

WELCOMING MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

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On behalf of the Women's Movement in India, it is my privilege to welcome the distinguished members of the International Committee that signaled the global march by women three years ago - Against War and Poverty, and for peace and equity in development. As a part of our participation in that march national organizations of women produced a document called *Women Speak* - on the impact of globalisation, and the **forced changes** in economic and social policies - euphemistically designated as **reforms** by some in the government and the media. For persons of my generation - the abandonment of the earlier policies meant abandonment of the hopes and dreams of a nation rising out of (a) the ashes of imperialism and (b) a hierarchic social system and culture which had survived successive regimes through three successful monopolies - of economic, political and knowledge power.

A few weeks before our march, on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Indian Republic, our then President, K.R. Narayanan warned the nation that "the three way fast tracks of liberalization, privatisation and globalisation have neglected to provide safe pedestrian crossings for the poor" ... and the dangers of economic growth at the expense of the poor, dalits/tribals/women and the environment. Three years down the road, his warnings remain unheeded, or forgotten - by the few who believe globalisation has **increased** opportunities - for many, including women.

Knowledge, like history, I am told, is no longer in fashion - we are now in the information age - and Indian women and men with their command over the English language - are in great demand for the services they could provide. My colleagues in the Centre for Women's Development Studies are examining the lot of some of these service providers - and give me reports of untimely aging and disorders of their physical and nervous systems.

I am shockingly out of date and out of sync with the increased dynamics of our globalised economy and social order - but find that when it comes to **international politics - nothing has changed - the verities are still the good old shenanigans - the unbridled exercise of power** by a very few - against the protests, logic, values and hopes of many.

I was a student and a teacher in international politics for several years - decades ago - but listening to the build up to the Iraq Crisis - I found myself amazed at the 'extraordinary use of shameless falsehood and dramatic projection of very puny men as the guardians of all international morality. In comparison, my old betenour - Winston

Churchill - appears a politically honest and brave character. The exposure through the last few weeks - has threatened all my capacity for 'incurable optimism'. The only warming experience has been the growing peace protests.

May I, as an old woman from the land of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi salute you, the most genuine **Satyagrahis** of the 21st Century for the courage with which you have embraced your historic responsibility!