

Chapter 5 - Consumer Rights

1. Why are rules and regulations required in the marketplace? Illustrate with a few examples.

Answer: Rules and regulations are required in the marketplace for the protection of the consumer. Individual buyer can be misled by the seller and in case of any complaint against the shopkeeper, the blame is put on the buyer. The sellers tend to hold no responsibility for the goods once sold. Hence to protect consumers from such incidents, rules and regulations are required in the marketplace. For example, if a person buys a product and checks the expiry date after paying for the product, the shopkeeper cannot deny changing the expired product. If no rules were maintained then the shopkeeper might refuse to change the product.

2. What factors gave birth to the consumer movement in India? Trace its evolution.

Answer: The consumer movement arose out of dissatisfaction of the consumers. The factors that gave birth to the consumer movement in India are as follows:

1. There was no legal system available to consumers to protect them from exploitation in the marketplace.
2. It was started because of the necessity of protecting and promoting the interests of consumers against unethical and unfair trade practices.
3. Rampant food shortages
4. Black marketing
5. Adulteration of food and edible oil

Till the mid-1970s, the consumer organisations were busy writing articles and holding exhibitions to arouse consciousness among the consumers. There has been an upsurge in the number of consumer groups since the 1980s. Currently, there are about 700 consumer organisations in India working in the field of consumer protection. Greater awareness among the consumers about their rights also led to a gradual transition from a predominantly 'sellers' market to a buyers' market.

These movements have also influenced the government to work for the protection of the consumer and the Consumer Protection Act was passed in 1986 to safeguard the interest of the consumers.

3. Explain the need for consumer consciousness by giving two examples.

Answer: The consumer must be conscious while buying or trading anything in the market so that they are not being cheated or exploited in the market place and charged wrongly for the goods.

For example, a person must always check the expiry and manufacturing date of the product before paying for it and must complain about the shopkeeper if any expired product is found in the shop to the consumer forum.

Another example that proves that consumer consciousness is important that a consumer must always ask for a computerised bill for the goods they buy. This is because if a consumer has been provided with a wrong product the consumer forum demands for a bill that acts a proof that the product given by the shopkeeper is wrong.

4. Mention a few factors which cause exploitation of consumers.

Answer: A few factors that cause the exploitation of consumers are as follows:

1. The most important factor is lack of awareness. People do not ask for proper bills while buying products which ultimately results in the exploitation of the consumer if the product bought is defective.
2. There is no proper monitoring of rules and regulations
3. Consumer ignores small losses and does not complain about them which makes the seller more ignorant

4. Lack of consumer consciousness. A consumer must always check the MRP, expiry date and manufacturing date and then buy a product.

5. What is the rationale behind the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act 1986?

Answer: The rationale behind the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act 1986 was to set up a department solely responsible to handle the complaints raised by the consumer and a separate department for the Central and state governments. Its main aim was to address the problems of consumers who reach the consumer courts for exploitation in the marketplace.

6. Describe some of your duties as consumers if you visit a shopping complex in your locality.

Answer: Some of our duties as consumers are given below:

1. Always ask for a proper bill
2. Check the MRP and do not pay more than the market price to the shopkeeper.
3. Check the expiry and manufacture date before buying any good from the market
4. If you see any rule or regulation under the marketplace laws being exploited, immediately report the consumer courts.
5. Do not leave a small amount of disparity unattended. This may let the shopkeeper liable to continue the disparity for the other consumers as well.

7. Suppose you buy a bottle of honey and a biscuit packet. Which logo or mark you will have to look for and why?

Answer: If you buy a bottle of honey or a packet of biscuit looks for the Agmark and the ISI mark before buying it. It is because these symbols specify that the products have been made Government authorised companies only.

8. What legal measures were taken by the government to empower the consumers in India?

Answer: The legal measures taken by the government to empower the consumers are as mentioned below:

1. The Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) was passed by the Government for the security of the consumers and to prevent them from exploitation at the market level.
2. The Right to Information Act was passed in the year 2005 so that the people of the country could be made aware about the functioning of the Government
3. A consumer Court was set up for people where cases against any disparity with the consumer were raised.

9. Mention some of the rights of consumers and write a few sentences on each.

Answer: A few rights of the consumers include:

1. Right to information - The RTI Act was passed in 2005 with an aim to make every citizen of the country aware of the functioning of the Government.
2. Right to Choose - 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. No customer can be denied the right to choose what they want to buy.
3. Right to Seek Redressal - Consumers have the right to seek redressal against unfair trade practices and exploitation. If any damage is done to a consumer, she has the right to get compensation depending on the degree of damage.
4. Right to Represent - This act gives the right of the consumer to present before the consumer court and present their case of disparity in form of law.

10. By what means can the consumers express their solidarity?

Answer: Consumers can express their solidarity by organising themselves in small groups that can fight against the exploitative trade policies. Such groups get financial aid from the government to fight the case against the shopkeeper.

11. Critically examine the progress of consumer movement in India.

Answer: The consumer movement in India has progressed rapidly over the past few years. The consumer rights that have been passed by the Government of the country has managed the people to become more aware and fight for their rights in the consumer courts. The Consumer Protection Act (COPRA) passed by the government made it easier for people to complain against any wrong practice performed by the shopkeeper or seller of the product. The public has become more aware and proper actions are taken against any ill practice in the marketplace.

12. Match the following.

(i) Availing details of ingredients of a product	(a) Right to safety
(ii) Agmark	(b) Dealing with consumer cases
(iii) Accident due to faulty engine in a scooter	(c) Certification of edible oil and cereals
(iv) District Consumer Court	(d) Agency that develop standards for goods and services
(v) Consumers International	(e) Right to information
(vi) Bureau of Indian Standards	(f) Global level institution of consumer welfare organisations

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13. Say True or False.

(i) COPRA applies only to goods.

Answer: False

(ii) India is one of the many countries in the world which has exclusive courts for consumer redressal.

Answer: True

(iii) When a consumer feels that he has been exploited, he must file a case in the District Consumer Court.

Answer: True

(iv) It is worthwhile to move to consumer courts only if the damages incurred are of high value.

Answer: True

(v) Hallmark is the certification maintained for standardisation of jewelry.

Answer: True

(vi) The consumer redressal process is very simple and quick.

Answer: False

(vii) A consumer has the right to get compensation depending on the degree of the damage.

Answer: True