

Rape has hit the headlines in South Asia once again. Cynics may wonder if it had ever been *out* of the news, given the depressing monotony with which the newspapers in Bangladesh report such incidents. Of course it is not the newspapers that are to blame for reporting it, when these incidents take place with such alarming regularity. But it seems that news reportage related to this terrible crime changes only insofar as some variation occurs in the details of the crime committed (e.g., the age of the victim, the number of rapists - and even, grotesquely, a recent case where the rapists recorded the event on their mobile-phone cameras). There does not appear to be any sign that things are changing for the better.

Indeed, far from it. On the contrary, there is reason to *believe* that things are getting worse. Not only in terms of the frequency or brutality of these attacks, but also in terms of social attitudes in this regard. Whether that is because some people actually believe the things that they say about whom or what is to blame, or whether we are all simply resigned to the status quo, is not quite clear.

Fortunately, not everyone is ready to blindly accept the messages being handed out. There has recently been a furore in India over an advertising campaign for pepper spray, which is being touted as a weapon against rapists. Regardless of your views on the effectiveness of pepper spray as a deterrent to rapists, the fact remains that this advertising campaign displays a truly appalling lack of sensitivity to women and their families.

The first ad in the series was addressed to the parents of girls and women, and went something like: if your daughter was to be raped, who would you blame - yourself, or the rapist? The implication being that, as a good parent, it is your duty to provide your daughter with pepper spray (produced, of course, by this company!) so that she can defend herself against potential rapists!

# Adding Insult to Injury

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