

**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
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**University of Mostaganem**  
**Faculty of Letters and Arts**  
**Department of English**



**Master**  
**British Civilization**

***Women Political Representation***  
***In UK amid the 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries***

Submitted By:

**Soumia KASMI**

Board of Examiners:

Chairwoman: Ms. Farida OUALI

Examiner : Dr. Houari MIREB

Supervisor : Ms. Hanane BELLAL

Supervised By:

**Ms. Hanane BELLAL**

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## **Abstract**

The present dissertation aims at analysing the representation of women in UK politics, their rise in the parliament and their achievements at the political level during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, looking for political equality with men. This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter focuses on the background in which these political representations were achieved, and the impact of the suffragette's movements on society, this was by gaining the important right is the vote in 1918. The second chapter explains the increasing number of women's representation in the parliament by the mid of twentieth century; this is by including many strategies that made their number increase, also this latter gave them the power to take a seat in ministry precisely in 1929. And finally the third chapter looks at the possible solutions due to set of recommendations that made their representation rise and to achieve equality.

**Key Words:** Political Representation, Parliament, Suffragette's movement, Vote, Ministry, Recommendations.

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## **Dedication**

*With a deep affection, I am grateful to my family, my source of success and happiness.*

I do offer my modest work to my dear family, precisely to my father, the source of the wisdom and the model of my life. Thanks to his guidance advices, and who supported my decision for higher education. I preserve the same trend of success from the primary school until now.

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## **List of Acronyms**

**MPs:**Member of Parliament

**UK:** United Kingdom

**WSPU:** Women's Social and Political Union

**%:** Percentage

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## General Introduction :

Through time women have been oppressed by the society of UK especially men, and many women fought valiantly for the rights women have today. They wanted to establish their status as equal citizens.

The women's rights and suffrage movements in the period between 1832 and 1918 which is known as "The first feminist wave" aimed to challenge the idea of women being the inferior sex and demanded equal right. This 'so called' first wave ended with the 'Royal Assent to the Representation of the People Parliament Act' being passed in 1918. Which granted women the ability to vote and recognized females as equal citizens.

From that time, women's provisions are that for increasing their political representation, and to achieve sex parity in political institutions enormously, additionally for having more women in parliament and politics.

If there is anything that pushed me forward to search enthusiastically to learn more about women political representation in UK, it is the fact of being influenced by one of British Civilization's lectures. During that lecture, it had been referred to that one of the main turning points in the British history of women was their interest and successes in politics. I have always asked about the real reasons behind the importance of that interest. Through my reading of the third chapter of 'Kingsly Kent Susan's Gender and Power in Britain 1640', I have noticed that one of the main elements of that importance is to impose themselves as politicians leaders, the chapter explains how women had achieved their political position, starting from the suffragette movements and their actions to be more equal and had the franchise, to the success they achieved for increasing their representation in the UK parliament and how to be ministers.

By the 1930s, more women entered into political levels, at the beginning their numbers were low however, by the time women representation in politics increased and this is due to many new strategies adopted.

So, the following problematic addresses; what did women do to get these full representations and what are their activities?

To carry out the study, women's aim is bringing a different perspective from men, and their participation is needed as a balanced.

Thus, in my research I attempt to show the status of women in the political representation of UK seeking to do their best for getting the place in the UK parliament since 1918. And to bring a progress in political participation. As a result, The following questions could be raised:

-What did women do to become politicians' leaders?

-Why should women be involved in the political system?

-What were they trying to achieve?

-What have women do to get political equality with men and to be more superior than them?

-What kind of challenges impaired them?

-What are their prospects to be greater?

In an attempt to answer the former questions that constitute my dissertation. it has a range of arguments that lead to the success of female politicians as leaders such as their

Characteristics that attributed to men as toughness, decision, strength and ambition. These are generally seen as more adequate in the political context.

Additionally, women are more likely to succeed in political careers when they manage to convince voters that despite their femininity, they possess masculine attributes.

Women's politicians in UK provide evidence that it is easier for them to break through the glass ceiling political context, when they can fit into the male dominated political game, when providing themselves as possessing male attributes.

They are also promoting gender equality by entering into more political parties and with establishing more organizations and working with media. Since these latter help many women's politicians for impose and develop themselves.

To achieve the objective of the study, the descriptive and analytical approach is used, and a feminist history theory is the tool employed to analyze the role of women in politics, with their prospects in the political representation on the UK parliament and institutions

The present dissertation is divided into three main chapters:

The first chapter deals with the position of women in the nineteenth century in society and politics, while many women demanded more political and legal rights. Especially the vote and by their great suffragette movements aiming to win the franchise, it also discusses their political representation in the UK.

The second chapter explains women's representation in the elected office by describing their role at Westminster, and how their numbers increased in UK parliament since 1918. And finally, their shift to be ministers.

The third chapter discusses the obstacles that impaired them after this success looking at many recommendations to solve these problems and by adopting many strategies.

Finally, many politician women hope to achieve their political representation and having better conditions in the political institutions.

## **Introduction**

During the nineteenth century, there were significant developments and the widespread questioning about the place of women in the English society, while many women would increasingly demand more political and legal rights. In this chapter, we attempt to examine the women's question and women suffrage in England. Then we also discuss the political representation of women.

### **1. The Women's Question (18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

Many of historical changes that characterized the Victorian period motivated discussions about the nature and the role of women. This was what Victoria called "the women question".

This question encompasses group debates about the physiological nature, the political capacity, the moral character and the place of women in society. The question about the place of women in society and in politics existed in times of wars through the revolution of 1848 to the dislocation of industrial change and the rise for empire towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The ideas of the suffrage movement in Britain descended directly from Enlightenment political philosophy and nineteenth century liberal theory, notably through Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*. They shared a fundamental theoretical premise: "the human attributes of men and women and the consequent social injustice involved in their unequal treatment" (Holton, 9).

During the enlightenment the “Rights of Man” were under discussion in England and in France. Mary Wollstonecraft had a great role during (1759-1797), she has been called the mother of feminism and was the first feminist (Holton, 11).

Mary identified with the revolutionaries of 1789. She proposed to apply enlightened ideas to women. To her, women were rational creatures who were no less capable of intellectual achievements than men. Her “Vindications of the Rights of Women” were published in 1792 and was addressed to Talleyrand, citizen rights. It is an important work since it advocated the equality of the sexes. “She ridiculed the predominant ideas about women as helpless, charming and foolish. To her, women were taught in sub dependence. She criticized the sentimental and foolishness of women.

Her text is a protest against women subjugation. Education held the key of achieving self-respect. To make women able to achieve a better life, not only for themselves but also for their children and their husbands. Women provided education to their children: that is why education was so important. She argued that “women should be able to enter the world of politics” (a vindication of the rights of women, NP)

It took more than a century before her ideas were put into effect. Also William Thompson wrote many books about women’s question; his text was the first manifesto for women rights and political equality. Thompson was a champion of the women rights.

The question of women role and women rights was discussed by the public in the 1860s. The first pamphlets in favor of the enfranchisement of women began to appear in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Lewis, 78)

John Stuart Mill published “*The Subjection of Women*” in 1869 (Lewis, 82). He used the image of slavery and bondage. He argued in favor of social, economic and political

Emancipation of women, and assumed that each individual had interests which only he or she could represent, and on these grounds Mill justified votes for women. He presented a petition in the Parliament calling for the inclusion of women suffrage in the Reform Act of 1867.

## **1.1 The Victorian View of Women**

The Victorian era is characterized as the domestic age; the age of the home. This was epitomized by Queen Victoria herself who came to represent a kind of femininity centered on the family, motherhood and respectability.

The popular Victorian image of the ideal woman and wife came to be known as the “Angel in the House”. So, women during the Victorian era did not have many rights. They were viewed as only supposed to be housewives and mothers to their children. The women during this era were only viewed as people that should only concern themselves with successful house hold. So, politics was of little concern to the Victorian women as she was not allowed to own property or have her own money (Levine, 61).

The development of the “woman question” in the early years of Victoria's reign turned out to be beneficial chiefly for middle-class women. Debates about relations between sexes flourished and impinged on national political issues. In the 1850s, the focus shifted onto questions concerning middle-class women's work.

So, many women needed to have an income to support their families because the men in the house hold were not making enough money to survive. When the women entered the work places they were not made to feel welcome and were often harassed. These women workers therefore were not welcome in the work place (outside of the house hold) or in

Society. It was not until the late 1860s when working Victorian women began to play an important role in the fight for working conditions.

## **1.2 The “Separate Sphere” Ideology**

“The two sexes now inhabited what Victorians thought of as ‘separate spheres’, only coming together at breakfast and again at dinner” (Hughes). This ideology dictated that the only proper place for a respectable woman was in the home, providing care and comfort to her husband and children. This ideology was developed to explain why this separation was necessary, by defining the inherent characteristics of women.

These traits supposedly made women incapable of functioning in the public sphere. Women were classified as physically weaker, yet morally superior to men. They were also expected to teach the next generation to carry on this way of life. The fact that women had such a great influence at home was used as an argument against giving them the vote right.

## **2. Women’s Rights**

In the eyes of the law, a married woman had no property, no vote, no rights to her children. It was a long struggle for them to acquire their rights as individuals. The state of coverture was part of the English common law system throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a legal doctrine that stated that upon marriage, a woman's legal rights were subsumed by those of her husband: he had all the rights. Whereas single and widowed women could hold money or run business and have property. Married women had no equivalent rights; they were excluded from their claim. “Emmeline Pankhurst had helped found the Women's Franchise League, nobody opposed to the coverture clause” (Pugh).

## **2.1. Chartism, Unions and Women**

Chartism was a popular radical movement campaigning for universal male suffrage which was highly hypocritical. Meanwhile it attracted large numbers of women. Many wives took an active role in furthering the Chartist movement and helped their husbands. Tens of thousands of working women were active in this movement. "There were about 150 female Chartist associations, one for every 9 male associations" (Matthew 177).

The movement towards granting women franchise really started in 1867, when the National Society for Women Suffrage was created. It favored petitions and obtained one clear victory in 1869 with the Municipal Franchise Act: unmarried and widowed women ratepayers could vote in borough elections. This key act enabled women to take part in the local government. Several women like Mary Corbett, Emmeline Pankhurst and Charlotte Despaired took advantage of this opportunity. They served as poor law guardians. In 1880, about 1 million women in England and Wales had a local franchise. In 1889, Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Franchise League. She campaigned in favor of the franchise and gained a victory when in 1894 the local government Act was passed. With this Act, married women were allowed the equal right to both vote and seat on municipal councils (Matthew 182).

## **2.2 The Suffragettes and Civil Disobedience**

Suffragettes were members of women's organizations in the late-19th and early-20th centuries which advocated the extension of the "[franchise](#)", or the right to vote in public elections, to women (Suffragette, 1.2).

The move for women to have the vote had really started in 1897 when Mrs. Millicent Fawcett founded the National Union of Women's Suffrage society. The largest suffrage organization in the United Kingdom. This was a federation of existing women's suffrage groups. It was the successor of the national society for Women's.

These suffragists were in favor of the women's suffrage, Mrs. Millicent Fawcett argued that if parliament made laws and if women had to obey those laws. Then women should be part of the process of making those laws (C.N Trueman, 1.2).

\*The term Suffrage means the right to vote and that is what women wanted.

However, Fawcett's progress was very slow. She converted some of the members of the Labour Representation Committee (soon to be the Labour Party) but most men in parliament believed that women simply would not understand how parliament worked and therefore should not take part in the electoral process. This left many women angry and in 1903, [Emmeline Pankhurst](#) and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia formed the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). They wanted women to have the right to vote and they were not prepared to wait. The union became better known as the suffragettes. It concentrated its activities on promoting support for votes for women within socialists and the trade union branches in the Manchester area.

They were disillusioned by the slow progress being made and began a violent approach, because their members were prepared to use violence to get what they wanted.

It was in 1905, the organization created a stir when Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney interrupted a political meeting in Manchester to ask two liberal politicians (Winston Churchill and Sir Edward Grey) if they believed women should have the right to vote. The

Two women got out a banner which had on it "Votes for Women" and shouted at the two politicians to answer their questions. Such actions were unheard; Pankhurst and Kenney were thrown out of the meeting and they refused to go to prison: to highlight the injustice of the system as it was then (Suffragettes, par 2). *Emmeline Pankhurst* later wrote in her autobiography that:

“This was the beginning of a campaign, the like of which was never known in England, or for that matter in any other country....we interrupted a great many meetings violently thrown out and insulted Often we were painfully bruised and hurt” (Kingsley Kent,268). The Suffragettes refused to bow to violence; they began destroying property in all parts of Great Britain. From 1909 onwards, the violence of their attacks grew progressively until serious attacks on property: they torched churches and cricket pavilions, set letter-boxes ablaze, slashed works of art and detonated bombs. In 1912, Emmeline Pankhurst declared and urged her followers: “Those of you, who can break windows, break them. Those of you who can still further attack property so as to make the government realize that property is as greatly endangered by Women Suffrage as it was by the Chartists of old, do so. And my last words to the government: I incite this meeting to rebellion” (Pugh, 217)

One event has dominated the popular image of the suffrage movement in its history: on a sunny June day in 1913, Emily Wilding Davidson, acted by a desire to gain publicity for women's suffrage went to the Derby, she threw herself under the King's horse but she was unsuccessful, and died of head injuries a few days later and the suffragettes had their first martyr. These different forms of violence were a response to the discouragement at the slow rate of progress and the violent response of the police and prison officials. This was noticeable after the hunger strikes of imprisoned suffragettes led to force feeding and the

passing of the Cat and Mouse Act. This allowed the release of prisoners weakened by hunger, but then allowed them to be re-arrested when they recover their strength. These events brought the suffragettes to public attention, but alienated many politicians. This arson campaign stopped fighting only with the outbreak of World War I.

### **2.3. The March to the 1928 Equal Franchise Act**

On 19 June 1917, the House of Commons accepted the female-suffrage clause in the Representation of the People Bill by 385 votes to 55. In the House of Lords, it was passed by a vote of 134 to 71. With the successful passage of the Representation of the People Act, all women on the local government register, or who were wives of men on the local government register and were over the age of thirty were enfranchised. In the general election of 1918, 8.5 million women joined 12.9 million men in voting. Nonetheless female suffrage remained restricted to women over the age of 30 years who were local government electors (Holton.150). The contribution made to the war effort by millions of women may have done more to convince Members of Parliament to grant women the vote than any protests.

In 1918, the general election was also the first in which women could stand as MPs. While the suffragettes ceased to exist after 1918 suffragists continued to fight for universal female suffrage. It was not until the Equal Franchise Act that women won the vote on the same terms as men. In 1928, women finally obtained the franchise on the same terms as it was granted to men. (Kingsely Kent, 297)

At the same time, the conservative party with the support of both opposition parties equalized the franchise laws. With this legislation women in Britain were at last given equal political rights with men.

### **3. Political Representation of 20<sup>th</sup> century:**

“The political representation of a group is most commonly understood as the presence of members of the group in the formal institutions of politics. The theory, at its simplest, is that representative’s act for the groups they represent” (Phillips).

However, in the UK, as elsewhere, most representatives’ act for many different groups and most also attempt to transcend group interests to act for the nation or community that the institution serves. For example, a woman MP will act for her nation and her race. She will also seek to balance different viewpoints within an overall understanding of the 'national' interest. The multi-dimensional nature of representation complicates arguments for women's representation. So, political representation is the activity of making citizens voices, opinions and perspectives. “Present” in the public policy making processes (Political Representation in UK). It is a kind of political assistance.

#### **3.1 Women Representation**

Women have traditionally been under-represented in UK political institutions. Although women won the right to vote in 1918, they remained less than one in ten members of parliament until 1997. It is only feminist advocates who have given first priority to sex equality in political representation. Such advocates drew on the principles of democratic representation and intervene in party politics to make claims for equality between men and women. When women struggled to win the right to vote, they imagined that with it would come women's representation an expectation that was not met. Until 1997 UK women were less than ten per cent of members of the House of Commons (MPs), and until 1983 were fewer than five per cent of MPs (Lovenduski, Norris, 225).

The pattern of under representation persisted despite women's growing numbers of qualified women seeking political office. Inevitably UK women began to mobilize to seek political equality. By the end of the 1970s, equality of representation was part of the women's agenda. And By the end of the 1980s a widespread movement for political equality had emerged. Also By the end of the 1990s such demands appeared to be inescapable as growing numbers of women entered active politics.

But why is equality of women's representation important? At the heart of this question is the issue of whether women need women to represent them. Until fairly recently, it was thought that women were perfectly adequately represented by male heads of household and the notion that women had different interests from their families was controversial. However, as social patterns have changed, it has become easier to agree that women have rights as citizens that entitle them to participation in government.

“This 'claim of right' has been an important feature of women's mobilization in the UK. There are three main arguments for why Women should be representatives in the elected political institutions, the justice, pragmatic and difference arguments” (Lovenduski, Norris, 7).

The powerful justice argument is monopolized wherever women claim political representation and contends that it is simply unfair for dominate descriptive representation, a claim that is especially telling in countries that purport to be democratic and or modern.

Pragmatic arguments stress the electoral advantage of increasing the numbers of women representatives, namely those political parties will be perceived as more women friendly and as a result *attract women's votes*.

Difference arguments are of two kinds. Firstly women will bring a different style and approach to politics than men. Secondly, those women are a heterogeneous group who require equal descriptive representation if their diversity is to be reflected in decision making. Only the justice argument no claims about substantive representation. The pragmatic and difference arguments both imply that women's presence will improve their substantive representation. Such arguments are common to a number of countries. However, because they are made in varying political circumstances, they took on different forms and emphases, and particularly reflect different arrangements for political representation (Lovenduski, Norris, 8).

Pragmatic and justice issues are intertwined, most apparent in the interplay of party, electoral and institutional structures. Difference issues are in play throughout the system but most visible in legislative assemblies.

Which Women are represented?

Here we ask what kind of women are in the elected representatives?

The case for descriptive representation weakens when we consider which women become elected representatives. They rarely share social backgrounds with women in the electorate, a pattern that also holds for men, but which is not often problematized. Women elected representatives are more likely to be highly educated, middle class, and elite women.

Where does the Representation of women take place?

Representation occurs in institutions. Institutions, defined as rules and processes, shape debate and decision making not least by determining who is and is not a representative and how, where, and when decisions are made.

How effective is the Women's Representation?

« Good representation » requires that the represented are made present, there is some agreement that women's representation is effective when they are sufficiently present in institutions and when attempts at substantive representation are made.

## **Conclusion**

Women were oppressed in many ways, the denial of the vote was both a manifestation and cause of their questions, but women fought for their rights. The women's suffrage campaign was a success story with the principle of suffrage conceded in 1918 and Equal franchise rights which followed in 1928.

Numerous women believed that by gaining the vote, other rights would follow. So, this chapter had examined women's efforts to have these rights and their efforts to increase their political representation in UK.

The next chapter, look at how the representation of women had increased in the elected office, especially in parliament of UK and what they do for realize their ideas.

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## Introduction

Women's representation in political office has increased substantially in many of Britain's institutions in recent years, exactly from 1918. When the number of women Mps grew, this chapter explains the situation of women in the UK parliament, and their shift since 1918, moving to their great success to be Ministers.

### 1. Women in Parliament

Women in the UK were first able to vote in parliamentary elections in the 1918 general election. So, women had the opportunity to stand as a Member of Parliament.

The first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons was "Nancy Astor" (Conservative) in 1919. Since then there has been a slow increase in the number of women MPs, with significant increase only occurring in the last three general elections

The figures for women's representation in the House of Commons since 1945 are given in Table 1.

**Table 1: Women in the House of Commons 1945-1997**

	Conservatives	Labour	Liberal democrat	Other	Total women	Total Mps %
1945	1	21	1	1	23	3.8
1950	6	14	1	0	21	3.4
1951	6	11	0	0	17	2.7
1955	10	14	0	0	24	3.8
1959	12	13	0	0	25	4.0
1964	11	18	0	0	29	4.6

1966	7	19	0	0	26	4.1
1970	15	10	0	1	26	4.1
1974(Feb)	9	13	0	1	23	3.6
1974(Oct)	7	18	0	2	27	4.3
1979	8	11	0	0	19	3.0
1983	13	10	0	0	23	3.5
1987	17	21	2	1	41	6.3
1992	20	37	2	1	60	9.2
1997	13	101	3	3	120	18.2
2001	14	95	5	4	118	17.9

Source. (Norris and Lovenduski, eds 1993).

This table shows that there have been dramatic increases in recent years. Particularly in 1997. However, despite this increase women are still fewer than One in Five MPs in the UK. This leaves the country ranking thirty-third in the Inter-parliamentary Union's table of women in National parliaments.

“Such Countries as Sweden (Forty-Three percent 43%), Denmark (thirty seven percent 37 %), The Netherlands (Thirty six percent 36 %), New Zealand (thirty one percent 31 %), South Africa (thirty percent 30 %), or Argentina (Twenty six percent)”, (Russell, 17).

The figures for women's representation in Both Houses of parliament are given in Table 3 in more details by the political party. For example in the upper chamber, the House of Lords, the representation of women has been lower. Until 1958 the chamber was composed a hereditary peers. And all of whom were men. Only in 1958, when a new class of appointed "life peer" was added, were women entitled to join the House.

In 1963, women hereditary peers were admitted, although the majority of these peers were still men. In 1999, the government tried to double the proportion of women in the chamber, from 8, 4 percent to 16, 7 percent. However, the proportion of women remains lower than that in the House of Commons, and the majority of appointments Continue to be given to men (O’Driscoll, 94).

The main parties in UK party system are given in Table 2.

**Table 2: Main parties in the UK Party System.**

Britain-Wide parties (England. Scotland and Wales only)
Labour party-Centre left Party Conservative party-Centre right party Liberal Democrat- Centre party Green Party.( Not represented in House of Commons) UK Independence Party (UK IP ) anti-European ( not represented in House of Commons)
Scottish Parties Scottish National Party (SNP)
Welsh Parties Plaid Cymru-Welsh national Party
Northern Irish parties Ulster Unionist Party( UUP) Progressive Unionist Party( PUP) UK Unionist Party (UKU) Democratic Unionist Party ( DUP) Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) Sinn Fein Alliance Party /Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition ( NIWC)

Source.(Norris and Lovenduski,eds 1993)

The representation of women the House of Common and House of Lords are given in

Table 3.

**Table 3: Women's Representation in both Houses of Parliament.**

Party	House of Commons (June 2001)				House of Lords (February 2001)			
	Men	women	Total	%Women	Men	women	Total	%Women
Labour	316	95	413	23.0	156	43	199	21.6
Conservative	152	14	166	8.4	196	33	229	14.4
Liberal democrat	47	5	52	9.6	48	14	62	22.6
UUP	5	1	6	16.7	0	0	0	-
SNP	4	1	5	20.0	0	0	0	-
Plaid cymru	4	0	4	0.0	0	0	0	-
SDLP	4	0	4	0.0	0	0	0	-
DUP	4	1	5	20.0	0	0	0	-
Sinn fein	3	1	4	25.0	0	0	0	-
Speaker	1	0	0	0.0	0	0	0	-
Independent/other	1	0	1	0.0	178	18	197	9.6
Total	541	118	659	18.2	567	111	687	16.7

Source,(Norris and LovendsKi, ed.1993)

## **Explaining these Changes:**

Throughout the last decades, the major political parties have made efforts to improve the representation of women in elected office. However, as tables 1 and 3 demonstrate the number of women in the House of Common increased due to the large increase in number of Labour women MPs. At the same year, the number of Conservative and Liberal Democrat stayed relatively stable.

It is notable; those from 1970 none of the Northern Irish parties had any women representatives at all (although three women were added in 2001). Also the representatives of women are fewer in Scotland (at fifteen percent) and Wales (at ten percent) than it is in England (at nineteen percent). It was until 1997, none of the efforts made by the parties brought about a significant breakthrough. Despite the existence of women's organization within the parties, and their effort to increase Women's representation, Local parties continued to select men." The Labour party did the most to support women but, it was until 1997, progress was relatively slow" (Pelling, N.P).

"Labour applied quotas for women in local, regional and national party office from 1990 onwards, but these stopped short of requiring women to be selected for public offices such as Councilor or MP" (Brooks,etal). "In 1988, a group of women members formed the Labour Women's Network, which looks for providing women with training and information to help them win selection as parliamentary candidates.

"The first positive action rule for candidate selection was adopted in 1988" (Russel, 19) so, when selecting the parliamentary candidate, it must include at least one women. However, while these measures resulted in an increase well-qualified women seeking selection, most of

them did not go on to be chosen. In 1992, the number of Labour women elected was only thirty seven (representing fourteen percent 14% of Labour MPs). Although the proportion of women Conservative MPs. at six percent 6% was far lower.

“In the 1997 election, The Labour Party adopted a more radical positive action system of all women short lists. This helped for increase from thirty-seven to 101 Labour women MPs” (Kelly N.P).

At the same time, the number of women representing other parties. In parliament dropped. This was partly as a result of the Conservatives losing seats, and partly because the Liberal Democrats, who more doubled their number of MPs, had selected very few women. Neither of these parties had used any Kind of positive action system.

“For the first time at 2001 election, since 1979 the number of women MPs decreased, because no party used an effective positive action system. One reason is that parties were concerned that strict quota systems could run into the same legal difficulties which had affected all women shortlists” (Lovenduski, 19). The Conservatives and liberal Democrats did not adopt quotas, despite their poor records and force from some activities. For instance, “after the election of 1997, William Hague, the new Conservative Party leader, proposed that there should be a twenty five percent quota for selection of parliamentary candidates” (Dehlerup, N.P). However, this was rejected by members of his party. The Conservatives and liberal Democrats tried various systems such as preparing for women, preparing for activists in equal opportunities selections, and shadowing plans for women prospective candidates with existing women MPs. However, the progress was poor, with the number of Conservative women MPs remaining unchanged after the election and the number of Liberal Democrat women MPs increasing by only one.

The same level of hostility to quota systems did not exist in the Labour party. However, “the use of all women shortlists had been ruled out. The party also helped that its twenty four percent 24 % women MPs would a “critical mass” and its members would now select women with force that was used in 1997” (Kelly; N.P).

“Local Parties needed to draw up short lists that were 50/50 male/female. However, this had little effect and most retiring Labour MPs were replaced by men, resulting in a fall in the number of Labour women” (UK Parliament).

Following this disappointment, positive action in back on the agenda in all the political parties, and likely to be adopted again for the next elections in 2005\2006. Without doubt,

The main reason that women’s representation has improved, has been the adoption by parties of position action (or ‘quota’) systems for selection of candidates. It was a long and difficult struggle within political parties to get these systems adopted.

## **1.1 The Devolved Assemblies**

The United Kingdom is a “Unitary” state, but it consists of three nation-England, Scotland and Wales-and the province of Northern Ireland. After Labour won power in 1997, legislation was enacted to create devolved institution in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. “The creation of a Scottish Parliament and Well Assembly were long standing Labour policy commitments and were achieved in 1999”, ( Russell, 19). The establishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly in 1998 was part of the Belfast Agreement that reached following all-party peace talks in Northern Ireland”. (Northern Ireland Assembly, par 4).

The High women’s representation in the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales has been very widely noted and celebrated, and it is shown in Tables 4 to 6.

The representation of women in the Welsh Assembly, in 1992 election are given in Table 4.

**Table 4: Women's Representation in the Welsh Assembly, 1992 Election**

Party	Constituency Seats		Lists Seats		Total	
	Men	women	Men	women	Men	Women %
Labour	12	15	1	0	28	53.6
Conservative	1	0	8	0	9	0.0
Liberal democrat	1	2	2	1	6	50.0
Plaid Cymru	8	1	4	4	17	29.4
Total	22	18	15	5	60	38.3

The representation of women in the Scottish Parliament, in 1999 election are given in Table 5.

**Table 5: Women's Representation in the Scottish Parliament, 1999 Election**

Party	Constituency Seats		Lists Seats		Total	
	Men	women	Men	women	Men	Women %
Labour	28	25	1	2	56	48.2
Conservative	0	0	15	3	18	16.7
Liberal democrat	10	2	5	0	17	11.8
SNP	5	2	15	13	35	42.9
Green	0	0	1	0	1	0.0

Scottish	0	0	1	0	1	0.0
Independent	1	0	0	0	1	0.0
Total	44	29	38	18	129	36.4

The representation of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, in 1998 election are given in Table 6.

**Table 6: Women's Representation in The Northern Ireland Assembly, 1998 Election.**

Party	Men	women	Men	Women %
UUP	26	2	28	7.1
SDLP	21	3	24	12.5
DUP	19	1	20	5.0
Sinn Fein	13	5	18	27.8
Alliance	5	1	6	16.7
NWS	0	2	2	100.0
PUP	2	0	2	0.0
UXU	5	0	5	0.0
Total	94	14	108	13.0

Source.Norris and Lovenduski,eds 1993

Why is women's representation so high in Scotland and Wales, and low in Northern Ireland?

The establishment of the new devolved assemblies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has offered the greatest opportunity to increase women's representation in recent years. "Because these were new institutions there were no incumbent Candidates or established traditions, and there was thus an opportunity for women to seize" (Russel, 23).

The design of the new institutions also offered the opportunity for women to be involved from the start in establishing bodies which would be hospitable to their needs.

## **2. Total Women MPs since 1918**

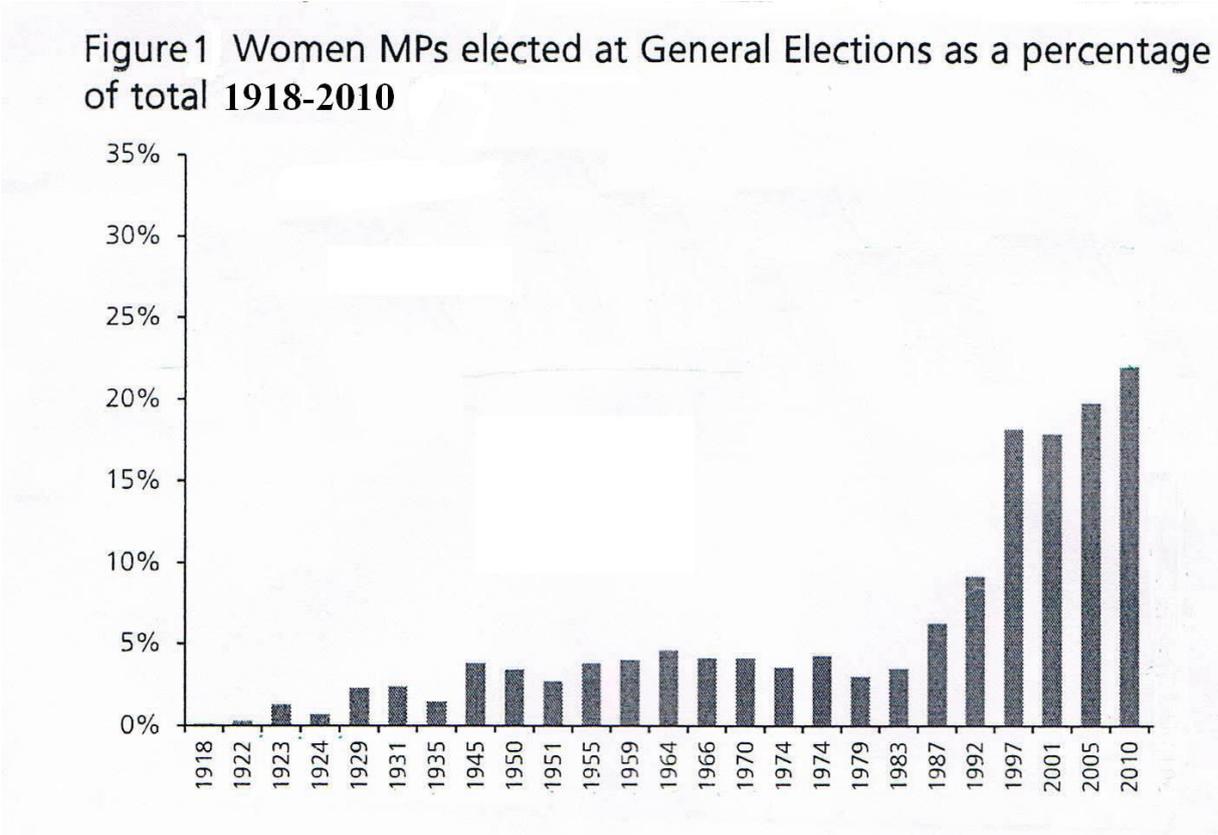
Allowing women to stand for parliament did not swiftly result in large numbers of women being elected. The number of women MPs grew, but only slowly. In the post War elections, the number of women MPs peaked at 15 at the 1931 general election. (Women in Parliament catalogue 7). Then fell back to at 9 the next election in 1935 when women were just 1 in 75 of all MPs. In 1945, the number of women MPs rose to 24, and it changed around this level for the next four decades.

In the early decades, the number of women candidates for Labour, Conservative or the Liberal party grew only slowly. "From 1918 Until 1983 General Election less than 5% of Conservative and less than 8% of Labour Candidates was women" (Factsheet, par2).

Despite that women succeeded to become candidates, they tended to be in less winnable seats than men. So, the seize of women MPs for each party was even lower than the seize of candidates. "Between 1918 and 1983, after a general election the highest number of women MPs Was 29 in 1964, it is about 5 % of the total"(the history of MPs since 1918).

This situation began to change 1980s general Elections; both the number of women candidates and elected MPs began to slowly increase. But it was not until 1997, 79 years after women has first been able to stand for Parliament, that there was a major increase in the number of women elected. “The change in 1997 was partly as a result of the Labour victory and the use of all. Women shortlists for selecting Labour candidates. It is about 120 women MPs were elected in 1997, 18, 2 % of all MPs, 101 were Labour MPs, 13 Conservative an 3 Liberal Democrat” (Caul, 5). So, since 1997, the numbers have continued to rise, though at a slower rate, 143 women MPs were elected. The number has since risen to 147 female MPs (23 % of Total) as a result of election.

The figure below represent women MPs elected at general election as a percentage of total 1918-2010.



Source. Women in parliament and Government.”

At 2010 general election, “women composed 30% of Labour party candidates and 31 % of Labour MPs. Women were underrepresented among MPs relative to candidates. 24 % of Conservative candidates were women Compared to 16% of those elected as MPs; 22 % of Labour Democrat candidates were women compared to 12 % of their MPs” (Keen, 7). So, 369 women have been elected as MPs since 1918. “8 % of all MPs; 105 (28%) as Conservative; and 23 (6%) as Liberal Democrats” (Keen, 8). They have been concentrated in recent times.

Women have been also more likely to be MPs in towns and cities than in rural constituencies since 1918. This reflects and led for Labour seats to be in urban areas and the higher number of Women Labour MPs compared with other parties. But also MPs have also like to from groups in constituencies is some of the UK’s biggest cities such as London, Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle (Keen, 8). Some areas of the UK have relatively few women MPs, only 14 women MPs have ever represented constituencies in Wales, and they

have been concentrated in South Wales. Parts of the UK that are yet to have a women MP include the North of Scotland, the Borders and parts of Dorset.

### **3. Women Ministers**

The entry of most women’s in parliament lead them also the power to take a seat in Ministry. As “the first women to hold ministerial office was “Margaret Bondfield” that was appointed under Secretary in the Ministry of Labour in 1924, but she lost her seat at the General Election later that year but was returned again at by an election in 1926” (Factsheet, par, 2). On June 1929, She was appointed “Minister of Labour; the first women member of the Cabinet and also the first British women politician to be admitted to the Privy Council. She held this position on until her parliamentary career came to an end in 1931”

(Factsheet, 6). A list of all those women Members of the House of Commons who have held ministerial office since Miss Bond field is given in Table7.

The women's Cabinet Ministers are given in Table 7.

**Table 7: Women Cabinet Ministers 1929-2016**

<b>Women Cabinet Ministers 1929 - 2016</b>			
1929-31	Margaret Bondfield	2004-08	Ruth Kelly
1945-47	Ellen Wilkinson	2006-09	HazelBlears
1953-54	Florence Horsbrugh	2006-09	Jacqui Smith
1964-70/74-76	Barbara Castle	2007-08	Baroness Ashton
1968-69	Judith Hart	2008-10	Yvette Cooper
1970-74/79-90	Margaret Thatcher	2008-10	Baroness Royal
1974-79	Shirley Williams	2010-12	Caroline Spelman
1982-83	Baroness Young	2010-12	Cheryl Gillan
1992-97	Gillian Shephard	2010-12	BaronessWarsi
1992-97	Virginia Bottomley	2010-	Theresa May
1997-98	Ann Taylor	2011-	Justine Greening
1997-98/07-10	Harriet Harman	2012-14	Maria Miller
1997-2001	Mo Mowlam	2012-16	Theresa Villiers
1997-2003	Clare Short	2014-16	Nicky Morgan
1998-2001	Baroness Jay	2014-	Elizabeth Truss
2001-03	Helen Liddell	2014-16	BaronessStowell
2001-02	Estelle Morris	2015-	Amber Rudd
2001-07	Hilary Armstrong	2016-	Baroness Evans
2001-07	Patricia Hewitt	2016-	Karen Bradley
2001-07/09-10	Tessa Jowell	2016-	Andrea Leadsom
2003-07	Baroness Amos	2016-	Priti Patel

Source. Women in Parliament and Government"

In 1979 General Election, the conservative victory brought about another "first" when "Margaret Thatcher" became the first British women Prime Minister, having led the Conservative party since February 1975. However, at the same time, the 1979 election returned the lowest number of women MPs for nearly thirty years. Only one other woman held cabinet office during the time that "Margaret Thatcher" was Prime Minister. This was Baroness Young" (Keen, 6), who was Lord Privy seal and leader of the House of Lords in 1982-83.

"Margaret Thatcher went on to become the longest serving Prime Minister of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, serving for 11 years. Only four Prime Ministers in history have served for a longer period" (Women in the House of Commons).

In 1997, "Tony Blair's Cabinet had five women and was the first to include more than two female ministers at one time. The highest number of concurrent women cabinet minister under "Tony Blair" was eight (36 per cent). Under "Tony Blair" (then a record) from May 2006-May 2007 (Keen, 6).

In July 2016, "Theresa May" became the second women UK Prime Minister. Currently, there are eight women in the Cabinet (including the Prime Minister) which is 35% of 23 Cabinet Posts" (Ibid, 7).

## **Conclusion**

The entry of more women into elected office has the capacity to make a difference in parliament. Women MPs had increased and they seek to articulate women's issues in parliament of UK and adopted affirmative action strategies with in parties; also they succeeded to play a big role to be a Minister and Prime Ministers.

Next, we look at how women conduct politics in a new feminized way, looking for their challenges and success.

## End Notes

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## **Introduction**

Although opportunities have given to women in politics, women continue to experience barriers to complete success and there are often formidable obstacles to women's active participation in there. In this chapter, we look at the possible solutions to these problems that are offered via recommendations, women's challenges and their prospects as well.

### **1. Obstacles to Women Political Participation**

Politics has traditionally been a male domain that many women have found unwelcoming or even hostile (O'Drisoll, 14). Even that men and women have an equal right to participate fully in all aspects of the political process, but in practise, it is often harder for

women to exercise these rights. In UK, there are frequently extra barriers to women's participation, and special care is required to ensure their rights are respected in this regard. Women are often more likely than men to face practical barriers to entering politics, including lower levels of education, less access to information, greater family responsibilities, and the exclusion of their rights that have left them with fewer opportunities to acquire a political experience .

" Barriers to women's political participation are often characterized by the political dominance of a small group of (typically male) elites, the absence of well-established political parties, the failure to include women in peace negotiations and the bodies created for peace implementation ,and other limiting factors. Therefore, because of these it is harder for women to emerge as political leaders " (Lovenduski, Norris, 25). At the same time, the country frequently offer unique opportunities to institute changes in the political structure and political

culture that insist the recognition and realization of women's right to participate fully and equally in politics.

### **1.1 Socio-cultural Obstacles**

For becoming politicians, women experience three main obstacles. Firstly, women have fewer of the resources needed to enter politics; they are poorer than men and less likely to be employed in occupations that are supportive of political activism. Secondly, a various life style constraints means some have less time for politics, family and other caring responsibilities are typically under-taken by women, reducing the time available for other activities. Thirdly, the men who established them have developed gradually the political style in UK parties and elected assemblies. This style is reflecting traditional male preferences .It

acts to exclude all outsiders, making them feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. It especially excludes women (Lovenduski, Norris, 96).

Such constraints affect supply; inhibiting women who might otherwise come forward fewer women than men have tried to become elected politicians in the UK.

## **1.2 Political and Constitutional Obstacles**

The combinations of the electoral system with party government reduced the options used to those seeking political office. The voters make choices between parties and rarely decide their vote based on individuals. As a result of this, in practice the entry of elected office is through one of the political parties in the only channel that can secure seats (Caul, 4).

UK political parties are inhospitable to women. The majority of individuals in positions of power within parties have been and remain men, and culturally these organizations have tended to be more masculine. The candidate selections processes have

been devised with men in mind and it was difficult for women to discuss. Party characteristics and procedures therefore distort both the supply of women coming forward and the demand for women among selectors. The positive action measures that were adopted during the 1995 were necessary corrective to that distortion (Lovenduski, Norris, 14).

It is the Westminster system with its high beginning of representation that is at least hospitable to women. Those who campaigned to equalise women's and men's representation in the 1970s, faced this system. Both the Labour and Conservative parties dominate the House of Commons, and both of them are responsible for low levels of women's representation there.

Those seeking to improve women's representation were required to deal with a well-established system where political parties give more importance to other social divisions which characterised the lives of both women and men (such as class, race, ethnicity, locality, physical ability and age). (Fawcett society, 25)

Such social divisions are always present and come into play whenever a group claims the right to be represented.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the party system in an analysis of women's political representation. But the high representation at Westminster discouraged the formation of a women's party. Women's advocates therefore had to campaign inside the parties to secure equal representation (Lovenduski, Norris, 21)

The new constitutional plans have changed this situation and the political parties continue to control nominations, but the more proportional electoral systems made it easier for smaller parties to compete. The demand for women candidates in Scotland and Wales has increased, and the established parties have begun to select more women but in Northern Ireland, where this has not happened, a women's organization (the Northern Ireland women's coalition) has achieved representation for its candidates (Ibid).

In constitutional terms, UK institutions have traditionally had a high threshold of representation compared to other representative democracies. "The Westminster system of single member constituencies is known to be associated with low levels of women's representation. In the UK individual local parties are responsible for choosing their candidates" (O'Driscoll, 94)

So, there is not necessarily an overview taken by party of the number of men and women selected. Similarly, individual electors are only presented with one candidate from each party and cannot easily judge a party on the basis of its record of selecting women.

Women are typically better represented in proportional electoral systems. The existence of party lists provides courage for parties to nominate a balanced state of candidates. Such electoral systems are also likely to lead to coalition governments in which victories are won at the margins, thus sharpening competition for votes and increasing incentive for parties to compete for women's support (Lovenduski, Norris, 12).

This obstacle therefore, has always been applied to the House of Common and to the UK local government. The creation of new assemblies with different electoral systems breaks down some of the barriers (although the majority of candidates in these assemblies still represent single member constituencies). So, the fact that women's representation among party candidates become more clearly in such systems along with added electoral competition between parties, the demand for women candidates has potentially increased. If women see

that the barriers are reduced, more women may put themselves forward, So the supply increased.

## **2. Recommendation to Increase Women Political Participation**

Advancing women's political participation in the UK requires determined efforts not only by women themselves but also by governments; the evidence suggests that the inclusion of more women at Westminster may be important, not just for symbolic legitimacy and substantive policy representation, but also for encouraging participation among women more

generally. Therefore, the uses of appropriate strategies are very important for women being selected and standing for elections and for addressing this issue.

Research has shown that the use of positive action policies in UK and other countries has had a significant effect on the proportion of women elected to office and in turn encourages a wider participation among women as citizens (Norris, 62).

These positive action strategies include a range of initiatives that are designed to benefit women usually as a temporary measure until gender parity is reached in legislative and appointed bodies (Norris, 63).

There are three main strategies for increasing the number of women's participations such as the use of reserved seats for women established in electoral law, and the use of statutory gender quotas controlling the composition of candidate lists for all parties in a country. There is also the strategy of voluntary gender quotas that is used in the regulations and rules governing the candidate selection process within specific parties (Jones, 64)

The UK tried only the after mentioned and with some success, these strategies are the most effective ways to overcome the social and economic barriers that women face to standing in and winning elections.

"Labour's all women's shortlists have been instrumental to increase the number of women in parliament, and 43% of Labour MPs are now women and as professor "Sarah Childs" argues, a mandatory quota is the only way the UK will reach anything near gender parity in an acceptable time frame, and political leadership on this issue is desperately needed (O'Neil, 2). So, all these strategies may lead to more women entering elected office.

Party initiatives operated with candidates selection transparently procedures, such as raising awareness of selection process and publicizing application and selection of underrepresented groups, could also be effective in this regard. In addition to this, the formalisation of job description and the skills that the successful candidates need to meet may help to make the selection criteria more transparent.

The government also should provide incentive for political parties to promote women candidates, including resources, training and increased access to broadcast time. Providing increased airtime for women in politics between elections could also advance women's participation by enabling voters to make informed assessments at election time of the overall performance of political parties including their support of women who have been elected as representatives (O'Driscoll, 96).

## **2.1 Increase Women's Awareness through Education**

Women are the heart of most societies, regardless of whether they are working or not, mothers are very influential people in children's lives.

Education has a profound effect on women's ability to claim other rights and achieve states in society such as economic independence and political representation so, having an education can make an enormous difference to women's chances of finding well-paid works raising a healthy family and preventing the spread of diseases.

“Education systems vary in administration, curriculum and personnel. As women have gained rights, formal education has become a symbol of progress and a step toward gender rights “(Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women's, 16).

For this reason, education of women is the most effective way of stopping the cycle poor protection of women's rights and low regard for women's rights; this will be achieved also through empowering women in the education system to become better advocates for themselves. In addition, policies designed to increase the numbers of women in education should consider three domains of how education can empower women through social norms and values on gender, through institutions and through the equitable distributions and through the equitable distribution of educational resources (Empowering Women through Education, 51)

## **2.2 Strengthen Links with Organisations**

The effectiveness of women's participation and the ability of government to meet women's needs depend on the extent to which policy makers listen to women. Consulting with women was very important that has been recognised by the UK government for at least thirty years most recently the new institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have sought to establish a new style of policy making .

Throughout the last century women have formed various organisations, and been active in other voluntary and community organisations. There have also been particular attempts to consult with women in these organisations (the Fawcett society, par 2).

Women in the UK have long been active in the voluntary sector, and there is a tradition of organisation formed to specifically address women's interests, And they are now better represented in political institutions and in other organisations such as trade unions,

there are many hundreds of organisation at national, regional and local levels which exist to support women's interests ( Lovenduski. Norris par 3).

Some of these date started in the twentieth century, and some have as many women members as the largest political parties, in Northern Ireland where the exclusion of women from political parties, their involvement in voluntary sector and community organisations have been particularly strong ( women's party in Northern Ireland).

The number of women that are involved in these organisations is difficult to quantify it, and some of the traditional organisation's memberships have declined. However, new organisations are always being formed and the latter may exist to campaign on issues of interest to women, to provide services to women or to allow women to network and carry out joint activities. Some of them are overtly feminist and the most will seek to engage on some levels with the policy-making process and influence political decisions. The consultation with these organisations may be important to government heaving women's views.

It has been suggested that are six categories of women's organisations (Grant, 40)

1. Traditional, long, established mass membership organisation –for example:

a. The Mothers union with 140,000 members and strong links to the Church of England.

b. The National Federation of Women's Institutes-founded in 1915 to voice the concerns of rural women's with 8000 local institutes and seventy country federations.

c. Town women's Guild founded in 1928 to help women in towns take advantage of the new right to vote it now has around 80000 members.

2. Established Organisation providing a service for young women for example:

a. The Guide Association.

b. The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).

3. Newer Organisation providing a service for women for example:

a. Maternity Alliance- supporting pregnant women babies and their families.

b. Rape Crisis Centres for women suffering sexual violence and rape.

c. Women's Aid Support Services for women suffering domestic violence.

4. Professional Women's Organisations for example:

a. Women in Medicine.

b. Business and Professional Women UK.

c. Association of Women Barristers.

d. Women in Science and Engineering.

5. Black and ethnic minority women's groups, for example:

a. Southall black sisters.

b. South Sudan Women's Concern.

6. Pressure on Campaigning Groups for example:

a. The 300 Group Campaigning for more Women in Parliament.

b. The Women's Environmental Network.

c. The Fawcett Society which Campaigns for equality between women and men.

"funding is a perpetual problem for most women's organisations in the UK, the government does not provide direct core funding for these organisations, although those providing services may get project funding from government on their local authority (Lovenduski, Norris, 42).

### **2.3 Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties**

UK political parties are among the most important institutions affecting women's political participation. Parties determine which candidates are nominated and elected and which issues achieve national prominence. " They also introduce measures to encourage more women to become politically active and to institutionalize fairness, transparency and equity as principles governing parties operating procedures and culture, they play a key role in enhancing women's participation" (Handbook promoting women's participation, 91). The role of women in political parties is therefore a key determinant of their prospects for political empowerment, particularly at the national level. Because political parties are so influential in shaping women's political prospects, governments and international organizations seeking to advance the participation of women in elections and that can be justified for tend to focus on

the role of political parties. For this reason, women seeking an entree into politics must usually turn to political parties. Political parties vary greatly in the extent to which they seek to promote women into leadership positions and to recruit women as party candidates, as well as in the extent to which they address political, economic and social issues of special concern

to women. Since political parties often tend to be more open to nominating women as candidates for local elections, women may find it easier to start at this level and use it as to achieving a national office (Political Parties, 2).

So, for increasing women's participation in political parties in UK, women politicians should focus on promoting themselves through the ranks of politics and planning their political careers, also they should build partnerships with other women and acting collectively on issues of mutual concern (Handbook on promoting women participation,93).

Political parties have established special wings for women that can contribute to their advancement, this can provide women to become active, learn political skills, and develop networks within the party. They are most effective when linked directly to party leadership and decision making bodies.

The governments also should make efforts for advancing women's political participation in political parties, it should encourage these parties to promote women candidates, including resources: training and increased access to broadcast time, and providing increased airtime for women in politics between elections that could also help for advanced women's participation. So, political parties, governments and even women themselves have made great efforts for more women's participation in political parties.

## **2.4 Working with Media**

The media and particularly electronic media, play an important role for making voter interest in and attitudes about election.

Media is currently characterized by social networks interactive forums; intense data sharing and collaborative knowledge(the role of new media for increased political participation, 40). The way the media portray women, how they deal with issues of special concern to women can have a major impact on women's participation in an election.

Media can convey a positive image of women as political leaders. And in print media, women candidates are sometimes lower to the women's pages" of a newspaper. The quality of media coverage can have a major impact on the advancement of women as candidates and as voters. The portrayal of women in the media as active political participants and leaders can greatly increase their participation. So, the media should focus attention on undertake voter and civic education programs aimed specifically at women(The Fawcett Society, par 4).

### **3. Women Promote Gender Equality**

Women's presence and influence in politics and public decision-making processes can contribute to gender equality. Women's increased presence in positions of authority and in public life more generally, changes this status quo and is one marker of reduced gender inequality. To be viewed as leader is through, position action or association can improve a women's status, particularly when it leads to benefits for her family, community or constituency (O'Neil, Dommingo, 28).

Even when the leadership of women in UK lacks substantive power and their part is taken by men; it can still have important symbolic effects on discourse, ideas, and

expectations. For instance, women in public positions can therefore normalize the idea of women with power like women's ministers contribute to shifting attitudes towards women's leadership. So, women's voice and leadership is a key to full gender equality and to removing

the barriers to women's empowerment. In addition to this, women's organizations in the UK and globally are seen to be a key to progress on gender equality and culture change (Gender Equality and Empowerment in the UK, 43). Throughout these actions done by women, women's rights and more equitable gender relations have emerged.

### **3.1 Women Contribute Economic Development**

In the UK when more women work, economics grow. An increase in female work's participation results in faster economic growth. The nation of the UK have seen a huge shift towards women's more equal participation in the formal economy, which is empowering for women and contributes to economic equality is good for business. Companies for instance, greatly benefit from. Increasing leadership opportunities for women, which is shown to increase organizational effectiveness, it is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational effectiveness (Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship, 17).

So, women are more likely than men to work and have the capacity to help in the developments of economy.

### **Conclusion**

Progress in women's empowerment and gender equality in the UK has been difficult at first in the inclusion of women's voices in politics and government. However, after all this difficulties women have succeeded to achieve their positions in politics by adopting many strategies, suggestions and many recommendations, they have also helped for the increasing of their participation in all domain by keeping the debates on their participation more alive.

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## **Introduction**

During the nineteenth century, there were significant developments and the widespread questioning about the place of women in the English society, while many women would increasingly demand more political and legal rights. In this chapter, we attempt to examine the women's question and women suffrage in England. Then we also discuss the political representation of women.

### **1. The Women's Question (18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

Many of historical changes that characterized the Victorian period motivated discussions about the nature and the role of women. This was what Victoria called "the women question".

This question encompasses group debates about the physiological nature, the political capacity, the moral character and the place of women in society. The question about the place of women in society and in politics existed in times of wars through the revolution of 1848 to the dislocation of industrial change and the rise for empire towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The ideas of the suffrage movement in Britain descended directly from Enlightenment political philosophy and nineteenth century liberal theory, notably through Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* and John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women*. They shared a fundamental theoretical premise: "the human attributes of men and women and the consequent social injustice involved in their unequal treatment" (Holton, 9).

During the enlightenment the "Rights of Man" were under discussion in England and in France. Mary Wollstonecraft had a great role during (1759-1797), she has been called the mother of feminism and was the first feminist (Holton, 11).

Mary identified with the revolutionaries of 1789. She proposed to apply enlightened ideas to women. To her, women were rational creatures who were no less capable of intellectual achievements than men. Her "Vindications of the Rights of Women" were published in 1792 and was addressed to Talleyrand, citizen rights. It is important work since it advocated the equality of the sexes. "She ridiculed the predominant ideas about women as

helpless, charming and foolish. To her, women were taught in sub dependence. She criticized the sentimental and foolishness of women.

Her text is a protest against women subjugation. Education held the key of achieving self-respect. To make women able to achieve a better life, not only for themselves but also for their children and their husbands. Women provided education to their children: that is why education was so important. She argued that “women should be able to enter the world of politics” (a vindication of the rights of women, NP)

It took more than a century before her ideas were put into effect. Also William Thompson wrote many books about women’s question; his text was the first manifesto for women rights and political equality. Thompson was a champion of the women rights.

The question of women role and women rights was discussed by the public in the 1860s. The first pamphlets in favor of the enfranchisement of women began to appear in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (Lewis, 78)

John Stuart Mill published “*The Subjection of Women*” in 1869 (Lewis, 82). He used the image of slavery and bondage. He argued in favor of social, economic and political

Emancipation of women, and assumed that each individual had interests which only he or she could represent, and on these grounds Mill justified votes for women. He presented a petition in the Parliament calling for the inclusion of women suffrage in the Reform Act of 1867.

## **1.1 The Victorian View of Women**

The Victorian era is characterized as the domestic age; the age of the home. This was epitomized by Queen Victoria herself who came to represent a kind of femininity centered on the family, motherhood and respectability.

The popular Victorian image of the ideal woman and wife came to be known as the “Angel in the House”. So, women during the Victorian era did not have many rights. They were viewed as only supposed to be housewives and mothers to their children. The women during this era were only viewed as people that should only concern themselves with successful house hold. So, politics was of little concern to the Victorian women as she was not allowed to own property or have her own money (Levine, 61).

The development of the “woman question” in the early years of Victoria's reign turned out to be beneficial chiefly for middle-class women. Debates about relations between sexes flourished and impinged on national political issues. In the 1850s, the focus shifted onto questions concerning middle-class women's work.

So, many women needed to have an income to support their families because the men in the house hold were not making enough money to survive. When the women entered the work places they were not made to feel welcome and were often harassed. These women workers therefore were not welcome in the work place (outside of the house hold) or in

Society. It was not until the late 1860s when working Victorian women began to play an important role in the fight for working conditions.

## **1.2 The “Separate Sphere” Ideology**

“The two sexes now inhabited what Victorians thought of as ‘separate spheres’, only coming together at breakfast and again at dinner” (Hughes). This ideology dictated that the only proper place for a respectable woman was in the home, providing care and comfort to her

husband and children. This ideology was developed to explain why this separation was necessary, by defining the inherent characteristics of women.

These traits supposedly made women incapable of functioning in the public sphere. Women were classified as physically weaker, yet morally superior to men. They were also expected to teach the next generation to carry on this way of life. The fact that women had such a great influence at home was used as an argument against giving them the vote right.

## **2. Women's Rights**

In the eyes of the law, a married woman had no property, no vote, no rights to her children. It was a long struggle for them to acquire their rights as individuals. The state of coverture was part of the English common law system throughout most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a legal doctrine that stated that upon marriage, a woman's legal rights were subsumed by those of her husband: he had all the rights. Whereas single and widowed women could hold money or run business and have property. Married women had no equivalent rights; they were excluded from their claim. "Emmeline Pankhurst had helped found the Women's Franchise League, nobody opposed to the coverture clause" (Pugh).

### **2.1. Chartism, Unions and Women**

Chartism was a popular radical movement campaigning for universal male suffrage which was highly hypocritical. Meanwhile it attracted large numbers of women. Many wives took an active role in furthering the Chartist movement and helped their husbands. Tens of thousands of working women were active in this movement. "There were about 150 female Chartist associations, one for every 9 male associations" (Matthew 177).

The movement towards granting women franchise really started in 1867, when the National Society for Women Suffrage was created. It favored petitions and obtained one clear victory in 1869 with the Municipal Franchise Act: unmarried and widowed women ratepayers could vote in borough elections. This key act enabled women to take part in the local government. Several women like Mary Corbett, Emmeline Pankhurst and Charlotte Despard took advantage of this opportunity. They served as poor law guardians. In 1880, about 1 million women in England and Wales had a local franchise. In 1889, Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Franchise League. She campaigned in favor of the franchise and gained a victory when in 1894 the local government Act was passed. With this Act, married women were allowed the equal right to both vote and seat on municipal councils (Matthew 182).

## **2.2 The Suffragettes and Civil Disobedience**

Suffragettes were members of women's organizations in the late-19th and early-20th centuries which advocated the extension of the "[franchise](#)", or the right to vote in public elections, to women (Suffragette, 1.2).

The move for women to have the vote had really started in 1897 when Mrs. Millicent Fawcett founded the National Union of Women's Suffrage society. The largest suffrage organization in the United Kingdom. This was a federation of existing women's suffrage groups. It was the successor of the national society for Women's.

These suffragists were in favor of the women's suffrage, Mrs. Millicent Fawcett argued that if parliament made laws and if women had to obey those laws. Then women should be part of the process of making those laws (C.N Trueman, 1.2).

\*The term Suffrage means the right to vote and that is what women wanted.

However, Fawcett's progress was very slow. She converted some of the members of the Labour Representation Committee (soon to be the Labour Party) but most men in parliament believed that women simply would not understand how parliament worked and therefore should not take part in the electoral process. This left many women angry and in 1903, [Emmeline Pankhurst](#) and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia formed the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). They wanted women to have the right to vote and they were not prepared to wait. The union became better known as the suffragettes. It concentrated its activities on promoting support for votes for women within socialists and the trade union branches in the Manchester area.

They were disillusioned by the slow progress being made and began a violent approach, because their members were prepared to use violence to get what they wanted.

It was in 1905, the organization created a stir when Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney interrupted a political meeting in Manchester to ask two liberal politicians (Winston Churchill and Sir Edward Grey) if they believed women should have the right to vote. The

Two women got out a banner which had on it "Votes for Women" and shouted at the two politicians to answer their questions. Such actions were unheard; Pankhurst and Kenney were thrown out of the meeting and they refused to go to prison: to highlight the injustice of the

system as it was then (Suffragettes, par 2). *Emmeline Pankhurst* later wrote in her autobiography that:

“This was the beginning of a campaign, the like of which was never known in England, or for that matter in any other country....we interrupted a great many meetings violently thrown out and insulted Often we were painfully bruised and hurt” (Kingsley Kent, 268). The Suffragettes refused to bow to violence; they began destroying property in all parts of Great Britain. From 1909 onwards, the violence of their attacks grew progressively until serious attacks on property: they torched churches and cricket pavilions, set letter-boxes ablaze, slashed works of art and detonated bombs. In 1912, Emmeline Pankhurst declared and urged her followers: “Those of you, who can break windows, break them. Those of you who can still further attack property so as to make the government realize that property is as greatly endangered by Women Suffrage as it was by the Chartists of old, do so. And my last words to the government: I incite this meeting to rebellion” (Pugh, 217)

One event has dominated the popular image of the suffrage movement in its history: on a sunny June day in 1913, Emily Wilding Davidson, acted by a desire to gain publicity for women's suffrage went to the Derby, she threw herself under the King's horse but she was unsuccessful, and died of head injuries a few days later and the suffragettes had their first martyr. These different forms of violence were a response to the discouragement at the slow rate of progress and the violent response of the police and prison officials. This was noticeable after the hunger strikes of imprisoned suffragettes led to force feeding and the

passing of the Cat and Mouse Act. This allowed the release of prisoners weakened by hunger, but then allowed them to be re-arrested when they recover their strength. These events brought

the suffragettes to public attention, but alienated many politicians. This arson campaign stopped fighting only with the outbreak of World War I.

### **2.3. The March to the 1928 Equal Franchise Act**

On 19 June 1917, the House of Commons accepted the female-suffrage clause in the Representation of the People Bill by 385 votes to 55. In the House of Lords, it was passed by a vote of 134 to 71. With the successful passage of the Representation of the People Act, all women on the local government register, or who were wives of men on the local government register and were over the age of thirty were enfranchised. In the general election of 1918, 8.5 million women joined 12.9 million men in voting. Nonetheless female suffrage remained restricted to women over the age of 30 years who were local government electors (Holton.150). The contribution made to the war effort by millions of women may have done more to convince Members of Parliament to grant women the vote than any protests.

In 1918, the general election was also the first in which women could stand as MPs. While the suffragettes ceased to exist after 1918 suffragists continued to fight for universal female suffrage. It was not until the Equal Franchise Act that women won the vote on the same terms as men. In 1928; women finally obtained the franchise on the same terms as it was granted to men. (Kingsely Kent, 297)

At the same time, the conservative party with the support of both opposition parties equalized the franchise laws. With this legislation women in Britain were at last given equal political rights with men.

### **3. Political Representation of 20<sup>th</sup> century:**

“The political representation of a group is most commonly understood as the presence of members of the group in the formal institutions of politics. The theory, at its simplest, is that representative’s act for the groups they represent” (Phillips).

However, in the UK, as elsewhere, most representatives’ act for many different groups and most also attempt to transcend group interests to act for the nation or community that the institution serves. For example, a woman MP will act for her nation and her race. She will also seek to balance different viewpoints within an overall understanding of the 'national' interest. The multi-dimensional nature of representation complicates arguments for women's representation. So, political representation is the activity of making citizens voices, opinions and perspectives. “Present” in the public policy making processes (Political Representation in UK). It is a kind of political assistance.

#### **3.1 Women Representation**

Women have traditionally been under-represented in UK political institutions. Although women won the right to vote in 1918, they remained less than one in ten members of parliament until 1997. It is only feminist advocates who have given first priority to sex equality in political representation. Such advocates drew on the principles of democratic representation and intervene in party politics to make claims for equality between men and women. When women struggled to win the right to vote, they imagined that with it would come women's representation an expectation that was not met. Until 1997 UK women were less than ten per cent of members of the House of Commons (MPs), and until 1983 were fewer than five per cent of MPs (Lovenduski, Norris, 225).

The pattern of under representation persisted despite women's growing numbers of qualified women seeking political office. Inevitably UK women began to mobilize to seek political equality. By the end of the 1970s, equality of representation was part of the women's agenda. And By the end of the 1980s a widespread movement for political equality had emerged. Also By the end of the 1990s such demands appeared to be inescapable as growing numbers of women entered active politics.

But why is equality of women's representation important? At the heart of this question is the issue of whether women need women to represent them. Until fairly recently, it was thought that women were perfectly adequately represented by male heads of household and the notion that women had different interests from their families was controversial. However, as social patterns have changed, it has become easier to agree that women have rights as citizens that entitle them to participation in government.

“This 'claim of right' has been an important feature of women's mobilization in the UK. There are three main arguments for why Women should be representatives in the elected political institutions, the justice, pragmatic and difference arguments” (Lovenduski, Norris, 7).

The powerful justice argument is monopolized wherever women claim political representation and contends that it is simply unfair for dominate descriptive representation, a claim that is especially telling in countries that purport to be democratic and or modern.

Pragmatic arguments stress the electoral advantage of increasing the numbers of women representatives, namely those political parties will be perceived as more women friendly and as a result *attract women's votes*.

Difference arguments are of two kinds. Firstly women will bring a different style and approach to politics than men. Secondly, those women are a heterogeneous group who require equal descriptive representation if their diversity is to be reflected in decision making. Only the justice argument no claims about substantive representation. The pragmatic and difference arguments both imply that women's presence will improve their substantive representation. Such arguments are common to a number of countries. However, because they are made in varying political circumstances, they took on different forms and emphases, and particularly reflect different arrangements for political representation (Lovenduski, Norris, 8).

Pragmatic and justice issues are intertwined, most apparent in the interplay of party, electoral and institutional structures. Difference issues are in play throughout the system but most visible in legislative assemblies.

Which Women are represented?

Here we ask what kind of women are in the elected representatives?

The case for descriptive representation weakens when we consider which women become elected representatives. They rarely share social backgrounds with women in the electorate, a pattern that also holds for men, but which is not often problematized. Women elected representatives are more likely to be highly educated, middle class, and elite women.

Where does the Representation of women take place?

Representation occurs in institutions. Institutions, defined as rules and processes, shape debate and decision making not least by determining who is and is not a representative and how, where, and when decisions are made.

How effective is the Women's Representation?

« Good representation » requires that the represented are made present, there is some agreement that women's representation is effective when they are sufficiently present in institutions and when attempts at substantive representation are made.

## **Conclusion**

Women were oppressed in many ways, the denial of the vote was both a manifestation and cause of their questions, but women fought for their rights. The women's suffrage campaign was a success story with the principle of suffrage conceded in 1918 and Equal franchise rights which followed in 1928.

Numerous women believed that by gaining the vote, other rights would follow. So, this chapter had examined women's efforts to have these rights and their efforts to increase their political representation in UK.

The next chapter, look at how the representation of women had increased in the elected office, especially in parliament of UK and what they do for realize their ideas.



General conclusion :

The last few years have witnessed substantial developments in the representation of women in politics of UK. This is due to the entry of more women into political systems, and they led to 'politics as usual'. Women politicians also bring a different set of values to issues affecting women's equality, at the workplace, home, and public sphere. Their main aim is achieving sex parity in political institutions, for them there is no single reason for women under representation.

They fought for their rights by their suffrage campaign and succeeded to get the vote and other rights have followed it after. In addition to this, they made efforts for increasing their political representation in UK's Westminster by achieving a great difference in the parliament, an example of this is the 1997 general election; the subsequent contests in parliament have seen unprecedented progressing in UK.

The main reasons for this development lie in the strategies of positive discrimination within the Labour party parliamentary recruitment process. which led to the policy of all women shortlists; this was by creating seats in which all prospective parliamentary candidates had to be women, and those women were selected.

This development has increased the pressures on the opposition parties to bring more women into office, and successes to be ministers and prime ministers; an example of this was the iron lady Mrs. Margret Thatcher.

Despite that women's representation increased however, many obstacles impaired them at first. Many women had tried to give more solutions via recommendations to be more equal, these were by adopting number of strategies that can be implemented to facilitate their

political advancement, and support the institutionalization of gender equality within parties. Women also focused on promoting themselves in all domains.

The present dissertation has also shown that, the most effective strategies towards increasing women's participation in politics are those that involve co-operation between male and female members.

So, when women have a real voice with in political parties and elected office, they are able to participate equally with men in public dialogue, and influence the decisions that determine their own future and that of their families, communities and countries.

If there is a single conclusion to be drawn from this research of the political representation of women in UK, it is this research has proved that political women did their best for improve equality between men and women within equal representation in elected office, they have encouraged themselves and other women for more participation in politics, and they also imposed themselves progressively. Additionally they have normalized the idea that are just as capable of running the UK country as men, and they are not weak as the men said. Furthermore, it was said that better representation leads to better legislation for women.

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