

A Geo-Spatial Study On Socio-Economic Changes and Demographic Profile of the Dombidasa Community Area in Mysuru City, Karnataka

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Abstract

The study aims to investigate the geo-spatial aspects of the socio-economic and demographic profile of the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city, Karnataka State. The Dombidasa community is a small, semi-nomadic, and traditionally performing tribe in Karnataka, characterized by a distinct cultural and social profile. As a micro-minority with a history of nomadism, the community has remained socially and geographically marginalized. Geographically, the Dombidasa population in Karnataka is distributed across scattered settlements in various districts. Notable concentrations are found in Belgaum district particularly in Arjunwad, Kurni, and Kotabagi villages of Hukkeri taluk as well as in urban areas such as Mysuru. Additionally, the community is present in the Tumkur district and has historically been dispersed across several rural regions of the state. This study has two primary objectives: (1) to examine the historical background and demographic profile of the Dombidasa community in Karnataka, and (2) to assess the geo-spatial and socio-economic changes among the Dombidasa community in Karnataka, with special reference to Mysuru city.

As per the results, the Chi-square test was applied to examine the association between various socio-economic changes and lifestyle changes among the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city. Among the selected indicators, digital integration recorded the lowest Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 15.291$), which is significant at the 1% level of significance. The findings reveal that variables such as occupational shift, housing status, educational level, digital integration, shift in livelihood, poverty and living conditions, strengthening of lifestyle, and improvement in savings exhibit a statistically significant association with changes in lifestyle and standard of living. The Chi-square test statistics indicate that all the variables are significant at the 1% level. Notably, the strengthening of lifestyle recorded the highest Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 51.073$), significant at the 1% level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, confirming that socio-economic changes have significantly influenced the living conditions of the Dombidasa community in the study area.

Keywords: *Dombidasa Community; Origin; Demographic; Geo-spatial status; Geographical; Cultural Legacy; Socio-economic Changes.*

Introduction

The Dombidasa community in Karnataka is a marginalized nomadic tribe characterized by severe socio-economic deprivation. Traditionally, the community has relied on itinerant occupations such as street performing, selling goods at village fairs, and begging for their livelihood. A significant proportion of the Dombidasa population has migrated from Andhra Pradesh. The community continues to face acute challenges, including low levels of literacy, lack of access to basic amenities, and an ongoing identity crisis resulting from their transient lifestyle and temporary habitation, often in tents. Predominantly nomadic or semi-nomadic in nature, the Dombidasa are primarily

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concentrated in Karnataka and are officially classified under the Other Backward Classes (OBC), reflecting their disadvantaged social and economic status.

Through this study, The Dombidasa community, a marginalized nomadic and semi-nomadic group in Karnataka, has traditionally depended on itinerant livelihoods and frequent migration, with many having migrated from Andhra Pradesh. Recent urbanization and welfare initiatives have led to a gradual shift toward semi-settled living, particularly in Mysuru city. Despite these changes, the community continues to face challenges such as poverty, low literacy, inadequate housing, and social exclusion. The study focuses on examining the geo-spatial, socio-economic, and demographic changes within the Dombidasa community to support inclusive development and effective policy interventions.

Research Objectives

1. To study the historical background and demographic profile of the Dombidasa community in Karnataka.
2. To assess the geo-spatial and socio-economic changes among the Dombidasa community in Karnataka and Mysuru city.

Hypothesis

1. There is a change in socio-economic status among the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city.

Materials and Methods

The study is primarily based on secondary and primary sources of data. Information has been collected from various sources, including the Economic Survey of India and Karnataka, the Backward Classes Welfare Department, the Mysuru Administrative Department, reputed journals and research articles, published and unpublished theses, edited volumes, scholarly journals, newspapers, and relevant websites.

Primary Data: A total of 55 respondents from the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city were selected for the study. Primary data were collected using a well-structured questionnaire, supplemented by personal interviews, group discussions, and direct observation of their activities.

Statistical Technique Analysis: The primary data were analyzed using statistical tools such as percentages, averages, and the Chi-square (χ^2) test. **Chi-square (χ^2) Test** is a significance of the socio-economic changes in the Dombidasa community, this test is used to determine if the observed frequencies in the modern state significantly deviate from the traditional 'static' state represented by the null hypothesis. The test statistic is calculated by summing the squared difference between observed and expected values, normalized by the expected value for each category:

Origin of Dombidasa Community in Karnataka: A Brief View

The Dombidasa community of Karnataka is a unique nomadic group whose origins are deeply intertwined with the cultural and religious history of the Deccan plateau. Traditionally known as peripatetic entertainers and religious storytellers, their identity is defined by a blend of spiritual devotion and folk artistry.

Geographical Origins and Migration: Their mother tongue is Telugu, which they still speak among themselves, though they are fluent in Kannada and other regional languages. They also use a specialized "hidden" language called Maragu Bhasha to communicate privately within the community during their travels.

Cultural Legacy Performances: Historically, the Dombidasa were the 'theatre-bringers' to rural Karnataka. They staged all-night open-air plays in village squares, using borrowed saris and dhotis to create elaborate costumes for characters ranging from gods to demons. They are known for playing instruments like the Jagate (gong), Shanka (conch shell), Tamboori, and Harmonium. They are involved folk characters; one of the most famous roles associated with them is the Kodangi (jester/clown), who provided social commentary and humor during serious mythological plays.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Dombidasa Community

Through this study, the Dombidasa community is a nomadic, highly marginalized, and historically disadvantaged community, primarily reliant on street performances, rural fairs, and petty trade for survival in Karnataka. Characterized by extremely low literacy rates with up to 90.5% of older generations being illiterate they face severe economic hardships, including poverty, lack of stable housing, and poor access to education.

Geo-spatial Context in Karnataka

The Dombidasa community in Karnataka is a nomadic, highly marginalized group primarily living in extreme poverty without basic amenities, often residing on the streets near Madiga community areas. A geo-spatial study reveals their concentration in specific, often temporary, settlements across rural Karnataka, with low literacy, high dependency on low-wage traditional occupations, and significant spatial mobility hindering development. While specific geo-spatial census mapping for Dombidasa is unavailable, their demographic presence and broad geographical context can be inferred from the locations where studies have taken place:

Table-1:Geo-Spatial of Dombidasa Community in Karnataka

District/Region	Likely Community Presence	Remarks
Belgaum	Settlements in Hukkeri area	Named in research as sites of Dombidasaru communities.
Rural Karnataka (Various districts)	Nomadic groups present	Field studies list them along with other nomadic groups across <i>Bellary, Chitradurga, Davanagere</i> , etc.
State-wide Nomadic Belt	Spread through rural/traditional circuit	Nomadic tribes, including Dombidasa, typically wander across agrarian belts.

The Dombidasa Community in Mysuru City

The Dombidasa community is a nomadic in Mysuru city, De-Notified Tribe (DNT) residing in, or having migrated to, specific rehabilitation settlements and slum areas in Mysuru city, with a notable presence in Ekalavya Nagar. They are socio-economically marginalized; economic reliance on traditional street drama, folk art, and often live in areas characterized by poor infrastructure and high poverty, and engage in low-wage livelihood activities, including traveling to village fairs. Often residing in informal settlements, they face significant social, educational, and economic challenges in urban areas. The Dombidasa community in Mysore (Mysuru) is a small, historically nomadic community with a distinct cultural identity. Their geo-spatial distribution within the city is largely concentrated in specific pockets where they have transitioned from a migratory lifestyle to settled urban living.

Table – 2: Geo-spatial Distribution in Mysore City

Region	Likely Community Presence
Kumbara Koppal and Surrounding Areas	This is one of the primary areas where members of the Dombidasa community reside. Many families have settled in the outskirts of the northern part of the city.
Hootagalli and Belavadi	Due to industrial growth in these sectors, some community members have moved to these peripheral regions for labour-oriented work.
Local Settlements	Historically, the community lived in temporary settlements called hattis. While many have moved into permanent housing provided under government schemes (such as the Ambedkar Awas Yojana), small clusters still exist near the Ring Road areas.
Siddhartha Layout and T. Narasipura Road	There are smaller, scattered populations in the eastern parts of the city, often living in proximity to other Dalit and backward class communities.

The present study examines the role of socio-economic changes in the lives of the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city. A total of 55 respondents were selected for the study. The analysis covers key variables, including gender, age structure, marital status, occupational status, educational attainment, and overall socio-economic changes, which contribute to improvements in their living conditions. Table 2 below presents the socio-economic profile of Dombidasa community households in the selected field area.

Table-3: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Dombidasa Community

Category	Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	42	76.36
	Female	13	23.64
Age	Below 30	21	38.18
	31- 60	19	34.55
	61 and above	15	27.27
Marital Status	Married	29	52.73
	Unmarried	19	34.55
	Widows	7	12.73
Educational Level	Illiterate	27	49.09
	Literate	11	20.00
	Below 7 th classes	17	30.91
Occupation	Singing bhajans	9	16.36
	Koole Basava	8	14.55
	Daily-wage labour	14	25.45
	Construction work	7	12.73
	Thogalu Gombe Aata	6	10.91
	Others	11	20.00
Types of House	Thatched roof	15	27.27
	Tiled or tin roofs	12	21.82
	Huts	28	50.91
Family Type	Nuclear Family	37	67.27
	Joint Family	18	32.73

Source: Field Study

Gender-wise Distribution: Out of 55 respondents, 76.36% (42) of the respondents are male and the remaining only 23.64% (13) of the respondents are female in the study area.

Age Structure: Out of 55 samples, the majority of the respondents are in the age group of below 30 years, 34.55% of the respondents are in the age group of 31 to 60 years and the remaining only 27.27% of the respondents are in the age group of above 61 years.

Marital Status: Out of the 55 respondents surveyed, the majority were married (52.73%), followed by unmarried individuals (34.55%), while the remaining 12.73% were widowed in the study area.

Educational Qualification: Out of the samples, 49.09% of the respondents are illiterate, 30.91% have passed up to 7th class, and the rest, 20%, are literate.

Occupational Status: Traditionally, Dombidasa community are entertainers, moving from place to place, performing open-air plays (often based on mythological and folk epics), singing bhajans, and living on alms. Some members specialized in specific entertainment roles, such as the kodangi (jester or clown). They are major activities such as singing bhajans, koole basava, daily-wage labour, construction work, thogalu gombe aata and others occupations (work carrying luggage, repairing items, hunting small animals, etc.). Out of 55 respondents, the majority of the respondents (25.45%) are involved in daily daily-wage labour, 20% of the respondents are engaged in other works (work carrying luggage, repairing items, hunting small animals, etc.), 16.36% are engaged in singing bhajans, 14.55% are involved in koole basava, 12.73% of the respondents are engaged in construction works and the remaining only 10.91% of the respondents are engaged in Thogalu Gombe Aata.

Types of Houses: Out of 55 samples, the majority of the respondents (50.91%) are they have huts houses, 27.27% of the respondents are they have thatched roof houses and the remaining only 21.82% of respondents are they have tiled roof houses.

Family Types: Out of 55 samples, the majority of the respondents are they have joint family systems (67.27%) and the remaining only 32.73% of the respondents are they have nuclear families.

Socio-economic Changes among Dombidasa Community in Mysuru City

The Dombidasa community in Mysuru, a traditionally nomadic group of religious storytellers and folk performers, is currently navigating a period of profound socio-economic transition. This shift is characterized by a move from a migratory, performance-based lifestyle to a settled, labor-oriented urban existence. The following table summarizes the primary socio-economic changes observed in the community:

Table- 4 Socio-economic Changes among Dombidasa Community in Mysuru City

Dimension	Traditional State	Modern/Current State
Occupation	Nomadic performance (open-air plays), religious mendicancy, 'Kole Basava' shows.	Construction labour, manufacturing jobs, auto-rickshaw driving, and petty vending.
Housing	Temporary tents (<i>hattis</i>) and makeshift shelters in temple yards or near railway lines.	Gradual settlement in permanent colonies (e.g., Ekalavyanagar) through government housing schemes.
Education	Extremely low literacy; children often traveled with families, leading to school exclusion.	Increasing enrollment in 'Tent Schools' and government primary schools, though dropout rates remain high.
Connectivity	Isolated nomadic units with minimal external communication.	Significant adoption of mobile phones for work coordination.
Diet & Life	Dependent on alms; foraging and hunting small game (wild boar, birds).	Integration into the formal food system via Fair Price Shops (PDS); shift from dhotis to shirts/pants for men.

Source: History and Administrative Department, Mysore.

Testing Hypothesis

H0: There is no change in socio-economic status among the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city.

H1: There is a change in socio-economic status among the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city.

Table-5: Socio-economic Status among the Dombidasa Community in Mysuru City

S. No	Indicators	No. of Respondents (Out of 55)	Chi-square Value	Df	Sig.
1	Occupational Shift	51 (92.73%)	40.164	1	.000
2	Housing Status	53 (96.36%)	47.291	1	.000
3	Education level	49 (89.09%)	33.618	1	.000
4	Digital Integration	42 (76.36%)	15.291	1	.000
5	Shift in Livelihood	48 (87.27%)	30.564	1	.000
6	Poverty and Living Conditions	44 (80.00%)	19.800	1	.000
7	Strengthening of lifestyle	54 (98.18%)	51.073	1	.000
8	Improvement of Savings	52 (94.55%)	43.656	1	.000

Source: Primary Data

As indicated in the table, the study hypothesis has been validated using a statistical tool, namely the Chi-square test, which demonstrates that various indicators of socio-economic change among the Dombidasa community have significantly influenced their lifestyle and standard of living in Mysuru city. As per the results, the Chi-square test was applied to examine the association between various socio-economic changes and lifestyle changes among the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city. Among the selected indicators, digital integration recorded the lowest Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 15.291$), which is significant at the 1% level of significance.

The findings reveal that variables such as occupational shift, housing status, educational level, digital integration, shift in livelihood, poverty and living conditions, strengthening of lifestyle, and improvement in savings exhibit a statistically significant association with changes in lifestyle and standard of living. The Chi-square test statistics indicate that all the variables are significant at the 1% level. Notably, the strengthening of lifestyle recorded the highest Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 51.073$), significant at the 1% level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted, confirming that socio-economic changes have significantly influenced the living conditions of the Dombidasa community in the study area.

Suggestions and Conclusion

The study concludes that the Dombidasa community in Mysuru city has undergone notable socio-economic and lifestyle changes influenced by multiple factors such as occupational shift, housing conditions, educational attainment, digital integration, livelihood diversification, and improvement in savings. The statistical analysis, particularly the Chi-square test, confirms a significant association between these socio-economic indicators and improvements in lifestyle and standard of living, with all variables proving significant at the 1 percent level. These findings clearly indicate that socio-economic changes have played a crucial role in enhancing the living conditions of the Dombidasa community. However, despite visible improvements, the community continues to face challenges related to poverty, education, and access to basic amenities, highlighting the need for sustained policy interventions, targeted welfare programs, and inclusive development strategies to ensure long-term socio-economic upliftment.

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