



When Women and Girls Are Attacked by Men, We Blame Everything Except Male Violence

[\(Cross-posted with permission from Crates N Ribbons\)](#)

Last Tuesday night, [two teenage girls from India went out into the fields](#), looking for a place to relieve themselves, due to the lack of toilets in their village. On their way, [they were brutally attacked](#) by a group of men, gang-raped, and murdered. Their bodies were found the next day hanging from a tree, in a sickening display of complacency that speaks volumes not only about the men's arrogance and lack of shame, but also their sense of entitlement to female bodies. Activists in India have rallied in protest against the problem of sexual violence in the country, and villagers have condemned police inaction relating to the incident.

[Yesterday, an article appeared in The Guardian](#), citing the lack of basic sanitation as the main reason for the death of the girls. It was the lack of toilets in their village, the article suggests, that resulted in the attack, never mind the perpetrators themselves, never mind the global ideal of masculinity that accepts, even encourages, violence in men, never mind the global culture of misogyny that normalises violence against women.

Don't get me wrong — I do believe that basic sanitation is crucial. It is of the utmost importance for [reasons of hygiene, leading to cleaner surroundings, safer food and water, lower rates of diarrhoea and illness, lower risk of snake bites](#), and lower mortality rates. Access to toilets provides privacy and dignity, and having a toilet in schools can [encourage girls to continue with their schooling](#) after hitting puberty. And with around [2.7 billion people](#) around the world without access to basic sanitation, the problem is a pressing one.

Neither do I deny the fact that many men choose to attack women when they are seeking a secluded spot in the fields to relieve themselves. Yet, to focus exclusively on the circumstances surrounding the attack, while ignoring the main source of the attack (the perpetrators), fits into a pattern that feminists have been decrying for decades — society's propensity to treat male violence as an accepted fact of life, to make allowances for it, to try to avoid it, and to attempt to redirect it. None of these can keep women safe.

Around the world, men have been raping and murdering women in every conceivable situation. They have carried out violence against women [in their own homes](#), on the [street](#), in [clubs](#), at [parties](#), [in hostels on a school trip](#), on [public buses](#), in [school toilets](#), in [high school hallways](#), at [concerts](#), while [camping](#), during [piano lessons](#), in [taxis](#), during a [football game](#), the list goes on. Women can avoid going to dark and secluded areas, we can stay at home, we can take all the precautions we have been told to take. No wearing short skirts, no going out alone at night, no getting drunk in public, no trusting a strange man. But as long as men continue their violent behaviour, as long as they continue to rape and murder women, then — naturally — women will continue to be raped and murdered. They will be raped and murdered no matter where they are, no matter what they happen to be doing at the time.

The global epidemic of male violence against women must end, but we will never end it by



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refusing to place our finger on the key issue at hand, the link between socialised masculinity and violence. If we continue to ignore this, then the only world where men no longer attack women will be a world where women and girls do not exist at all.