

INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HEALTH (IASSH)

Ninth Prof. John Caldwell Memorial Lecture

by

Dr. Ravi Verma

on

“Fertility Transition to Gender Justice: Revisiting Caldwell’s Theory of Social Change.”

The Ninth **Prof. John Caldwell** Memorial Lecture was held at the RA Podar Auditorium of University of Rajasthan, at 12:00 PM on February 11, 2026, as part of the 21st annual conference of IASSH. The session was chaired by Prof. KNM Raju (Former Director, PRC, ISEC Bangalore) and co-chaired by Prof. T.V. Sekher (former President, IASSH). The session began with an introduction by Prof. T.V. Sekher about the life and works of Prof. John Caldwell, a renowned demographer who contributed significantly to the field of demography.



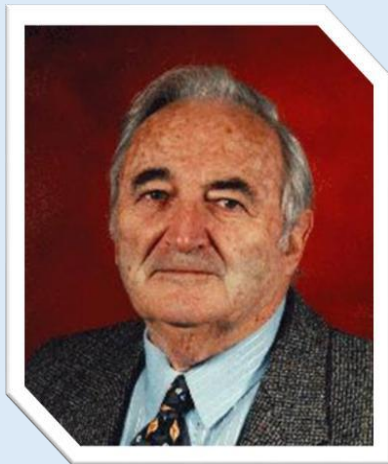
The ninth Caldwell Memorial Lecture was delivered by **Dr. Ravi Verma**, Regional Director of the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW-Asia), New Delhi, a distinguished social scientist with over three decades of experience in gender, population health, and public health research. His lecture, titled “**Fertility Transition to Gender Justice: Revisiting Caldwell’s Theory of Social Change,**” revisited Caldwell’s theoretical framework to examine the evolving links between demographic transition and gender equality. Drawing on his extensive experience in gender, population health, and social research, he highlighted the importance of gender-transformative approaches and evidence-based policies to address social and health inequalities in India and South Asia.

In his address, Dr. Verma emphasized that fertility decline and broader social changes must be understood alongside persistent gender inequalities. Drawing on his extensive research on masculinities, violence against women, and sexual and reproductive health, he highlighted the need for gender-transformative approaches that actively engage men and boys and promote gender-just social norms. The lecture provided valuable insights into how demographic and social transformations can contribute to more equitable health and development outcomes in India and the wider South Asian region. Dr. Verma warned that persistent low level of fertility could lead to long-term population decline, and stressed the need for balanced policies to support ageing populations, workforce sustainability, and family well-being. His lecture concluded with a call for rethinking India’s demographic policies in light of future socio-economic challenges.

At the conclusion of the lecture, **Dr. Manas Pradhan** (Treasurer, IASSH), proposed the vote of thanks, expressing sincere appreciation to the guest speaker, chairpersons, and audience for their engagement and valuable contributions to the session. He acknowledged the insightful discourse on India's fertility transition and its policy implications, emphasizing how the lecture shed light on emerging demographic challenges and the need for strategic interventions. The session provided a comprehensive understanding of fertility trends, socio-economic influences, and future population concerns, making it a significant addition to the conference's academic discussions.

Prof. John Charles (Jack) Caldwell

The Doyen of Demography, **Prof. John Charles (Jack) Caldwell**, died on 12th March 2016 at the age of 87 in Canberra. He was associated with the Department of Demography of the Australian National University (ANU) for many decades. Caldwell's seminal work included documentation of the role of mother's education in fertility limitation and child mortality



decline and the role of circumcision in inhibiting the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa. He is known for his "wealth flows" theory, which relates Demographic transition theory to changes in intergenerational transfers within the family. He has encouraged and mentored many young scholars from India, and a good number of them received their Ph. Ds from ANU under his able guidance. His anthropological demographic work on South India, particularly on marriage, fertility and contraception, received much research attention. Prof. Caldwell was the President of IUSSP (1994-98). At Prof. K.N.M. Raju's initiative, Prof. Caldwell's former students, colleagues, and friends approached the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH) to institute a memorial lecture in his honour. Considering this request, the IASSH

instituted the lecture series in memory of the most famous demographer of our times.



Guest Speaker and Participants at the Prof. John Caldwell Memorial Lecture.