

Are Daughters Preferred in a Matrilineal Society? A Case Study of the Garos from Assam

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ABSTRACT Some studies have revealed that a son enjoys preferential treatment in upbringing and in later life in comparison to a daughter. This is the case in dominant patriarchal societies where a daughter is neglected on several occasions. The present paper attempts to look at whether the situation is different in a matrilineal society. It also attempts to see whether the matrilineal social set-up plays any role in a favourable treatment of the son or daughter. The paper draws its material from three aspects of child-rearing process of the Garos of Bakrapur, a village in Goalpara district, Assam, who are matrilineal. These three aspects include parental preference of a particular sex for an unborn child, issues regarding food and eating and work allotted to male and female children. This study revealed that in terms of food and eating, and tasks allotted, rather than sex, age plays a significant role. However a slight inclination towards boys is noticeable. In case of parental preference for a particular sex, a girl child was preferred, depending on certain situations. Again, depending on familial conditions, both sexes were favoured.