Gender Selectiveness

Why in news?

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A Kerala newspaper offered ‘scientific’ advice for conceiving boys.

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What is the current scenario?

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- Indian society has long had a preference for sons.
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- As a result, sex-selective abortion and female foeticide have led to the country having one of the world’s most skewed sex ratios.
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- According to the Census 2011, there were 914 girls to every 1,000 boys in India for children up to the age of six.
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- A report pointed to the fact that in the absence of prenatal sex selection, several families resort to repeated pregnancies in their quest for a male child and data has shown that at every family size, there were more boys born than girls.
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What is the issue?

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- Fuelling the country’s obsession with sons, a newspaper in Kerala called *Mangalam,* last week offered “scientifically proven” advice on how to conceive a boy.
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- Among the advice offered by the newspaper are eating plenty of mutton, never skipping breakfast and always sleeping with the face turned leftwards.
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- The column contains more ridiculous food habits to be followed to “ensure

male baby”.
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- Several women in the country even pin their hopes for a male offspring on what are known as sex-selection drugs.
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- Women are consuming these harmful drugs – linked to birth defects and stillbirths – without realising that the sex of a child cannot be altered in the womb.
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What are the consequences?

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- The article in the Kerala daily just goes to show that gender selection is widespread despite initiatives taken by the Indian government, NGOs and health workers.
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- The message isn’t going through and the people still value boys more than girls.
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- Apart from the obvious gore in this practise, it also reflects a mentality that proves harmful to girl children, when the “escape” the sex selectiveness and enter the world.
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- Stereotypical gender roles that assign certain duties and ideal behaviour to people impact the way men treat women.
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- When children are exposed to an imbalanced power system from almost the day they were born, a sense of invincibility makes boys believe people will excuse their deplorable behaviour.
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- Children are not born violent, or aggressive or disrespectful of women. They learn to be so from grown-ups and other sources.
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How prevalent is the crime among juveniles?

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- More and more young people are taking to heinous crimes such as rape are

magnifications of this mentality.
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- Rape was the third most prevalent crime among juveniles in 2015 after theft and trespassing or burglary, says the National Crime Records Bureau.
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- In 2015, more than 41,000 juveniles were apprehended across the country, 1,841 on rape-related charges.
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- 1680 cases of rape were registered under juveniles in India under Section 376. Minors were booked in 88 cases of gang rape.
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- Moreover, as one of our columnists noted, notions of honour are central to the discourse on rape.
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- The rape of a daughter, sister or wife is a source of dishonour to males within the family structure. This deters the reporting of rape to the police.
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What should be done?

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- In order to change the long-standing preference for sons, there is a need to first change the image of girls in our society.
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- Violence against women will not decrease unless there is a thrust on having a gender-neutral approach towards policies and programmes.
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- This is because investing in men is also a way of ensuring women's empowerment, because a gender sensitive father, brother or spouse will positively impact women's lives.
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Source: hindustantimes, The Wire

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