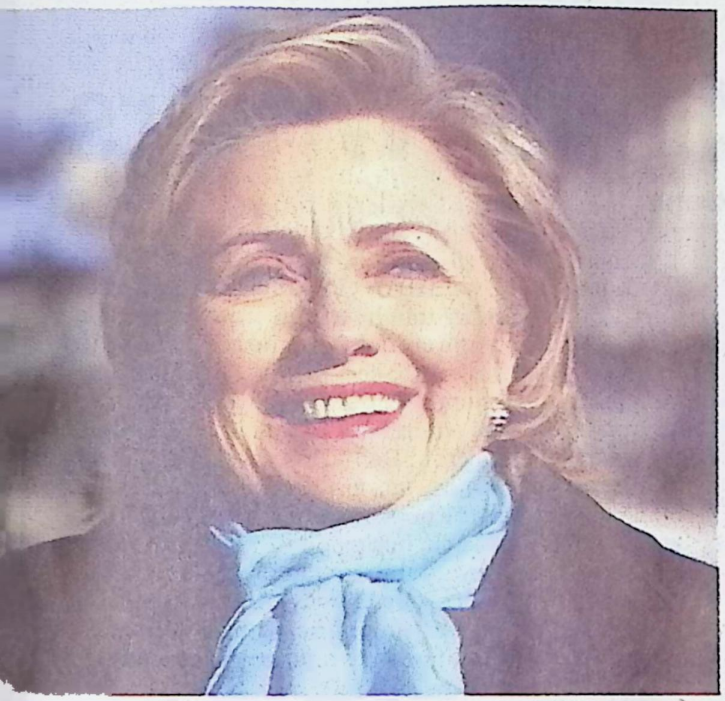


Hillary Clinton

voted for the "unconditional funding" of the war.

Under pressure from the Democratic base, Senator Clinton has recently issued numerous statements about bringing the troops home "responsibly." But her actual plan would leave tens of thousands of Americans soldiers in Iraq over a period of many years. Her record of embracing military solutions and the foreign policy advisors she has selected make us doubt that she will end this calamitous war.

Choosing to support Senator Obama was not an easy decision for us because electing a woman President would be a cause for celebration in itself and because we deplore the sexist attacks against Senator Clinton that have circulated in the media. However, we also recognize that the election of Barack Obama would be another historic achievement and that his support for gender equality has been unwavering.

In backing Senator Obama, we are mindful of the inconsistencies in his voting record and the limitations of his own plans for withdrawal. Yet it is noteworthy that at a time when this position was politically unpopular and when he was aiming for national office, Barack Obama opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq and has spoken out against the war ever since. This puts him in a far better position to articulate a clear challenge to a Republican opponent.

We are also moved by the positive tone of the Obama campaign, the tremendous energy it has released across the country, the dramatic engagement of young people and the impetus for change that his candidacy embodies. We are speaking out now because we cannot afford to elect another President who will continue the aggressive, interventionist policies of the present."

Frankly, either Obama or Clinton in the White House means little to me. However, my personal observation of women in politics has been that women undergo a sex-change as soon as they plant themselves in the hot seat of power. Political power creates out of the female a neutral animal, neither a woman nor a man but a hybrid that tries to overcompensate for the perceived weaknesses of her sex and at the same time to assume the preconceived machismo of the other sex. The result can often be, in various degrees and in individual cases, a more rigid, a more corrupt, a more brutal, or a more ordinary leader. Certainly, we have all seen that a woman Head of State hardly ever brings to her role the essential female graces of intuition, humanity, maternal compassion and the moral strength and courage earned from centuries of living with repression and injustice: in other words, all the qualities that we expect a female hero to possess, if we still naively harbour such illusions.

There is nothing wrong with illusion or hope, this last having been the redeeming quality left in Pandora's Box of evils that were let loose on mankind. But politics may not be the right place to hope for redemption or justice. The existence of heroes and heroines, at least among elected leaders was always a myth, and the national quest for that perfect and heroic leader is always doomed to be a journey of self-delusion. The fantasy of a woman in a place of power making the world a better place is one of those fairy tales which, the sooner abandoned the better for the voting world. We have to use other measures to judge candidates, who we all know are just ordinary people put in extraordinary situations; whether they manage to live up to that position is a matter of their individual character.

Remember, women are equal to men? Ergo, they are potentially as fallible and brutish as the men are. In fact, it has often been seen that sometimes a woman, to show her competence or professionalism, strains to be more 'masculine' than her male colleagues. So what does it matter whether one votes in a female head of State or a male? Politics, at best, will neutralize them, and at worst, will make a Dominatrix out of the women and autocrats out of the men.

The political field is hardly the proper arena for the Battle of the Sexes. He/she who triumphs in the political game, only wins personal and party power. It means little to the larger gender community. Hillary in the White House will mean little to ordinary women, and less so to women all over the world. A woman in a powerful place is just a politician. We don't need to leave the Indian subcontinent to know this truth.