# Gender Preference and Culture Construct in a Matrilineal and a Patrilineal Society: A Study in Alipurduar District, West Bengal

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**Abstract:** Gender is guided by the social norms and values. The concept of gender is often community specific. It depends on the social organization. Gender roles are the product of cultural construct. The status of man and woman significantly varies in a patrilineal and a matrilineal society. The present study on gender preference was done among the Mech, a patrilineal tribe and Rabha, a matrilineal tribe of West Bengal, India. The aim of this study was to find out the perception of the men and women of these two different kinds of societies regarding gender. How tradition and modernity in influencing the gender role and decision-making process has been observed. The study has been done on hundred respondents, fifty from each community. Data was mainly collected through individual and group level interviews. It was found that descent rule is the most important contributing factor for gender preference. Female are given priority in matrilineal society, while male gets prominence in patrilineal society. The change has been observed in the decision-making process. In both the societies' decision regarding economic and family matters are taken jointly. The reason for women's participation in important family matters was possible due to education and economic independence in patrilineal society. In Rabha society women are decision taker. They also take leading role in marriage and property related issues. Both the tribes still follow their tradition. Yet modernization is gradually influencing the perception regarding gender in these societies.

**Keywords:** *Gender preference, gender role, decision making, cultural construct, matrilineal descent, patrilineal descent, The Mech, The Rabha*

## Introduction

Gender "refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures" (UNESCO 2003). Gender is conceptualised differently by different types of people. It varies from one region to another and one community to another as well. Gender roles are universally sanctioned by every society. Gender role changes with the growing age. From the perspective of the functionalist, gender role is imbedded in the cultural practices of each human group. The roles are passed from one generation to the other. Scholars opined that constructivism and culturalism are mostly concerned with norms. The members of each society are actors in a social structure meaningfully executing their social roles (Farrell 2002). Gender roles are different in so called matrilineal societies as compared to the patrilineal societies. Descent in such societies is regulated by the social rules which in turn mould the gender role. Cross-cultural studies on gender role by various social scientists concentrated mainly on the specific techniques utilised by children

in different societies to learn the behaviour appropriate to their gender. Gender based task assignment is important in learning gender roles at young age (Condon and Stern 1993). There is a strong role of culture and socialization process in creating this difference. In one way or other gender role is assigned to the men and women by the society. In words of West and Zimmerman (1987) we are always "doing gender" as the roles are performed. In this way gender is also symbolic. The gender roles significantly contribute to human behaviour and interaction pattern. Every individual of the society carries this role structure in mind. The concept of 'matrilineal puzzle' is also important in this context as parenting is often influenced by descent rule and kinship system (Richards1950). The puzzle arises out of the conflict situation created by the matrilineal descent rule, where women have the control over property and the role of men in rearing children. Husband gains authority over wife and children in the family. At the same time mother's brother and brother get importance in the matrilineal society. For example, the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya follows matriliny and the women enjoy property rights, but they hardly have power to manage them (Nongbri1988 and Shangpliang 2012).On the contrary the Hindus traditionally believed that man is the provider of the seed and the woman is a passive recipient who only nurtures the seed within her for its owner. So, women could not inherit parental property (Dube 1986). There are a few studies related to the influence of culture on gender role in tribal societies.

## Literature review:

Panoff's (1976) work on the Maenge community of East New Britain focused on the issue that although they follow matrilineal descent, but they give importance to fathers. *Malo Tumana* is a local term for band of brothers related by blood. Individuals related by *Malo Tumana* help each other in warfare and expeditions. Father takes the main responsibility of rearing children while mother involves themselves in household chores.

According to Barbara and Franke (1992) "Matrilineal Puzzle" is based on the following assumptions. 1) Women are always controlled by men; 2) Male roles are structurally central in all social systems; 3) The roles of father and husband are the most important social roles of men, these being transferred in matrilineal systems to the maternal uncle and brother, who take over the paternal and partnership functions; and 4) Men's control of women's sexual and reproductive potential is universal. They also argued that kinship structures determine and define people's positions and connections in pre-state societies. Women play a central role, while men are women defined. Father's importance lies in his function as controlling progenitor. The role of maternal uncle is rather important. Mother has the economic power.

Condon and Stern's (1993) study on the Inuit youths of Holman revealed that both male and female have well developed sense of gender identity and preference for same sex gender roles. Males have preferred status than females as they are less involved in household activities. Females were brought up to become mother and home makers. But traditional roles have now changed as the women are getting engaged in different economic activities.

Pakyntein (2000) noted that female child is highly preferred in the Khasi society. This preference is linked with Khasi customs and traditions. The reasons for preference are -

1. Continuation of lineage and handling property.

2. Matrilocal residence pattern of the younger daughter.
3. More security for Khasi men at wife's house.
4. Girls are loyal and responsible to the family.

Pakyntein's (2005) study on the gender preference in Khasi society gives the impression that the main reason for female preference was the tradition of matriliny. But it is also true that at present the married couples are more likely to prefer any child irrespective of gender.

VUBO's study (2005) focussed on the Ring group of Grass field Bantu who were at once patrilineal and matrilineal. The kinship structure of these people is stressed on the symmetric position of male and female in the society. For example, wife or women member of the same group has high status as the father, son and unmarried daughter's son. On the other hand, the daughter (married and unmarried), married daughter's daughter and son have low status. So, the status of individual moved from low to high and vice versa. The kinship weightage of the descent was maintained through marital exchange within the groups having matrilineal or patrilineal descent. The change from matriliny to patriliny has been observed as the change in nuclear family at the operational level.

Gneezy et. al. (2009) studied effect of culture on gender gap among the Masai of Tanzania who are patriarchal and the Khasi of North East India, a Matrilineal tribe. Gneezy suggested that the women compete more in Khasi society, while the case is reverse in case of the Masai. The study was done among the children aged 7 to 15 years. It was observed that the gender gap increases with age, especially at 15 years.

Andersen et.al. (2013) studied the gender competitiveness as an impact of socialization process among the Khasi, a matrilineal tribe and the Karbi, a patriarchal tribe of Meghalaya. They observed that while there is a decline in girl's competitiveness around puberty in the patriarchal society, there is actually slight increase in competitiveness for older girls in matrilineal society. There is no difference in competitive behaviour across gender and culture for younger children, but a significant gender competition gap emerges among the older children in patriarchal society, but not in matrilineal society.

Seitova and Utemyratov (2021) pointed out that ethnographers have studied different cultures across the world and find out that almost every society has specific gender approved behaviours for men and women followed rigidly. Gender stereotypes have significant impact on the socialization process. In most societies men are portrayed as strong, aggressive, rational, while women are just opposite being weak, passive and dependent. They differ in emotional sphere as well. Today mass media plays the crucial role in socialization process. They also noted that gender identity is formed in childhood and strengthened in adolescence, but may change later. Biological, social and psychological factors influence formation of gender identity.

The studies reflected that the consciousness regarding gender role develop from childhood and through socialization process. This process varies in matrilineal and patrilineal societies. There are a few matrilineal societies in India, viz. the Khasi, Garo, Rabha living in North Eastern states. There is lack of comparative studies on gender perspective among the matrilineal and patrilineal tribes of India and more specifically in West Bengal. With the notion that people having different social and cultural background must conceptualise gender in a different way, the present study was

done in a matrilineal and a patrilineal society. The Rabha are the matrilineal tribe residing in close proximity with the Mech or Bodo, a patrilineal tribe of West Bengal. The study was done on these two communities in Alipurduar district of the state.

## Background of the studied area and population

The study was done in two separate villages inhabited by the Rabha and the Mech tribe. The village Andu Bana Basty was chiefly inhabited by the Rabha tribe. It was a forest village belonging to the Bania beat of Chilapata range. It was under Mathura Tea Garden Gram Panchayat of Alipurduar- I block. Another village Chandragaon was chiefly inhabited by the Mech or Bodo tribe situated in Kamakhyaguri - I Panchayat of Kumargram block.Andu Bana Basty was surrounded by forest, but Chandragaon was surrounded by agricultural fields. Naturally the Rabhas largely depended on the forest for their livelihood. The Mech people were mainly agriculturists, but occupational diversity was found in the studied area.

The Mech and the Rabha are enlisted Scheduled Tribes(ST) of West Bengal. They are living in Alipurduar district since many generations. The Mech are said to have migrated from Kamrupa and settled at the bank or river Mechi. This probably brought their name. Some scholars also believed that the term Mech came from Mleccha (a Sanskrit word meaning unclean). The settlements of the Mech in Tarai and Duars were reported by many British administrators and travellers (Sanyal, 1973). Their culture is more like the Hindus and they worship lord Shiva as the supreme deity. Many of them use the surname *Shaibo*. They have five or six main septs as stated by Sanyal, viz. *Sampramari, Narzinari, Basumatari, Mochari* and *Hajoari*. Another sept *Iswari* was found to use surname *Thakur* in the studied area.

The Rabhas are believed to have migrated to Assam from south east Tibet before Christ and then one of their groups crossed Brahmaputra River and entered western Duars. Scholars suggested that they were actually offshoot of the Koch. The term Rabha has many connotations. For example, in Koch dialect the word *morab* means 'man'. According to Dhananjay Rabha (1998), the word Rabha might have come from the words *ma* or *mra* meaning 'man' and *rab* meaning 'uneven' or 'rough' and *ha* means 'land' or 'earth', i.e. man of uneven place. He also noted that still there is a place in Tibet called Rabha in the Mango Valley (Rabha, 1998). The word *Raba* in Garo language means 'recalled' or 'called back' as the Rabha were called by the Garo king to teach them cultivation (Saha, 2006). The Rabha comprises of eight socio-cultural and linguistic groups such as — *1.The Pati, 2. The Rangdani, 3. The Maitari, 4. The Kochha (Koch), 5. The Dahari, 6. The Bitalia, 7. The Totla* and *8. The Hana or Shonga* (Raha, 1974). These groups are again sub divided into a number of exogamous clans (*Hausuk* in Rabha language). Different scholars and anthropologists suggested that both the tribes belong to great Bodo family of Indo-Mongoloid ethnic group and has Tibeto-Burman linguistic affiliation. The Mech prefer to call themselves Bodo in Duars.

The Mech people were probably settled in different parts of Alipurduar district during the dynasty of the Koch kings. The village Chandragaon was settled by some Chandra Singh, a Mech king or zamindar. The Rabha settlements under Chilapata range of Alipurduar district was established during British period. According to the villagers, Andu Bana Basty was established around 150 years ago. They got agricultural and homestead land from the forest department during settlement. As per 2011 Census the population of the Mech community in West Bengal was 41242 covering

0.78% of the total ST population of the state. There were 20851 males and 20391 females. The Rabhas constituted 0.53% of the total ST population of the state. Their population was 27820 including 14255 males and 13565 females.
During the survey in 2019, the total population of the Mech in Chadragaon was 366 including 177 females and 189 males and the sex ratio was 936.51. The total population of the Rabha in Andu Bana Basty was 306 including 159 females and 147 males. The sex ratio was 1081.63.

## Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the study were-

- To know the concept related to gender preference among the Mech and the Rabha tribes of West Bengal.
- To find out the role of women in decision making in both the societies.

The **purpose** of the present study is to know the outlook of the tribal people toward gender preference and gender role in decision making having different descent rule. This will reflect the status of women in a matrilineal and a patrilineal society.

## Methodology

The present study was mainly based on primary data collected through field work among two indigenous communities residing in West Bengal, India. The comparative analysis method was applied to understand the gender issues in a matrilineal and a patrilineal society. The Rabha and the Mech community were selected respectively. Data related to gender preference was collected from 50 adult individuals from each community comprising of total 100 participants. Both the males and females were purposively selected on the basis of availability during study period. Only married men and women were interviewed.The age of the respondents varied from 20 to 80 years.
The study was based on qualitative data gathered through structured schedule, interview and observation methods. Data on gender preference and gender role was collected through structured schedules. The schedule contained basic information about the respondents like name, age, sex, education and occupation. The specific questions regarding gender preference and role of male and female in decision making related to family matters were also included. The technique of data collection was direct interview. Some group discussions were also done to understand the perception of men and women regarding gender preference and gender role. The information collected through schedules was quantified and tabulated using MS Excel. The qualitative data were documented and described systematically along with quantitative data.
Socio-economic indicators of the studied population were analysed by using the parameters like marital status, educational status and primary occupation of the studied population. Opinion regarding gender preference of the offspring was analysed on the basis of three indicators, viz. preference for girl child, preference for boy child and no preference. The reasons for preference were analysed separately for two tribes as the responses varied. It also varied in terms of offspring of the respondents which was separately tabulated. The data on decision making was comparatively

analysed by finding the answer to the question 'who takes decision in the family' regarding economic matters and family matters.

## Findings

### Socio-economic indicators of the studied population:

It has been observed that the Mech and the Rabha people were mainly agriculturists. Apart from agriculture, the Rabha of Andu Bana Basty depended on the forest for livelihood. The Mech people of Chandragaon were involved in different kinds of occupation like service, business etc. The respondents from these two villages were mostly females. Among the 50 respondents from Mech community 33 were female and 17 were male and among the Rabahs 26 were female and 24 were male. Altogether there were 59 female and 41 male respondents (Table No.1). From each community 44 respondents were found to be married (88%) and 6 (12%) were single parent during the time of survey. Single parent means widow/widower and divorced/ separated (Table No.2).

As per 2011 Census the literacy rate of the Mech people (74.24%) was higher compared to the Rabhas (61.30%) of West Bengal. Same trend was found among the studied population, although majority of the respondents in the studied areas were literate. People having higher education was more among the Mech (Tertiary level = 28%). There were graduates and post graduates also. Among the Rabhas, only 2 women were found to get tertiary level of education, highest level being class eleven (Table No.3).

Men and women from both the studied areas mostly depended on agriculture. Most of the respondents from the Rabha community were agriculturists (34.0%). The Rabhas had agricultural land beside the forest. They mainly cultivated paddy once in a year. They also had kitchen garden attached to their house. The Mech people cultivated paddy. Some of them practiced animal husbandry (6.0%) which included piggery and poultry business. Women respondents were mainly involved in household activities among both the communities. Three women and 4 men from the Mech community were service holders. There was no service holder among the Rabha respondents. The Rabhas collected minor forest products like edible fruits, roots, leave, honey, available fish at the river and fuel wood. Both men and women were involved in forest related activities. But the products collected were not sold at the market. These were part of their daily needs. One male respondent worked as forest guide and one female worked as forest labourer. There were shop keepers among Mech people. Besides labours and other professions like priest or driver was also found among both the communities. It could be apprehended that the Mech people got jobs as they had higher degrees in education (Table No.4).

The village settlement of the two communities widely varied as the Rabha village was a forest village and the Mech village was revenue village. Rabhas had a symbiotic relationship with the forest. The Mech respondents were educationally forward than the Rabhas as the Mech had more accessibility to higher education. There were service holders among the Mech. The Rabhas mainly depended on small scale agriculture.

### Gender preference:

The concept of gender is typically a social-cultural construct varying contextually. While speaking of male and female gender preference for child always remained a matter of cultural significance.

The construction of this preference lies in the gender role. The role is assigned by the society itself. Comparing the context of a matrilineal and a patrilineal group is significant because traditionally they had a different outlook towards gender. The respondents belonging to Mech community mostly remained neutral while asked about child preference (74.0%). There was hardly any difference in case of male and female respondents. But situation slightly differed in case of the Rabha. They preferred female child (68.0%). Preference of male child was recorded to be same in both the communities (16%) (Table No. 5). The Rabha people of Andu Bana Basty still believed that women take care of the family (20.0%). The impact of matriliny is still relevant in choosing gender (34.0%). They believe that women are responsible for continuing lineage. Most of the families were matrilocal in the studied area (Table No. 6.ii). The change from matrilocal too patrilocal residence pattern has infiltrated in Rabha society. But preference of girl child is the reflection of their cultural construct. The Mech people on the other hand stressed on the importance of both male and female child in a family. The respondents who preferred male child reasoned for being with the parents as a patrilineal and patrilocal system. Only a few (10%) of them stated that girls are more caring than boys (Table No. 6.i).

The preference of children not only associated with the traditional system, but it is also linked with the life experience. Couples having male offspring could not ignore the importance of male child as found among the Mech (10%). The studied Mech people were mostly educated (Table No.3). Education among both male and female was behind a neutral outlook. Majority of the respondents had both male and female offspring. Except a few, most of them had same opinion regarding child preference (40%). To them both were important. In part of the Rabhas preference for girls was a common factor in every case as they admired their tradition and felt the importance of female in the family. Even then 30% of the respondents had only female offspring who preferred girl child (Table No. 7). As a system of matrilocal residence pattern girls stay at their parental home and looks after the parental property. This is one of the important reasons for female preference. Group discussion with the married couples of different age groups also reflected the same concept. Parents of a boy child also preferred girl child in case of the Rabha. The respondents from both the communities having no child mostly opined that both male and female are required to maintain a family so they will love to have child of any gender (Table No. 7). The community centric concept regarding gender preference is not an exception. Watson-Franke (1992) stated that kinship and descent status influences people's relationship in pre-state societies. She also accepted high value of women in matrilineal society. This notion is also applicable for the Rabha people and status of women is a gift of their social structure.

It has been observed the Rabhas consciously preferred girl child as they are matrilineal tribe, but the Mech people hardly had any preference. The main reason is traditional set up of the Rabhas, both in terms of their habitation and psycho-social make up. The Mech respondents had more exposure to outer world as they were educated. They accepted both girl and boy child to be equally important. Some respondents from both the communities believed that girl child is more caring than boy child and so girl child is preferred.

## Decision making:

In most cases, a matrilineal society does not follow the rule of matriarchy. On the contrary patriliny follows patriarchy in most of the societies. Now the question is - whether decision making process is influenced by matriliny or patriliny? In some case off course, it is. During the present study two main issues were highlighted regarding decision making; economic matters and family matters. Economic matters included investment and property issues. The family matters include decision regarding children, aged, marriage, education and health. It is very interesting to find that in case of the Mech people, decision regarding economic matters (62.0%) and family matters (54.0%) were mostly taken by the male members of the family. Only 10% of the respondents said that both male and female members take decision on economic issues. According to most of the Rabha respondent decision regarding economic matters (76.0%) as well as family matters (62.0%) is mostly taken jointly. In some of the Mech family women are the authority for taking decision regarding economic issues (28.0%) and this could be the result of education and economic independence of the female. The opinion of the females regarding family matters (30%) is in respected of the Rabha society. Males taking decision alone for economic or family matters in Rabha society is rare (Table No. 8). It should be mentioned that traditionally men held the important position in both Mech and Rabha society, whether it is a religious head or political one. In case of family, kinship and marriage related issues the women are given priority in the Rabha society. The relatives from maternal side are always important among them as happens in most of the matrilineal societies. The situation is just opposite in case of the Mech. Descent rule is a contributing factor in shaping social norms. The difference in decision making process in two communities is reflected their outlook towards traditional system and conventional gender role. But recent changes in education and economy have somehow influenced the culture construct of the Mech people.

Generally, women are active workers in tribal societies. Along with household works the women in both the societies engage themselves in agriculture related activities and occasionally work as wage labourers. The Rabhas collect fuel wood and other minor forest products from the forest; sometimes they sell vegetables (product of kitchen garden) in the weekly market. Such kind of involvement empowers them to take decision in economic matters as well as family matters.

## Conclusion:

There are only a few existing matrilineal societies in India. The Rabha is one of them. They are also changing very fast. But still the women are valued as a care giver, as a torch bearer of the lineage, as a partner in economy and off course family. The importance of women is reflected in their opinion regarding gender preference. They kept women ahead of men in every aspect. The female takes decision along with their male partners. This attitude made the Rabha women more empowered than the Mech women. Even the sex ratio (1081.63) gave impression of female primacy over male in Rabha society. The patrilineal Mech people have different opinion regarding child preference and gender role. The respondents from the Mech community were more educated compared to the Rabha. A few of the Mech women were service holders too. Reflection of this status was seen in case of their opinion regarding gender preference as well as decision making. Yet the power left in the hands of the male members. Gender preference often moved around the dilemma of parents regarding care giving. Staying with parents after marriage was a concern for the

parents which varied in patrilineal and matrilineal societies. Property inheritance is another aspect related with the status of men and women. In case of immovable property existence of son or daughter counted for parents whether they belong to patrilineal society or matrilineal society respectively. The status of women as viewed from the perspective of gender preference and role in decision making clearly suggest the matriliny plays a positive role in Rabha society for giving women a preferred status over men. The Mech women are also coming forward in decision making now-a-days. Although cultural values could not be ignored, nevertheless gender roles could be altered in any society if opportunities are given.

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# Tables

(Source: Primary Data collected through field work)

**Table No. 1: Community wise distribution of the respondents**

| Name of the community | Female | Male |
|---|---|---|
| Mech (n=50) | 33 (66.0) | 17 (34.0) |
| Rabha (n=50) | 26 (52.0) | 24 (48.0) |
| Total respondents (n=100) | 59 | 41 |

**Table No. 2: Marital status of the respondents**

| Community | Gender | Married | Divorced/separated/widow/widower |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mech** (n=50) | Female | 28 (56.0 | 5(10.0) |
| | Male | 16(32.0) | 1(2.0) |
| | **Total** | **44(88.0)** | **6(12.0)** |
| **Rabha** (n=50) | Female | 23 (46.0) | 3(6.0) |
| | Male | 21(42.0) | 3(6.0) |
| | **Total** | **44(88.0)** | **6(12.0)** |

**Table No. 3: Education of the respondents**

| | **Mech (n=50)** | | | **Rabha (n=50)** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Level of education** | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| Illiterate | 14 | 3 | 17(34.0) | 10 | 13 | 23(46.0) |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary (I-IV) | 2 | 1 | 3(6.0) | 1 | 1 | 2(4.0) |
| Secondary (V-X) | 10 | 6 | 16(32.0) | 13 | 10 | 23(46.0) |
| Tertiary (above X) | 7 | 7 | 14(28.0) | 2 | 0 | 2(4.0) |
| Total | 33 | 17 | 50(100.0) | 26 | 24 | 50(100.0) |

**Table No. 4: Primary occupation of the respondents**

| | **Mech (n=50)** | | | **Rabha (n=50)** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Occupation** | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| Agriculture | 2 | 3 | 5 (10.0) | 1 | 16 | 17 (34.0) |
| Animal husbandry | 2 | 1 | 3 (6.0) | - | - | - |
| Business and self employed | - | 2 | 2 (4.0) | 2 | 1 | 3 (6.0) |
| Forest related work | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | 2 (4.0) |
| Household work | 25 | 3 | 28 (56.0 | 21 | 2 | 23 (46.0) |
| Labour | - | 1 | 1 (2.0) | - | 1 | 1 (2.0) |
| Others | 1 | 3 | 4 (8.0) | 1 | 3 | 4 (8.0) |
| Service | 3 | 4 | 7 (14.0) | - | - | - |

**Table No. 5: Child preference among the studied population**

| **Community** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mech (n=50)** | **Female** | **Male** | **All** |
| Girl | 4 (8.0) | 1(2.0) | 5(10.0 |
| Boy | 3 (6.0) | 5(10.0) | 8(16.0) |
| No preference | 26 (52. 0) | 11(22.0) | 37(74.0) |
| **Rabha (n=50)** | | | |
| Girl | 14(28.0) | 20(40.0) | 34(68.0) |
| Boy | 5(10.0) | 3(6.0) | 8(16.0) |
| No preference | 7(14.0) | 1(2.0) | 8(16.0) |

## 6. i. **Reasons of preference among the Mech**

| **Reasons of preference among the Mech (n=50)** | **Girl child** | **Boy child** | **No preference** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Both girls and boys are equally important | - | - | 34 (68.0) |
| Boys stay with parents and continue the lineage | - | 11 (22.0) | - |
| Daughters are more caring | 5 (10.0) | - | - |

## 6. ii. **Reasons of preference among the Rabha**

| **Reasons of preference among the Rabha (n=50)** | **Girl** | **Boy** | **No preference** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Both girls and boys are required | - | - | 15 (30.0) |
| Boys stay with parents now | | 8 (16.0) | - |
| Daughters are more caring and helpful | 10 (20.0) | - | - |
| Traditional matrilineal system | 17 (34.0) | - | - |

**Table No. 7: Gender preference based on offspring of the respondents**

| **Community** | **Preference of child** | **Having both male and female offspring** | **None** | **Only girl offspring** | **Only boy offspring** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mech (n=50)** | Girl | 3(6.0) | - | 2 (4.0) | - |
| | Boy | 2 (4.0) | - | 1 (2.0) | 5 (10.0) |
| | No preference | 20 (40.0) | 3 (36.0) | 3 (6.0) | 11 (22.0) |
| **Rabha (n=50)** | Girl | 9 (18.0) | - | 15 (30.0) | 10 (20.0) |
| | Boy | 5 (10.0) | - | 1 (2.0) | 2 (4.0) |
| | No preference | 4 (8.0) | 1 (2.0) | 2 (4.0) | 1 (2.0) |

**Table No. 8: Decision making in the family**

| **Community** | **Who takes decision?** | **Economic matters** | **Family matters** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mech (n=50)** | Both | 5 (10.0) | 17 (34.0) |
| | Female | 14 (28.0) | 6 (12.0) |
| | Male | 31 (62.0) | 27 (54.0) |
| **Rabha (n=50)** | Both | 38 (76.0) | 31 (62.0) |
| | Female | 6 (12.0) | 15 (30.0) |
| | Male | 6 (12.0) | 4 (8.0) |

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