) party for the role of Chief Minister. This action was perceived as a calculated manoeuvre to preserve Lalu's influence and power inside the family. An important turning point in Bihar's political history was Rabri's ascent to the top position.

Likewise, the journey of Rani Bharti (Huma Qureshi) in Maharani Season 1 is similar to Rabri's. A modest housewife named Rani finds herself thrown into politics when her husband, Chief Minister Bheema Bharti, abruptly steps down. Initially greeted with scepticism, Rani's appointment as the new Chief Minister gradually demonstrates her abilities. Similar to Rabri, Rani too has to deal with opposition from inside her own party and patriarchal conventions while navigating the complexity of politics.

During her time as Bihar's chief minister (1997–2005), Rabri Devi faced many difficulties. Critics referred to her as a puppet CM that Lalu was manipulating from behind the scenes. Rabri, however, showed tenacity and flexibility in figuring out the ins and outs of governance. She carried out a number of social programs with an emphasis on rural development and women's emancipation. Similar themes may be seen in Maharani, where Rani Bharti's character gives women's issues and rural development priority.

Rabri and Rani encountered resistance from both outside parties and their own factions. While Rani confronts Navin, her husband's old supporter, Lalu's loyalists consistently undercut Rabri's leadership. Maharani's depiction of Rani's hardships draws attention to the similarities between her experiences and Rabri's.

Rabri Devi continues to be a legendary figure in Indian politics, even in spite of the controversy surrounding her reign. Her ascent from housewife to Chief Minister represents the possibility of female empowerment in the face of hardship. Inspired by Rabri's incredible journey, Rani Bharti's role in Maharani Season 1 shows how a reluctant politician may become a self-assured leader.

The foundation of Rabri Devi's story is still there, even though the web series takes artistic license to improve the story. Rani Bharti is given a human touch in Maharani Season 1, which makes her likable and accessible. Rabri's

own journey parallels the show's depiction of Rani's transformation from a timid housewife to a strong-willed leader.

Finally, Rani Bharti's character in Maharani Season 1 is greatly influenced by Rabri Devi's extraordinary political career. The parallels in their experiences underscore the obstacles that Indian women in politics confront as well as their opportunities for advancement and self-determination. The way in which Maharani depicts Rani's development from a housewife to a politician highlights the importance of Rabri Devi's influence on Indian politics.

**Content Analysis Table:**

**Coding Sheet 1: Character Display traits in Rani Bharti  
(Huma Qureshi)**

**2. Table1: Maharani Season 1**

NAME OF SERIES	YEAR OF RELEASE	GENRE	IMDB RATING
Maharani Season 1	2021	Political Drama	7.9 /10

Episod eNo.	IMDB Rating	Financially capable	Higher Profession	Solid & Decisive	Emotional Intelligence	Empowerment	Resilience	Strategic Thinking	Collaborative Approach
Answer expected		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
1	7.2	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	N
2	7.4	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N
3	7.7	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
4	7.3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
5	7.3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
6	7.0	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
7	7.3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
8	7.3	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
9	7.5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
10	7.8	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
Total of Y's		8	8	9	10	8	9	8	0

Total of N's	2	2	1	0	2	1	2	10
% of character display traits	80%	80%	90%	100%	80%	90%	80%	0%

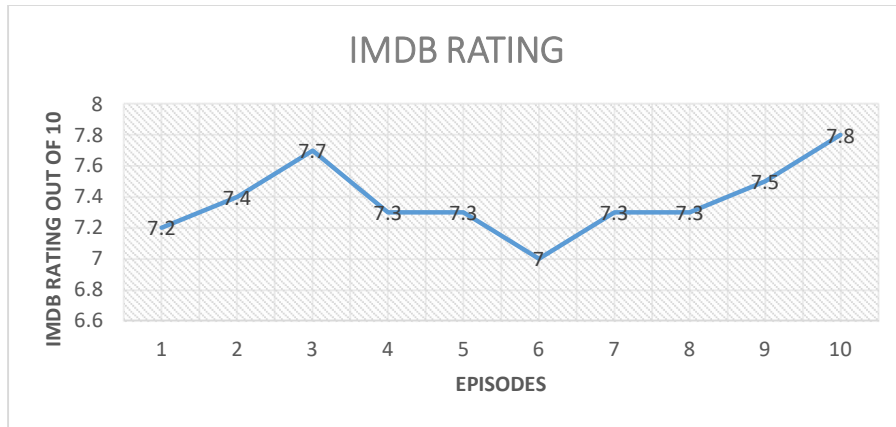


FIGURE 1

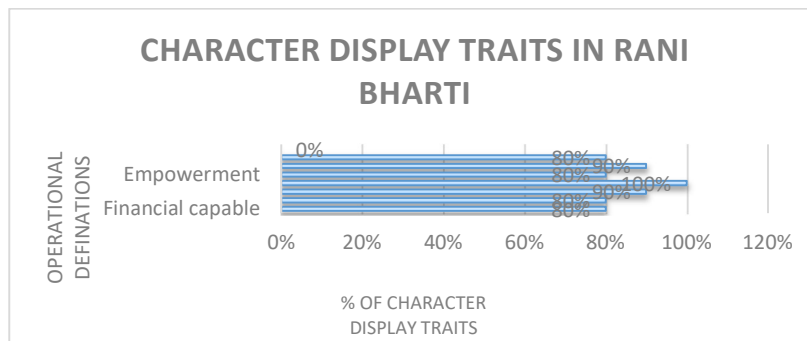


FIGURE 2

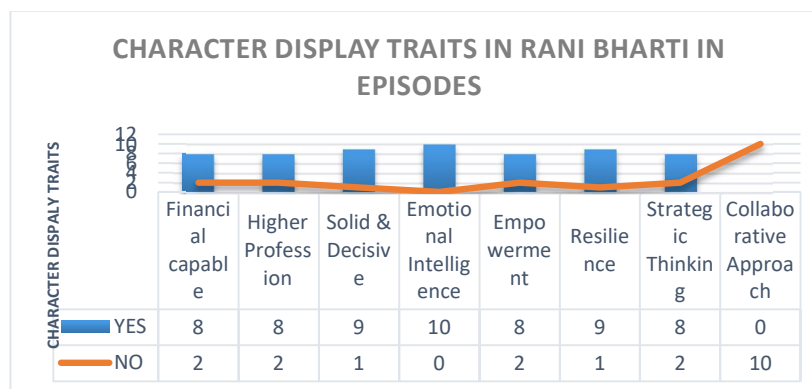


FIGURE 3

**Findings and Conclusion:**

The above table shows the content analysis of webseries named Maharani Season 1 which chosen for the research for this research paper in which one female character is chosen that is named to be Rani Bharti an Illiterate, Homemaker from a Rural India background and accidentally make herself as the CM of the Bihar state when her husband shot by some goons and this webseries solely tells that how OTT shows the Women in Indian politics

and also explain the public perception related to women in Indian Politics after watching the webseries and the episodes of season 1 through different operational definitions that are made after a thorough study of review of literature which explains the factors on which we can study the characterization of women in over-the-top (OTT) platforms, particularly as OTT makes a remarkable history in the world of entertainment and media specifically as this proves itself to be a new age media which not only gives rise and boon to the media industry in corona time but also gives advantage to distributors in terms of distribution, to makers to make films according to their own choices and without fear of censorship, to audiences to watch any kind of content at anytime, anywhere, and also provides enormous support to characters to work in reality-based plot, particularly in women's narration on screen. From above table it is shown webseries Maharani Season 1 Rani Bharti character analysed on 8 aspects that are Financial Capability, Higher profession, Solid & Decisive, Emotional intelligence, Empowerment, Resilience, strategic Thinking and Collaborative Approach.

And from the above coding of data which will be collected after watching the whole episodes from webseries it is clearly defined that Rani Bharti character is not highly financial capable at one side when she is just a homemaker who is illiterate and live in a village in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> episodes but in further episodes when she portrayed as CM of state, she is financial capable enough and now she is not depend on her husband Bheema Bharti for her daily expenses. Next, if we talk about higher profession Rani Bharti is just a homemaker who handles household chores but after 2<sup>nd</sup> episodes till 10<sup>th</sup> episodes of whole season she worked as Chief Minister of State which is the highest profession of state. After that if we talk about Solid and Decisive nature of Rani Bharti here the coding of data from all the episodes it is clearly shown that she is from the very first episodes seen as in higher decision approach where she can decide strongly without any kind of hesitation and fear like she solely investigates the matter of Pashupalan Scam done by various officials and then she suspend all the officials who are involved into this matter, with this she also takes the ministry from different Cabinet Ministry when she found that minister don't work properly.

Next, if we talk about Emotional Intelligence and Empowerment as the operational definition Rani Bharti proves that being a female many persons believe that female can't take strong decisions properly on serious because they think that females only take decisions from heart not from brain and they are emotionally weak but in the series the character of Rani proves that she is emotional but intelligent too, as in one scene where a whole village is killed by Naxalite when she witness the murder place she loose her emotions and weep with the family of victims, everyone thinks that she is a normal lady who weeps like a typical emotional women but after that she catches that goon with the help of DGP and this shows her empowerment and intelligence she proves that being a female she is emotional but a intelligent CM too who takes decisions very precisely and with strong headed approach.

After that from above coding chart next three points are Resilience, Strategic Thinking and Collaborative Approach which examines that how Rani character is powerful to tackle various challenges and problems come in the route of her political career, how she takes her decision strategically and how she works with her party mates so form the analysis it is to be found that Rani is a strong headed women who takes her decision very strongly and also her thinking level is so wise and this can be explained that when she tackle Prem Kumar matter with perfection and also she chooses her power to eradicate this Scam form her state and after that if we talk about Collaborative approach her Rani character fails as per the expectations everyone thinks because here she proves that she for the sake of her state goodwill she will not tolerate any kind of nuisance whether it is from her party and after when she catches the Scam she takes action against her own party mates, also with this she also take actions against her husband too when she finds his involvement into this matter.

**IMDB Review**

Reviews	Highly liked	Neutral	Less liked	Not liked
Star Rating	Star rating (10-7)	Star rating (6-4)	Star rating (3-2)	Star rating (1)
No of People Comment	221	17	9	39

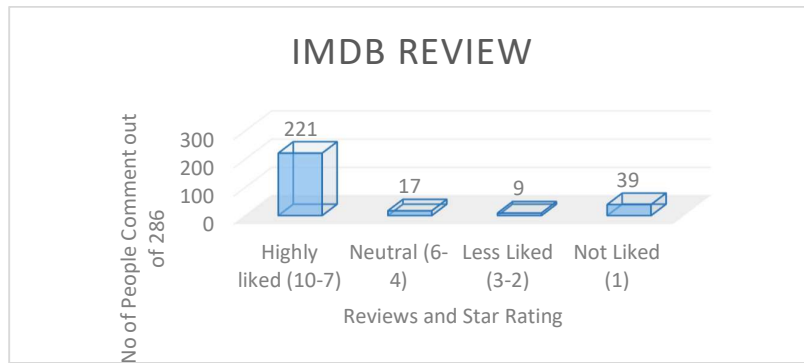


Figure 4

**Findings and conclusion:**

The above data is collected from IMDB website where Maharani Season 1 reviews are marked and analysed on 4 rated scale that is Highly liked, neutral, less liked and not liked. There are total of 286 reviews in comment box which are mix in categories out of 221 viewers give high stars and give reviews in comment box in IMDB websites gives rating from 10 to 7 stars and this shows that they liked this webseries because of novel approach of showing a rural woman who is illiterate becomes CM of state after everyone declared as puppet of her husband, she successfully breaks this implication by making strong decisions to tackle the Scam related to corruption. After that 17 people voted for neutral rating which ranges between 6 to 4 stars in which they say that not liked this webseries more or they liked some instances of webseries like how a Indian women showcased in a very different Avtar where her role makes harsh decisions to make her state safe and in order to which she also destroys her personal life as for the sake of wise judgement she arrested her husband too in Scam case while some people says it shows some fantastical incidents which doesn't match with the real life women politicians India.

After that out of 286 viewers feedback 9 persons voted for 3-2-star rating which depicts that they don't like this webseries because of certain reason like story is too bland, facts and figures are not justify, portrayal of Rani Bharti character is not up to mark as they think instead of showcasing women role in Indian Politics strong the directors show them in a fictionalised heroic character And remaining 39 persons out of total reviewers don't liked this webseries in totally as they think story is only made for setting a propaganda to favour one real political party of India and this series also create a rift between the people on the basis of their caste system. Also, some people say that this webseries ruins the image of Bihar totally by showing that how there is so easy rule of Naxalites who work fearlessly and also Police and government support them in order to save their position. From the above analysis it is clearly mention that some persons don't like this webseries due to certain reason but if we talk about numbers, we clearly examine that there is a huge majority in numbers who like this webseries so much because they like the earthiness and realism that show in webseries by the directors in characters plot and also there is a full presence of twist and turns related to story and audiences also like the way how directors portray a women from rural India in such a strong character who breaks all the taboo of set stereotypes related to Indian women and about her relationship. In this webseries to show the women empowerment director make audience to witness that how an Indian Women can handle both perspectives of her life and also whether on professional or personal front she can take strong decisions as well. And this approach shows one thing that how today's viewers like the new perspective related to women actors and this can be only happened because of OTT platforms because they give the utmost advantage and freedom to makers as well as creators to showcase their real talent on screen without the fear of censorship or any other societal pressure which they face earlier on other media forms.

**Conclusion:**

Lastly, from the above coding of data and analysis from focus group discussion , comparative analysis of Rabri Devi and Rani Bharti Character and IMDB Review Analysis of Maharani Season 1 now it is clearly shown that directors show the real power of women in Indian politics and also set a huge example to those persons who thinks that a women can't be a true leader or can't be a good politician because as a woman she thinks from heart not from brain and if the women is from illiterate and rural background then this woman is of no use, she is only meant for household chores but here Rani Character totally dismisses all the set stereotype and show how a women

wisely handles her professional and personal life. After that this series also shows that Politics is not only the cup of men and a woman who can handle the cup of her house, she can easily handle the Cup of politics as well.

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