

A Study on Problems and Solutions of Street Vendors

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Abstract

Street Vendors play a significant role in fulfilling the demands of urban dwellers in Madurai – the second largest city of Tamil Nadu. This paper attempts to gain an insight into the businesses of street vendors as well as their impacts on our society. A large number of people are directly and indirectly engaged in this profession and are contributing to the economy to some extent. Because of the street vendors, some unfavorable effects are also visible, such as, lack of formalization and weak management system, which create problems in urban areas by producing street garbage and gathering crowd on the footpath. By the implementation of proper public management system, street vendors would become a role model for urban dwellers of Madurai city.

Keywords: Street Vendor, income, employment, service.

INTRODUCTION

Street Vendors played a dominant role in major cities and provided employment opportunities to the poor. It is not recognized as a lawful activity but still such activities flourish in the cities over the year. But they are not in a position to get a better paid, secured employment in the formal sector and they have to stay for work in the informal sector. In our country there is another segment of the population who were earlier employed in the formal sector is forced to join the informal sector. The activities in the informal sector can be categorized into two sections – self-employed and casual (non-permanent) labour. A major section of these self-employees work as street vendors.

The reports from the Asian nations demonstrate that there was a bounce in the quantity of road merchants after the money related emergency of 1998. Street vending survives not merely because it is an important source of employment but also because of the services it provides for the urban population. So, we find that, street vendors subsidize the existence of the other sections of the urban poor by providing them cheap goods. Street vendors provide the basic necessities of the poor people at cheaper rates than in formal outlets. Although they live in poverty, they are generating employment as well as income and thereby, contributing towards our economy. So, street vendors are found to be crucial to India's development as a source of income, employment and service to millions of people.

INFORMAL SECTOR IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

The expert group, constituted by the Department of Statistics, Government of India, for defining the informal sector in its meeting held on November 5, 1998 felt that it is 'Own Account Enterprises' and 'Establishments' with at least one hired worker. This definition which is enterprise work out the value added by industry groups also felt that the work force in the unorganised / informal sector could be better measured through the household surveys by taking in to account the principal and subsidiary activities of each member of the household. The term used in the Indian National Accounts Statistics is 'organised' and 'unorganised' sectors. The organized sector comprises of enterprises for which the statistics are available regularly from the budget documents or reports, annual reports in the case of Public Sector and through. On the other hand, the unorganised refers to those which do not maintain any regular accounts.

ABOUT STREET VENDORS

Street vending in India falls in unorganized / informal sector category. Street vending has been a profession since time immemorial, with street vendors an integral part of our urban history and culture. Social interaction is integral to Indian markets in contrast to the mechanized and the sterile concept of shopping favoured by modern market and super market structures. Vendors exhibit remarkable entrepreneurial skills. They change their marketing strategies according to the wishes to the consumers. Besides, middlemen have a major say in the wholesale markets. The consumer products should be in harmony with the taste and preferences of the consumer. Further, reasonable price with also play an important role. It is believed that the largest concentration of vendors is in the age group 16-35 years. It indicates that vending involves enormous physical labour. Every day, the street vendors, collected the necessary goods in gunny bags from various places and loaded it in their vending cart which is not an easy task. Further, the necessary placed their vehicle at one particular spot, which is far away from their dwelling places. Urbanisation is the most significant of all India phenomena of our times. The city has today become an engine of growth, the main job provider. Twenty nine per cent of the people of the country generate 60% of the GDP. The problems of street vendors are not addressed and redressed. Whatever policy that does exist is poorly implemented.

There is unabated official and social hostility towards the informal sector, even though the formal sector has ceased to grow, having reached saturation point. As the cost of creating jobs in the informal sector is very low, it needs to be integrated into the context of the overall macro-economy. Every social system must cater to the needs of its members to enable them to survive; it must have effective means of allocating and distributing resources. The vendors provide a wide array of goods and commodities to the urban populace at reasonable prices and convenient locations. The type of goods they sell makes an interesting study – from daily needs like vegetables, fruits, fish, meat and snacks to occasional needs like flowers and readymade garments. A survey conducted by the Indian Institute of Health and Hygiene in 1997 counted 300 types of eatables sold by the hawkers of Calcutta. The middle

and lower class consumer specifically prefers to purchase from them, though even well-off citizens purchase many commodities given reasonable prices. Indian social institutions show an uncanny ability to adjust and adapt to changing societal conditions. Indian agriculture is organized around the family mode of production, with the entire family engaged in various stages of agricultural production, i.e., sowing, harvesting and so on. The same system has crept into urban areas; it is not uncommon to find the entire family involved in the micro-enterprise. Nevertheless, the planners remain oblivious to the role of vendors who are victimised, harassed, marginalized and pushed from one area to another. Rolling stones gather no mass; so it is with the street vendors. Pushed to the city in search of employment, they take to vending as self-employment for it is an easier option, perhaps the most promising avenue for the poor. Many vendors are erstwhile workers, who after the closure of mills and factories took to vending. Some are victims of displacement caused by developmental projects. Sometimes they are survivors of natural disasters. Often they are simply looking for work.

Vendors are regularly subjected to mental and physical pressures by city officials. At times this has led to riotous situations, loss of property, or monetary loss. A major problem is that master plans prepared for the cities do not allocate space to vendors/hawkers, as planners blindly imitate the western concept of marketing, ignoring Indian traditions. No wonder, weekly markets struggle to survive and natural markets area unit unheeded. The policy statements of the Regional Development Authorities talk of making provision for trading and commercial activities, which unfortunately is interpreted as making provision for rich traders and big business. The vendors have to deal with multiple authorities – the Municipal Corporation, Police, Regional Development Authorities, District Administration, Local, Panchayats and so on. This leads to exploitation and extortion. In many cases the positive steps taken by one authority are nullified by the actions of others. The Municipal Corporation laws, based as they are on 19th century British practice, are outdated and detrimental to the peaceful conduct of business by vendors. Harassment stems from an absence of official recognition of the rights of street selling and vendors' lack of political and economic power. Instead of regulation vendors, Municipal companies treat them as a nuisance associated an irritant their policies and actions area unit aimed additional at removing and harassing them instead of at regulation. The most frightening experience for the vendors is, however, the regular eviction carried out by the District or Municipal Administration. They fear the very sight of the eviction team which is known locally by different names.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

By witnessing the characteristics of the vending workforce informal sector their living conditions are poor and they spend their life in open air here there is a hot sun or rain. The highest Indian Constitutional Document provides equality to all human beings with dignity, but it is not seen in the case of this work force. This is very painful to those who love the humanity and its values. Apart from their hard working they are harassed by police, local rowdies and politicians and they pay them from their low income. They face a threat from the giant Indian and Multinational Companies in the name of globalization. Many retail outlets

are coming to compete with this poor helpless workforce. So studying socio economic status and suggesting measures to improve their status is so significant and the researcher sees the above mentioned items as the most significant researchable problem.

Objectives:-

- * To understand socio-economic status of street vendors.
- * To identify their problems or issues.
- * To find out or to suggest some solution for planning

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The findings of socio economic conditions of street vendors paved the way for central and state governments to enact suitable laws to improve the well-being of the street vendors as well as the people those who are sailing on the same boat. Further, it is an eye opener for the researching buds to go deep into the problems of similar categories of workers in our country.

Problems : -

- 1) The street vendors lead a very difficult life, the mode of travel or their working hours, it providing hardly any time for rest and for relaxation, which creates adverse effects on their health.
- 2) Increased traffic affects their mobility on main street
- 3) Pollution is affecting them in many ways, road widening also effect of street vendors.
- 4) Harassment from local authorities or from policemen during vending.
- 5) Uncertainty and insecurity is the basic problem vendors as their profession is considered illegal.
- 6) Vendors are not protected by government, NGO's, labour union by any labour laws.
- 7) They are insecure due to their low income, irregular employment and their sale fluctuation.
- 8) They are not getting easy financial assistance from bank due to their low income and fluctuation in income.
- 9) Vendors needs some market amenities such as water toilet, storage or shades, waste disposal.
- 10) Sanitation and work place security.

Solutions:-

- 1) Authorities should provide licence to the vendors so that they can be protected by harassment and eviction by local authorities.

- 2) Some street vendors are food vendors, they have not received formal training as they are less educated while selling ready food. Local authorities should have to provide training to those vendors.
- 3) Skill training and credit facilities to be made available to the vendors.
- 4) Scheme like regular health check up or health care and pension should also be extended to vendors.
- 5) In town there must be a vending committee they should take care of vending issues.
- 6) Authorities should provide permanent sheds for vendors and minimum facilities such as first aid, drinking water, toilet, garbage collection and solid waste disposal etc.

CONCLUSION:- The study may be useful for initial guide line to the local authorities for solving the problems of street vendors.

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