

CONSUMER RIGHTS, AWARENESS AND PROTECTION IN NEW GLOBAL ECONOMIC POLICIES

The neo colonization under the banner of globalization, liberalization, privatization and commercialization of various economies of various nations is causing great concern for the consumer protection by the respective government. The growing size and complexity of production and distribution systems, the high level of sophistication in marketing and newer methods of advertising, mass marketing methods and emergence of e-commerce result in reduction of personal interaction between buyers and sellers has contributed to the increased need of consumer protection. The paper focuses that for the protection of consumers India passed its new Consumer Protection Act in 1986. The Act is a landmark in the history of the consumer protection movement in India. The paper notes that in order to protect the consumers from exploitation and to save them from adulterated and substandard goods and deficient services the Consumer Protection Act was passed to aware and protect the consumers.

The Consumer Protection Act 1986 provides for consumer disputes redressal at the state and national level. With the help of this law the agencies can solve grievances in a speedy, simple and inexpensive manner. A three tier system of consumer courts at the National, State and District levels are set up for hearing cases raised by consumers.

1. Right to Safety- to protect against hazardous goods .
2. Right to be Informed- about price, quality, purity.
3. Right to Choose - access to a variety of goods and services at competitive prices.
4. Right to be Heard - consumers interest and welfare must be taken care of
5. Right to seek Redressal- protection against unfair trade practices and settling genuine grievances.
6. Right to Consumer Education- Knowledge about goods and issues related to consumers.

Consumer awareness is actually the need of the hour. With the increasingly large number of products springing up in the market there is a need to educate the community. However, making of a law in itself is not the end. Education and awareness is the most powerful tool for the progress of the country and an educated individual is able to make rationale choice as a consumer. An aware consumer can protect himself from trade and business exploitation. The another methods where by the grievances of consumers can be protected is ombudsmen who is an independent official who looks into complaints and mediates settlements between consumers and organisations.

The paper concludes that the legal measures for consumer safety and consumer awareness must be uniform, and transparent in terms of prices, quality of goods and stocks. Consumers must have the tools to combat malpractices and protect their rights. There is an urgent and increasing necessity to educate and motivate the consumer to be wary of the quality of the products mainly in the rural areas, where there is wide spread illiteracy.