

**Speech at Women's Studies Centre  
University of Delhi**

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1. Recent release of CSD's first **Social Development Report on India**. The authors argue that despite considerable progress on Education and Health front and Empowering LOC, Govt. – **Social and Economic Exclusion** - from the fruits of Development remain as the basis and the manifestation of inequality. **Both chapters on Women and Child Development, admit the problem of female foeticide**. But the Editorial Team hesitated to mention **demographic exclusion** as an issue that needs exploration.

**However there are more concerned paragraphs in the chapters on Women and India's Promises and obligations to the child.**

“The **shock** figure of the 2001 Census is not the 927 females per 1000 males ratio of the 0-6 years group, **but the 858 females per 1000 males of the 15-19 years cohort**”.

The same chapter quotes the 2004 mid-term assessment of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan that “the most important problem facing India is the **size and growth of its population**.”

Fortunately the CSD team is more sensitive and possibly more competent on the demographic front.

“The 2001 Census are a **damning indictment of the social valuation of the girl child**. So is the Govt’s continuing failure to analyse, address and stem the decline”.

“**The National Policy for the Empowerment of Women fails to see where justice for the female Indian must begin - before birth**”.

Unfortunately the **Judiciary is not convinced** of this – and continues to believe like the Planning Commission, that the Population Problem is still the; biggest enemy of India’s progress.

2. Need to consider the role of the politics of language in promoting a fear complex. For over half a century **people have been pushed aside by the bloodless, soulless population explosion propaganda**. **Would some of you like to work on – whether the politics can be countered by using Indian languages with their regional diversity? It should be a different exercise to undertake in Delhi.**
3. The CSWI used Declining Sex Ratio as an indicator of marginalization/neglect of women’s poverty, illiteracy and ill-health by the State and Society. Today the decline is **concentrated in the younger set – i.e. the group in their 40s and below**. In the older age-groups – especially 60+ women outnumber men.
4. So which group is frightening the Planning Commission still? Because as long as the population hysteria fogs their minds – the missing girl child will continue to go missing.
5. Some colleagues feel my **obsession** with this issue **needs correction by demographers – certainly I am no demographer** – but 9 years experience on the Board of Trustees of the Population Council (New York) and 3 years as

member of the International Independent Commission of Population and Quality of Life taught me enough about this **politics**.

In the South Asia Consultation for this Commission - Nasreen (Bangladesh) ‘ “Women have children, not population. (If I remember, she too is a literature scholar).

6. My last point is – the ‘missing girls’ i.e. **future mothers** is no longer an Indian/S. Asian problem but practically global – as you will see from Savitri’s presentation. The data suggests ‘Development’ as the enemy of the girl child – but I would say you can replace the **abstract development by developments in genetics and bio-technology**.

Amniocentesis, sex-determination and sex selection – all made their appearance by the late 1970s and 1980s. The experiments for these tests/procedures are produced by General Electronics – a giant TNC. And the young doctors who buy these equipment get cheap loans from GE Capital. You don’t need high mathematics to complete this equation – **plain understanding of ‘market promotion’ or the role of media would do**.

What is needed is a revolution in moral and social responsibility. And analysts of language and literature can play a leadership role.