

# Chapter 5 - Consumer Rights

In the last chapter of Economics, you will discuss the issue of consumer rights within the context of the Indian market. CBSE Notes Class 10 Social Science Economics Chapter 5 on Consumer Rights helps you to understand that the awareness of being a well informed consumer arose out of consumer movement and active participation of people through their struggles over a long period. This chapter also provides details of a few organisations helping consumers in different ways. Finally, it ends with some critical issues of the consumer movement in India.

## The Consumer in the Market Place

We participate in the market both as producers and consumers.

- As **producers** of goods and services, we could be working in any of the sectors such as agriculture, industry, or services.
- **Consumers** participate in the market when they purchase goods and services that they need. These are the final goods that people use as consumers.

The rules and regulations are required for the protection of the consumers in the marketplace.

## Consumer Movement

In India, the consumer movement as a 'social force' originated with the necessity of protecting and promoting the interests of consumers against unethical and unfair trade practices. Because of all these efforts, a significant initiative was taken in 1986 by the Indian government. It has implemented the **Consumer Protection Act 1986**, popularly known as **COPRA**.

## Safety is Everyone's Right

Consumers have the right to be protected against the marketing of goods and delivery of services that are hazardous to life and property. Producers need to strictly follow the required safety rules and regulations.

## Information about Goods and Services

When you buy any commodity, you will find certain details given on the packing such as:

- Ingredients used
- Price
- Batch number
- Date of manufacture
- Expiry date
- The address of the manufacturer

This information has been displayed because consumers have the right to get information about the goods and services that they purchase. Consumers can then complain and ask for compensation or replacement if the product proves to be defective in any manner.

In October 2005, the Government of India enacted a law, popularly known as **RTI (Right to Information) Act**. This law ensures that its citizens get all the information about the functions of government departments.

## When Choice is Denied

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Any consumer who receives a service in whatever capacity, regardless of age, gender and nature of service, has the right to choose whether to continue to receive the service or not.

### Where Should Consumers Go to Get Justice?

Consumers have the right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices and exploitation. The consumer movement in India has led to the formation of various organisations, known as **consumer forums or consumer protection councils**. They guide consumers on how to file cases in the consumer court.

**COPRA**, a three-tier quasi judicial machinery at the district, state and national levels was set up for redressal of consumer disputes.

- The district-level court called **District Forum**, which deals with the cases involving claims up to Rs 20 lakh
- The state level court called **State Commission**, which deals with the cases involving claims between Rs 20 lakh and Rs 1 crore.
- The national level court is known as the **National Commission**, which deals with cases involving claims exceeding Rs 1 crore. If a case is dismissed in district-level court, a consumer can also appeal in the state and subsequently in national-level courts.

### Learning to Become Well Informed Consumers

The enactment of COPRA has led to the setting up of separate departments of Consumer Affairs in central and state governments. The logo with the letters ISI, Agmark or Hallmark helps consumers to get assurance of quality while purchasing goods and services.

### Taking the Consumer Movement Forward

India is one of the countries that have exclusive courts for consumer redressal. 24 December is observed as the National Consumers' Day in India. After more than 25 years of the enactment of COPRA, consumer awareness is spreading, though slowly in our country. For the speedy process of the consumer movement, we require a voluntary effort and active participation of the people.