

Speech at Women's Studies Centre
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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 10th 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) said: 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 biotechnology**.

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 me. 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.