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# A Tale of Two Nations — Getting Honest about Sex Selection Abortions

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The Prime Minister of India delivered a brave and important speech on Monday of this week. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared his nation's practice of sex-selection abortions to be a "national shame" and called for increased enforcement of laws that would prevent the practice.

Sex selection by abortion is widespread in both India and China, although it is practiced in many other nations as well. In both nations efforts to limit the size of families is part of the equation. In China, the nation's draconian "one child only" policy has led to a dramatic imbalance of males to females. In India, only 927 baby girls are born for every 1,000 baby boys.

Throughout India, ultrasound technologies and other diagnostic procedures are used to identify the sex of the unborn baby. Close nearby are abortionists ready to terminate a pregnancy of the unwanted gender — almost always baby girls.

As *The New York Times* reported:

*Over past three decades, the increasing availability of ultrasound equipment has assisted India's cultural preference for sons and distorted the sex ratio across the nation. As the equipment has become more affordable, special ultrasound clinics have opened even in the most impoverished parts of the country.*

*Before undergoing an ultrasound test in India, pregnant women must sign a form agreeing not to seek to know the sex of the fetus. Doctors who disclose the sex during an examination can be imprisoned for up to five years. But the law is widely flouted. Studies suggest that doctors often give coded hints, by remarking for example, "Your child will be a fighter," or by offering pink or blue sweets, as appropriate, on the way out. Successful prosecutions are rare.*

The Prime Minister's speech was amazingly candid and clear. He referred to sex selection abortions as "inhuman, uncivilized and reprehensible." He also argued that the practice was not justified by poverty or other considerations. He put the blame directly on those who demand and those who provide the sex selection abortion services, speaking of "unethical conduct" on the part of medical personnel and of "unscrupulous parents" who seek out those willing to perform the procedure.

In the most important sentence of his speech, the Prime Minister put it all on the line:

*"No nation, no society, no community can hold its head high and claim to be part of the civilized world if it condones the practice of discriminating against one half of humanity represented by women."*

Time alone will reveal if the Prime Minister's bold words are backed up by real action. Getting local authorities to prosecute these cases may be difficult. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister fired a significant shot in defense of human life



and human dignity. The great tragedy is that he did not extend his moral argument to the “national shame” of elective abortion for *any* reason.

No doubt, many Americans will read of the Indian Prime Minister’s speech with a degree of appreciation. Feminists find themselves in an excruciating moral bind on this question, because they have argued so assiduously for a woman’s “right” to an abortion for any reason or for no stated reason at all. They are now on shaky ground to suggest that sex selection abortions (in particular, the elimination of female fetuses) are morally wrong and should be legally impermissible.

In a larger sense, however, Americans should recognize that sex selection abortion is practiced here as well. There is no law that would prevent a woman to abort her baby for this (or any) reason. While Americans recoil in horror at the widespread scope of the problem in India, the fact is that Americans are guilty of the same practice, only on a smaller scale.

Prime Minister Singh delivered an honest message to his nation on Monday. We can only hope that Americans will face this tragedy with equal honesty.

Consider this recasting and extension of the Prime Ministers comments:

*No nation, no society, no community can hold its head high and claim to be part of the civilized world if it condones the practice abortion on demand — for any reason.*

Those are the words we should all pray to hear.

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The full text of the [Prime Minister’s](#) speech is found [here](#).

