

The a nation where
poverty is the



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The merchandise may vary from vegetables, to crockery, to plastic items, to beauty aids, to shoes. Generally a street hawker spreads his ware on the road. To do this he must; however, gain permissions from the municipal corporation, which will issue him a license to sell at a particular site on the road. In India many hawkers operate without licenses. It means that every time the Municipality makes its rounds on the lookout for encroachers, the stalls of these hawkers will be pulled apart and their goods either thrown asunder or confiscated. In cities where corruption is rampant the hawkers pay a certain ' hafta' (weekly payment) to local goons and sometimes even the local police officers to be able to operate their trade without license. There are several reasons why hawkers prefer to operate without licenses. Getting a license requires money which is not easy to come by for this class of people who mostly live below the poverty line. The municipal offices are known to give away license to only those who are willing to bribe its officials. Despite this, in most cities in India people will buy from a vendor irrespective of the fact that he holds a license or not.

In a nation where poverty is the main reason why people resort to crime; the public believes that the street hawker should be exonerated in view of his trying to eke out an honest living. In the Indian subcontinent, the street hawker shares special rapport with the customer. Most street hawkers specialize in a particular item. Unlike a mall where one hopes to get everything under one roof, with a hawker one hopes to get the best of a particular commodity for e. g.

Shoppers will buy all their greens from one vendor, tomatoes from another and fruits from yet another altogether. This works for the consumer as the competition affords him more choice; be it quality or price. Also since business is on a one-to-one basis, a relationship is built and people will shop with a particular vendor for a particular item almost all their lives. With the advent of mobile communication, shopping with these vendors has become easier.

Some of them deliver to your doorstep and you end getting the service that you would normally associate with the supermarket. With a view to providing easy accessibility to commuters street hawkers generally set trade immediately outside the railroad station, near bus depots and at busy junctions. This proves to be a menace for traffic. It creates congestion, which leads to traffic jams which is Sundesirable in peak hours. In cities where space is hard to come by, areas near the station must be reserved as non-hawker zones as hawkers can prove to be a nuisance in these congested areas. Reliance retail has had to deal with a lot of opposition from street vendors for trying to steal their livelihood. Private companies should find a way to do business without hurting the livelihood of street hawkers.

Truth is the street hawker is a part of our community, an intrinsic part of our social and cultural fabric and we must try to preserve his livelihood.