

24 JUN 1933

*With the Compliments of  
The Women's Indian Association*

**MEMORANDUM II**

ON

**The Status of Women in the future constitution  
of India.**

WITH THE COMPLIMENTS  
OF  
THE WOMEN'S INDIAN ASSOCIATION,  
(LONDON COMMITTEE)

*May, 1933.*



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Women's International League for Peace & Freedom, London.  
International Alliance of Women for Suffrage & Equal Citizen-  
ship, London.

### Objects

- (1) To present to Women their responsibilities as daughters of India.
- (2) To secure for every girl and boy the right of Education through schemes of Compulsory Primary Education, including the teaching of religion.

## Women's Indian Association Memorandum II on the Status of Women.

IN THE PROPOSED NEW CONSTITUTION OF INDIA,  
MAY 1933.

After a careful consideration of the proposals embodied in the White Paper with regard to the status and enfranchisement of women in the proposed new constitution of India, Women's Indian Association find that they fall far short of the demands made in the memorandum of August 1931 presented to the Second Round Table Conference.

We are still of opinion that only the proposals made in our first memorandum will confer upon women equal political status and equal opportunities with men, but as they have not been accepted on the ground of their supposed impracticability at the present moment, we feel obliged to make the following new proposals:—

### FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

1. We urge that the recognition of the principle of equality between the sexes should find a definite place in the "Declaration of the Fundamental Rights of Citizenship" in the Constitution Act.
2. We desire to point out that the word "Sex" has been omitted from page 29, para. 75 of the Introduction to the proposals for Indian Constitutional Reform, as embodied in the White Paper.



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FRANCHISE AND REPRESENTATION

3. Though we feel strongly that "Adult Franchise" is the best method of enfranchising men and women on a basis of equality, we would accept as a temporary measure, until such time as universal adult suffrage can be introduced, the following system:—

4. We recommend (a) that literacy (ability to read and write in any language) should be substituted for the higher educational qualifications proposed in the White Paper for voters to the Provincial Councils as well as for the voters to the Federal Legislature, (b) and that the property qualification proposed in the White Paper for voters to the new Provincial Councils be adopted for voters to the Federal Legislatures also; (c) In the place of the proposed special condition in the White Paper under which women may be enfranchised, namely, being the wife or widow of a person possessing the property qualification at present entitling him to a vote, we recommend that in addition to (a) and (b), women of 21 years of age and over be enfranchised in all urban areas for the following reasons:—

The number thus enfranchised would be approximately seven millions and odd, including many of those already enfranchised under (a) and (b) and they should vote both for the Provincial Councils and for the Federal Legislature.

1. There is more education and knowledge among the urban than among the rural women. Almost all the girls' schools, adult women institutions, women's clubs and women's associations are largely situated in the cities

and in the towns and hence the urban women are better organised than their rural sisters.

2. Polling and canvassing is easier in the cities than in the villages. Presiding women polling officers are more available in the cities at the present moment and hence less administrative difficulties will be experienced.

3. Newspapers, magazines, both English and Vernacular, Radio and broadcasting being now chiefly confined to the cities, the urban women possess better facilities for exchange of views, for the acquirement of knowledge and education, etc.

4. The desire for the spread of education and for social reform is, at the present moment, keenly felt by the urban women and as the needs of women are the same all over, the urban women are better fitted to work for the advancement of their rural sisters.

5. We strongly object to the election of women to the Federal Assembly from the Provincial Legislature by the Indirect system of elections as proposed in the White Paper. (page 75, Appendix II, para. 4.)

6. We earnestly recommend that men and women should be equally eligible for membership of the Upper House. This should be clearly stated as the existing practice does not allow women to stand election for the Upper House.

7. We recommend that property qualification should be supplemented by educational qualification for membership of the Upper House.



8. In the matter of reservation of seats for women both in the Provincial and Federal Legislature, we are opposed to any such reservation, as we feel confident that capable women will be returned to the above bodies in open election.

#### ELECTORATES.

We are of opinion that a system of franchise and representation based upon communal electorates and interests, as proposed in the White Paper, will be highly detrimental to the progress of the Indian people as a whole and to that of her women in particular. We stand united in our demand for a system of Joint Electorates and record our protest against the Communal Award as it will introduce the poison of communalism into the now united ranks of the women of India.

*Note*:—This memorandum had been circulated to all the active branches of the W. I. A. and approved.

(3) To secure the abolition of child-marriage and other social evils.

(4) To secure for Women the vote for Municipal and Legislative Councils on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men.

(5) To secure adequate representation of Women on Municipalities, Taluk and Local Boards, Legislative Councils and Assemblies.

(6) To secure for Women the right to vote and to be elected for the Council of State.

(7) To establish equality of rights and opportunities between men and women.

(8) To help Women to realise that the future of India lies largely in their hands; for as wives and mothers they have the task of training, guiding and forming the character of the future rulers of India.

(9) To band women into groups for the purpose of self-development and education, and for the definite service of others.

#### Membership

Women who agree and will co-operate with the Objects and Organization of the Association may become members. Groups of women having the same aims can be affiliated to the Women's Indian Association.

Local Branches are self-governing and make their own arrangements.

#### Activities

The Association grants scholarships to girls; interests women in maternity and child-welfare work and in other social and welfare activities for the general betterment of Indian society; has worked successfully for securing Franchise for women in India (see page 93 & 94 of the Simon Report Vol.-II) and compulsory education for girls in the city and also actually helped in the Passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Act in the Assembly and the Acts for Suppression of Traffic in women and children and the abolition of the Devadasi system, in the local legislature. Holds regular monthly meetings of women to educate them as to their duties as wives, mothers and citizens, publishes a monthly magazine entitled 'Stri Dharma' for the carrying out of the above objects. The Association is an international body, as it was the initiator of the All-India Women's Conference and the First All-Asian Women's Conference at Lahore. The Madras Seva Sadan and the Children's Aid Society owe their origin to the strenuous efforts of this Institution.



Journal of the  
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