

## **Why Street Vendors appeared Unplanned in a Planned City? A Case Study with Special Reference to Bidhannagar Planned Township in Kolkata, West Bengal**

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### **Abstract:**

Street vendors, as a part of India's informal sector employment, provide various types of services; though they are persecuted by the municipal authorities and the police. Bribery is the only way most street vendors can survive in their trade. The working conditions of the hawkers are very poor and most hawkers lead a very hard life. In this paper, we are tries to analyse the facts behind engaging in the street vending job by the vendors, coming from various part of our country, in the Bidhannagar planned city of Kolkata in West Bengal. In this regard, through a primary survey followed by a scheduled questionnaire we conduct the study. This study also postulates some policy measures which are essential in improving the economic as well as social benefits for the vendors as well as for the society. From our study, we found that the main cause behind the problem of Street Vendors in a planned city like Bidhannagar Town is that the Planners did not think that the staff of different offices (Government as well as Private) would need food during break i.e. necessary condition was not considered. Alternatively to fulfil the necessary condition the offices located here might arrange for internal canteen yet general human psychology is that she / he always finds many options and choices. Therefore, dependency on street vendors is inevitable, because a strong demand is exist that can only be satisfied with the items supplied by the street vendors. There is no other alternative. So the street vendors must be given their due attention. Otherwise the conveniences of planned city cannot be enjoyable in the long run. It will transform to a non-planned city – no control, no sustaining of development. Bidhannagar town is already struggling to provide a basic quality of life and livelihood security of the poor vendor is far behind.

**Key Word:** Vending, Socio-economic Status of Vendors, Planned City, Hazard.

## 1. Introduction:

Bidhannagar, the most important satellite township of the city of Kolkata is situated in the eastern fringe of the city. The South-West boundary of the planned Bidhannagar area is demarcated by the Eastern Metropolitan By-Pass, which is the eastern boundary of the city of Kolkata. The city is connected to 24Pgs(s) through this Bye-Pass which extends up to Sonarpur Municipal area in the South. Bidhannagar Junction Railway Station located within Kolkata Municipal area is situated nearby. This station connects the city not only with other Municipalities in the northern half of the KMA but also with other districts of West Bengal. The newly developing Greater Kolkata i.e., Rajarhat-Newtown area is just beside. The city Airport which is the main regional linkage to the city of Kolkata is also within 10 Km. Besides roads & railways, revitalization of the Kestopur Canal is being done at present. This will be an added advantage, as along with other mode of transport the water transportation will also be introduced in the transportation system.

### 1.1. Physical Base:

- Though most of the roads are sufficiently wide in the planned area, unauthorized encroachments of the footpaths, decreases the effective carriageway.
- Bidhannagar Municipal Area according to its population Density is much less to be termed as a Small town according to the UDPFI Guidelines. Still, comparing the Land-use Pattern of the town with that of a small town according to UDPFI Standard, it is observed that:
  1. Commercial is much less. Commercial areas need to be added.
  2. Open unused land, along with the Water bodies, Parks & Playgrounds are within the Standard (though there is only one water body in the planned township area)

3. As Bidhannagar is a Satellite town of the city of Kolkata, there is occurrence of Public/Semi-Public Area (though small in number compared to the CBD of the city of Kolkata) in order to lighten the pressure of CBD of city of Kolkata.
4. The percentage of Unauthorized Settlements (which was at the beginning concentrated only at Dattabaad) has increased due to the inclusion of the added area.
5. Comparing to planned area of the Municipality these wards are situated on low lying area. During monsoon the people had to engage themselves for removal of water from their houses resituating in losing the days wage. If the water logging continues for a number of days at a stretch the people also suffer from water borne diseases also resulting in loss of wage.

## 1.2. The Misery:

Despite the fact that street vendors provide various types of services, they are persecuted by the municipal authorities and the police. Bribery is the only way most street vendors can survive in their trade. The working conditions of the hawkers are very poor and most hawkers lead a very hard life. They work for more than ten hours a day to earn their meagre income. We have tried to examine the different aspects of hawking. Despite the fact that hawkers perform an important role in urban life their importance is considerably undermined by the government and the local administration. The main problem lies in the fact that most state legislatures have made this an illegal profession and hence hawkers are under constant threats of eviction and victimization. At the same time we can see that hawkers cannot be removed not merely because a large number of people are dependent on street vending for their livelihood, but also because the common urban dweller benefits from their services. **Hawkers exist only because the consumers want them to exist.** Conversely, if the urban population did not buy from street vendors, they could not have existed, let alone proliferated as they are doing at present.

Street vendors are not regarded as a part of the urban system. Despite this we find that almost all sections of urban society, including the affluent sections, patronize them.

### **1.3. Consumers Behaviour:**

Consumers prefer hawkers because they provide services at convenient places. Hence a lot of time is saved in making purchases. They feel that hawkers near their homes and near the offices are most convenient for them. The main reasons for patronising hawkers are that their non-perishable goods (fruits and vegetables) are fresh and the prices of all goods are cheap. Those who patronize food hawkers occasionally (mainly from the upper income group) do so mainly because the food is tasty. Consumers from the lower income groups are more regular in visiting food hawkers. They do so mainly because the food is cheap and thus affordable and also the food they sell is tasty.

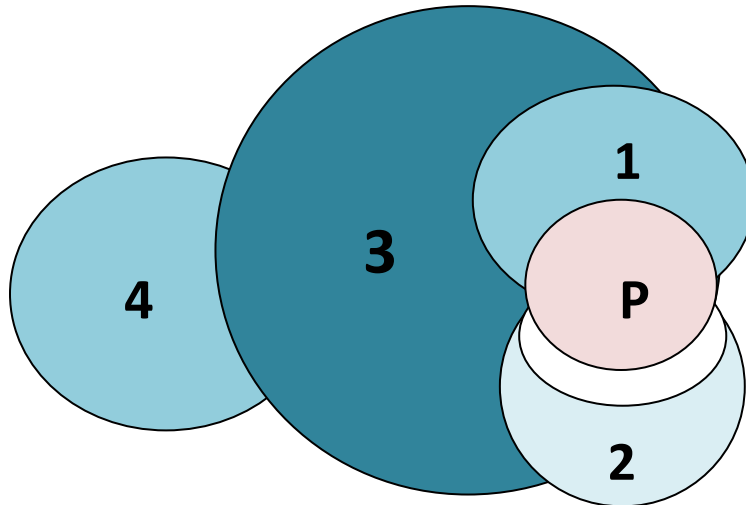
## **2. A Brief Profile on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Vendors:**

Vendors block the pavements in busy places thus making it difficult for pedestrians to walk on them. They then spill over to the roads causing problems for motorists. A section of the middle income group too had the same complaint, but surprisingly only a very few from the lower income group noted this as a negative feature. They did not mention this in their response. Vendors contribute to dirtying the pavements. This response was again mainly from the upper income group. The vendors on the other hand claimed that they tried to keep the pavements clean, as dirty pavements would affect their clientele. This was especially true of the food hawkers, as their clients tend to throw the refuse on the pavement. These people kept baskets near their stalls for people to throw the waste. They said that if waste is strewn around the place consumers would not patronize them. Nuisance caused by mobile vendors that these vendors disturbed them at odd hours.

In this regard, through a schedule questionnaire, by using purposive sampling technique, we surveyed one hundred street vendors in our study area. The results obtained from the primary survey may be summarized as follows:

- Vendors' age group ranges from 23 years to 65 years. 88% vendors belong to the age group of 21 years to 50 years. Very small part (12%) of vendors also belongs to the older age group of above 50 years.

- Most of the vendors are male (92%) and only 8% of vendors are female whereas 96% of vendors are Hindu and 4% of vendors are Muslim here.



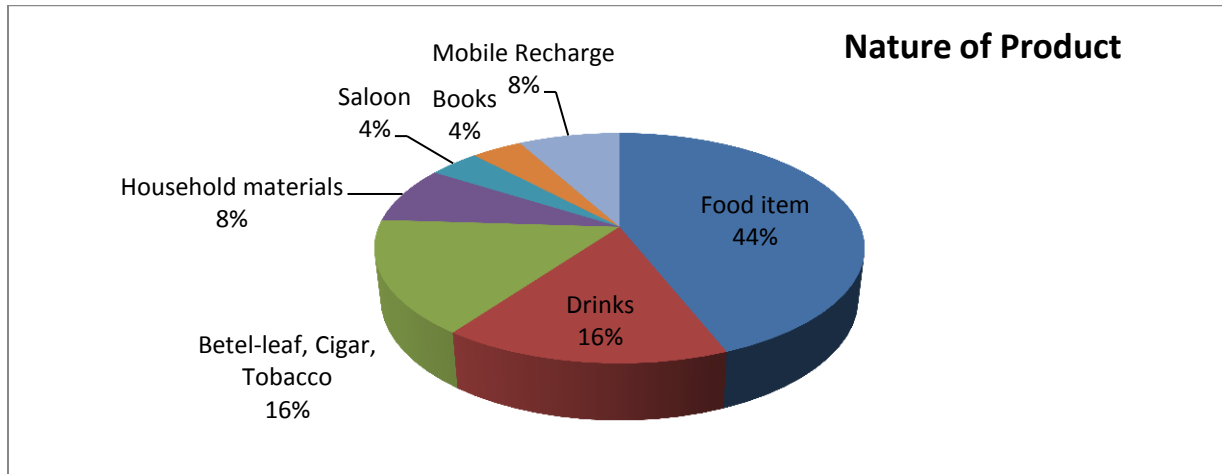
**Fig.No.1 : Residential Distribution of the Vendors**

**Table No. 1: Residential Distribution of the Vendors**

Area No. in Distance Hierarchy	Resident	%Number of vendors	Colour according to thickness of vendor number in %
P	Within Bidhannagar	20	
1	Kestopur, Newtown, Sodepur, Barasat	20	
2	Maloncha and Pathorpratima	8	
3	Medinipur, Bardhaman and U.Dinajpur	<b>32</b>	
4	Bihar and Jharkhand	20	

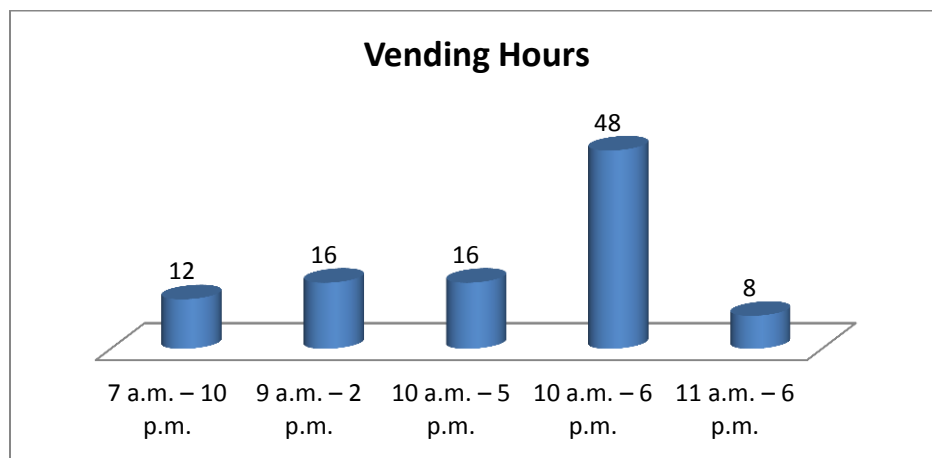
- People from different parts of the country come here to vend. Very small part (20%) of the vendors is originated from this area under the Bidhannagar Municipality. Next (20%)

of vendors come from area number 1 consisting of Kestopur, Barasat, Sodepur and Newtown, whereas 8% of them come from area number 2 consisting of Maloncha and Pathorpratima of South 24 Pargana. But a greater part (32%) of the vendors has come from area number 3 consisting of Medinipur, Bardhaman and Uttar Dinajpur and (20%) have come from area number 4 i.e. Bihar and Jharkhand also.



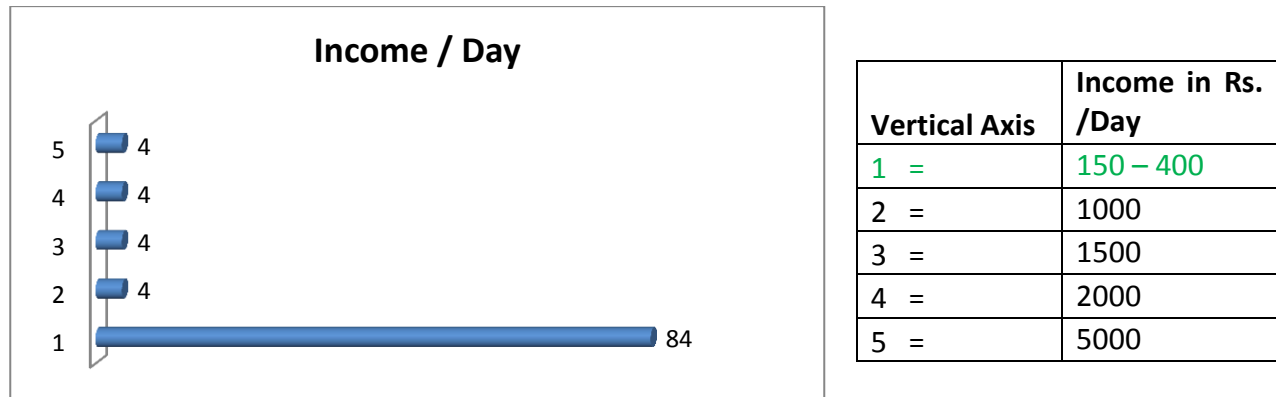
**Fig.No. 2: Nature of Product of the Vendors**

- The Point is mainly dominated by Food items (44%) followed by Drinks (16%) and Betel-leaf and cigarette (16%). Except this 8% are Household materials, 8% are mobile recharge, 4% are books and 4% are saloon are also obtained here among the vendors.



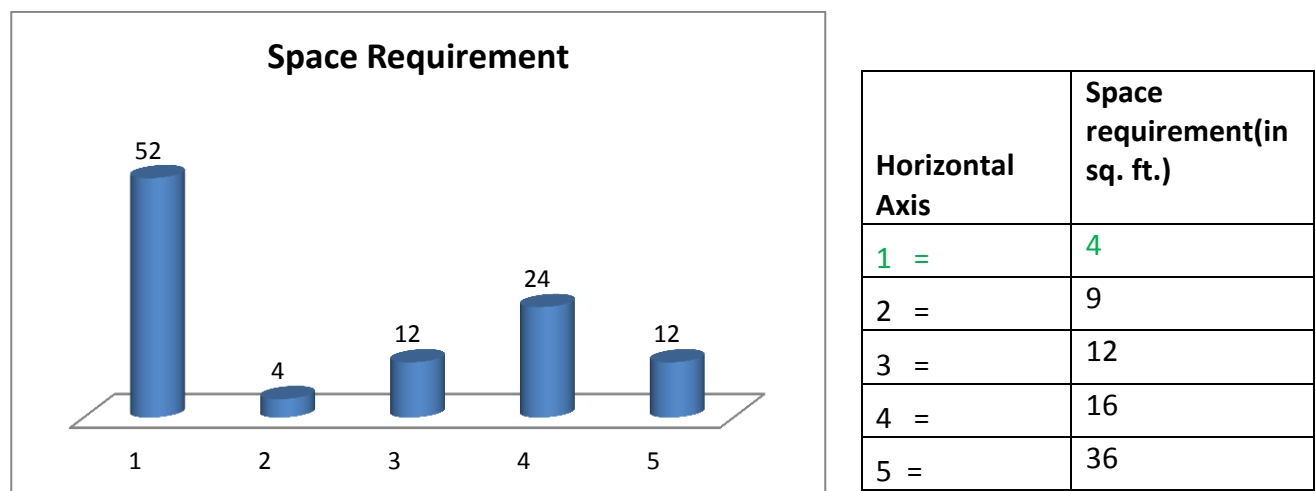
**Fig.No. 3: Vending Hours of the Vendors**

- Different vending hours are followed by the vendors. More or less it ranges from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Mode (48%) vending hour is 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.



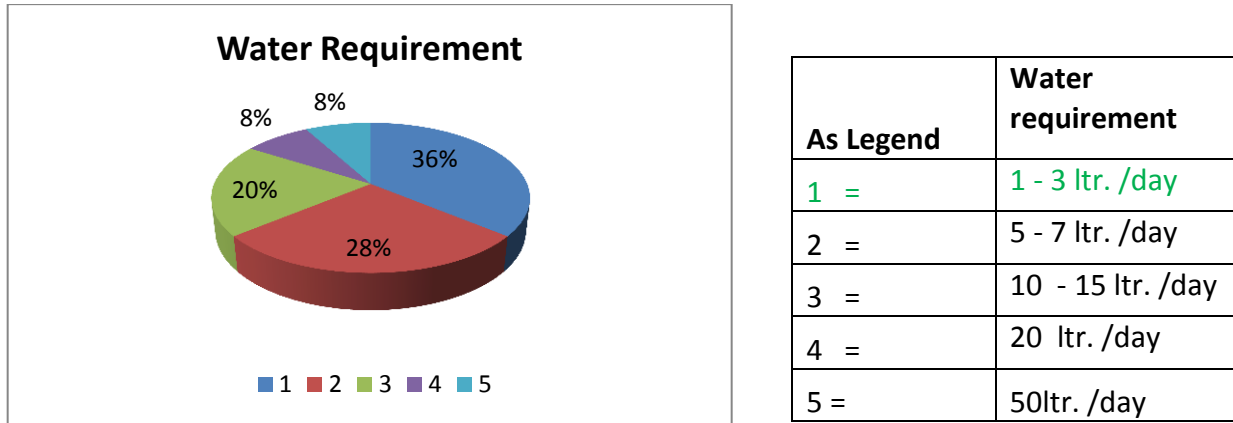
**Fig.No. 4: Income /Day Distribution of the Vendors**

- Income per day ranges from Rs. 150 to Rs. 5000 whereas Mode (84%) income is Rs. 150 – 400/ day.
- 88% of vendors are stationary and 12% of vendors are found mobile whereas 96% of them sit here round the year and only 4% come here before Durga Puja and during different Fair conducted by the Municipality.



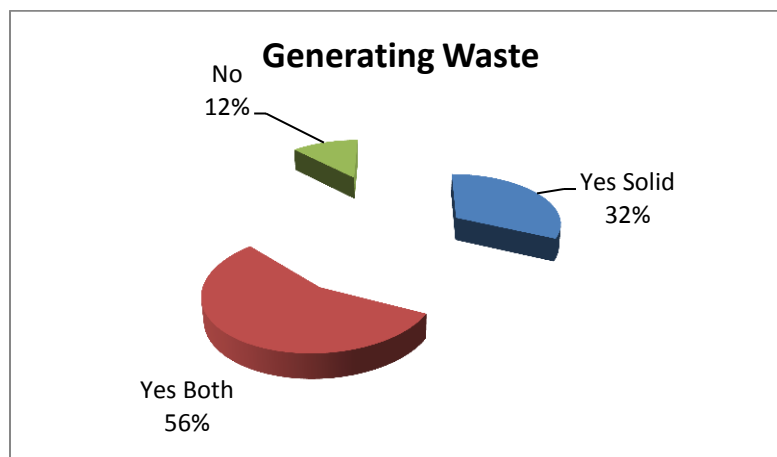
**Fig.No. 5: Space Requirement of the Vendors**

- Minimum space occupied by a vendor is 4 sq.ft. and maximum is 36 sq.ft., whereas Mode (52%) of the occupied space is 4 sq.ft.



**Fig.No. 6: Water Requirement of the Vendors**

- 36% of the vendors collect only 1 ltr. to 3 ltr. water for their drinking purpose. But 28% of vendors use 5ltr. to 7 ltr. water; 20% of vendors use 10ltr to 15 ltr water and only 16% of vendors use 20 ltr to 50 ltr water everyday for their drinking as well as vending item arrangement purpose. Most (52%) of the vendors arrange for their required water themselves either purchase or otherwise; where as 48% of the vendors collect their water from Municipality supply.



**Fig.No. 7: Generation of Waste of the Vendors**



- Greater part (88%) of vendors at this Point generate waste; of it only 32% of vendors generate solid waste but 56% of vendors generate both type of waste solid and liquid. Solid wastes ranges from  $\frac{1}{4}$  kg to 10 kg as  $\frac{1}{4}$  kg -  $\frac{1}{2}$  kg waste comes from 50% of vendors ; 1 kg – 2 kg waste comes from 45.5% of vendors and 10 kg waste comes from only 4.5% of vendors who generate solid waste. Liquid waste ranges from  $\frac{1}{4}$  ltr. to 5 ltr. as  $\frac{1}{4}$  ltr -  $\frac{1}{2}$  ltr. liquid waste comes from 35.7% of vendors; 1 ltr. – 2 ltr. liquid waste comes from 50.1% of vendors and 3 ltr. – 5 ltr. liquid waste comes from 14.2% of vendors who generate liquid waste. As disposal 36.4% of vendors' waste are collected by bazaar Samity Sweeper, only 4.5% of vendors' waste are collected by Municipal Trolley and 54.6% of vendors' wastes are disposed of by the vendors themselves in nearby vat whereas 4.5% of vendors' wastes are also sold at this Point. This Point has no toilet (Pay & Use or other) as such and hence all the vendors feel this need.
- Though very negligible part yet 8% of vendors possess trade license and 4% of vendors possess Pollution Control Board clearing (if require) license at this Point. Still the greater part 92% and 96% of vendors do not possess trade license and Pollution Control Board clearing license respectively.
- 32% of the vendors are assisted by their family members and only 12% of vendors employ outside labour. All of them employ only one labour but income of the labours varies from Rs. 150 to Rs. 200 per day and Rs. 500 per month with 33.3% each.
- Having structure question expresses greater part (88%) in affirmative though those are temporary fenced structure by observation, whereas 12% have no structure.
- Most of the vendors (76%) are not ready to relocate, as 52% of vendors want an office area like/ within Salt Lake City and 28% of vendors want any good place but 20% are not interested at all.
- Most (92%) of the vendors face problem during natural calamities like storm and heavy rain and 4% of vendors complained for overflow of drain as a problem and 4% complained of vat garbage and water-logging whereas 4% of vendors said that they have no problem in natural calamities. In case of vending 52% of the vendors express their financial problem, they need loan, 36% of them are in need of license whereas

12% of them said that they have no problem as such but 4% of vendors still complain about the ragging of Municipal authority.

### **3. Major Problems faced by the Vendors:**

Initially conception of Salt Lake was perceived to be dwelling units for people in Government sector to accommodate their need for residential establishments. With the development of the city the idea got further impetus and many people working in Government sector applied for land allocation and consequently settled in Salt Lake. As a result, the socio-economic activities of this planned area revolve around the income of Government employees and this character more or less is still retained.

There is one market establishment in each Block. Except this there are other three Malls also namely Bigbazar, City Centre and Charnok City.

Still the vendors emerged exist and the number of vendors is increasing very rapidly. Bidhannagar Town is a planned city. Vendors here and there damage its beauty. If it is not controlled immediately the growing trends of vendors will soon destruct its planned features and the city will be suffering from the defects of unplanned city ad congestion, accident, environment pollution etc. in near future. It is a genuine Threat for the Municipal Authority.

On the other hand the Town has a growing number of government and other offices. Near about one lakh people work at these offices. Over the fixed population of strong financial condition there is a great number of floating populations daily in this township area. This is the general feature of any town or city with establishment of required public and private offices, schools, colleges and institutions. All offices have not the arrangements of canteen for Tiffin or lunch. These people need such arrangement at reasonable rate that can only be possible by on-street vendors. So this is a reliable market for food related vendors. These vendors therefore do not want to go to the planned market area of Bidhannagar town in fear of losing their sales.

The main cause behind the problem of Street Vendors in a planned city like Bidhannagar Town is that the Planners did not think that the staff of different offices (Government as well as

Private) would need food during break i.e. necessary condition was not considered. Alternatively to fulfil the necessary condition the offices located here might arrange for internal canteen yet general human psychology is that she / he always finds many options and choices. So if those canteens could not be able to supply varieties i.e. sufficient condition was failed to satisfy, then it would also not be very successful prevent street vendors outside the office premises. In some cases supply of varieties and qualities may be possible but may not be profitable for the suppliers. Then they cannot run their business for long time and the total system will fail to prevent street vending.

Dependency on street vendors is inevitable, because a strong demand is exist that can only be satisfied with the items supplied by the street vendors. There is no other alternative. So the street vendors must be given their due attention. Otherwise the conveniences of planned city cannot be enjoyable in the long run. It will transform to a non-planned city – no control, no sustaining of development. Bidhannagar town is already struggling to provide a basic quality of life and livelihood security of the poor vendor is far behind.

Now, space related to vending zone is not a problem for Bidhannagar Township, but its required proper planning. In this regard, we can propose some policy measures as depicted in the following:

i) Space may be allotted for one vendor depending on the type of product and the size of boulevard. There is no boulevard facility in 16 (Dattabad Bye Pass Roadside) and 17 (Bye Pass Roadside near Paribesh Bhawan). For 17 there is an approach road which is at lower level than the level of Bye Pass Road. The road has a footpath with one side wall that is used for urinals. Therefore the footpath is very nasty and cannot be used for walking. This is also polluting the environment. This is required to be stopped immediately. So here this footpath can be used for vending zone that will not create problem rather the environment can be saved. In 16 there is a wide footpath that can be divided into vending zone and pedestrian zone.

ii) There are many island areas (Fig.5) dividing the blocks. In those island areas the four corners (Picture 5) may be the vending zones. These vending zones will be identified as restricted or non- restricted according to their nature of surroundings as

stated before. On an average one corner area can get 30 ft. and 40 ft. two straight sides and 45 ft the arch side. An asbestos shade with four sides open can be set for the convenience of the vendors. One corner may set for 10 vendors, and then one island area can be spaced for 40 vendors.

iii) The place of the Vending zone will be shaded firmly for protection against sun and rain. At the two end points of the Vending points there will be water and toilet facility. The Municipality will collect garbage from this places in the afternoon at 4 p.m.

#### 4. Way-Out Analysis:

The unfortunate part of all efforts is that the problem is being looked at in a piece meal manner. A broad and holistic approach is needed to ease the problem. For example, while formulating urban plans it is necessary to take into account the right of street vendors to public space. In other words, all urban plans demarcate public spaces for specific purposes such as parks and gardens, educational institutions hospitals etc. Hawking also needs to be included in this. Plans must take into account the idea of natural markets in urban areas. These are usually the most convenient spots for consumers. These markets need to be developed and regulated. Areas around municipal markets, major bus stops, places of worship, hospitals etc. emerge as natural markets and they need to be developed.

The places for their spatial allotment should be appropriate for them i.e. the places are tried to be considered as Vending Points where they exist already so that they do not lose their business. Followings are such places those must be considered as Vending Points during planning a new city or town:

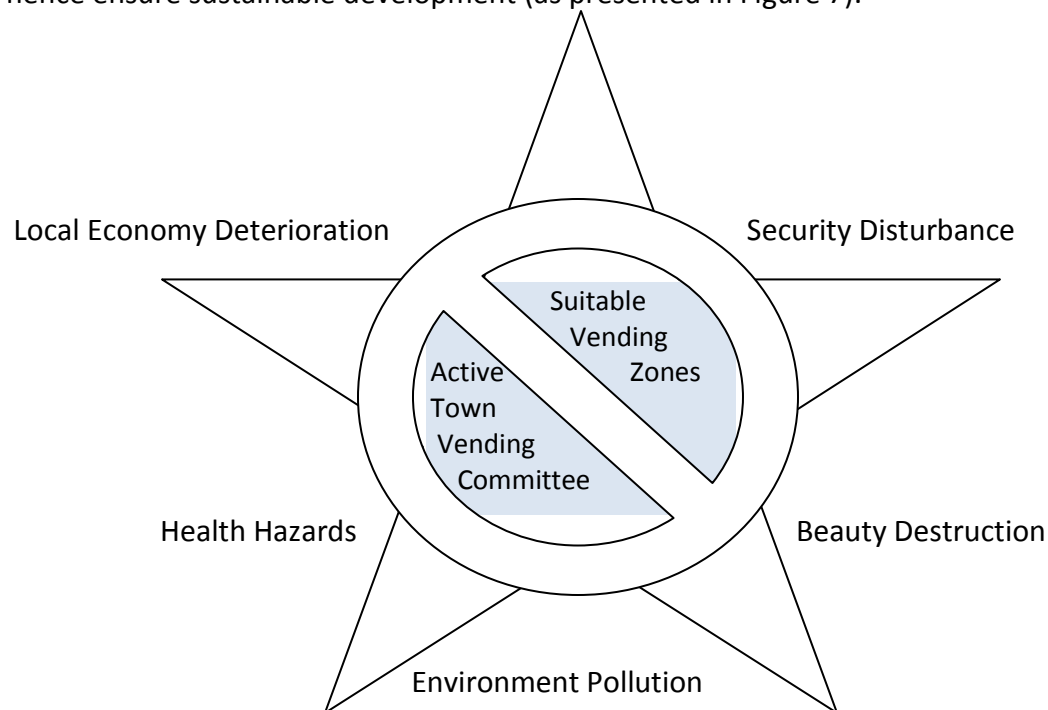
Government and Private Offices*	Parks*
Cinema / Theatre Halls*	Hospital and Nursing Homes
School and Colleges*	Rail Station
Bus Terminus	Established Old Heritage Building and Temples

(\*) Marked Vending Points should be Restricted Vending Zones and should be provided with basic infrastructural facilities and social security's through Town Vending Committee. Restrictions are on time and items. Time setting depends on the Vending point analysis and

item should be only food items. Residential and market places are strictly no vending zone for the stationary street vendors but mobile vending may be allowed, but not without registration. Registration is must for all types of Street Vendors because it is a mutual security on the part of both, the vendors and the town / city. Therefore, there in the sector of Vendor Planning we get

1. Suitable Vending Zones i.e. spatial allotment to the vendors with their Registration is the first and the necessary condition for sustainable development;
2. An Active Town Vending Committee is the second and the sufficient condition for sustainable development.

These two together will act as a Five Faced Missile to intervene five major social development problems as – Environment Pollution, Health Hazards, Beauty Destruction, Local Economy Deterioration and Security Disturbance (by diminishing anti-social activities in the town that can take place easily in the unorganized uncontrolled sprawled and congested vendors' market), hence ensure sustainable development (as presented in Figure 7).



**Figure 7 : The Five Faced Missile**

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