PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE FEDERAL POLITICAL PROCESS OF CANADA: A STUDY OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, 1984-2004

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**Participation of Women in the Federal Political Process of Canada: A Study of Women's Representation in the House of Commons, 1984-2004**", submitted by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is my own work and has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university.

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We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. C.S. Raj
(Chairperson)

Prof. Abdul Nafey
(Supervisor)

For Ma & Papa

Preface and Acknowledgements

Over the years there has been a growing realisation and admission amongst women and the protagonists of women's rights that the 'political' – law, state and society - affected the personal lives of individuals. Hence, it is of utmost importance that women be 'empowered' in the realm of politics, where they could play a significant role in defining political equations and partake political resources so as to affect the re-distribution of power along the gender lines. There is an increasing need to recognise the crucial role that women require to play in the development and ongoing functioning of the democratic governments and institutions.

In the current discourse on the political empowerment of women, an important element is that of political representation of women. The issue is how to effect the empowerment of women at the local, provincial and national level, especially in the legislative and decision-making arenas. In a parliamentary democracy, one of the most crucial yardstick for evaluating women's presence in the decision making process is to look into the representation and the role played by women at the legislative level. It is argued that the increasing participation of women in political realm and representation in the legislature would change the attitudes, behaviours and opinions of the system and would bring about more gender-related justice and equality.

The issue that the present study aims to address is whether the proportion of female members in representative institutions is a sufficient measure for the effective political representation of women. One needs to look at whether increasing the number of women in positions of political power will necessarily produce more public policies and political procedures that favour women. One cannot, however, in this context ignore the fact that women's numerical under-representation is a major challenge to the quest for a world where an equal foothold for men and women are guaranteed.

In the case of Canada, one observes that despite there being far from a numerical equality in terms of legislative representation, Canadian women have made significant gains over the past few decades in the political realm. Before the federal elections of 1993, Canada ranked second in its female representation among industrialised democracies with single member district electoral systems. At 13 per cent, Canada had higher proportion of women than several other industrialised democracies with proportional representation system. In both the 1997 and 2000 elections, the percentage of women MPs in the House of Commons remained at 20.6 per cent of the total MPs. In the June 2004 general elections, 65 of the 308 MPs (21.1 per cent) elected were women.

However, one needs to look at whether the increasing representation of women over the decades in Canadian politics has brought about any significant change in the policy outputs and in turn in the very status of women in Canada. On one hand, one may argue that since women themselves are the victims of discrimination in the society and hence are in a better position to understand the sufferings, aspirations and requirements of fellow women, once elected they would necessarily have a more women-friendly political agenda.

On the other hand, there can be another line of argument claiming that both women and men in positions of political power act in the same way guided by the party spirit and ideology. Hence the question arises as to whether gender is relevant at all or the most competent candidate is to be chosen as a political representative. In this context, however, one thing needs to be realised that if access to the representative institutions of political life is substantially more difficult for women compared to men, then the very fairness of the system is in question.

In order to address and explore these issues the present study aims to critically examine some of the above-mentioned questions in the context of Canada. The study focuses on the position that Canadian women have come to acquire in higher echelons of

politics especially in the Canadian federal parliament over the years; and the effects that it have in the making and implementation of policies that favour women.

The present study adopts a largely descriptive, and analytical approach. At the very onset the study attempts to trace the issue of political representation of women from a historical point of view. The study analyzes the debate surrounding the political representation of women in its broad outlines and then specifically deals with the issue of increasing representation of women in federal parliament and their influence or lack of it in bringing about public policies favouring women.

In this quest, both primary and secondary sources are heavily relied upon. Under primary sources government reports and documents dealing with political representation of women, and reports and documents on women candidates in Canadian federal elections have been largely consulted. The study also relies on the Internet for such information. As regards to secondary sources, relevant books, journal articles and articles available on the Internet have been consulted. This study adopts an inductive method, as its attempt is to draw certain general conclusion on the basis of its research.

At the very first stage of its exploration, the study looks into the issues of political participation and representation of women in Canada from a historical perspective. A modest attempt is made to understand the changing role of women in the Canadian federal political process; and the salient factors responsible for the change are also identified and examined.

The first chapter critically evaluates the Royal Commission on the Status of Women Report, 1970, which is regarded as the first concrete historical step towards ensuring increasing political participation and representation of women in Canada. The chapter further looks into some of the follow up actions that have been undertaken post Royal Commission Report and evaluates their effect on women's political representation. In sum, the first chapter provides the base for further exploration into the issue of political representation of women in Canada.

The second chapter of the present study attempts to look at how far the rhetorical promise of increasing political participation and representation of women has found practical implementation. In order to address this issue, the attitude of various political parties, media and the people as such towards women's representation has been analysed, and the changing scenario of political representation of women has been examined on the basis of their electoral performance at the federal level. The issue of women representation and participation has been addressed in view of the performance of the women candidates in the elections to the House of Commons from 1984 to 2004.

The year 1984 marks the beginning of a new era for Canadian federal politics as each of the major political parties made a conscious attempt to nominate women candidates; and for the first time in the history of Canadian elections, the three major party leaders participated in a nationally televised debate that was exclusively devoted to political issues that concerned women. From 1984 onwards the number of women participating in the elections and getting elected to the House of Commons had shown a slow but steady growth. This is a very significant and positive development and allows the women to have a definite say in the process of policy making and policy implementation.

However, the chapter also makes an attempt to examine as to whether the numerical growth in the political representation of women is just an illusion, and seeks to explore whether the political potential of the women in Canada is recognised in the same way as that of their male counterparts. The chapter further explores the various obstacles that come in the way of a woman willing to be active in the political battlefield. The attitude of the political parties towards the women members is discussed and described in view of the candidature being given to women. The societal and most importantly the electoral reaction to women candidates are issues that also find prominence in the chapter.

In the third chapter, the issue as to whether mere numerical strength of women in the legislature ensures policy formulation that favours women is discussed. In this respect, the study looks into the various concepts and theories of representation, and explores the various debates surrounding the concept. A detailed discussion is presented as regards to the shift in the concept of representation' from 'Ideas' to 'Presence'.

Having looked into the debate regarding the issue of representation and the changing connotations that the term representation has come to acquire, the attempt of the present study then is to put the entire debate in the Canadian context; and to examine whether or not numerical strength of women in the Canadian federal parliament necessarily translate into policy formulations favouring women.

The chapter also looks into the aspect of how party politics, party discipline and adhering to party ideology affect the decision making of women legislators. The issue here is to look at whether gender matters or is it, in the ultimate analysis, the party line that the women legislators adopt. In this respect, the chapter looks at the both the positive and negative connotations of making gender the sole criterion for political representation.

The chapter also looks at the feasibility of having cross-party cooperation among the female political representatives for ensuring policy formulations favouring the concerns of women. There is also an attempt to highlight the importance of ensuring such an environment where everyone has an equal right of accessibility to the political system, and no one is discriminated on the grounds of gender.

The fourth and the final chapter of the present study draws certain general conclusions on the basis of the study conducted. The research findings of all the preceding chapters are discussed, and on the basis of these findings, the issue of political participation and representation of women is addressed. The aim of the final chapter is to put the various findings of the study in a coherent form so as to give it a proper academic perspective.

No successful project is a single-handed effort and this project is no exception. I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Pro. Abdul Nafey for his constant guidance, encouragement and inspiration without which this thesis would not have been a reality.

I am immensely grateful to my family for bestowing their complete trust in me and for standing by me in all my endeavours. I also take this opportunity to thank my friends Karuna, Sarani, Anita and my roommate Mandavi for their unconditional help and support.

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CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgements i-vi

List of Tables and Graphs viii

Abbreviations ix

CHAPTER I: Evolving Patterns of Women's Representation in Canadian Politics 1-24

The Movement for Political Representation of Women in Canada
Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, 1970
Follow-up Actions

CHAPTER II: Women's Participation and Representation in Canadian Federal Parliament 25-43

The 1984 Elections: A Watershed in Political Participation and Representation of Women
Changing Equations in the Political Participation and Representation of Women: Looking at the Federal Elections From 1988-2004

CHAPTER III: Meaning of Representation: Does it Make a Difference to Women? 44-61

The Idea of Representation
Problematising Representation
Evaluating the Canadian Case

CHAPTER IV: Summary and Conclusion 62-70

Select Bibliography 71-78

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Dates of Women's Suffrage and Eligibility to Run for Public office	6
Table 1.2	The Establishment of Major Canadian Women's Organisations, 1960-83	21
Table 2.1	Number of Women Elected to the House of Commons by Year, 1921-84	28
Table 2.2	Percentage of Women MPs of the Total MPs Elected, 1921-84	29
Table 2.3	Number of Women Candidates Projected by the Three Major Political Parties, 1963-84	31
Table 2.4	Women Candidates Projected by the Three Major Political Parties, 1988-2004	33
Table 2.5	Women and Nominations in Competitive Seats	34
Table 2.6	Number of Women Elected to the House of Commons by Year, 1988-2004	36
Table 2.7	Percentage of Women of The Total MPs Elected, 1988-2004	37
Table 2.8	Ranking of Most Important Obstacles Among 1988 Women Candidates	38

List of Graphs

Graph 1	Number of Women Elected to the House of Commons by Year, 1921-84	41
Graph 2	Percentage of Women MPs of the Total MPs Elected, 1921-84	42
Graph 3	Number of Women Elected to the House of Commons by Year, 1988-2004	43
Graph 4	Percentage of Women of The Total MPs Elected, 1988-2004	43

Abbreviations

AWP	Association of Women Parliamentarians
BQ	Bloc Quebecois
CACSW	Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women
CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEW	Committee for Equality of Women
DWEA	Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association
FFQ	Federation des Femmes du Quebec
HOC	House of Commons
JCPC	Judicial Committee of the Privy Council
MACSW	Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women
MPs	Members of Parliament
NAC	National Action Committee on Women
NDP	New Democratic Party
PCs	Progressive Conservatives
RCSW	Royal Commission on the Status of Women
TWLC	Toronto Women's Literary Club
UN	United Nations
VOC	Voice of Women
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union Women
WPA	Women for Political Action

Chapter I

Evolving Patterns of Women's Representation in Canadian Politics

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Evolving Patterns of Women's Representation in Canadian Politics

Political representation is one of the most debated topics in modern political discourse. John Stuart Mill had argued, " The pure idea of democracy, according to its definition, is the government of the whole people, by the whole people, equally represented"[1]. In today's modern democracies, which are marked by massive diversity in the population, it is imperative that various sections of the society are represented adequately in the political sphere so that everyone's voice is heard and their grievances redressed. In the words of German social theorist Robert von Mohl,

> Representation is the process through which the influence which the entire citizenry or a part of them have upon governmental action is with their expressed approval, exercised on their behalf by a small number among them, with binding effects upon those represented [2].

However, it is not possible to accord the term 'representation' with a precise meaning. As Curtis in his *Comparative Government and Politics* argues, the term 'representation' is " inherently ambiguous" and due to this inherent ambiguity representative government may have different meaning under different circumstances.[3] The reason that is responsible for the varied meanings attached to the term 'representation', according to Curtis, mirrors the difference in attitudes and views as regards to the "relationship between the rulers and the ruled"[4].

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[1] J.S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (Chicago, 1962), p. 256.
[2] Quoted in Carl J. Friedrich, *Constitutional Government and Democracy* (Calcutta, 1966), p. 266.
[3] Curtis, *Comparative Government and Politics* (New York, 1968), p. 98.
[4] ibid.

Canada, a federal parliamentary democracy, represents a multicultural mosaic and over the years people from varied ethnic background have embraced Canada as their homeland. Therefore, utmost importance is given to the issue of according political representation to various ethnic minorities so that their grievances are redressed and their participation in the socio-political and economic spheres is ensured. Along with this, the last few decades in Canada, particularly from 1960s onwards, have seen a growing demand for an increased participation and representation of women in the political sphere. There has been a growing consciousness that women have not been accorded the place that they rightfully deserve in the political field and their political role has been subjected to limitations and restrictions. As British Columbia MLA Rosemary Brown, reflecting on her own political experiences observed, " to talk of power and to talk of women is to talk of the absence of power as we understand today"[5].

The attempt, in the present chapter, is to trace the evolving patterns of women's representation in Canadian politics. For this purpose, the entire movement towards participation and representation of women in Canadian politics is being broadly discussed in two phases. In this respect, the chapter takes a critical look at the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW), 1970, which had played a role of crucial significance in the quest towards increasing political participation and representation of women in Canada. Having highlighted the significance of the RCSW recommendations, the chapter attempts to explore the follow up actions taken post the Royal Commission Report and evaluate their impact on the political representation of women in Canada.

THE MOVEMENT FOR POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN CANADA

The movement towards women's political participation and representation in Canada can be broadly divided into two distinct phases. In the first phase, spanning from the early days of the establishment of the Canadian federation to 1950s, one may observe

[5] Quoted in Sylvia B. Bashevkin, "Political Parties and Representation of Women" in Alain-G. Gagnon and A. Brian Tanguay, eds., *Canadian Parties in Transition* (Toronto, 1989), pp.446-460.

the gradual yet steady enhancement of women's political consciousness. The three major turning points, in this respect, were - the beginning of the industrialisation process, World War I and World War II.

During the second wave of feminism that flooded Canada from 1960s onwards, the struggle was geared towards preventing women from compromising their own way of living and hiding their feminine qualities in order to survive in the so-called men's world. The concerted efforts during this phase resulted in the setting up of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women that provided a concrete foundation for women's political participation and representation.

The traditional role of the Canadian women has been quite different from the way the role of the Canadian women is seen and perceived today. Women had enjoyed a place of unique significance in the progressive French society that was established in Canada in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries.[6] In the French society the role of a woman was not regarded to be confined to the four walls of the house and the women were not subjected to limitations and restriction in terms of their domestic or societal role. However this unique position of women got vehemently challenged with the coming of the British.[7]

The British settlers whose number significantly increased after 1815 had threatened not only the way of life of the French society but had also shaken the significant position that women had attained within it. Most of the English women who came to Canada at the end of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century came as wives, mothers and daughters, and gradually the Protestant Victorian view that saw the home as women's "proper place" got widely accepted.[8] A law had also been

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[6] Aparna Basu and Meenalochana Das, "Women's Movement in Canada and India" in Aparna Basu, ed., *Perspective on Women: Canada and India* (Bombay, 1995), p.2.

[7] Jane Errington, "Pioneers and Sufferings" in Sandra Burt et al., eds., *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada* (Toronto, 1991), p.64.

[8] ibid.

passed in 1849 that excluded women from franchise in both upper and the lower house.[9] Thus the political freedom and representation of women got completely eroded.

By the time of the confederation (1867), as Jane Errington argues, "the transition from pioneering communities to a stratified Victorian society was largely complete".[10] Women were expected to pursue 'woman's work' such as teaching, nursing, and domestic service, as the private sphere of the home was considered as the 'true woman's place'.[11] With the accordance of a private sphere to women, a patriarchal order got established which lasted almost till the end of the century and husband took charge of the family including the finances and properties of the wife.[12]

However, the turn of the century saw a gradual but steady upsurge in women's consciousness. Many Canadian women openly came out to challenge the domestic role and limited place in the work force accorded to them. During this phase, which can be called the first phase of the Canadian women's movement, there were three crucial turning points, viz., beginning of the industrialisation process, World War I and World War II. [13]

The onset of industrialisation provided the Canadian women with an outlet for their skills and energies in addition to the home and other workplaces to which they were hitherto confined. With the rapid industrialisation process between 1900 and 1920, Canada saw the ushering in of the 'new woman'- a woman who was increasingly educated and independent.[14] A section of the Canadian women even went to the extent of suggesting that this 'coming out' was in fact the first step towards an era where women would enjoy full political and economic equality.[15]

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[9] John Garner, *The Franchise and Politics in British North America 1755-1867* (Toronto, 1969), p.155.
[10] Errington, n.7, p. 68.
[11] ibid.
[12] Basu and Das, n. 6, p.3.
[13] ibid.
[14] Errington, n. 7, p.72.
[15] ibid, p.73.

First at the local level and then at the provincial and national levels, Canadian women came together to redress a host of social evils and launched a massive campaign for, among other things, temperance, religious instructions, improvements in the workplace, better housing, facilities for single women, and state-run public health and child welfare programmes. Eventually their activities compelled them for direct involvement in the political life of the nation.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a massive campaign was launched demanding the extension of right to vote to women in Canada. The Toronto Women's Literary Club (TWLC), founded in 1876, was the first suffrage organization. It was composed of a small group of middle-class, educated, professional women, who lobbied not just for the right to vote but also for the opening of schools and universities to women.

The campaign also got endorsed by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the largest and perhaps the most influential organization in Canada, which was established in 1874. The active campaign for the suffrage led to the forming of the Dominion Women's Enfranchisement Association (DWEA) in 1889, and with this the issue got truly recognized in the public sphere. [16]

The suffragettes, however, did not quite represent a majority of the Canadian women and many were not involved in the campaign.[17] But the force of the case combined with the political expediency during the World War I ensured victory for the suffragettes as women's suffrage and the eligibility to run for office progressively gained recognition (see Table 1.1). This can be regarded as one of the most crucial victories in the struggle towards ensuring an increasingly active role for the women in the political battlefield.

[16] ibid, p.78.
[17] Heather MacIvor, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Ontario, 1996), p.77.

TABLE 1.1.
Dates of Women's Suffrage and Eligibility to Run For Public Office

Jurisdiction	Date of Suffrage	Public Office
Manitoba	January 1916	January 1916
Saskatchewan	March 1916	March 1916
Alberta	April 1916	April 1916
British Columbia	April 1917	April 1917
Ontario	April 1917	April 1919
Nova Scotia	April 1918	April 1918
Canada	May 1918	July 1920
New Brunswick	April 1919	May 1934
Prince Edward Island	May 1922	May 1922
Newfoundland	April 1925	April 1925
Quebec	April 1940	April 1940

Note: The dates in the Table 1 do not refer to all Canadian women. Chinese and East Asian women did not receive full Canadian Citizenship (including the right to vote) until 1947, while aboriginal women living on reserves could not vote in the federal elections until 1960s.

Source: Catherine L. Cleverdon, *The Women Suffrage Movement in Canada* (Toronto, 1974, p.2).

It may be observed from the Table 1.1 that amongst all the Canadian provinces, Manitoba was the first province to accord suffrage rights to women (January 1916). At the federal level, women's suffrage was accorded in May 1918, and the eligibility to run for public office got recognised in July 1920. By early 1930s, this phenomenon became a reality in almost all parts of Canada, except Quebec. As it is shown in the Table, Quebec became the last province to recognize women's suffrage and their eligibility to run for public office. It was as late as in April 1940 that this recognition was accorded in Quebec.

The successful victory in another battle concerning the judicial interpretation of the word 'persons' provided a big boost to the Canadian women's movement towards political representation. The issue was whether the term 'persons' in law referred to

women as well as men or men were the only legal 'persons' on the basis of legal precedent. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC), in October 1929, held that Canadian women were indeed 'persons' under section 24 of the constitution, and for all other legal purposes. [18] Thus the first phase of women's movements in Canada sowed the seeds for a massive mobilization towards political representation of women that got manifested during the second phase of women's movement in Canada.

The so called second wave of feminism that emerged in Canada from 1960s onwards was quite unexpected as women, by that time, were advancing very well in both economic and political terms and their remaining problems seemed like temporary disadvantages.[19] It was commonly assumed that once the vote was won, and women were legally acknowledged as 'persons', women had no more political ambition left.

However all these assumptions were proved wrong as the Protestant Victorian view which saw women bearing all the domestic responsibilities still persisted strongly. Marriage and child bearing continued to be perceived as the chief goal for women, and men were not expected to offer women a helping hand in the discharge of household duties.[20] This had created a situation where women were working under immense stress and tensions in their pursuit to cope with multiple roles and responsibilities.

Women also faced tremendous discrimination at the work place and found themselves in a disadvantageous position both in terms of political as well as economic life. There was still explicit or implicit refusal to allow women to hold property or citizenship on the same terms as men. Thus the women faced, as Naomi Black argues,

> a kind of a 'glass ceiling' that stopped women at a certain level: they could vote, but few would become lawmakers and none would be premiers; they could graduate from university and even from professional schools, but they could not expect to be judges or surgeons; they could work for pay, but it would be far less pay than men received, and they were unlikely to become rich by their own achievements. [21]

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[18] ibid, p.79.
[19] Naomi Black, "The Canadian Women's Movement: The Second Wave" in Burt et al, ed., n.7, p.80.
[20] Basu and Das, n.6, p. 14.
[21] Black, n. 19, p. 81.

Moreover, the few women who had managed to find success in public life had to do it "the men's way", and in the process had to forgo or hide their feminine qualities.[22] Keeping this in view, the second wave of feminism that swept Canada during the 1960s sought to enable women to stay different without being penalized for these differences.

The second wave of feminism, it is argued, was an American import as it began first in France and then in the United States of America. It emerged as part of a student movement radicalized by racism and imperialism. The argument put forth was that the women need to be 'liberated' just like the minorities and colonial dependencies.[23] The catch phrase " the personal is political" was also first popularized during the mid-1960s by the statement of American feminist organizations such as Redstockings.[24]

In the case of Canada, as per the movement towards achieving political recognition and representation of the women, the organization *Voice of Women* (VOC) was established in 1960. Initially the organization confined itself to peace issues and protested against nuclear weapons testing.[25] Over the years, however, it became more political in its orientation. A crucial turning point in this regard was the organization of *Committee for Equality of Women* (CEW) in 1966 at the initiative of Laura Sabia, President of the Canadian Federation of University Women.

The CEW launched a massive campaign demanding a government enquiry into the status of women. Laura Sabia went to the extent of threatening the government with a march of two million women to Ottawa if the government did not pay heed to the request.[26] She claimed, "We're tired of being nice about trying to get an official enquiry into women's rights in Canada. If we don't get a royal commission by the end of this

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[22] ibid.
[23] ibid, p.80.
[24] Sheila Rowbotham, "The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism" in Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, eds., *Beyond the Fragments* (London, 1979), pp. 40-41.
[25] Basu and Das, n. 6, p. 16.
[26] ibid.

month, we'll use every tactic we can. And if we have to use violence, damn it, we will."[27]

These efforts got finally culminated in the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW) in 1967, under the Presidentship of Florence Bird. It came to be commonly known as the Bird commission. The Royal Commission was a watershed that changed the course and the discourse of Canadian social history and social policy. It gave a new impetus to the movement for political representation of women and provided a concrete foundation for its further advancement.

The credit goes to the so-called second wave of feminism for blurring and complicating an easy distinction between women's roles and men's roles, although the division between the private and public spheres did not completely go away.[28] Change was evident in all quarters and new posts and institutions such as the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and a Woman's Programme-Secretary of State, were created.

Furthermore, as a result of the struggle, the government did away with the sexist language used in official documents, and the number and the role of women in civil services also got enhanced. The position women hitherto enjoyed in the public sphere got alleviated, and they got appointed to federal boards and commissions, to the governing body of Air Canada, as the head of the board of Canadian National Railway, and as members of the Supreme Court of Canada. In fact, the material as well as ideological beginning of the Canadian contemporary women's movements can be traced to the early 1960s.

In this context, it also needs to be pointed put that the creation of the Royal Commission was an idea that, culturally speaking, came from English Canada. The

[27] Quoted in Black, n.19, p. 87.
[28] Errington, n. 7, p.85.

operation of women's movements in Quebec and English Canada had followed the principle of "two solitude" and although there had been various channels connecting the "two solitudes", they were very loosely knitted and not well documented.[29]

Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, 1970

The Royal Commission tabled its Report in 1970, which provided the base for the political representation of women in Canada. The Report had led to both intensification and an institutionalization of the demands for political representation of women in Canada. It, for its time, can be argued to be a very progressive and forward-looking document; and it remains a benchmark for the measurement of gender equality in Canada.

The recommendations in the Report of the RCSW provided the parliament and the Canadian public with a resounding message concerning women's future participation in public life. Tabled in the House of Commons in December 1970, the Report identified the absence of women from public life as a significant obstacle to the achievement of equality for the Canadian women. The emphasis of the Report was on "More Women". It was recommended that more women needed to be elected to the House of Commons, Provincial Legislatures and Local Governments. More women needed to be appointed to Senate and to the bench. [30]

The RCSW Report, thus, had recommended more women MPs, more women senators, more women federal court judges, and more women mandarins. The general strategy seemed to have been to increase the number of women who represent the

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[29] Monique Begin, "The Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada: Twenty Years Later" in Constance Backhouse and David H. Flaherty, *Challenging Times: The Women's Movement in Canada and the US* (Montreal&Kingston, 1992), p.23.

[30] Jane Arscott, "More Women: The RCSW and Political Representation, 1970" in Manon Tremblay and Caroline Andrew, eds., *Women and Political Representation in Canada* (Ottawa, 1997), p.145.

citizenry in high profile public positions.[31] It also called on the Canadian women to show a greater determination to use their legal right to participate as citizens. The call, along with the rest of the recommendations in the Royal Commission Report, served as the blueprint for the women's movement through the 1970s.[32]

The RCSW, through its recommendations, had exposed beyond doubts the *status quo ante* of pervasive, often legal, sexist discrimination. The Commission had identified four basic principles of equal opportunity for women:

i) the freedom to choose whether or not to take employment outside the home;
ii) sharing the responsibility for the care of children by the mother, the father and society;
iii) special treatment related to maternity;
iv) interim special treatment to overcome the adverse effects of discriminatory practices.[33]

Only the first one is anachronistic today; the rest remained valid and are enshrined in the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[34]. To realize the crucial significance of these recommendations, it is essential to talk about the *status quo ante* that prevailed before the tabling of the RCSW Report:

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[31] Kimberly Marie Speers, The Royal Commission on the Status of Women: A Study of the Contradictions and Limitations of Liberalism and Liberal Feminism, (Kingston, 1994), p.113.
[32] Lisa Young, "The Canadian Women's Movement and Political Parties, 1970-1993" in Manon Tremblay and Caroline Andrew, eds., *Women and Political Representation in Canada* (Ottawa, 1997), p.197.
[33] Freda L. Paltiel, "State Initiatives: Impetus and Effects" in Caroline Andrew &Sandra Rodgers, eds., *Women And The Canadian State* (Montreal &Kingston, 1997), p.29
[34] ibid.

i) A married women lacked legal identity, capacity and entitlement. She was under the legal control and authority of her husband in common law and under the Civil Code.

ii) Women could not testify against their husbands or have a separate domicile.

iii) A widow had no automatic legal right to share equitably in her husband's wealth.

iv) An Indian women who married a non-Indian or non-registered Indian, together with her children, lost all the rights and privileges of an Indian, while an Indian man could confer Indian status on his non-Indian wife.

v) All Canadian women who married aliens before 1947 became aliens.

vi) Husbands were deemed to be homeowners or home purchasers by the National Housing Loan regulations, even if the wife was the actual owner or purchaser of the family home.

vii) Housewives were effectively excluded from access to training by the Adult Occupational Training Act provisions, which required candidates to have either a three-year attachment to the labour force or to have one or more persons wholly or substantially dependent on them for support to be eligible for a training allowance.

viii) Pensions, and superannuation policies and programmes legally discriminated on grounds of sex and marital status on the assumption that all women were, rather than had, dependents.

ix) 'Protective' labour legislation had the effect of restricting female job opportunities, and "help wanted" ads specified whether male or female applicants were sought.

x) Women were not admitted to National Defense Military Colleges as a matter of policy; indeed, a woman could be released from the Canadian Forces because she had a child.

xi) Wife assault was regarded as a private intimate matter between husband and wife; *vide* "the rule of thumb".

xii) There were virtually no licensed day-care centers.

xiii) In the media women were invisible and inaudible, confined to the women's pages. Women in academia were scarce, insecure and marginalized.

xiv) The Criminal Code was replete with references to "women of previously chaste character".

xv) Attempting suicide was criminal offence that gave rise to a criminal record." [35]

Keeping this situation in view, the Royal Commission wrote 167 recommendations that had radical implications as far as the political representation of Canadian women was concerned. The Royal Commission was viewed as a gigantic exercise in the process of national consciousness building. It held extensive public

[35] ibid, p.30.

hearings in fourteen cities over a period of ten months, which had an immense effect on the media, on the public and on the members of the group.[36]

The commission had the firm conviction that the advancement of women was foundational to the amelioration of the society. If the position of women could be made more secure and autonomous through equal participation in educational and economic opportunities, people would in general postpone mating and child rearing until they were quite certain that they could form a long-term couple and family unit.[37] It vehemently laid down that the family unit would not be threatened by the emergence of women in public life but would be strengthened in all aspects.[38]

The approach adopted by the Royal Commission in its Report, was a "three-pronged" approach:

i) "To comb and review substantive policy in areas important for women – family, law, employment, child care – to analyze the general direction, and to look for anomalies creating or perpetrating inequalities;

ii) To find a way to redistribute the opportunities for interesting and well-paid work as a good in itself and as the motor for bettering the lives of women;

iii) To take opportunities for changing attitudes through the symbolic representation of women and also through directly addressing stereotypes in government and educational documents."[39]

The Report had aimed at eliminating inequalities and discriminations by attempting to provide equal opportunities. The Report gave a lot of emphasis on child

[36] Black, n.19, p.88.
[37] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women*, (Ottawa, 1970), p.17.
[38] Maureen O'Neil and Sharon Sutherland, "The Machinery of Women's Policy: Implementing the RCSW" in Andrew & Rodgers, n. 33, p.203.
[39] ibid.

care and income security. For instance, it had come up with a series of recommendations respecting day care and stated that

> Parents require supplementary help, and society may legitimately be called upon to contribute to community services for its younger generation. The equality of women means little without such a programme, which should include a number of different services, among them daycare centers.[40]

The Commission further recommended

> that the federal government immediately take steps to enter into agreement with the provinces leading to the adoption of a national Day-Care Act under which federal funds would be made available on a cost-shared basis for the building and running of day care centres meeting specified minimum standards.[41]

One of the most revolutionary recommendations of the Royal Commission was that the principle 'equal pay for work of equal value' needs to be adopted that would replace the existing principle of 'equal pay for equal work'.[42] The Report further gave the Canadian women the right to abortion, which was hitherto denied to them.

As regards to prostitution, the attitude of RCSW was quite progressive and it had recommended the abolition of the 'vagrancy' provision [s.164 (1) (c)] of the Criminal Code.[43] The 'vagrancy' provision of the Criminal Code provides that the prostitutes are to be regulated on the grounds that they were "vagrants". The Report underlined the fact that many women enter the realm of prostitution due to acute economic constraints.

Highlighting the role that society needs to play in the upliftment of women, the Report cited, and endorsed, the recommendations of the *Ouimet Report* that had argued that society needs to develop "alternate social resources for women, particularly for

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[40] *Report of the RCSW*, n. 37, p.271.
[41] ibid.
[42] Black, n.19, p. 96.
[43] *Report of the RSCW*, n. 37, p. 371.

young women who are without lodging or visible means of support, under health or welfare, rather than correctional auspices"[44]

Taking up the issue of sexual offences against women, the Commission became immensely critical of the provision of the Civil Code that claimed that only young women "of previously chaste character" deserves the protection of the law.[45] The Commission, in its recommendations, vehemently argued for the deletion of the phrase from all the relevant sections of the Civil Code.[46] It stated that "the Criminal Code be amended to extend protection from sexual abuse to all young people, male and female, and protection to everyone from sexual exploitation either by false representation, use of force, threat, or the abuse of authority."[47]

The Royal Commission, thus, through these recommendations, tried to restore the pride of women and give them their due in the society. The recommendations of the Commission allowed women to enter the hitherto man's world of work and, negated the prevailing view that confined women to the four walls of the house. The entry of women into a world, which was so far monopolized by men, gave rise to a strong desire amongst women to politically alleviate themselves so as to be able to write and guide their own destinies.

However, the RCSW Report had to face staunch criticisms from various quarters particularly as regards to its recommendations in the arena of political representation of women. It was criticized by many of the new generation feminists for failing to identify some of the basic elements of women's oppression. Although the Report devoted almost an entire chapter to the issue of political representation of women identifying the lack of presence of women in public life as one of the prime reasons for their inequality, and emphasized that more and more women needed to be elected to the House of

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[44] Report of the RCSW, n.37, p.372 , citing Canadian Committee on Corrections, *Report: Toward Unity, Criminal Justice and Corrections* (Ouimet Report) (Ottawa,1969), p. 391.
[45] Lorenne M.G. Clark, "Reminiscences and Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Commission's Report" in Andrew & Rodgers, n.33, p.8.
[46] *Report of the RCSW*, n.37, p. 373.
[47] ibid, p.374.

Commons (HOC), Provincial Legislatures and Local Governments; its recommendations are argued to be weak.

It is also argued that this weakness of the RCSW Report was not the result of a lack of awareness of the problems, but was due to the lack of "a theoretical framework for analysis."[48] Its analysis of causes satisfied neither the left wing nor the right wing feminists. Lorenne M.G. Clark, talking about the issue of violence against women and children, argues that despite devoting two paragraphs to the issue of sexual offences in relation to women, the Commission fails to address the issue in depth.[49]

The Royal Commission, in fact, was seen more as an attempt to diffuse active feminism. Canadian governments have appointed Royal Commissions on numerous occasions, most conspicuous among them being the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (1963-71). Thus, the prevailing argument was that the Canadian way to deal with active insistent claims for reforms is to "royal-commission them to death".[50] Florence Bird, the Chairman of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, himself wrote:

> There was a general consensus in editorials all across the country that the commission would be pigeon-holed and forgotten. It was also often suggested that the commission was a political gimmick to allow women to let off steam and to appease Judy LeMarsh and Laura Sabia's cohorts.[51]

It was further felt by many that the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada had failed to address the various issues of importance in depth because the ongoing women's movement could not inform and influence its work. Monique Begin argues that the Commission did not benefit from the discussions generated within women's movement, as it had no way to know what these movements were aiming for

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[48] Monique Begin, "The Canadian Government and the Commission's Report" in Andrew & Rodgers, n.33, p.2.
[49] Clark, n.45, p.8.
[50] Black, n.19, p.88.
[51] Quoted in ibid.

except through public demonstrations that were staged very rarely.[52] Moreover, such demonstrations were often quite radical and were difficult to understand from the outside in the absence of written manifestoes.[53]

One cannot, however, deny that the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was a dynamic and progressive document that changed the very fabric of the Canadian social, political and economic life. It is argued that the Royal Commission through its Report was able to bring about a "strategic marriage" between the interests of the various women groups that were outside the government on one hand and the forces, both political and bureaucratic, inside the government on the other.[54]

Writing in the *Toronto Star*, Anthony Westell saw the Report of the Royal Commission as a "bombshell", a "political blockbuster", and argued that the Report was "packed with more explosive potential than any device manufactured by terrorists".[55] Trying to provide a balanced judgment, Morris had put forth,

> If we view the RCSW as an arm, or vehicle, of the women's movement, we must agree with feminist critics that it failed to adequately reflect feminists concerns and commitments. If, on the other hand, we view the RCSW as a step in the Canadian policy making process, we cannot judge its composition deficient simply because it provided no representation for critical feminism.[56]

The Royal Commission, in fact, had provided a definite plan of action to be followed, so as to ensure that the Report got implemented without delay and it reached its target group. As per this plan of action:

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[52] Begin, n.29, p.28.
[53] ibid.
[54] Maureen O'Neil and Sharon Sutherland, "The Machinery of Women's Policy: Implementing the RCSW" in Andrew & Rodgers, n.33, p.198.
[55] Jick Vickers, Pauline Rankin and Christine Appelle, *Politics As If Women Mattered: A Political Analysis of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women* (Toronto, 1993), p.26.
[56] Quoted in ibid.

i) For the successful implementation of the Report, it is required that each Canadian government establishes a committee of administrators who would oversee its implementation.

ii) The Commission also highlighted the need to establish a Human Rights Commission by each Canadian government to oversee its own legislation.

iii) The Commission recommended the establishment of a Status of Women Council, which would report to the Parliament directly.

iv) Highlighting the need to implement the Report at the grass root level, the Commission recommended for each province and territory to establish government bureau or other agencies that would oversee the implementations of the various recommendations of the Report.[57]

One may, thus, argue that, notwithstanding its shortcomings, the Report of the RCSW was, undoubtedly, the first comprehensive and concerted attempt at changing the lives of the Canadian women. It, for the first time targeted the female half of the population and contained opportunities of all magnitudes, from incremental to revolutionary. However, looking at the ground realities, one finds that none of these measures got fully adopted in the decade following the tabling of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. Hence there was the need for yet another wave of campaigns and pressure to ensure that the reforms initiated by the Royal Commission are carried out in full force.

[57] O'Neil and Sutherland, n.54, p.204.

Follow-up Actions

Dissatisfied at the lack of immediate government response towards the Royal Commission Report, the women's groups that were originally active in demanding a Royal Commission turned the Committee on Equality for Women into a National Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women in Canada. It met during 1971, and brought under its wing a number of new groups that included organizations such as the 'liberal-feminist' Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women (MACSW), Toronto Women's Liberation, and Toronto's 'radical-feminist' New Feminists.[58]

In 1972 it held a 'Strategy for Change' conference; and the National Action Committee on Women (NAC) was created out of a process of interaction and conflict.[59] NAC dropped the 'Ad Hoc' from its title because the government did not fund ad hoc groups, and it was in urgent need of money to carry forward the struggle for women's emancipation and work on the 'strategy for change'.[60] NAC quickly gathered momentum and emerged as an almost all-encompassing umbrella organization. By 1986, NAC could claim to represent almost five million women in more than five hundred organizations, which included a considerable number of organizations that were indirectly affiliated to it.[61]

Apart from NAC, a special position of a Minister Responsible for the Status of Women at the federal level was also created in 1971. 1973 saw the establishment of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. All these various organizations have played significantly crucial roles in voicing the grievances of a multi-generational women's movement and contributed to the political emancipation of women in Canada. The following table (Table 1.2) provides a list of the major Canadian Women's Organizations and their main purposes, which were set up from 1960 to 1983.

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[58] Black, n.19, p.96.
[59] Vickers, n.55, p.26.
[60] Black, n.19, p.96.

[61] ibid, p. 85.

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TABLE 1.2

The Establishment of Major Canadian Women's Organisations, 1960-83

Date	Organisation	Main Purpose
July 1960	Voice of Women (VOW)	To fight against the possibility of a nuclear war
April 1966	Federation des Femmes du Quebec (FFQ)	Pressurizing for legislative reform and a Council of Women
June 1966	Committee for the Equality of Women in Canada (CEW)	Demand for the setting up of a Royal Commission on the Status of Women
February 1967	Royal Commission on the Status of Women (RCSW)	To provide a report on the status of women in Canada
March 1969	New Feminists, Toronto	Awakening the consciousness of women and fight against oppression
September 1970	Report of the RCSW	Recommendations for the enhancement of the status of women in Canada
January 1971	National Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women	Pressurizing for the implementation of the Report of the RCSW
February 1972	Women for Political Action (WPA)	Increasing female political participation and political education at all levels of government
April 1972	National Action Committee on the Status of Women in Canada (	Replaced Ad Hoc Committee
May 1973	Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW)	To report on women's concerns to the Minister responsible for the status of women
February 1979	Feminist Party of Canada	To establish a political party with a feminist perspective.
January 1981	Ad Hoc Committee of Canadian Women	To achieve equality for women in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
January 1983	Canadian Coalition Against Media Pornography	To protest the portrayal of women on First Choice Pay TV

Source: Sylvia B. Bashevkin, "Independence Versus Partnership: Dilemmas in the Political History of Women in English Canada" in Sylvia B. Bashevkin, ed., *Toeing the Lines: Women and Party Politics in English Canada* (Toronto, 1993), p.436.

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All these developments had provided an immense boost to the struggle for political representation of women in Canada; and the coming decades saw a steady rise in the representation of women in the federal parliament and other representative institutions of the government. In 1990, Audrey McLaughlin of the New Democratic Party (NDP) was elected as the first woman leader of a national political party; Rita Johnson of British Columbia was elected as the first female leader of a governing political party in 1991; in early 1993 Catherine Callbeck was the first to be elected as a premier; and perhaps the most significant symbol of change occurred when in June 1993 Kim Campbell took over as the leader of the National Progressive Conservative Party and as the prime minister of the country.[62]

Thus, although they are still far from attaining numerical equality in terms of legislative representation, Canadian women have made significant gains over the past few decades in the political realm. Before the federal elections of 1993, Canada ranked second in its female representation among industrialized democracies with single member district electoral systems.[63] Canada, at 13 per cent, had a higher proportion of women than several industrialised democracies with proportional representation system.[64]

The turning point was the 1984 elections where the number of female candidates for all the three major national political parties doubled, and the percentage of female MPs recorded a rise from 5 to 10.[65] The 1988 elections saw a jump in the female candidates for major political parties, and percentage of female MPs increased to 13 per cent.[66] In the case of the 1993 elections, despite the precipitous decline in the parliamentary seats of both the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) and the New

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[62] MacIvor, n.17, p.81.
[63] Donley T. Studlar and Richard E. Matland, "The Growth of Women's Representation in the Canadian House of Commons and the Election of 1984: A Reappraisal", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, (Waterloo), vol.27, no.1, (March, 1994), p.53.
[64] ibid.
[65] ibid, p.54.
[66] ibid.

Democrats, overall women's number in the House of Commons rose almost 5 per cent – from 13.2 per cent to 18.0 per cent, i.e. 53 women.[67] In both the 1997 and 2000 elections, the percentage of women MPs in the House of Commons is 20.6 per cent of the total MPs. In the June 2004 elections, 65 of the 308 MPs, i.e., 21.1 per cent, elected were women.[68]

Thus, on the basis of the preceding discussion that took a close look at how the issue of political representation of women in Canada has evolved and gathered momentum over the years, one may conclude that it was the result of a meticulous struggle and involved immense sacrifices and intense commitment. From the Protestant Victorian view that prevailed during the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century that saw the home as being the 'proper place' for a women, Canada has come a long way as far as socio-political and economic emancipation of the women is concerned.

Since 1970s and particularly during the 1980s and in the 1990s, the numbers of women in positions of political, economic, cultural and legal influences have been growing significantly. One can no longer undermine the phenomenon of increasing political role and influence of women; and this role that women play in the Canadian political framework is immensely crucial in determining not only the present but also the future of Canada as a modern parliamentary democracy.

Having, thus, discussed the evolving patterns of women's representation in Canadian politics and tracing this evolution through its various stages, the present study, in the next chapter (Chapter II) would examine as to how far all these concerted efforts towards increasing political participation and representation of women have been able to achieve its goals in concrete terms.

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[67] Data available at *Women and Elections*, http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/elections/women.htm., dated 2 September, 2004.
[68] ibid.

For this purpose the second chapter of this study would critically look at the changing equations of women's representation in Canadian federal parliament from 1984 elections to 2004 elections. The chapter would also look at the attitude of the various political parties, media and the people as such towards women political candidates and would explore the obstacles faced by the women candidates in their quest for political empowerment.

Chapter II

Women's Participation and Representation in The Federal parliament

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Women's Participation and Representation in The Federal Parliament

It has been observed in the first chapter of the present study that over the years there has been an increasing awareness in Canada towards the need to enhance the participation and representation of women in the political arena. Under the impact of industrialisation, World War I and World War II, more and more women have come out openly and strongly to fight against the limited role accorded to them in the socio-political and economic sphere. It has been observed that by 1960s and 70s Canadian women had come a long way from the early Protestant Victorian view that confined women to the four walls of the house.

The 1960s saw a sweeping movement in Canada that sought to enable women to become an active part of the so-called 'man's world' on their own terms and not on the basis of compromising their identity as a woman. The most significant development during this period was the establishment of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1967 that changed the very course of the women's movement in Canada by providing it with a concrete base.

The Royal Commission and its various recommendations have been dealt with at length in the previous chapter. What the present chapter intends to deal with is that how far these recommendations have found real implementations as far as participation and representation of women in the political sphere is concerned.

The call of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women was "More Women"- more women in the House of Commons, Provincial Legislatures and Local Governments. The main focus of the present chapter is to look at the extent to which, this 'call' has been answered. Another prime issue that needs to be addressed in this context is that whether

the proportion of women members in the significant political representative institutions is a sufficient measure of effective representation of women; and whether more women in Canadian federal parliament would necessarily translate into public policies and political procedures that favour women. This aspect, however, will be taken up in the third chapter. The present chapter concentrates on the issue of representation of women in Canadian federal Parliament from 1984 to 2004.

The political elites in almost all the democratic polities of the world generally exclude and bypass the poor, the ethnic and racial minorities, and women. Often some concessions, more in the form of tokenism, are granted to showcase the political system as democratic and multicultural. Statistics reveal that among all these social groups, women are the most underrepresented in the elected assemblies of the world.[1]

In the case of Canada, a major attitudinal change, however, has been visible since the second wave of feminism that swept the country during the 1960s. The Royal Commission on the Status of Women that tabled its Report in 1970 led to the gradual institutionalization and intensification of this process. It is significant that that the growth of women's political participation and representation in Canada during the past two decades has increased tremendously, as compared to the minimal representation during the first fifty years of enfranchisement.

For the purpose of the study of political representation of women in Canadian federal parliament from 1984 to 2004 elections, the present chapter has been divided into number of sub-sections. On the very outset, the present chapter attempts to highlight the importance of the 1984 elections in Canadian politics so far as women's political representation is concerned. It attempts to show, with the help of available data as to how the 1984 elections marked a departure from the earlier elections, and had provided the crusade for more political representation of women with a new impetus.

[1] Robert Putnam, *The Comparative Study of Political Elites* (Englewood Cliffs, 1976), p. 32.

Having talked about the significance of the 1984 federal elections, the present chapter looks at the changing equations of the political participation and representation of women from 1984 to 2004 federal elections. The present chapter further looks at the attitude of the major national political parties towards women candidates. It also looks into the various obstacles that come in the way of a woman candidate aspiring political power and attempts to see as to how far the political system is accessible to women.

The 1984 Elections: A Watershed in Political Participation and Representation of Women

The 1984 elections, it is argued, had been a watershed in the history of political participation and representation of women in Canada. In many ways it had marked a break away from the past, as it is from this year onwards the political representation of women in Canadian federal parliament had started showing an upward trend. The year 1984 marked the beginning of a new era for Canadian federal politics as each of the major political parties made a conscious attempt to nominate more women candidates, and for the first time in the history of Canadian elections, the three major party leaders participated in a nationally televised debate that was exclusively devoted to political issues that concerned women.[2]

The result of such developments was clearly manifested in terms of the number of women elected to the House of Commons in 1984. It almost doubled from 14 in 1980 to 27 in 1984. The following table (Table 2.1) that shows the number of women elected to the House of Commons from 1921 to 1984 clearly reveal that the year 1984 saw a big leap in terms of women representation in the Commons. The Table, in fact, manifests that prior to late 1970s; women could hardly make their presence felt in the political realm.

[2] Janine Brodie, "Women and the Electoral Process in Canada" in Kathy Megyery, ed., *Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equity in Representation* (Toronto and Oxford, 1991), p.5.

TABLE 2.1

Number of Women Elected to the House of Commons by Year, 1921-84

Years	Number of Women Elected
1921	1
1925	1
1926	1
1935	2
1940	1
1949	0
1953	4
1957	2
1958	2
1962	5
1963	4
1965	4
1968	1
1972	5
1974	9
1979	10
1980	14
1984	27

Source: Cited in Janine Brodie, "Women and the Electoral Process in Canada" in Kathy Megyery, ed., *Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equity in Representation* (Toronto, 1991), p. 5.

The Table 2.1 reveals that till 1984, the number of women elected to the House of Commons was largely insignificant and negligible. Till 1972 the maximum number of women elected to the House of Commons in one year was only 5 (1962 and 1972). In most years (1921, 1925, 1926, 1940, 1968), the number of women elected to the House of Commons has otherwise been only one. In fact, the year 1949 did not see the election of one single woman to the House of Commons.

However, the year 1984, as evident from the Table, shows a massive leap from the past. In fact, as compared to the year 1980, the number of women elected to the House of Commons in 1984 almost doubled. If one observes this data in a graph form

(see Graph1 in p.41), the steep rise in the representation of women in the House of Commons becomes crystal clear.

If one looks at the percentage of women MPs in Canadian House of Commons 1921 to 1984, the significant rise in the percentage of women MPs in 1984 is unmistakable (see Table 2.2).

TABLE 2.2

Percentage of Women MPs of the Total MPs Elected, 1921-84

Year	Total Number of MPs Elected	% Of Women of the total MPs Elected
1921	235	0.4
1925	245	0.4
1926	245	0.4
1930	245	0.4
1935	245	0.8
1940	245	0.4
1945	245	0.4
1949	262	0
1953	265	1.5
1957	265	0.8
1958	265	0.8
1962	265	1.9
1963	265	1.5
1965	265	1.5
1968	264	0.4
1972	264	1.9
1974	301	2.9
1979	282	3.5
1980	282	5.0
1984	282	9.6

Source: "Percentage of Mps of the Total MPs Elected", data available at Library of Parliament, http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/elections/women-elected.html, dated 2 September 2004

The Table 2.2 clearly shows that the year 1984 recorded a notable and significant rise in the percentage of women MPs elected to the House of Commons, as compared to

the preceding years. It is seen that up-to 1958, the percentage of women MPs of the to total MPs elected have been less than 1, with the exception of the year 1953 when it was 1.5 per cent. In fact, in the year 1949, the percentage of women MPs was zero.

This, indeed, reflects the massive under-representation faced by women in the Canadian federal parliament. The situation showed some signs of improvement from 1962 onwards as there were at least more than 1 per cent women representatives in the federal parliament. However, the percentage again went down below 1 per cent in 1968, and was recorded at 0.4 per cent. From 1972 onwards, the upward trend in women's representation has shown a steady progress. This follows the tabling of its Report by RCSW in 1970. The year 1984 marked a massive increase in this percentage as compared to the earlier years and recorded the percentage of women MPs at 9.6 per cent. .

If we put the above data in a graph form (see Graph 2, p.42), than the steep rise in the percentage of women MPs elected in the year 1984 cannot be missed. The following graph clearly shows that the in 1984 the percentage of women MPs elected has increased tremendously. The steep rise in the percentage is visible from 1972 onwards. Although, in case of the other years, the growth has been gradual, in the year 1984, the percentage of women MPs almost doubled from the 5.0 per cent in 1980 to 9.6 per cent.

However, 9.6 per cent as such cannot be argued to be a major percentage and women do have a long way to go as far as their political representation in the Canadian federal parliament is concerned. The year 1984 cannot, hence, be argued to be the finest year in terms of political representation of women in Canada, but it definitely signifies a breaking away from the past where the political representation of women was almost non-existent.

The year 1984, thus, marked the beginning of a new era; and there has since been a steady growth in the political representation and participation of women in Canadian federal politics. There is most significantly a visible and marked change in the attitude of political parties towards women. So far it can be observed that the political parties, at

least the three major political parties, i.e., the Liberals, the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) and the New Democratic Party (NDP) had a reluctant attitude towards projecting women as candidates for House of Commons elections. Women had also been suffering from massive under-representation at the provincial and federal levels of party activity, including election as delegates to party conferences and the election as members to party executive.[3] However, this scenario has shown signs of change since the mid-1980s as evident from the following table (see Table 2.3).

TABLE 2.3

Number of Women Candidates Projected by the Three Major Political Parties, 1963-84

	Number of Women Candidates in Each Election							
Major Political Parties	1963	1965	1968	1972	1974	1979	1980	1984
Liberals	6	8	1	10	20	21	23	44
PCs	12	8	6	6	11	14	33	23
NDP	13	16	21	28	42	47	14	64

Source: "Number of Women Candidates Projected by Major Political Parties" data available at *Library of Parliament*, http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/elections/women-elected.html, dated 2 September 2004

The Table 2.3 shows that the NDP had taken a greater initiative in the projection of women candidates for House of Commons elections than the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives. In the year 1968, where the Liberals had only one women candidate for the House of Commons elections, the NDP had 21 women candidates.

The year 1984 marked a watershed in the projection of women candidates as far as the Liberals are concerned as they projected a record 44 candidates which was their highest since 1963. The NDP had, in the same year, outdone the Liberals and projected 64 women candidates for the House of Commons elections. The PCs had projected 23 women candidates in the 1984 elections, whereas in 1980 elections they had 33 women

[3] Heather MacIvor, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Ontario, 1996), p.258.

candidates. Thus, the Table clearly manifests a visible shift in the attitude of the political parties towards the women aspirants of political empowerment.

Changing Equations in the Political Participation and Representation of Women: Looking at the Federal Elections from 1988 to 2004

Having established the year 1984 as a watershed in the process of political representation of women in Canada, one needs to look at whether the trend initiated by the 1984 elections has persisted in the following years. In order to address this issue, one needs to, at the very outset, look at the women candidates projected by the major political parties in Canada. It is only when political parties increasingly offer candidacies to women candidates; women would have a chance to come forward and display their political potential.

The 1984 elections marked the beginning of an increased political participation of women. However, it is still the case that although women constitute more than half the population of Canada, they accounted for only little more than two out of ten candidates in the 2004 federal elections.[4] It suggests that equal political representation in Canada still remains a distant dream.

According to the Elections Canada, 1,685 candidates ran in the 2004 elections. Of these 1,294 were men and 391 women. During the campaign, women accounted for 23.2 per cent of the candidates – a minimal increase over the 2000 federal elections where women accounted for 20.7 per cent of candidates.[5] The following table (Table 2.4) manifests the number of women candidates projected by the three major political parties, i.e., the Liberals, Progressive Conservatives and New Democrats, 1988 to 2004 federal elections.

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[4] Gina Bishop, "Women's Representation After the 2004 Federal Elections" available at http://www.canadiandemocraticmovement.ca/displayarticle476.html, dated 31 October, 2004.

[5] ibid.

TABLE 2.4

Women Candidates Projected by the Three Major Political Parties, 1988-2004

Major Political Parties	1988	1993	1997	2000	2004*
Liberals	53	64	84	65	75
Progressive Conservatives	37	67	56	39	37
New Democratic Party	84	113	107	88	96

Source: Library of Parliament, available at http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/elections/women-elected.html, dated 2 September, 2004.

* Source for 2004 Federal Elections Gina Bishop, "Women's Representation After the 2004 Federal Elections", available at http://www.canadiandemocraticmovement.ca/displayarticle476.html, dated 31 October, 2004

Table 2.4 reveals that there has been a steady growth in the number of women candidates projected by the three major political parties in Canada if one compares it to the era till 1984. However, one cannot miss the fact that there is still a kind of reluctance on the part of the major parties particularly the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives to project women as their candidate.

It is also argued that the women candidates often fail to gain nominations for the safe seats. They are mostly assigned the seats, which the so-called strong male candidates are not willing to contest. The following tables (Table 2.5 I and Table 2.5 II) clearly manifest the above point by showing the percentage as regards to the nominations of women in competitive seats as per the data available of the 1984 elections.

TABLE 2.5

Women and Nominations in Competitive Seats

(I)

Aggregate Figures (Performance-Based Measure), 1984 Federal Elections

Competitiveness of local party	Female candidates (%)	Male candidates (%)
Safe Seat	12	25
Good Chance	18	26
Unlikely	14	12
Hopeless	56	38
N	(171)	(706)

Source: Lynda Erickson, "Women and Candidacies for the House of Commons" in Kathy Megyery, ed., *Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equity in Representation* (Toronto, 1991), p.10.

(II)

Survey Results (Perception-Based Measures)

Competitiveness of local party	Female Candidates (%)	Male Candidates (%)
Safe Seat	10	22
Good Chance	52	47
Unlikely	32	24
Hopeless	6	7
N	(69)	(275)

Source: Cited in ibid.

In this context, however, it needs to be highlighted that in order to assess the effects of competitiveness on party activity, one of the critical elements would be to closely perceive local competitiveness. This analysis is limited to the three major political parties in Canada, i.e., the Liberals, the Progressive Conservatives and the New Democratic Party.

Results in both the cases, at the aggregate level using the performance measure and at the level of survey data using the perception data, reveal that women are still not being nominated in safe seats compared to that of the nomination of their male counterparts. According to the aggregate data, only 12 per cent women nominated by the three parties were nominated to constituencies that were characterized as safe. Whereas the male candidates got 25 per cent nominations to seats that were considered safe. Women candidates got their maximum nominations in case of seats that were characterized either unlikely or hopeless.

In the perception based survey results also, where the perspective of local associations and their judgment of their own competitiveness have been assessed one observes that the women candidates nominated to the safe candidacies were only 10 per cent; whereas the male candidates got a 22 per cent nomination to seats that were considered safe. Women nominations rose only in case of constituencies that have been categorized as unlikely and hopeless.

It is argued that the women's traditional role of being the home-maker is responsible for raising a doubt in the minds of all as to whether a woman would be able to forego her domestic responsibilities and devote her heart and mind in the public sphere. However, this is a phenomenon that cannot be argued to be confined only to Canada. As the former Chairperson of the Swedish Equality Commission comments,

> Everyone agrees that equality is a good thing – that we must have equality provided that it doesn't cost anything, as long as it will require only superficial changes, provided that we need to do nothing more than make pretty speeches, or as long it is woman who pay the price for it.[6]

Moreover women tend to enter politics later than their male counterparts as they wait for their children to grow up before they make a full-fledged entry into politics. At least this is what is expected of them. As a result of this delayed entry they find

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[6] Drude Dahlerup, "Overcoming the Barriers: An Approach to the Study of How Women's Issues are Kept from the Political Agenda" in J. Stiehm ed., *Women's Views of the Political World of Man* (New York, 1982), p.34.

themselves in a disadvantageous position in competing with their male political counterparts. As Randall argues, in order to get to the top one has to start early.[7] It is perhaps for the same reasons that political parties may not find sufficient suitable women candidates to field in the elections.

If one looks at the number of total women elected to the House of Commons from 1988 to 2004, having already discussed the big leap taken in the 1984 lections, it is observed that although there is an increase in the number of women elected to the House of Commons each year, this increased representation seems quite illusionary as the rise is marginal. The following table (Table 2.6) clearly manifests this point.

TABLE 2.6

Number of Women Elected to the House of Commons by Year, 1988-2004

Year	Number of Women Candidate Elected
1988	39
1993	53
1997	62
2000	62
2004*	65

Source: "Number of women Elected to the House of Commons by Year" data available at *Library of Parliament,* http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/elections/women-elected.html, dated 2 September 2004.

* The source for 2004 Federal Elections is Gina Bishop, "Women's Representation After the 2004 Federal Elections" available at http://www.canadiandemocraticmovement.ca/displayarticle476.html, dated 31 October 2004.

The Table 2.6 clearly displays the trend that the number of women candidates being elected to the House of Commons in each federal elections since 1988 onwards has been rising at a very slow pace, to the extent that at times it becomes quite negligible. As for instance in the 1997 and 2000 elections, the number of women elected to the Commons was 62. In 2004 elections, this number rose only to 65.

[7] Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics: An International Perspective* (London, 1987), p.126.

This marginal growth becomes clearly evident if one looks at the above data in a graph form (see Graph 3, p.43). Thus, it may be observed that women still have a long way to go in terms of their increased representation in the House of Commons.

To understand the scenario as regards to the political representation and participation of women in Canadian federal parliament, it is essential to look at the percentage of women MPs of the total MPs elected. That would give a picture (see Table 2.7) of actual participation and representation level of women at the federal level.

The Table 2.7 clearly shows that the percentage women of the total MPs elected has been showing an undoubtedly upward trend. In fact in 1988 itself, it rose massively, from 9.6 per cent in 1984 elections to 13.2 per cent. As compared to the 1984 elections, the percentage doubled to 18.0% in 1993. However, in the 1997, 2000 and 2004 elections, the growth has not been of much significance. This point becomes immensely clear if one observes the graph form of the following data (see Graph 4, p.43).

TABLE 2.7

Percentage Of Women Of The Total MPs Elected, 1988-2004

Year	Total Numbers of MPs Elected	% Of Women of the Total MPs Elected
1988	295	13.2
1993	295	18.0
1997	301	20.6
2000	301	20.6
2004*	308	21.1

Source: "Percentage Of Women Of The Total MPs Elected' available at *Library of Parliament*, http://www.sfu.ca/~aheard/elections/women-elected.html, dated 2 September 2004.

* The source for 2004 Federal Elections is Gina Bishop, "Women's Representation After the 2004 Federal Elections" available at http://www.canadiandemocraticmovement.ca/displayarticle476.html, dated 31 October, 2004

Thus on the basis of an overall analysis of the Canadian federal election pattern, one may draw the conclusion that political participation and representation of women in Canada has come a long way from the days where the Protestant Victorian view of confining the women to the four walls of the house was prevalent. Women today enjoy increasing representation in the federal polity.

However, this growth cannot be argued to be revolutionary as such. Women do not enjoy the position of political decision maker in the Canadian political set up. The Canadian socio-political set up, although equal in the rhetoric, fails to recognize the political potential of women the same way as that of their male counterparts. A woman, in her quest for a political career, has to encounter obstacles that her male counterparts are spared from. Here the accessibility of the political system is in question. A political system that claims to be based on the concept of equality should be accessible to both men and women alike. A survey conducted during the 1988 elections as regards to the obstacles faced by women in their political adventures shows the following results:

TABLE 2.8

Ranking Of Most Important Obstacles Among 1988 Women Candidates

Obstacles	**Percentages**
Funding	37.0
Lack of Public Support	18.5
Lack of Party Support	11.1
Lack of Media Coverage	11.1
Family Obligations	7.4
Winning Nomination	3.7
Finding Volunteers	3.7
Party Gender Negative	3.7
Work Obligations	3.7

Source: Janine Brodie, "Women and the Electoral Process in Canada" in Kathy Megyery, ed., *Women in Canadian Politics: Toward Equity in Representation* (Toronto, 1991), p.45.

Almost all the obstacles pointed out in case of the 1988 federal elections hold water till date. Although one may say that people are increasingly becoming sensitive towards gender politics, funding and family obligations, as it has been projected in the above table (Table 2.8), are two of the most severe impediments in the path of a woman's political career. Lack of public support and lack of party support are also to a great extent responsible for the creating obstacles in the path of the political career of a woman.

Lack of media coverage is another crucial obstacle as in today's world media plays a very significant role in making and breaking the image of a political candidate. Linda Archibald et al, in the article "Sex Biases in Newspaper Reporting: Press Treatment of Municipal Candidates", assessing a sample of all newspaper coverage of the municipal elections in Canada, demonstrate that the political bias of the journalists in terms of male and female candidates is manifested in the kind of characteristics of candidates which are reported including a woman candidate's marital and parental status, as well as her husband's or father's occupation and status in the community.[8]

Having discussed the practical scenario as regards to the political representation of women in Canadian federal parliament, one may safely argue that although from 1984 onwards women's representation has shown an upward growth, there are ample instances to prove that only lip service has been paid to the issue of increasing women political representation. The present chapter clearly points out the obstacles that come in the way of a woman politician. The attitude of the media and the political parties has put further impediments in the political path of a woman.

However, the present chapter also highlights that times are fast changing and people are increasingly becoming conscious of gender politics. If one looks at the political scenario of Canada up to 1960s and 70s, as has been elaborated in the first chapter of the present study, and compares it to the political scenario of the 1980s and 90s, as has been discussed in the present chapter, a visible attitudinal change may be

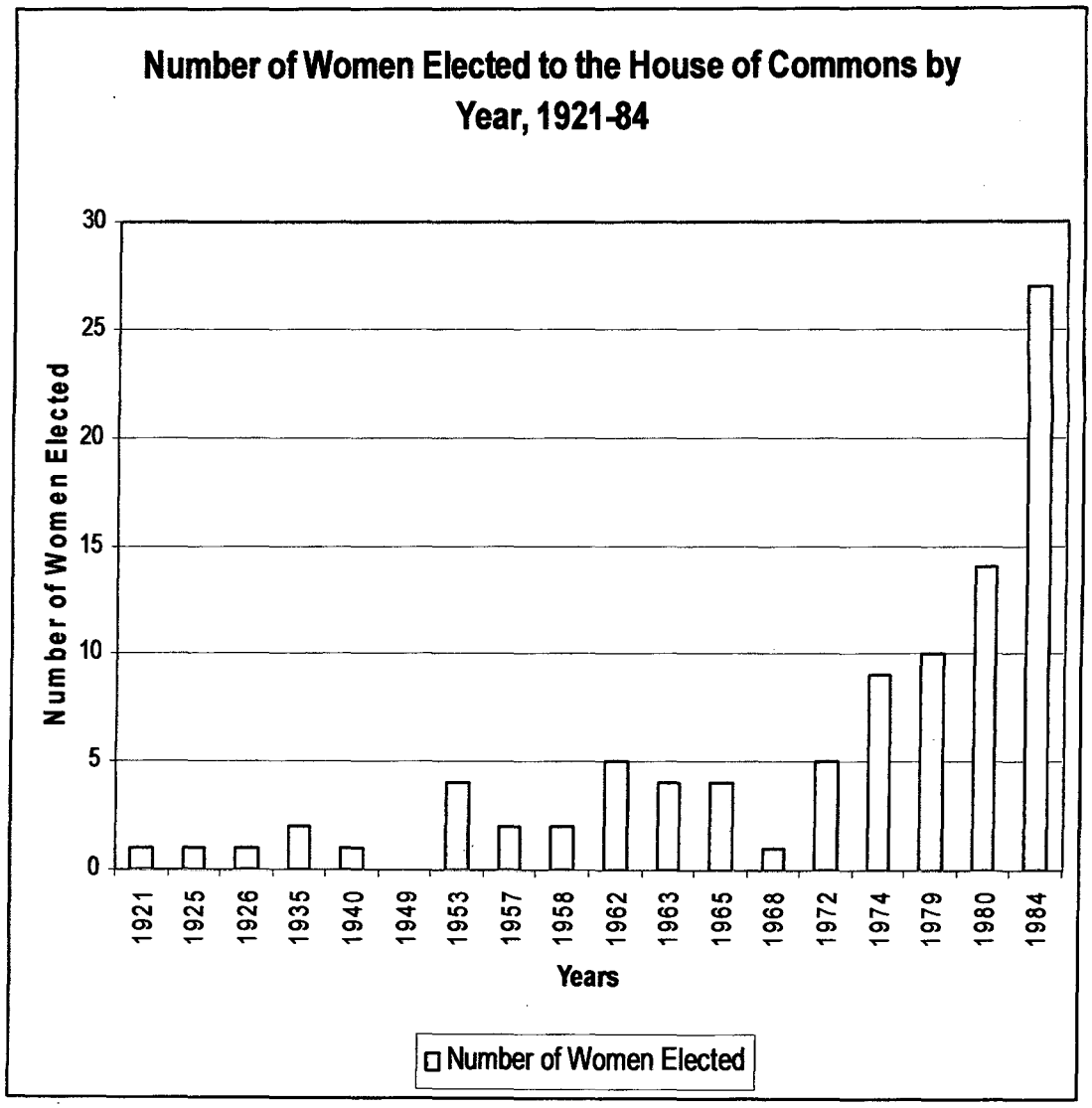
[8] Linda Archibald et al, "Sex Biases in Newspaper Reporting: Press Treatment of Municipal Candidates" in Atlantis, (Lancaster), vol. V, no.2, Spring 1980, pp. 177-184.

observed. Political parties are also willing to adopt a more congenial attitude towards women candidates.

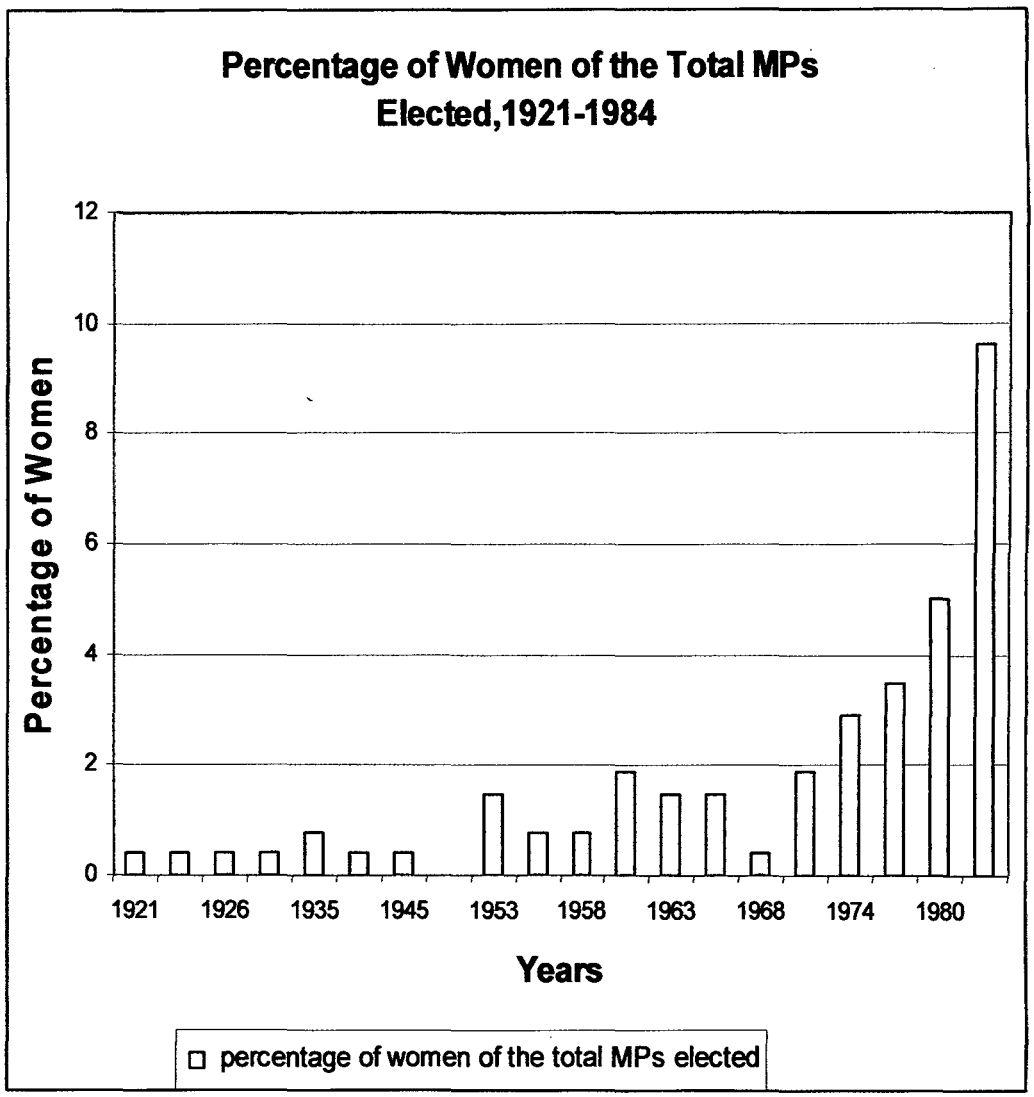
This change is evident from the participation of the three major political parties in the nationally televised debate in early 1980s that exclusively dealt with issues concerning women. Since then, as it has elaborated in the present chapter, there has been a conscious attempts by political parties, particularly by the major national parties to nominate more women candidates and to recruit more and more women delegates at the organizational level.

However, one needs to, in this context, examine the question as to whether an increasing numerical strength of women in the political arena translates to policy formulations and implementations favouring women. In order to address this question, the present study, in the next chapter, would closely look at the various concepts and theories of representation, and would also examine the various arguments and counter-arguments surrounding the concept. The next chapter would then attempt to place these arguments in the Canadian context. The main aim would be to look at how the women in positions of political power conduct themselves in the face of rigid party ideology and discipline.

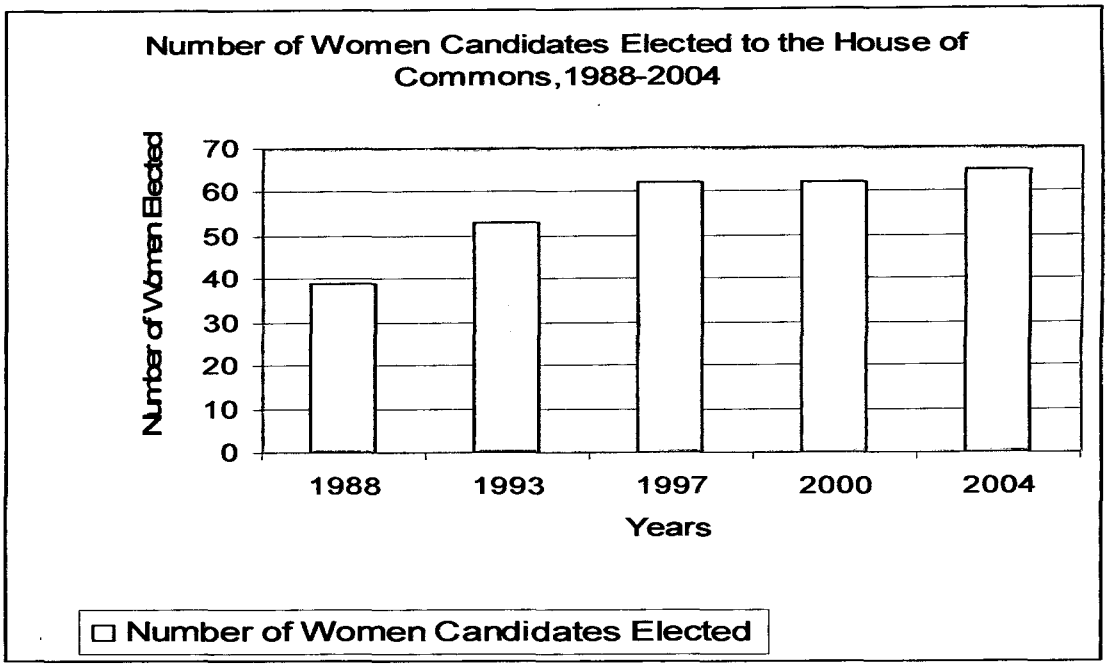
GRAPH 1


Number of Women Elected to the House of Commons by Year, 1921-84
Number of Women Elected
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
1921
1925
1926
1935
1940
1949
1953
1957
1958
1962
1963
1965
1968
1972
1974
1979
1980
1984
Years
Number of Women Elected

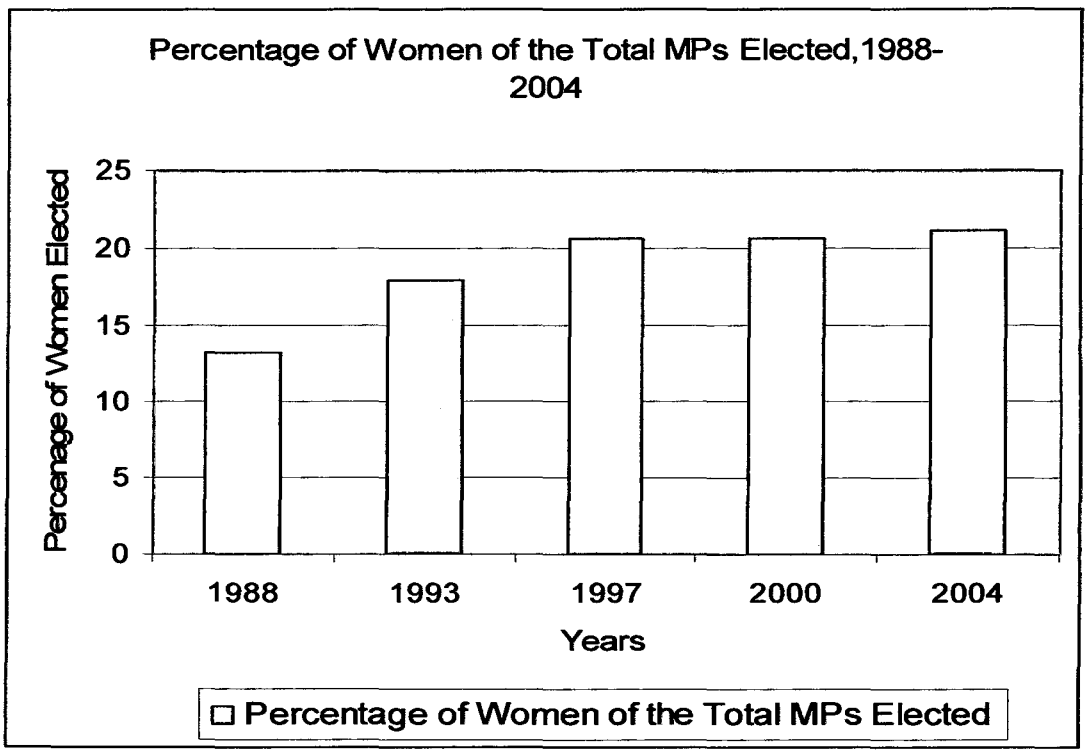
GRAPH 2


Percentage of Women of the Total MPs Elected,1921-1984
Percentage of Women
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
1921
1926
1935
1945
1953
1958
1963
1968
1974
1980
Years
percentage of women of the total MPs elected

GRAPH 3



GRAPH 4



Chapter III

Meaning of Representation: Does it Make a Difference to Women?

Chapter III

Meaning of Representation: Does it Make a Difference to Women?

In the first and the second chapter of the present study the historical background of the issue of women's political representation in Canada have been explored and the women's participation and representation in the Canadian federal parliament has been closely looked into. The first chapter of the present study closely evaluated the various phases through which the women's movement in Canada passed and how the movement came to acquire its present shape. In this respect the crucial role played by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women has been highlighted and the follow up actions in pursuit of the Royal Commission recommendations have been thoroughly discussed.

The second chapter of the present study has looked at the actual participation and representation of women in Canadian federal parliament with the help of available data, and further highlighted the various obstacles that lie in the path of a woman wanting to become an active part of the political scene of the country. It has been realized that women's political participation and representation in Canada has come a long way and the early Protestant Victorian view that talked of confining women to the four walls of the house has given way to an environment where there is an increasing willingness to recognise the political potential of women.

However, the second chapter has also highlighted that despite their increasing representation in the federal polity, women do not enjoy the position of actual decision makers. Their quest for political participation and representation is often dwarfed by such obstacles, as discussed in the chapter, from which their male counterparts are spared. Thus the women politicians find themselves in a disadvantageous position.

This present chapter raises an important question as to what is it that should decide the political fate of a candidate, be it male or female. True representation

cannot be a reality if the accessibility of the political system is in question. If the political system has different norms of accessibility for male and female then the resulting representation would be one sided and thus would paralyze the entire concept of representation. However, a political system that allows equal accessibility to all without using gender as parameter, the fate of a candidate in such a political system, one may argue, needs to be decided on the basis of his/her competence and skill.

The present chapter intends to take a close look at the core issue, that is, the very meaning of the term 'representation' and evaluate the extent to which it would be able to make a difference to women and issues that concern women. The basic question that needs to be addressed in this context is that whether an increase in the numerical strength of women in the legislature would result in the formulation and implementation of policies favouring women. Are the women representatives in a position to forsake their party commitments and party ideology and come together as a force to ensure the formulation of policies favouring women? To address this issue in this chapter, on the very outset the concept of representation and the various theories attached to it would be explored and then the issue of problem of representation would be taken up. Having looked into the various aspects of representation, the Canadian case would be taken up in the light of the preceding discussion.

In delineating the overall issue of participation and representation of women in the Canadian federal politics, one crucial question that emerges is whether an increase in the numerical strength of women in the parliament ensures substantive representation of women and a more women friendly political agenda. In this respect, generally two lines of arguments are preferred. On one hand, one may put forth the argument that women have been historically underrepresented as far as the realm of politics is concerned; and it is of vital importance that they are given proper political representation. It may also be argued that a woman would be in a better position to understand the grievances of women in general and hence would be able to influence public policy in a way that would favour women. Women have different

psychological, social and economic grievances that can be understood and articulated by women alone.

However, there is a contrary line of argument, claiming that an increase in the numerical strength of women in the federal parliament is not a guarantee towards policy formulations that favour women. It may be argued that women, as parliamentarians, essentially adopt the party line as regards to a particular issue. They are first the member of a given political party having a certain stand on a specific issue and then a woman. This line of argument puts a question mark on the very idea of women's representation. The core issue that emerges here is whether gender matters; or is it competence that one needs to look for? The idea is to look at whether the women who are elected to the parliament substantively represent women. Secondly, it also needs to be seen whether actions taken for ensuring women's entry into the legislature in terms of reservations, quotas or affirmative action amounts to 'reverse discrimination'.

The Idea of Representation

Before exploring the arena of women's representations and the various arguments and counter arguments surrounding it, it is imperative to look at the very idea of representation. John Stuart Mill, as it has been already mentioned in the first chapter, in his celebrated *Considerations on Representative Government,* argues, the idea of democracy, in its purest form is to ensure "a government of the whole body by the whole people, equally represented.[1] John Adams argued that a legislature "should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large, as it should feel, reason and act like them".[2]

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[1] J.S. Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government,* (Chicago, 1962), pp.256-57.
[2] John Adams, "Letter to John Penn, 1776", in *Works of John Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1951), Vol.4, p.205, quoted in Hanna F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkley, 1972), p.60.

Iris Marion Young argues that in the web of modern social life, representation becomes essential because the actions and deliberations of some people or some institutions at one place affect the lives of many at various other places.[3] She puts forth:

> Representation consists in a mediated relationship, both among members of a constituency, between the constituency and the representative, and between the representatives in a decision making body...Representation is a cycle of anticipation and recollection between constituents and representative, in which discourse and action at each moment ought to bear *traces* of the others. [4]

The idea of representation, in its very rudimentary form, may be traced from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* where he emphasized the need to give up one's right of governing to an absolute sovereign in order to escape "the solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" state of nature. Unlike Hobbes' absolutism, John Locke places the government under the control of the society and emphasizes on the fact that the government must perform in accordance with the 'consent' of the people. Finally Jean Jacques Rousseau's concept of the 'general will' laid down the foundation for the modern ideas of representation based on the notion of popular sovereignty.

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* talks of representation as the process

> through which the attitudes, preferences, viewpoints and desires of the entire citizenry or a part of them are, with their expressed approval, shaped into governmental action on their behalf by a smaller number among them, with binding effect upon those represented"[5]

Analyzing the characteristics of the liberal democratic theories of representation, Ball argues that there is a definite emphasis on individual rights, universal adult franchise, secret ballot, free and fair periodic elections, and a firm belief that an individual is capable of using his or her right to vote in an intelligent manner.[6]

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[3] Iris Marian Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York, 2000), p.124.
[4] ibid, p.129.
[5] *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol.19, p.266.
[6] Ball, *Modern Politics and Government* (London, 1971) pp.123-26.

Thus there are various definitions and explanations surrounding the concept of representation. L.P. Baradat has put these various explanations into five different sets of theories:

i) *Reactionary Theory* has been put forth by Thomas Hobbes and Alexander Hamilton; and the crux of this theory is that representation is based on the need for order and authority. The people has the duty to follow the dictates of the government and extend all their support to the government on the basis of the firm conviction that the supreme authority always acts keeping the best interests of the people in mind.

ii) *Elitist Theory* argues that it is the elites or the 'chosen few' who can best represent the interest of the people. The Elitist theorists like Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca and Robert Michels are of the opinion that society consists of two categories - the elites or the minority and the masses or the majority - and the ideal representation is when the majority of the masses are represented by the minority of the elites.

iii) *Conservative Theory* finds support in Edmund Burke and James Madison who claim that people should have the right to choose their representatives from a group of elites, but once elected the representatives are to act in accordance with their own judgment without any interference from the people. Thus people have the right to participate in the process of selection of their of their representatives, but no right to take part in the actual running of the government.

iv) *Liberal Theory,* which developed in the hands of political thinkers like John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, believes in the essential equality of all men; and hence concludes that all people are equally capable of ruling. The representatives of the people have the duty to act in accordance with the will of

the people, and the opinion of the masses are taken into account in every stage of decision making.

v) *Radical Theory,* put forth by great democrats such as Rousseau, negates the very idea of representation and claims that only the people are capable of ruling themselves in the best possible manner. Thus this theory advances the case of pure democracy.[7]

Thus, different thinkers and theorists have approached the question of representation from different perspective. In a nutshell, hence, one may argue that the concept of representation is "inherently ambiguous" and this ambiguity attaches different meanings to different representative governments.[8]

Problematizing Representation

In a conventional liberal democratic set up, difference may be viewed primarily as a matter of ideas; and representation may be regarded as 'adequate' on the basis of the manner in which it reflects the beliefs, preferences and opinions of the voters. [9] Talking about the shift in the concept of representation from 'Ideas to Presence', Anne Phillips argues:

> Many of the current arguments over democracy revolve around what we might call demands for political presence: demands for equal representation of women with men; demands for a more even-handed balance between the different ethnic groups that make up each society; demands for the political inclusion of groups that have come to see themselves as marginalized or silenced or excluded. In this major reaffirming of the problems of democratic equality, the separation between 'who' and 'what' is to be represented, and the subordination of the first to the second, is very much up for question. The politics of ideas is being challenged by the alternative politics of presence.[10]

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[7] L.P. Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact* (New Jersey, 1979), pp.137-39.
[8] Curtis, *Comparative Government and Politics* (New York, 1968), p.98.
[9] Anne Phillip, *The Politics of Presence* (Oxford, 1995) p.1.
[10] ibid. p.5.

Jane Mansbridge, in "What does a Representative Do? Descriptive Representation in Communicative Setting of Distrust, Uncrystallized Interests, and Historically Denigrated Status", highlights three most vital functions of a representative because of which, the disadvantaged groups may want to be represented by individuals who in their own backgrounds 'mirror' the typical experiences and outward manifestations belonging to the disadvantaged group:

i) Representative is an instrument of ongoing communication and consultation. She points out that the members of the dominant groups have failed to listen to the grievances of the subordinate groups and the subordinate groups, in their turn, have developed a keen sense of distrust and hence they want to be represented by members who belong to their own group in the belief that such representatives would be able to understand their grievances better and hence would be able to communicate it in a much better manner.

ii) Secondly, it is argued that at the legislative level the representatives engage in an "organized deliberative process"; and they need to communicate with each other in an effective manner. In this process of deliberations, the issues that are taken up are largely "uncrystallized" and representative who do not personally share the experiences of the disadvantaged groups would not be able to spontaneously contribute to such deliberations. Only those representatives who belong to these disadvantaged groups would be able to convince the advantaged groups as regards to the problems faced by the people they represent by drawing instances from their personal experiences.

iii) Finally, in case of a polity which has a history of legally excluding the members of a particular group from vote and other political rights, Mansbridge argues, there are traces of the feeling that the dominant cultures did not consider the specific group to be fit to rule. Under such historical conditions, it is important that such groups are being represented by their own

people, which would instill the feeling that they are capable of functioning successfully and competently as lawmakers.[11]

As far as women's representation is concerned, Anne Phillip broadly divides the arguments for raising the proportion of women elected into four categories:

i) First and foremost, there is the argument that successful women politicians act as kind of role models for the others;

ii) Some argue that increasing the proportion of the women elected would ensure the principles of justice between the sexes;

iii) Thirdly, it is further suggested that this would ensure the fulfilling of certain interests of women, which may otherwise be neglected;

iv) Finally, there is a line of argument that claims that women's presence would enhance the quality of the political life;[12]

These varied perspectives all together make the case for the representation of the disadvantaged groups by the members of the same specified group. Iris Marian Young, arguing in a similar vein, claims that an enhancement in the inclusion and influence of the social groups that are unrepresentative or underrepresented would help the society in confronting the problem of structural social inequality and to find remedies for it.[13] She claims that democratic political institutions that are committed to political equality need to resort to specific measures to ensure the representation of those socially deprived groups which would fail to voice its interests and concerns without such measures.[14]

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[11] Jane Mansbridge, "What does a Representative Do? Descriptive Representation in Communicative Setting of Distrust, Uncrystallized Interests, and Historically Denigrated Status", in Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, ed., *Citizenship in Diverse Societies* (New York, 2000), pp.99-100.
[12] Phillip, n.9, p.62.
[13] Young, n.3, p.141.
[14] ibid, p.148.

If one applies these arguments in case of women, it would entail women need to be essentially represented by women representatives at least in the legislature if not in other political bodies in order to further their interests and to create a policy environment where their grievances are adequately addressed. A study conducted on the women in Norwegian politics concluded that with a relative increase in the number of women in public office has enabled a greater amount of sex equality in the country's governance and has also contributed towards a change in the national political agenda and legislation.[15]

This line of argument falls within the ambit of 'descriptive' or 'mirror' representation. 'Descriptive' representation, as Birch argues, refers to representatives who share the experiences of the group they represent, and their own lives and persons in some sense are typical of the larger class of persons whom they represent.[16] Jane Mansbridge argues that 'descriptive' representation does not imply that the representatives should have no other attribute other than being 'descriptive'. What it suggests is that 'descriptive' representation should be an additional aspect to other characteristics of "good representation"[17]

However, many a scholars negate the idea of 'descriptive' representation. Pennock, making an immensely strong statement, claims "no one would argue that morons should be represented by morons"[18] Brain Barry talks about the limited applicability of this model as regards to a society based on religious and ethnic divisions.[19]

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[15] Jill M. Bystydzienski, "Influence of Women's Culture on Public Politics in Norway" in Jill M. Bystydzienski, ed., *Women Transforming Politics: Worldwide Strategies for Empowerment* (Bloomington, 1992), p.22.
[16] cited in Mansbridge, n.11, p.100.
[17] ibid, p.101.
[18] Cited in ibid, p.102.
[19] Brian Barry, "Political Accommodation and Consociational Democracy", *British Journal of Political Science,* (Cambridge), 5/4 (1975).

Hannah Pitkin, a great champion of 'substantive' representation, argues that if one looks at the legislature as a "pictorial representation or representative sample of the nation" then automatically the emphasis lies on the composition of the legislature rather than on its activities.[20] She argues that 'descriptive' representation lays emphasis on the characteristics of the representatives; and thus the focus is on "being something rather than doing something".[21] A representative, according to Pitkin, must in his opinions and actions reflect the wishes, needs or interests of those for whom he acts and "he must put himself in their place, take their part, act as they would act".[22]

Representing, thus, for Pitkin, implies, "acting in the interests of the represented in a manner responsive to them."[23] Elaborating on this, she further argues that " there need not be a constant activity of responding, but there must be a constant condition of responsiveness, of political readiness to respond."[24]

Lowenberg and Kim have also laid emphasis on the 'responsive' aspect of representation. They are of the opinion that as far as the members of the parliament are concerned, 'responsiveness' includes:

i) a conceptualization of the constituents who comprise their partners in relationship;

ii) the use of various channels of communication through which to listen and hear;

iii) the propensity to consider and answer the demands of the constituents.[25]

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[20] H. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkley, 1967) p.226.
[21] ibid, p.61.
[22] ibid, p.114.
[23] ibid, p.227.
[24] ibid, p.233.

[25] Gerhard Lowenberg and Ching Lim Kim, "Comparing the Representativeness of Parliaments" in *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, (Iowa), vol.3, (1978), pp.27ff.

Eulau and Karps, talking about the 'responsiveness' aspect of representation, have outlined four crucial components of responsiveness:

i) *Policy Responsiveness,* where the public issues affecting the political process are targeted.

ii) *Service Responsiveness,* where there is an effort by the representatives to secure specific benefits for the individuals or groups in his/her constituency.

iii) *Allocation Responsiveness* that talks about the representatives' effort to secure benefits for his/her constituency through pork-barrel changes in the appropriations process through administrative interventions.

iv) *Symbolic Responsiveness,* where there are certain public gestures that create and accentuates a sense of trust, confidence and support between the representatives and constituents.[26]

Anne Phillips, endorsing the viewpoint of Pitkin, argues that it is not possible to guarantee fair representation in advance.[27] Justice is about eliminating discrimination; and if the emphasis is not on competence but ensuring numerical strength to women in the legislature then this would lead to what Anne Phillips argues as, "structural discrimination"[28]. In fact, when there is a provision for reservation or quota or affirmative action in order to ensure an increase in the strength of the women in the legislature, it in a way amounts to a kind of 'reverse discrimination'.

One cannot ignore the fact that women suffer from massive inequality in the political arena and positive action in this sphere needs to be taken. However, here the question arises - should such action be taken at the expense of competence? Is mere 'descriptive' representation an answer to the problem of representation? Or is it 'substantive' representation that holds the key for solving the representation question? The responsibility of being a politician cannot be relegated as "just another kind of

[26] Heinz Eulau and D. Carps, "The Puzzle of Representation: Specifying Components of Representativeness", in *Legislative Studies Quarterly*,(Iowa), vol.3, 1977, p.233.
[27] Phillip, n.9, p.4.
[28] ibid, p.64.

job"; and hence "while men have no 'right' to monopolize political office, there is something rather unsatisfying in basing women's claim to political equality on an equal right to an interesting job."[29]

Melissa Williams, in her essay "The Uneasy Alliance of Group Representation and Deliberative Democracy" brings out the aspect of a serious lack of trust between the citizens belonging to the marginalized groups and the representatives belonging to the privileged groups.[30] Due to this lack of trust, the flow of communication, which is immensely essential for the attainment of effective representation, gets disrupted. For ensuring effective representation, it is essential that the voice of the marginalized groups be heard. However, Melissa, in the same vein points out that the mere presence of marginalized groups in the decision making process does not guarantee positive outcomes; and in order to ensure positive policy outcomes, Melissa argues, decisions should be based "not only on the counting of votes but also on the sharing of reasons."

Evaluating the Canadian Case

Having elaborated about the various theoretical and subjective issues in the debate surrounding the concept of representation, one needs to look at the Canadian case and the issue of political representation of women in Canada. It is important, on one hand, that the women in Canada, who have been able to gain some kind of foothold in the political realm through a prolonged and consistent struggle, as it had been elaborated in the first and the chapters, are provided with a suitable environment in which they can voice their concerns and grievances.

It is argued that only when adequate representation is given to women, the political system would become more sensitive towards issues concerning women.

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[29] ibid, p.65.
[30] Melissa Williams, "The Uneasy Alliance of Group Representation and Deliberative Democracy" in Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman, ed., *Citizenship in Diverse Societies* (New York, 2000), p.124.

Increasing representation of women is not only expected to have an impact on the fate of the female population of the country, but is also expected to change the very face of the political system by making it more soft and sensitive. It is; in fact, argued that the very notion, which claims that the women make a difference in politics has gotten internalized and both female as well as male legislators tend to accept the "rhetoric of difference", i.e., gender difference.[31]

The expectation is that with more and more women assuming the role of political decision makers, attention of the political system would change towards issues such as family life and children, health, education, pay equity, violence against women and so on. Pippa Norris, citing the case of the women who participated in the 1992 Candidate Study in the United Kingdom, demonstrates that women were " more likely [than men] to express concern about issues like welfare services, poverty and health".[32]

However, to argue that only a woman can voice a woman concerns may not be a very correct approach to the whole issue of representation of women in the political arena. In fact, it is put forth by many that being a woman politician does not imply that she would best understand and express the aspirations of another woman. Many women in politics are, in fact, either not sympathetic to feminism or reluctant to express the feminist views.[33]

In a study conducted in United States by Susan Carroll, it had been observed that roughly a third of the female legislators were "Closet feminists".[34] Although they sympathized with the ongoing women's movement, they were not ready to act on behalf of the women. They did not consider themselves as representing the interests of the women. In fact, at times women parliamentarians consciously avoided taking up

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[31] Hege Skjeie, "The Rhetoric of Difference: On Women's Inclusion into Political Elites", *Politics and Society*, (Thousand Oaks), vol.19, 1991, 233-63.
[32] Pippa Norris, "Women Politicians: Transforming Westminster?" *Parliamentary Affairs* (Oxford), vol.49, 1996, p. 98.
[33] Heather MacIver, *Women and Politics in Canada* (Ontario, 1996),p. 292
[34] Susan Carroll, *Women as Candidates in American politics* (Bloomington, 1985), p.152.

women's issues in the fear that they would lose the respect they have in the eyes of their male colleagues if they got branded as "women's libbers".[35]

Lise Gotell and Janine Brodie are of the opinion that "the women recruited (for public office) can be, and sometimes are, openly antagonistic to the policy agenda of the Canadian women's movement as well as to the very concept of gender equality."[36] However, one may feel that it is a kind of extreme position to take while saying that the women in political power are at times antagonistic to the very concept of gender equality. Although, in many a cases, a situation so arises that women parliamentarians are forced to take an anti-women position because of the immense pressure to follow the party line or the party position. A parliamentarian has little choice but to endorse the official party position in the parliamentary debates particularly in a country like Canada where party discipline is immensely strong; and thus their being a woman or a man is not a matter of crucial importance.

However, in order to ensure free, fair and competitive elections where all the candidates fight on the basis of competence and on an equal footing, everyone needs to be given an equal opportunity to participate in the political process. There should be no discrimination on any ground whatsoever. The attitude of the party, the press and the people becomes important in this regard, and needs to be changed.

Another argument that gains currency in the question of political representation is that representation, to a large extent, depends upon the pattern of democracy prevailing in the country. This line of argument is evident in the work of political scientist and comparative government studies expert Arend Lijphart who, in *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Democracies*, assessed and compared the performance of the majoratarian democracies (associated with winner-take-all voting systems) and consensus democracies (associated with proportional representation systems).

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[35] Vicky Randall, *Women and Politics: An International Perspective* (London, 1987), p. 155.
[36] Lise Gotell and Janine Brodie, "Women and Parties in the 1990s: Less than Ever an Issue of Numbers", in Hugh Thorburn, ed., *Party Politics in Canada* (Scarborough, 1996, edn.7), p.68.

Lijphart, through his study, argues that consensus democracie, using proportional representation voting systems, are more reflective of the political attitude of the electorate. He argues that the

> general pattern discovered...was that in consensus democracies the difference between winners and losers were significantly smaller than in majoratarian democracies...the difference in satisfaction is more than 16 percentage points smaller in the typical consensus than in the typical majoratarian democracy. The correlation is highly significant (at the 1 per cent level).[37]

Lijphart further points out that high voter turnout also acts as an excellent indicator of democratic equality as it indicates as to what extent the citizens are actually interested in being represented. High voter turn out would imply more equal participation and hence would ensure greater political equality. In this respect, Lijphart highlights the importance of consensus democracy and argues, on the basis of the study conducted that "the effect of consensus democracy on voter turnouts becomes much stronger...consensus democracies have approximately 7.5 per cent higher turnout than majoratarian democracies".[38]

Lijphart has also assessed the percentage of women elected to lower houses from 1971 to 1995 in his thirty-six democracies. The assessment showed that the percentage of women in parliament was "strongly and significantly related to the degree of consensus democracy. The percentage of women's parliamentary representation is 6.7 percentage points higher...in consensus democracies than in majoratarian systems"[39].

The findings of Lijphart's study have serious implications for the Canadian political system. Canada has the first-past-the-post system, which may often lead to a distorted result in the elections, i.e., a party's portion of seats may be significantly

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[37] Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Democracies* (New Heaven, 1999), p. 287.
[38] ibid, p.285.
[39] ibid, p.281.

different from their portion of the popular vote, and as a result rhetorical majority governments may form as one party would be able to acquire majority of seats despite failing to win a majority of the popular vote. In fact, since World War I, Canada has had only four majority governments, which won a majority of the popular vote. As for instance, the 1997 Liberal government won 51.5 per cent of the seats with only 38.5 per cent of the popular vote.[40]

At another level, it is argued that one of the most crucial steps that need to be taken in the sphere or representation is to ensure a change in the attitude of the political parties. They need to give equal opportunities to all to participate in the party politics and commit themselves to ensuring better participation from women.

It is suggested by the findings in Canada that gender difference is less frequent in parties of the right than in the left wing parties.[41] The New Democratic Party, however, has shown great promise in this regard. It had formally, for the 1993 elections, adopted an immensely ambitious goal of nominating women candidates, which were to be 50 per cent of the total candidates nominated by the party.

Out of all the other prominent parties, only the Liberals had announced that 25 per cent of Liberal nominees would be women. Both the Liberals and the Progressive Conservatives also have had since the 1990s various training programmes for women and funds dedicated to women candidates. In stark contrast, the Reform party has so far had no training programmes for women, no funds dedicated to women candidates; and the party has also not projected as to what percentage of their total candidates would be women.[42]

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[40] Cited in *Fair Vote Canada*, http://www.fairvotecanada.org, dated 30th September 2004.

[41] Lynda Erickson, "Might More Women Make A Difference? Gender, Party and Ideology Among Canada's Parliamentary Candidates". *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, (Waterloo), vol.30, no.4, (December, 1997), p.684.

[42] ibid, 670.

It is argued that be at the level of political parties, in the House of Commons, or in the cabinet, the women have been reduced to "pink-collar ghettos"[43]. However, it needs to be realized that the difference that women would make in the political realm would depend largely upon the way they conduct themselves in the larger political context; and the way they handle themselves regarding issues concerning women in the face of party adversity. The younger generation of female politicians seem to be more willing to take on the challenge; and they are less willing to accept the maltreatment that is meted out to the women politicians.[44]

Ideally, it is necessary for the larger interest of women that they work as a force together against inequality and exploitation of all kinds. They need to have the commitment and courage to cut across party lines to serve the cause of women. For instance, the women MPs in the 1990s have formed the Association of Women Parliamentarians (AWP). It was a historical step in the realm of women politics in Canada. AWP was more of a support group and not a policy forum, but the very existence of such an organization of women politicians across party lines became an important step towards more constructive cooperation in the future.[45]

Sub-Committee on the Status of Women, an offshoot of the Standing Committee on Health and Welfare, was another promising attempt in 1990, at cutting across party lines, and building cooperation on the issues concerning women. The committee received immense public attention when in 1991 it had come up with a strong feminist report on violence against women entitled *The War Against Women.* The report was the cause of hostile reaction in the Standing Committee as well as in the Commons[46]. However, the committee succeeded in getting most of their recommendations implemented despite the hostile reaction.[47]

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[43] MacIvor, n.33, p.291.
[44] Randall, n.36, p.152.
[45] MacIvor, n.43, p.292.
[46] ibid.
[47] ibid.

Although the AWP and the Sub-committee were very crucial steps in the cooperation of women in politics, it could not escape the rigid party discipline and failed to attain the desired effects that it set out to attain. It did not have the required power backup to ensure the adoption of its recommendations. Neither AWP nor the sub-committee was able to survive the 1993 federal elections.[48]

There was, in fact, a complete reluctance on the part of the Reform and Bock Quebecois women to go for a cross-party cooperation with the Liberals.[49] However, the very fact that an Association of Women Parliamentarians was set up suggests that such cooperation across party lines could be a reality in the days to come. AWP was a definitely an earnest attempt to let the women parliamentarians make a difference in the realm of politics.

Thus, having discussed the arguments and counter arguments surrounding the issue of political representation of women, one may observe that instead of gender, it is party politics that plays a crucial role in the formulations of policies at the federal as well as at the local level. Adherence to party ideology and a rigid party discipline sees to it that members of the parliament essentially take the line that the party desires them to take.

In such a scenario, the argument that having more and more women in the parliament would lead to the formulation of policies that favour women does not hold much water. However, there should be no denial of providing all eligible individuals, be it men or women, with equal opportunities as far as participation in the political process is concerned. Having done that, the election of a candidate needs to be decided on the basis of the competence and skill of the candidate without letting gender becoming the chief criterion in determining his/her political potential.

[48] ibid.
[49] ibid.

CHAPTER IV

Summary and Conclusion

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The present study has been an earnest attempt to evaluate the issue of political participation and representation of women in the Canadian federal parliament. To address this issue, the study has been broadly divided into three major chapters. The first chapter has dealt with the patterns of evolution of women's movement in Canada; the second chapter has analyzed the changing equations of female representation in Canadian federal parliament with respect to the federal elections from 1984 to 2004; and the third chapter has addressed the question as to whether an increase in the numerical strength of women in the positions of political power would make a difference as far as issues concerning the welfare of the female half of the population is concerned.

In order to understand the present day scenario of women's representation in the Canadian federal parliament, it is imperative to look into the patterns of historical evolution of the issue of political participation and representation of women in Canadian politics. Such a historical evaluation of the issue of political participation and representation of women in Canada, as elaborated in the first chapter of the present study, reveals that women in Canada have had to undergo a long and constant struggle so as to achieve an equal footage with their male counterparts in the political field.

While tracing the evolution of the demand for political representation of women in Canada, two broad phases are identified. During the first phase of the movement, spanning from the early days of the federation to 1950s, the unique position enjoyed by women in the progressive French society of Canada in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries got challenged with the coming of the British, and the Protestant Victorian view that considered the home as the 'proper place' for women got widely accepted. Women were assigned only household chores and the outside world was accessible only to men.

However, this situation gradually got challenged, and the first chapter brings out the impact exercised by three major events - beginnings of the industrialisation process, World War I and World War II – on the women's movement during the first phase. Under the impact of these events, there was the ushering in of a new era that saw women gaining the right to vote and acquiring legal recognition as 'persons'. Women became increasingly conscious of their rights and strove for a better deal in the socio-political and economic sphere.

Having discussed the first phase of the women's movement, first chapter moves towards the second phase of women's movement that swept Canada from 1960s onwards. In the second phase, it was felt that though women had achieved few political victories in being given the right to vote or legally recognized as 'persons', there still was a kind of 'glass ceiling' that prevented women from becoming active in the socio-political and economic realm after a certain level. In the political sphere, there were few women who could become actual decision makers. The ones who succeeded in achieving positions of political power could not do it on their own terms and had to adopt the so-called 'man's way'. The main thrust of the second phase of the women's movement in Canada, as being highlighted in the first chapter, was to achieve socio-political and economic equality for women without compromising their existence as a woman.

One of the crucial milestones in the struggle for political participation and representation of women in Canada, during the second phase, has been the setting up of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1967). The Commission, in its Report, for the first time, identified the absence of women from public life as a significant obstacle to the achievement of equality for the Canadian women. The first chapter makes a critical study of the Report of the RCSW, and delineating in detail the circumstances that led to the setting up of RCSW.

Highlighting the *status quo ante* that prevailed before the setting up of RCSW, the chapter clearly elaborates the changes that the RCSW sought to achieve. The Royal Commission, through its recommendations, sought to provide equal opportunities for

women in the socio-political and economic sphere, which have been hitherto denied to them. The detailed discussion that has been undertaken in the first chapter as regards to the recommendations of the Royal Commission, clearly reveals that the Commission has made an revolutionary attempt to improve the status of women in Canada by emphasizing on child care and income security, equal pay for work of equal value, protection of women against sexual harassment, and the like.

The Royal Commission has urged that the society needs to play a role of crucial significance in ensuring an overall upliftment in the status of women. As far as the political sphere is concerned, the slogan of the Commission has been "More Women". The Commission has put forth that more and more women needed to be elected to the House of Commons, Provincial Legislatures and Local Governments in order to ensure equal political participation and representation of women in the political field.

The first chapter, while delineating about the sweeping changes that the RCSW set out to achieve, further outlines the various criticisms that have been leveled against it. It has been argued by many that the RCSW Report has failed to address the issue of improvement of the status of women in Canada in depth. It was felt by both the left and right wing that the Commission's main agenda was to diffuse the active feminism that was prevalent in Canada during the 1960s.

However, one cannot deny the fact that the Royal Commission was a path-breaker as far as participation and representation of women in the Canadian politics is concerned. The assessment undertaken in the first chapter reveals beyond doubt that Canadian women owe a lot to the Royal Commission recommendations for giving a massive push to the movement towards women's political empowerment. It provided a plan of action to be carried out, which acted as a blue print for the women's movement in Canada.

The Royal Commission has given the Canadian women's movement for political representation a concrete base with its revolutionary recommendations. However, most of these recommendations could not be implemented due to the lack of organized political

will. This aspect is clearly brought out in the first chapter and the chapter talks in detail about the follow up actions that had been undertaken post the Royal Commission Report. Listing chronological establishment of the major women's organizations in Canada from 1960 to 1983 along with their main purposes, the chapter highlights their contribution towards political emancipation of women in Canada.

The main argument that comes forth from the first chapter is that women in Canada, through a steady and continuous struggle, have been able to make their presence felt in the political realm, and there has been a growing sensitiveness towards the issues concerning women. However, the question here is - to what extent the recommendations of the Commission got translated into policy decisions, most particularly in the political realm? In order to address this issue, the second chapter takes a close look at the political representation of women in Canadian federal parliament, from 1984-2004.

The year 1984 has been taken up as the benchmark as this is the year that has marked a break away from the past. Representation of women in the Canadian federal parliament has, since 1984, shown a steady upward growth. The chapter, at the very outset, highlights the reasons as to why the 1984 elections have been termed as a watershed in the arena of political representation of Canada. This is done with the help of three important data – Number of Women Elected to the House of Commons by Year (1921-1984); Percentage of Women MPs of the Total MPs Elected (1921-1984); and Number of Women Candidates Projected by the Three Major Political Parties (1963-1984). All these data have clearly projected that the year 1984 has marked a massive departure from the past in terms of women's political representation.

Having outlined the significance of the 1984 elections, the chapter takes a close look at whether the trend initiated by this election have persisted in the following years. The chapter brings out, with the help of available data, that although the trend of increasing women's representation in the Canadian federal parliament has been sustained in the following elections, this growth cannot be argued to be revolutionary. There has

definitely been an increase in the number of seats occupied by women in the parliament, but in most cases, as the chapter clearly brings out, this increase has been marginal.

The chapter further explores the attitude of the three major political parties towards political representation of women, and citing available data on women candidates projected by these parties in the federal elections, 1988-2004, it has been highlighted that there is a kind if reluctance on the part of the Liberals and PCs to field more women candidates. Women are generally assigned seats which are not considered safe and from where no male candidate is willing to contest. The chapter also brings out that the traditional role of women as a homemaker and their late entry into politics than their male counterparts are reasons responsible for the lack of suitable women candidates to be projected by the political parties.

The chapter, thus, brings out that despite the increasing consciousness and concern towards the issue of political representation of women, there are still a number of obstacles that women have to face in their quest for political empowerment. The chapter, with the help of available data, outlines the obstacles that a woman has to face in her struggle for political representation. It is observed here that lack of funding is one of the most important obstacles that a woman faces. This is the result of the reluctance of the family and party to back the political quest of a woman.

The chapter also brings out the biased attitude adopted by the media as regards to the women candidates. The media hardly gives coverage to the women candidates, and on the occasions when coverage is given, the media talks more about the personal life of the candidates rather than highlighting their political competence.

Thus, it may argued that political representation of a woman can be ensured only when the attitude of the parties, media and the people as such is changed and there is willingness to look at the competence aspect of a candidate and not the gender aspect. One should not be denied access to the political system on equal terms on the basis of gender. Election or non-election of a woman candidate to the House of Commons may

depend on a large number of factors, the most important among them being the competence of a candidate. However, the very access to the political system being denied to an individual on gender grounds is a serious and a severe challenge to a liberal democratic society.

Hence, it is of utmost importance that the procedural fairness in the electoral system is ensured. The procedural fairness, of course, cannot be interpreted as a key to increasing political participation and representation of women. However, it would, at least to a certain extent, ensure that the norms of true liberal democracy are followed in the electoral process and a fair chance is given to all without any biases or favours.

Having discussed the scenario as regards to the political representation of women in the Canadian federal parliament, a crucial question that arises is that whether a mere increase in the numerical strength of women the federal parliament would ensure formulations of policies and programmes that favour women. Addressing this issue, the third chapter analyses two sets of argument – one that claims that problems faced by women are best understood by women alone and hence they are in a better position to work for the redressal of these problems; and the other that argues that having more women in the parliament is not a guarantee for policy formulations favouring women.

While addressing this controversial issue, the third chapter first looks at the very concept of representation as such. Tracing the idea of representation from Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*, the chapter explores broadly various concepts and theories that surround the term 'representation', and argues that it is not possible to accord the term 'representation' with a precise definition as it has been viewed differently by different schools of thought.

The chapter further explores the shift in the concept of representation from 'Ideas' to 'Presence', and elaborates in detail on the debate concerning the issue of 'descriptive' and 'substantive' representation. It is argued that in a modern liberal democratic set up, the concept of representation has given way to demands for political presence. The

groups that are disadvantageously positioned in society express a need to be represented by people who belong to their own group as they feel that only then their voices would be heard and grievances redressed.

Following this line of argument, the chapter brings out that women's aspirations, needs, and problems can be best addressed by women political representatives, and the presence of women in the political decision making arena would ensure policies and programmes that furthers the interests of women. Since representatives would share the same experiences of the group they represent, their approach towards policy making would be quite different than others and they would take specific measures to ensure that the voice of their people is being heard. With more and more women assuming the role of political decision makers, attention of the political system is expected to change towards issues such as family life and children, health, education, pay equity, violence against women and so on.

However, the chapter also looks at the other line of prevailing argument that makes a case for 'substantive' representation. A modern liberal democratic society does not represent a homogenous population and is marked by immense ethno-cultural diversity. In such a situation, the applicability of the descriptive model of representation comes into question.

Elaborately discussing the arguments that attack the concept of 'descriptive representation', the chapter brings forth that justice can be ensured only when all forms of discrimination are eliminated. Election of more and more women to the legislature, through quotas, reservations and the like, on the basis of the argument that their numerical strength would ensure better handling of issues concerning women, would, in fact perpetuate 'reverse discrimination'.

One cannot negate the fact that women do suffer from massive inequality in the political sphere, and this point had been very clearly discussed in the second chapter. There is definitely the need to take concrete steps to undo these wrongs. However, these

steps need to be taken in order to ensure equal accessibility of all to the political system. Having ensured equal accessibility, the issue of election of a candidate needs to be decided on the basis of political skill and potential of the candidate.

Being in the position of political power entails huge responsibility and only a competent candidate can shoulder this responsibility with ease. Adorning the position of a member of the legislature is not just any other kind of job; rather it requires specific aptitude, skill and propensity. This does not suggest that it is only men who have a monopoly right over positions of political power. The argument here is that the claim to political office needs to be on the basis of competence and not gender.

If one contextualises this debate in the Canadian scenario, it is observed that although the need to ensure equal opportunity for all in the political realm is vehemently felt, the argument that claims women to be the best representatives of women find few takers. In fact, there are circumstances under which, as the third chapter brings out, women representatives take stands that are quite antagonistic to the issues concerning women. A candidate gets elected to the legislature on a party ticket, and the loyalty of the candidate to the party remains immensely strong as his or her political career would be nowhere without party support. When a particular issue is taken up in the legislature for discussion, a legislator essentially toes the party line and supports the party policy.

It is further brought out in the third chapter that although there have, at times, been attempts by the women parliamentarians in Canada to cut across party lines and work together on issues concerning women, for instance the formation of the Association of Women Parliamentarians (AWP); these attempts have failed to achieve the desired effect due to rigid party discipline. Hence to argue that a woman candidate would fight for policies favouring women defying the party policy would be a stale argument.

In a nutshell, thus, it may be argued that the issue of women's political representation in Canada requires to be approached with immense caution. It needs to be ensured that no one is denied access to the political system by citing gender as a criterion.

However, one may observe that the situation is fast changing and the political parties are now fielding more and more women candidates. The Canadian women have undoubtedly covered miles of distance in their political journey from the days when the role of a woman was considered to be confined to the four walls of the house. Further progress in this direction would depend to a large extent on the very approach and conduct of the women politicians as such. The struggle needs to be geared towards ensuring that the prevailing attitude of the political parties, media and citizens in general towards women candidate is changed; and equal accessibility to the political system is not denied to women on any grounds. Having ensured that, the claim to political office needs to be based on the political competence and skill of the candidate; and that may serve the cause of women representation better in the long term. There are obvious limitations to gender becoming the sole criterion for women's political representation.

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