



Association of the  
All-India Women's Conference.

A.I.W.C. Office  
etc.

President's Circular No...

From

Shrimati Hansaben Mehta,  
President, A.I.W.C.,

To

The Members of the Standing Committee.

Dear Friend,

Nahmal Gvt.

At long last a National Government is functioning at the Centre. On behalf of the All-India Women's Conference I had sent a wire of felicitations to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the auspicious day he took charge expressing a hope that he will lead us to complete independence.

It is indeed a matter of regret that the Muslim League should have thought it fit to keep out of the Government. It is also regrettable that organised violence has broken out in some parts of the country which has caused considerable loss to life and property. The riots in Calcutta tell terrible tales and I had issued a statement sometime back asking for public enquiry. It was indeed a pleasure to read of heroic women in Calcutta, both Hindus and Muslims, trying to help each other during the disturbances. We must feel very proud of them. We as a Conference stand for peace and for unity of this country. It is upto us to see that

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suitable heading  
for the paragraphs.  
Sinc. 14/4/46*





the communal poison does not spread; that we are able to maintain peace in spite of all provocation; and that we persuade others to do likewise. This transition period will be a crucial test for us all. Let us be <sup>firm</sup> fair about our convictions and stand by our faith in peace and unity.

### The Charter & the Memorandum.

You will have seen from the Minutes that we have taken some important decisions. The Charter and the Memorandum with slight modifications have been ratified. They will now be sent to the Interim Government as well as to the Provincial Governments. I would also like the Branches to take up the Charter and educate the women with regard to their rights and duties.

### Election to Local Bodies.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Branch Representatives to the coming elections to Municipalities and Local ~~BA~~ Boards. They must see that more women are put up and that women should have a definite programme for the welfare of the people.

### Hostels for Women.

Another important item to which I would like to draw your attention is the Hostels for women. The Branches, specially <sup>in cities like</sup> those of Bombay, Calcutta, etc., should take it up in right earnest.





Political Rights.

Now that the Indian States are introducing some constitutional changes, women should see that they get the same rights as men. They must bring it to the notice of the Conference where political rights are denied to women.

All-India Day.

I would once again remind you of the 14th November which is to be the Conference Day. I hope the members will do their best to celebrate the Day <sup>in a fitting manner</sup> and ~~make a large collection~~. Collect as much money as they can.

Yours sincerely

Jawahar

President,

All-India Women's Conference.



# Charter Of <sup>13-2/46</sup> Women's Rights

## The Human Aspect

(BY LEELA JOG) - 88 -

Famine and pestilence are the natural successors of war but their effects are comparatively short-lived. The changes brought about by war conditions in the life, rule and administration of a nation prove of far-reaching consequence in the history of human civilization as a whole.

In the early nineteenth century, the end of Napoleonic wars saw the virtual end of monarchical rule and the birth of democratic government in Europe. The effects of modern wars, however, are naturally more widespread and comprehensive. While World War I brought the Common Man to the fore, it also gave a great impetus to the emancipation of women from age-old and man-made shackles, which in themselves were the results of constant warfares in olden days.

### Women Demand Equality

The end of World War II, in which women the world over played so important a part as workers, administrators and even fighters, has given a new orientation to the women's movement. It will naturally call for not only readjustment but a wholesale reconstruction in the social, economic and political life of the nations. Women will no longer make demands on men and rest satisfied with the "privileges" granted to them. The days of chivalry are over and women are vigorously asserting their rights of equality.

With equality of opportunities will come responsibilities in civic as well as social spheres. The present state of our social life and structure badly needs a fresh and sympathetic approach and handling which has been lacking in the man-monopolised and mismanaged show. There is little doubt that this change will be provided for by women's participation in planning and administration as well. It is, precisely, in recognition of this new aspect that the Indian National Congress has always helped and even encouraged women to take their due share in national work.

In view of this fact, the Charter of Women's Rights, which is being prepared under the auspices of the All-India Women's Conference, is sure to have an easy passage when a National Government comes in power in our country. Despite this certainty, however, one wonders how the Charter will affect and help the average woman in the country. To her, the right to vote, to enter any intellectual profession or to hold any office of power, do not mean anything. Her eyes are never turned towards those highways of individual glory. Her main concern is the home, children and earning or making the bread which absorb all her efforts and energy, leaving no leisure to develop her own mind which is supposed to influence that of her children. How then will the grand principles of the Charter of Women's Rights change her life of drudgery and dependence?

### Not A Mechanical Approach

The A.I.W.C. has appointed Smt. Renuka Ray, Kitty Shivarao and Kamaladevi to frame the Charter and prepare the Memorandum which is to be submitted to the National Governments when they are formed in the provinces. It was, therefore, heartening to learn from Kamaladevi that theirs will not be a "mechanical, old-fashioned and feminist" approach to the question. They will not stop at demanding statutory rights for women.

In the first place, they will demand and urge the importance of creating social conditions for bettering family life. This at once broadens the vision inasmuch as it takes within its compass the interests not only of the woman but the child, the father and ultimately the human society at large. For, unlike the old days of joint family system, at present the entire burden of the family falls upon the young mother, who has to cook, mend, wash and take care of the children, too. In this monotonous routine her mind gets slack and her life becomes a passive experience. Her creative urge is exhausted in raising a family. Her mind is half developed and she thus cannot share the intellectual interests of her husband or children. Moreover her work carries no economic value, neither has she any status. On the top of it all, she is regarded as a dependent of her husband or the earning member of the family.

It is, therefore, necessary to give her an independent status of a housewife. Besides she must also be given immediate relief from her daily drudgery by providing healthy houses, fitted with labour-saving devices. Community kitchens and community nurseries should be encouraged. The necessity of children's clinics, nursery schools and creches should be so impressed upon the Government that they become a common feature in the life of the people. It is these facilities touching their day-to-day life that will give some respite to the thousands and thousands of our women in big cities as well as the villages.

It will be this short but very essential leisure that will provide for the little-educated city-woman, or illiterate village woman, an opportunity to attain her full growth as a human being. After all, freedom from want, fear and care as well as freedom to develop one's self make the sum-total of human rights. And once these are recognised, need there be a cleavage between the man's and the woman's rights?