

Educational Struggles and Successes Storytelling of the Garasia Tribe in Rajasthan

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Abstract

Globally, education among tribal communities is gradually improving, with indigenous groups advocating for better access while preserving their cultural identities. Examples include the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, the Sami in Northern Europe, and Native American tribes in the United States (Cultural Survival n.d.). In India, tribal communities are evolving in education, culture, infrastructure, and connectivity with mainstream society. The Garasia tribe of Rajasthan is known for its rich traditions, rituals, and unique way of life. This study examines the role of education in the lives of Garasia youth, highlighting both benefits and challenges. While the tribe has increasingly prioritized education, barriers such as limited access, socio-economic constraints, and cultural perceptions still persist. Using qualitative research methods, particularly case studies, this study explores individual educational experiences among Garasia youth. Findings reveal both opportunities and struggles in their educational journey. While some youth benefit from government initiatives and family support, others face early dropouts, financial hardships, and cultural resistance. The study also identifies the need for targeted strategies to overcome these challenges, enhance educational opportunities, and promote holistic development. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of tribal education in India and suggest pathways for future improvement.

Keywords: *Education, Garasia Tribe, Government Schemes, Rajasthan & Social context.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Educational in the contemporary day has surpassed its conventional function as a mere instrument for obtaining knowledge. Undoubtedly, it has evolved into an essential entitlement, intricately connected to the fundamental requirements of human existence and welfare (T Brahmanandam, 2016). Although food, shelter, and security are really fundamental requirements for survival, education has become a vital cornerstone that facilitates the progress and advancement of both individuals and communities. Educational opportunities¹ enable communities to undergo evolution, foster innovation, and disrupt the cycle of poverty and marginalisation (Dr & Bhattacharya, 2021). Hence, it is imperative that every individual, irrespective of their social or economic status, be granted equal access to high-quality education, so guaranteeing the realisation of their full potential. The progressive advancement of every civilisation commences with the education of its young members (Kamat, 2008). Educational attainment among young people is crucial for promoting social, economic, and cultural advancement (Andrabi, 2014). It is imperative that this education is not limited to specific social classes or genders; it should be comprehensive and fair, offering chances to all individuals in society (Ghanshyam Shah, 2020).

Educational Scenario of Indian Tribes

Tribal populations in India have traditionally been one of the most marginalised groups, frequently denied fundamental rights and services, such as formal schooling. India's indigenous population, accounting for around 8.6% of the overall population, has persistently faced marginalisation, especially in the realm of education (Poddar, 2024). Despite the implementation of several government initiatives, such as the creation of Ashram Schools and the Tribal Sub-Plan, tribal populations continue to encounter substantial educational obstacles. The 2011 Census documented a literacy rate of 59% among Scheduled Tribes, which is lower than the national average of 73%. Chronic high dropout rates, insufficient infrastructure, and a dearth of culturally appropriate education persistently impede growth. Government programmes such as the Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS)² are significantly enhancing the availability of high-quality education for school children belonging to tribal communities (Sujatha, 2002). The objective of these schools is to offer education within a culturally suitable environment, supported by complimentary accommodation and meals. Notwithstanding these persistent constraints, there have been promising indications of advancement in indigenous education. Government policies and initiatives are progressively enhancing the availability and standard of education in tribal states (Kumar, 1983). These educational institutions not only provide tuition-free instruction but also include cultural elements of indigenous tribes into the curriculum, therefore facilitating the connection between traditional wisdom and formal scholarship. Furthermore, non-governmental organisations (NGOs)³ and other entities persist in playing a vital role in complementing government initiatives, especially in distant regions where educational opportunities are still restricted (Malyadri, 2012). As these collaborative endeavours progress, there is optimism for a more promising educational future for the indigenous communities of India.

State-wise Literacy Rate, India

Table 1: India: Tribal Literacy Rate

No.	STATE	Literacy (in percentage)		
		Person	Male	Female
1	Jammu & Kashmir	50.6	60.6	39.7
2	Rajasthan	52.8	67.6	37.3
3	Uttar Pradesh	55.7	67.1	43.7
4	Jharkhand	57.1	68.2	46.2
5	Odisha	52.2	63.7	41.2
6	Chhattisgarh	59.1	69.7	48.8
7	Madhya Pradesh	50.6	59.6	41.5
8	Gujarat	62.5	71.7	53.2
9	Andhra Pradesh	49.2	58.4	40.1
10	Karnataka	62.1	71.1	53.0

Source: Census of India, 2011

Education Policy, India

One such population is the Garasia Tribe⁴ of Rajasthan, who has always been perceived as backward because of their restricted access to resources and opportunities (Upmanyu, 2016). Like many other indigenous communities in India, the Garasia tribe has long been confronted with substantial obstacles to education, such as physical remoteness, financial adversity, and social marginalisation. Nevertheless, the Indian government and some non-governmental organisations have recently pursued initiatives to tackle these issues by providing education

directly to the indigenous populations (Ahmed, 2021). These efforts include not only enhancing the accessibility of education but also striving to guarantee its inclusivity, accommodating both males and females within these communities. These initiatives have started to have positive results for the Garasia tribe, as a growing proportion of young individuals are now able to obtain fundamental education. The ongoing transition is progressively altering the dynamics within the tribe, as education provides new opportunities for individual and communal growth (Digal, 2021). The objective of this study is to gain a thorough understanding of the function of education in the lives of the Garasia youth by examining both the beneficial effects and the persistent difficulties. Moreover, this study will investigate the wider consequences of these educational advancements on the social and economic structure of the Garasia tribe (Minister et al., 2023).

(a) National Education Policy (NEP), 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 presents a forward-thinking framework that is particularly relevant to addressing the educational challenges faced by tribal communities, including the Garasia tribe. The policy recognizes the importance of closing the educational gap for tribal groups by promoting an inclusive and culturally sensitive education system. It emphasizes incorporating indigenous languages, traditions, and local knowledge into mainstream education, an approach that resonates strongly with the Garasia tribe, whose cultural heritage is often neglected in conventional education. The NEP advocates for a multilingual education system, which would allow Garasia children to learn in their native language, helping them maintain their cultural identity while improving academic performance (Ministry of Human & Development, 2020).

In addition, the NEP encourages reforms to the curriculum that respect and reflect the local cultural context, ensuring that education for tribal students, such as those from the Garasia community, is not only academically enriching but also culturally meaningful. This is especially important for the Garasia tribe, where education has historically been disconnected from their daily life and traditions. The policy also promotes the recruitment of local tribal teachers and the establishment of tribal-focused schools, aiming to empower these communities by providing educators who are familiar with their unique cultural and social contexts. This approach seeks to improve both access to education and retention rates among Garasia children, who have often been excluded from mainstream educational opportunities.

Through NEP 2020, there is a focused effort to ensure that tribes like the Garasia are not only included in India's educational system but are also supported in a way that preserves and respects their cultural integrity. The policy aims to provide the Garasia tribe, along with other tribal communities, with more equitable opportunities for social advancement, economic participation, and cultural preservation. By emphasizing inclusivity and locally relevant education, the NEP offers a transformative opportunity for the Garasia youth, helping them acquire the skills and knowledge needed to navigate both their traditional heritage and the modern world.

II. EXPLORING PERSPECTIVES

This study will examine the educational achievements and difficulties encountered by the Garasia tribe in Rajasthan using a qualitative method. Through semi-structured interviews, field observations, and document analysis. Purposive sampling will be employed to choose case study locations that reflect different educational access levels: from rural areas. Thematic

analysis of the data will reveal sociological elements including cultural impacts on education. The study will look at both educational successes and government interventions, and obstacles to education, like resources, traditional beliefs, and geographic isolation. In addition to offering important insights for policy formation and community-based educational solutions, this research attempts to provide a thorough overview of the educational landscape within the Garasia tribe while maintaining ethical norms and cultural sensitivity.

III. CASE STUDIES: GARASIA TRIBE IN RAJASTHAN

CASE STUDY: 1

Background of the Respondent

Geeta, she is 15-year-old girl from the Garasia tribe who resides in Jamboori hamlet, Abu Road, Rajasthan. Currently a student in the 11th grade, she is known for her resilience and determination to pursue education despite the challenges her community faces.

Family Structure of the Respondent

She is coming from a traditional Garasia household of six members. Her father works as a farmer and occasional laborer, while her mother manages the household and assists in agricultural work. She has three siblings: an elder brother who helps in farming, a younger brother attending primary school, and a younger sister who assists their mother with daily chores. The family values education and supports her aspirations, though limited financial resources often make it difficult to sustain her schooling needs.

Moving from Village to Town for Education

She is decided to leave her village and move to a nearby town was driven by the lack of educational facilities beyond elementary school in Jamboori hamlet. She recognized that continuing her studies was essential for building a better future, not only for herself but also for her family. While the urban environment offered better infrastructure and learning resources, it came with significant sacrifices. Being away from her family was emotionally challenging, and she had to adapt to a new cultural environment that was vastly different from her tribal roots. Her family supported her decision, despite the financial strain it placed on them. They saw education as a way to break the cycle of poverty and provide her with opportunities that were unavailable within their community. The girl herself viewed education as a means to gain independence and contribute to the development of her village in the future.

Key Findings

It provided valuable insights about the student's educational trajectory and the wider educational environment in her neighbourhood.

- 1. Higher Education:** The student articulated a fervent aspiration for higher education, underscoring the significance of pursuing studies beyond the elementary academic level. The speaker underscored the significance of higher education in terms of individual growth and professional progression. Notwithstanding her ambitions, she saw that the availability of secondary and higher school facilities in her area restricts the possibilities for pursuing further study.
- 2. Gender Equality:** The student highlighted the gender inequalities in education prevalent in her neighbourhood. She observed that although there are initiatives to encourage education for girls, cultural conventions and familial expectations frequently impede

their educational advancement. Due to traditional beliefs and family obligations, many girls in her area are unable to pursue their education beyond their primary school years.

3. **Career Enhancement:** The student explored the significance of education in augmenting economic opportunities. The speaker recognised that education has the potential to provide access to improved professional prospects and economic self-sufficiency. Her family actively endorsed her academic endeavours and motivated her to enrol in a school located in Abu Road, which featured a government-funded dormitories specifically for female students like Hostels under the Department of Tribal Area Development (TAD), Rajasthan, Rajasthan Post-Matric Scholarship for ST Students, Tribal Development Residential Schools (TDRS), Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in Abu Road, This assistance played a vital role in facilitating her ability to pursue her studies outside of her family.
4. **Vocational Education:** Vocational education in these schools plays a crucial role in equipping students with practical skills that are directly relevant to their daily lives and future employment opportunities. By offering training in areas such as agriculture, handicrafts, and other trades, the schools help students gain valuable skills that can enhance their economic independence and provide a pathway to self-sufficiency. This focus on vocational education ensures that students are not only academically prepared but also capable of contributing meaningfully to their communities.

Limitations and Constraints

The student expounded upon the limitations and restraints that impact the education of girls in her community:

1. **Economically Underdeveloped:** The primary school in Jamboori hamlet lacks the necessary facilities to provide instruction beyond the elementary level, thereby necessitating pupils to seek higher education off Abu Road.
2. **Societal Expectations:** Although girls may meet the educational requirements up to the 12th grade, they often encounter societal expectations to marry at an early age and prioritize family life over pursuing higher education or professional prospects.
3. **Unsupportive Family:** Although her family acknowledged the importance of education and aided with her schooling in Abu Road, this support is not widespread among her neighbourhood. A significant number of families do not provide priority to the education of girls, resulting in elevated rates of dropout.

The student's narrative highlights the disparity between her expectations for education and the actual educational prospects available in her neighbourhood. Despite successfully surmounting several challenges with the assistance of her family and government assistance, numerous girls in her village encounter substantial impediments in attaining their scholastic and professional aspirations.

CASE STUDY: 2

Background: About the Girl

Raama Bai, she is 13-year-old girl from the Garasia tribe, residing in Jamboori hamlet, Abu Road, Rajasthan. Currently in the 8th grade, she is known for her determination to overcome the challenges of accessing education beyond elementary school. Her resilience reflects the broader struggles faced by tribal girls in pursuing higher education.

Family

The girl comes from a close-knit Garasia household of five members. Her father, though primarily a farmer, supplements the family income by working as a seasonal laborer in nearby towns. Her mother, apart from managing household chores, is skilled in making traditional handicrafts, which she sells at local markets to contribute to the family's finances. She has two younger siblings: a brother who attends primary school and a sister who assists their mother at home. The family places a strong emphasis on education, viewing it as a means to improve their socio-economic status, even amidst financial constraints.

Moving from Village to Town for Education

She is decided to leave her village and move to a nearby town for middle school education was driven by her ambition to continue learning. She recognized that staying in the village would limit her opportunities. Her family's encouragement played a vital role, despite their concerns about financial strain and her safety in an unfamiliar environment. While the move has provided access to better educational resources and opportunities, it has also required her to navigate emotional and cultural adjustments. Living away from her community has been challenging, but she views education as a path to independence and a means to contribute to her village's development in the future.

Key Findings

- 1. Access to Better Resources:** The student highlighted that moving to the town for her secondary education opened up access to better facilities, such as more experienced teachers, a diverse curriculum, and modern teaching aids. She was able to learn subjects like science, mathematics, and social studies in greater depth, which she felt was not possible in the elementary school in her village. She mentioned that the quality of education in the town school had motivated her to pursue her studies with more focus and enthusiasm.
- 2. Exposure to New Opportunities:** The girl expressed that being in the town had broadened her horizons. She now has exposure to a more diverse student body and better extracurricular opportunities. Her aspirations have expanded, and she is now more determined to pursue a career that could contribute to improving education in her community. She believes that completing her education will allow her to bring positive change, particularly for the girls in her village.
- 3. Parental Support for Education:** Despite the challenges, her parents have been supportive of her education, seeing it as an opportunity to secure a better future for her. They have made significant sacrifices to ensure she could study in the town, which she appreciated deeply. This support has played a crucial role in her ability to continue her education.

Limitations and Constraints

- 1. Emotional and Cultural Disconnect:** One of the main constraints the student faced was the emotional toll of being away from her family and community. Being in a town far from her village made her feel isolated at times, and she struggled with homesickness. Moreover, she felt a sense of cultural disconnect as the school environment was different from her own community's way of life. There were few students who shared similar cultural backgrounds, and this sometimes made her feel out of place.

2. **Gender Expectations and Responsibilities at Home:** The student mentioned the pressure of gendered expectations back home. While she was away at school, she felt that her family, especially her mother, still relied on her to help with household chores whenever she returned home. This dual responsibility—balancing education with domestic duties—created significant stress. She noted that, in many ways, girls in her community were expected to prioritize household responsibilities over their education, which made it challenging to fully focus on her studies without feeling guilty about neglecting her family's needs.
3. **Limited Educational Facilities in the Village:** A major constraint was the lack of educational infrastructure in her village. The absence of secondary schools meant that students like her had no choice but to leave their homes to continue their studies. This limitation often leads to high dropout rates, particularly for girls who are less likely to receive support from their families to pursue education outside their village. For many in the Garasia tribe, the financial burden and logistical difficulties of moving to a town for school can be a significant barrier.
4. **Social Stigma and Pressure on Girls:** The student also discussed the social stigma surrounding girls' education in her community. While her parents supported her schooling, there was often resistance from other members of the community who believed that girls should focus on domestic duties rather than education. This societal pressure sometimes led to self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy, as she felt she was defying traditional norms by pursuing her studies further.

The successes and constraints faced by this 16-year-old Garasia girl reflect the broader educational challenges experienced by tribal communities. While her access to quality education in town provided her with valuable opportunities, the emotional cost of being away from home and the societal pressures she faces as a girl in her community highlight the persistent barriers that tribal girls encounter in pursuing education. The success of parental support underscores the importance of family encouragement, while the constraints of gender roles and cultural expectations point to the need for greater community awareness and intervention to ensure that girls' education is equally prioritized. The case study underscores the need for more localized educational infrastructure in tribal areas, as well as programs aimed at changing attitudes toward girl's education, to help break the cycle of gender inequality in education.

CASE STUDY: 3

Background of the respondent

Bhatia Garasia, 20-year-old, he is doing the Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree in Nursing (Pursing: 2nd year student 4th semester). He hails from a small village, Jamboori, located near Abu Road in the state of Rajasthan. Like many other villages in the region, Jamboori faces significant challenges in accessing higher education institutions, forcing students to travel to Abu Road for their academic endeavours. The experiences of this male participant reflect the resilience and challenges faced by Garasia youth pursuing education beyond their village.

Family Background

The participant comes from a humble, close-knit family consisting of his father, mother, two younger sisters, and a younger brother. His father is a farmer who works hard to support

the family and provide for their basic needs. The mother, who stays at home, is primarily responsible for household chores and caregiving duties, including looking after the children and managing day-to-day tasks. The family lives in a modest mud house, with limited access to modern amenities, typical of rural areas. The family has always prioritized mutual support and unity. Although financial constraints have limited their options, the participant's parents have maintained a strong sense of family values and strive to ensure a harmonious home environment for their children. They often come together to tackle challenges, whether they are related to health, work, or personal difficulties. The family has had to make many sacrifices to manage the basic needs of the household, but they continue to support each other in all endeavours.

Moving from Village to Mainstream Education

As with many others from rural villages, the participant's transition to formal education outside the village was a significant milestone. He was forced to move from his home village to a more centralized location to pursue higher education. The journey of leaving home, while challenging, opened up new opportunities for his academic and personal growth. However, the separation from family and the challenges of adapting to a new environment posed additional hurdles for him, particularly in terms of adjusting to the more urbanized academic institutions.

Key Findings

The participant initiated the conversation by elucidating the importance of higher education in his life. The speaker underscored that, in his perspective, higher education encompasses not only scholastic success but also serves as a means to promote professional advancement and personal development. His academic endeavour to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing is motivated by a strong aspiration to establish a secure and steady profession, which he considers essential for disrupting the cycle of poverty that is widespread in his neighbourhood.

Furthermore, he emphasised the significance of achieving gender equality in the field of education. The participant voiced apprehension regarding the inequalities between male and female students in obtainment of higher education. The speaker observed that whereas boys, such as himself, have the ability to travel to Abu Road for their academic pursuits, it is significantly more difficult for girls to do so. Often, cultural conventions and safety concerns hinder girls from continuing their education beyond the 10th or 12th grade. The author contended that this discrepancy sustains gender inequity within his society and constrains the potential of numerous gifted young women.

Limitations and Constraints

The participant identified such limitations and restrictions that he and his peers encounter when striving for higher education. An inherent obstacle is the absence of educational infrastructure in close proximity to his area. Given the absence of local colleges or universities providing advanced degrees, students seeking to pursue further education are required to either move or travel to Abu Road. This scenario presents substantial financial and logistical obstacles, especially for families with restricted means.

While the participant found commuting from Jamboori to Abu Road to be feasible, he recognised that this is not universally true. According to him, certain boys in his village either commute daily to visit college or seek temporary lodging in Abu Road. Nevertheless, the

scenario becomes far more intricate for girls. The cultural norms and safety considerations linked to long-distance travel pose challenges for them in their pursuit of higher education.

Consequently, a significant number of girls are compelled to terminate their education upon finishing their secondary schooling, so restricting their future prospects. The experiences of the participants highlight the wider systemic deficiencies that impede educational achievement in native communities. The confluence of limited availability of higher education and gender-specific obstacles poses substantial obstacles for Garasia youth, especially for girls who have ambitions to pursue higher education.

IV. CONCLUSION

Education highlighting the intricate interaction between advancements and obstacles in the educational experiences of Garasia youngsters in Abu Road, Rajasthan. The provision of government dormitories and scholarships, in conjunction with the presence of supportive families, has facilitated access to higher education for numerous students, therefore enabling them to strive for improved job prospects. Nevertheless, the evaluation also uncovers persistent challenges, notably for girls, who still encounter cultural expectations, gender inequalities, and restricted availability of educational resources. The administration has implemented several programs for the tribal population, such as the mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through minimum support price, the upgradation of merit of ST Students, Vocational Training Centres in Tribal areas, and National Overseas Scholarship for Scheduled Tribe Students. Rajiv Gandhi Implementation of National Fellowship for ST Students, Post Matric Scholarship for ST Students, Establishment of Ashram Schools in Tribal and Sub-Plan areas, Pre-Matric Scholarships, and Centrally Sponsored Hostels for ST Boys and Girls (Dr & Bhattacharya, 2021). These findings emphasise the importance of continuous investment in educational facilities and the formulation of culturally appropriate policies that especially cater to the requirements of tribal people. The resolution of these enduring obstacles will not only enhance educational achievements for Garasia young but also make a valuable contribution to the overall social and economic empowerment of marginalised groups. Sustained endeavours are necessary to guarantee that all young people, irrespective of their origin, have the chance to achieve their maximum potential in the ongoing pursuit of educational fairness in tribal regions.

Footnotes

- 1) Educational opportunities refer to the chances and resources available for individuals to access and benefit from formal and informal learning environments.
- 2) Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) are government-run institutions in India that provide quality education to tribal students from Class 6 to 12, with the aim of fostering academic and holistic development in a residential environment.
- 3) Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are independent, non-profit entities that work to address social, environmental, and humanitarian issues, often operating outside of government influence.
- 4) The Garasia tribe is an indigenous community primarily found in Rajasthan and Gujarat, India, known for its rich traditions, rituals, and a unique way of life, while increasingly focusing on education to improve socio-economic conditions for their youth.

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