



THE SUNDAY INDIAN

THE NATION'S GREATEST NEWS WEEKLY

The women who move & shake India

After 60 years of freedom, women from diverse fields, professions and regions are making bold and meaningful statements. A TSI tribute

WOMEN SPECIAL

TAMIL NADU

Sheelu

TSS MANI, SOCIAL ACTIVIST

Sheelu, heading Tamil Nadu Women's Collective is a born-fighter. She was born in Kerala and brought up in Madurai, Tamil Nadu. With a Masters degree in Social Work and a die-hard commitment, she ventured into the slums of Pulianthope in North Chennai in eighties. That was then the breeding ground for antisocial elements. Though Sheelu had a law degree, she did not take up the profession. With help from Christian Aid, a London based funding agency, she focussed on issues relating to environment, globalisation and the plight of the dalits and fishing community. Her

role in CASI (*Campaign Against Shrimp Industries*) was commendable. She also campaigned for Tony Blair in Britain. She supported Blair since he spoke of helping the developing countries. She eventually initiated the launch of Tamil Nadu Women's Collective, which today coordinates with many NGOs. The organisation works among women in 1,449 villages and 646 panchayats in the state. The organisation works for empowerment of rural and marginalised women and dalits. Her group also deals with environmental and contentious issues like nuke-deals and SEZ.



The organisation is also engaged in tsunami relief work in various districts.



She also participated in the preparation for 'World Social Forum' 2004, at Mumbai and is leading Tamil Nadu Social Forum.

Maintaining a low profile, Sheelu always appears quite and composed. Behind that soft appearance lie a steely

resolve to work for the welfare and extend a helpful hand to those who are in need. She is a force to reckon with. **101**