

Dear mothers, stop coddling your sons



NO STRINGS ATTACHED

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Mothers are the epitome of sacrifice, the symbol of eternal kindness and the always-available emotional anchor. They will protect their children with their lives. Yet these same loving mothers (along with fathers) often end up raising the very men who grow into entitled, emotionally stunted adults. Patriarchy is not just perpetuated by men but by women conditioned by patriarchal values.

In societies such as ours, where male preference dominates every class, religion and neighbourhood, mothers unintentionally become collaborators of male exceptionalism. They raise boys who believe they are gifts from heaven, which wouldn't bother the rest of us women if we didn't have to live with them for the rest of our adult lives.

Disclaimer: Yes, there are those rare, absolutely lovely men who genuinely believe women are their equals, who will fight for our rights with other men, happily take care of the baby and cook dinner without feeling emasculated and well, basically, who seem almost too good to be true. Most likely, it was their mothers who drilled into their heads that respect is non-negotiable—"or else no supper, no TV, no video games." But these men are the exceptions.

Let's talk about the majority of men. From the moment a boy is born, the royal treatment begins. Just like in the UNICEF cartoon show *Meena*, which exposes the blatant bias towards sons, the boys get the choicest food, the nicer toys, and the best opportunities available. Girls, on the other hand, are trained, gently but firmly, to give up things for their brothers, to take care of them, and consider their needs more important than their own. And it is the mothers who play a big role in establishing



VISUAL: ARWIN SHAMS SIDDIQUEE

these rules from the very beginning.

By the time boys reach adulthood, many mothers have held them so tightly in the grip of affection that it borders on emotional smothering. This makes the recipient used to being the sunshine of the household, unwilling to accept anything less than

premium treatment, regardless of his own behaviour.

When the son marries, the dynamics shift quite dramatically. The same gentle, self-sacrificing, doting mother can transform into a territorial hawk. She devotes her energies to save her son from the inept, unfit female she must call her daughter-in-law. Trying to prove that her daughter-in-

law falls short in every category becomes a primary mission. The cooking is never quite right, the son is not being taken care of because the daughter-in-law is so lazy, the children are not being raised properly, her relatives visit too often, she has no sense of aesthetics and just comes from "inferior

stock". Meanwhile, these mothers continue to pour their adoration on their sons like the thickest rabri (cream concentrated from unbelievable amounts of milk). The son must have the head of the fish, the juice from fifty pomegranates and the eggs of the hilsa—basically the best of everything. This will also extend to the grandsons, but never the daughter-in-law. Because males are born

with this privilege.

Of course, there are exceptions: sometimes the daughter-in-law is the hyena, and the mother-in-law the suffering rabbit, because the son has turned out to be a spineless maggot or is in cahoots with the scheming wife. But again, these aren't the norm.

But why do women do this? Why do they perpetuate this absurd sense of male entitlement that turns so many men into selfish, insensitive, boorish beings?

Because this is what they have seen all their lives. Boys as kings, girls as helpers. Sons as legacy; daughters as support staff.

Unfortunately, religious norms are interpreted through the same patriarchal cultural context. Everything reinforces the idea that men are inherently superior.

And so, the cycle continues.

A boy who always gets his way and is never taught compassion or accountability grows into a man who expects the same treatment from the world. When he doesn't get it, disappointment quickly turns into frustration, anger, and sometimes even violence.

Contrary to popular belief, raising a boy is harder than raising a girl. Because society already places the boy on a pedestal. So, how do we teach him how to climb down?

For starters, mothers must recognise that they are their sons' first teachers and arguably the most influential ones. This means teaching boys from childhood that girls are equal in value and deserve equal respect. Mothers must hold their sons to the same behavioural standards as daughters. They must expect their sons to have empathy, responsibility and generosity, and not make excuses for them when they are being selfish, arrogant and rude.

And when the son grows up and marries, mothers must swallow that instinct to cling and be territorial. Instead of searching for faults in the daughter-in-law, they can actively look for reasons to praise her, support her, and make her feel welcome. Instead of serving the son the biggest portion, they might ask the daughter-in-law what her favourite dish is.

These small shifts matter and can change the way men behave towards women, including their mothers, whom many take for granted.

Because if mothers keep showering sons with unquestioned indulgence, they risk raising men who believe the world owes them the same level of devotion and lash out when it doesn't. If we want decent men, we must start by raising decent boys.

Trump's Venezuela problem is not about cocaine, but oil



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Since the beginning of September, the US military struck several boats in the Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean, alleging these were "drug boats" carrying cocaine into the United States. So far, there have been 21 strikes killing more than 80 civilians.

Venezuela has been designated a narco-terrorist state by the Trump administration to justify these attacks. Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro has been accused of establishing "cocaine factories" in his country and of allegedly supplying drugs trafficked into the US.

Ridiculously, the White House spokesperson claimed that these attacks are being carried out in "self-defence" to save American lives!

There is no originality in this sort of rhetorical hyperbole from the US administrations. In 1983, under the Reagan administration, when Grenada was attacked, it was the "communism factory" the administration was trying to eradicate!

The rhetorics are familiar and the goals are obvious. The script is very similar to what happened when Panama's ruler, Manuel Noriega, was taken down in 1989 under President George H W Bush. Noriega was also accused of drug trafficking. The real US goal was to have greater control over the Panama Canal administration.

Maduro has been labelled by the US as the leader of the *Cartel de los Soles*, dubbed a foreign terrorist organisation. In August 2025, the US government increased the reward offer up to \$50 million for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction of Maduro.

The history of US invasions—"intervention" being the preferred US term—in Latin America is as frequent as it is widely varied. The justifying propaganda behind each encounter is as unimaginative as they are ridiculous. The ploys, in most cases, are to establish "democracy" by overthrowing

authoritarian regimes. The underlying reasons in almost all instances are anything but! As we are seeing today, the saga continues! Contexts are diverse, pretexts are alike!

Thus, what we are witnessing in Venezuela in recent months is nothing new. The history of US control in Latin America is replete with propaganda spewed by the US administrations and their paid agents in the media.

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Venezuela, an oil-rich country in Latin America, has become US's headache since 1998 when a bold nationalist leader named Hugo Chavez assumed power. He nationalised the oil industry in addition to implementing a socialist land reform programme. As a result, it drew the ire of the US. Under Chavez, Venezuela made tremendous progress in reducing poverty (by as much as 15 percent) and increasing GDP.

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As seen time and again, history repeats itself too often in Latin America. The US administration did everything possible to make Chavez's government a failure, eventually staging a CIA-instigated coup in 2002. The coup failed within two days despite backing

from the CIA as Chavez's supporters gathered and stormed the presidential palace, Miraflores, and demanded his immediate release. After that, he stayed in charge until his death from cancer in 2013.

His Vice President Nicolás Maduro became the president and hung on to power despite many insurmountable challenges since then. The challenges he is facing were primarily conjured up by the US administrations in the form of diplomatic pressures and economic sanctions. Since they are not producing the intended results, the US government under Trump is now pushing for the military option. Attacks on boats are just the beginning. The pressure tactics appear to be part of a sinister campaign by the Trump administration to orchestrate a regime change in Venezuela by removing President Maduro from power and replacing him with the newly minted Nobel Laureate Maria Corina Machado. The goal is to establish US control over Venezuela's oil and to re-establish the elite class of which Maria Machado is a "poster child."

America's "problem" is Venezuela's vast reserves of oil. US's interest is to gain a strong grip on that resource. With 303 billion barrels (estimated as of 2023) of oil, Venezuela has the largest reserves in the world. But the country's export in 2023 was only \$4.05 billion as compared to \$181 billion of Saudi Arabia during the same year. Venezuela used to be one of the major sources of foreign oil to the US during the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, during Chavez's regime production fell due to his government's nationalisation policies and other socialist measures. Subsequent US sanctions worsened the situation further and Venezuela's oil production and export suffered a drastic reduction. Production grew to some extent in 2024 and early 2025, with output exceeding close to a million barrels per day in February 2025.

Recently, however, to the dismay of Trump administration, China has become the primary importer of Venezuelan oil. About 84 percent of total exports in September (2025) went to China, by direct or indirect means (via third parties) despite US-imposed sanctions.

The staggering amount of oil exports to China from Venezuela suggests a major

shift in the geopolitical scenario. China's increasing influence in Latin America, exemplified by this statistic, is undeniable. China extended \$62.5 billion in loans to Venezuela over the last three decades and is now Venezuela's biggest creditor. Of course, the US is concerned and is taking measures to thwart China's advances in the hemisphere. Washington looks at the

emerging strong ties, both economic and ideological (socialist), between Venezuela and China with suspicion and concern.

Obviously, the strategic relation between these two countries across the two continents is hard for the US to swallow. Previous administrations sought to counter China by trade and investment, but Trump, in his second term, is keen on pursuing a military

"solution" to America's "Venezuela problem." With roughly 10,000 troops, eight naval warships, two B-52 aircraft, and MQ-9 Reaper drones, deployed in the Caribbean in recent months, there are reasons to believe that the Trump administration has a broader and long-term plan and its scope goes beyond Venezuela to strengthen the US control in the region.

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