

Sreela Sarkar,

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Communication, Santa Clara University

*"Away from the Doorsteps of the ICT Center: Youth, Technology, and Development in Global India"*

As India emerges as a model for high-technology led development in the world, there is growing urgency in international policy circles to train its "demographic bulge" of youth to participate with equity in a global economy. Drawing from postcolonial and feminist studies, my talk critically examines the celebrated notion that crossing the digital divide ushers in economic and social development. Based on archival research, the first part of my talk historically traces the figure of the modern day "computer operator" in India to the figure of colonial "Maistry" or the skilled craftsman. I return to contemporary India through my ethnographic work in slums and resettlement colonies in New Delhi that focuses on IT and soft skills training directed at marginalized communities. I argue that contrary to popular perceptions, IT-led development programs for youth renegotiate and even heighten economic and social inequities of gender, class, and caste.