

# WORSHIPPING THE BOY CHILD

**M**y mother only had two children, my big brother and I. I know she loved me and I was spoiled senseless, but my big brother was her pride and joy. I remember being about five years old and hearing her say, "Everything I own and everything I work for is for her only son". It is a memory that has stayed with me because even at that tender age I couldn't help wondering: "If everything was for your only son, what is left for me, your only daughter?"

Recently, about twenty years later, I approached my brother to find out if he recognised his privilege. Of course he did not. As far as he's concerned, male privilege ended with colonialism. He made the old-age argument of 'Boy children were previously considered "assets" only because it was believed that a boy was more likely to grow up to take care of his family, whereas a woman would get married and leave.' In his view it was inconceivable that a woman would not want to get married at all, or choose to actually take care of her family, even if they thought, ironically, all she was good for was to look after a (marital) household and bear children. I will however not get into that. What really irked me about the conversation with my brother is that I found myself listening to this really smart, really well-read

man thinking male privilege is a "thing of the past" because "girls go to school now." What's sad is, the bulk of both his and my peers, are of the same mentality. So I looked to see how male privilege persists in society. And this is what I found:

- Men can expect to be paid equitably for the work they do, and not less because of their sex
- A decision to hire a man won't be swayed by whether or not the employer assumes he will be having children in the near future
- Men can work comfortably (or walk down a public street) without the fear of sexual harassment
- Men can walk alone at night without the fear of being raped or otherwise harmed
- Men can go on dates with a stranger without the fear of being raped
- Men can dress how they like and not worry that it will be used as a defence if they are raped
- No one ever tells men to stay in an abusive relationship "for the sake of the children"
- Men can decide not to have children and not have their masculinity questioned, at least not as often as a woman would have her "womanhood" questioned
- If a man chooses to have children, he will be praised

for caring for his children, instead of being expected to be the full-time caretaker

- Men can balance a career and a family without being called selfish for not staying at home (or being constantly pressured to stay at home) or worry about how having children may affect their careers
- If a man rises to prominence in an organization/role, no one will assume it is because he slept his way to the top
- Men can have promiscuous sex and be viewed positively for it while women will be shamed for it should they do the same.

Yes, the feminist movement has come a long way in ensuring that women's rights as well as issues pertaining to women are given more prominence, but we have not come far enough yet.

By Mimi Mwiya

