

## Chapter - XI

# CONSUMER PROTECTION AND EDUCATION

### 11. (i) INTRODUCTION

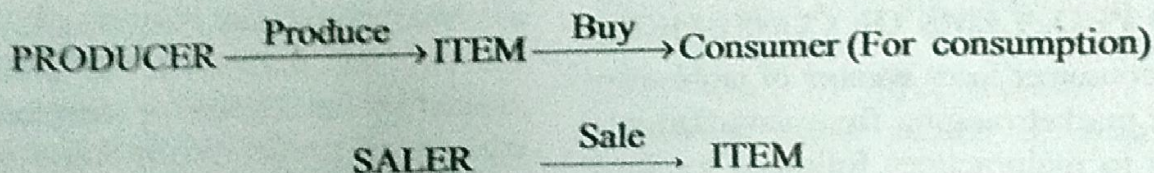
Everyday we use variety of items. In urban areas, most of these items are available in the market but in rural areas few items are produced at home for use and they sell some of them in the market. So those who purchase item from market for their use are called consumer, and who produce items are known as producer, who sell items in the market is called saler.

Consumer always purchase items and

product for higher prices. So consumer faces a lot of problem in the market. How can one overcome these problems?

After reading this chapter you will be able to –

- Define the concept of consumer
- Problems of consumer
- Rights of a consumer
- Responsibilities of consumers
- Consumer Education
- Consumer Protection Act
- Consumer Aid.



avails services for satisfying work and to lead a comfortable life. Can you list out some items which are essential for consumption?

Today, market is flooded with different brands of the same product or items. For example- different brands of biscuits are available in the market. How does one decide the brand of biscuit to buy? Sometimes prices of same commodity is different at different places. Why is it so? Some time people get inferior quality

**11.(ii) MEANING AND CONCEPT OF CONSUMER :** A consumer is a person or individual who purchases, uses or consumes items, services and products to satisfy wants. All people irrespective of age, sex, occupation are consumer. They consume and uses goods and services for satisfying their wants. Therefore consumer includes children, adults and elderly people in one way or other. They can demand for a commodity and services. Producer produces items



and services on the basis of demand of the consumer.

Consumer can be defined as a person who purchase, consume and use goods and service to satisfy his wants.

We are consumers. For example your needs likes dress, pen, pencil, notebook, books which you purchase from the market and go to school by bus by using the services of transport operation, so you are consumer. Like you, other people and the producer are also consumer. Because they demand or buy certain materials for their production purpose. In that case producer are consumer for those articles. Do, you understand the term consumer?

## II. (a) PROBLEMS OF CONSUMER

A consumer faces number of problems in the market ranging from variation in prices to malpractices followed by the shopkeepers. So it is important for every consumer to be aware of such problems and can be equipped with the necessary knowledge to safeguard oneself from being cheated.

Problems faced by the consumer are:

- i. Variation in prices
- ii. Non-availability of items
- iii. Adulteration
- iv. Defective weights and Measures.
- v. Misleading Advertisement
- vi. Misleading and Incomplete label.

vii. Quality of product

viii. Deceptive Packaging

ix. Malpractice adopted by the seller.

**Variation In prices** - Consumer used to face the problem of variation in prices of same commodity in different shop or places. In some cases, shopkeepers change the original prices which is printed on the price tags in order to increase the price by adding local taxes. In such situation, consumer is at a loss to know whether he is paying the right price or not.

### **Scarcity or non-availability of items:-**

Sometimes common food stuffs are not available in the market. Even if it is available, it will cost more. Usually such scarcity are man-made or artificial, created by the supplier or shopkeeper to earn more profit. When these people come to know that there is possibility of price rise of a commodity, they withdraw the commodity from the market and continue to supply the commodity to the market as soon as the price is increased.

Some situation like flood, (which is very common in our state), the shopkeeper hoards stocks of essential items and sells them at higher price.

**Adulteration** : It is a common problem, faced by the consumer everyday. Today, consumer does not get pure commodities like ghee, milk, spices etc. even if he is prepared to pay higher prices. Such



items are sold in the market with a guarantee of purity but we found to be adulterated when used. Adulteration of yellow powder in turmeric powder, starch in milk and cereals, used tea leaves are generally sold in the market. Consumer does not have any knowledge to judge the purity of eatable. Therefore, he is compelled to buy adulterated items in ignorance. Apart from food items the problems of adulteration in these for other consumable goods.

#### **Defective weight and measures:**

In addition to adulteration, there is another problem faced by the consumer is defective weight or incorrect measurement of items. Have you ever checked the weights and measures used by the shopkeeper?

If so, you will find the weights may have hollow space or may be dented, as a result consumer will get less than the actual amount. It is very common among the vegetable vendor using stones instead of proper weight. In case of weighing balance they may not use properly. A magnet may be stuck at the bottom of the pan or iron rings put on the string to make one side of the balance heavier than the other. But the weights used by the shopkeeper should have stamp of the department weights and measures. There is standard liquid measuring cups or jars bearing the stamp from the department of weights and measures. But shopkeeper

never use them, very often they use measuring Jugs that have a false or raised bottom to cheat their customer. Are you aware of these malpractices followed by sellers?

**Misleading Advertisement :** Today, you will find that some product is produced by number of manufacturers. So the manufacturers take the help of advertisement to sell their products. Usually advertisement give details of quality of product, content of the product and method of use etc. Most of the manufacturers give an exaggerated account of his product to lure the consumer to buy these product. But after the product is purchased, the consumer realises that it does not match with what has been claimed in the advertisement. Such kind of advertisements are misleading which cheated the consumer badly.

**Misleading and incomplete label :** Labels are used on product to give information about the product, so that consumer can decide to select an item after going through the informations written on the label. The label also help a consumer to take decisions on purchasing a particular product after comparing the quality and the prices of the items. Often manufacturer gives incomplete information on the label or imitate a popular brand of product in such a manner that consumer finds it



difficult to differentiate between the genuine and the imitation product. It is done to cheat the consumer.

**Quality of the Product-** It is another problem faced by the consumer in the market. Today lots of goods are available in the market, but all of them are not standardized and consumer are also not sure of the quality of the product for which they are spending their money. It is also not possible to judge the quality of all the product at household level. Consumers are often misled by the dealers. Only a few reliable dealers are willing to take responsibilities for the quality of the product. For example selling furniture made up of inferior quality wood and after polishing or covering with colourful fabric and then claiming as superior quality and selling at higher price etc.

**Deceptive packaging :** Nowadays large number of packaged items are available in the market. It is a very common sight as shops and market are loaded with packaged items. Packaging of product is done to protect them from any kind of damage, breakage, contamination, pilferage etc. But seller use it as a tool to attract consumer to increase their sale. The sale misguides the consumers by making the volume or size of the package appear much bigger than the inside contents. Have you seen package of chips, popcorn etc. ?

## MALPRACTICES ADOPTED BY THE MANUFACTURERS.

Manufacturers or sellers adopted numerous way to lure consumer in selling their product. They implement misleading schemes like "free gift" or 'heavy discounts' etc. to attract consumer easily. They initially inflated or raised the prices of the commodity and then a discount of 20% to 50% is offered. But in reality, there is no change in prices. Sometimes the producers immitates the colour, shape and name of popular brand available in the market to cheat consumer.

**For example:** Manufacturer of an article say 'A' has tried to cheat by using the bottle of same colour, size, brand name as used by Manufacture "B". Because the product 'B' is a populer brand.

## 11.3. RIGHTS OF CONSUMERS

In order to protect consumer to avoid such kind of cheating which is mentioned above, consumer should know their rights. They are :-

**i. Rights to safety** - This is the first right, that every, consumer should have. which helps to safeguard against items, products, processes and services which are hazardous to health. They can demand or ban the sale of goods injurious to health like - harmful food products, medicines and electric appliances without safety devices. Rights to be in force - consumer has a right to



## CONSUMER PROTECTION AND EDUCATION

demand or collect informations about the quality, prices, purity, expiry, weights etc. of any product. These informations will help the consumer to safeguard the interest of them while choosing an items or product.

### ii) Right to choose :

Today, same article, produced by different producer or manufacturer and alternatives are also available in the market. Consumer has the right to choose the products of various producers and purchase one which is suitable for him.

iii) **Right to be heard:-** This gives the consumers the right to bring notice of the seller or manufacturer about any deficit found in goods purchased by him. In case they do not pay any attention to the consumers complaint, consumer can approach the concerned authorities. But, if the manufacturers pay proper attention to the consumers, then it will help them to improve the quality of their product.

iv) **Right to redressal :** It indicates the right to fair settlement and compensation for faulty goods and services.

### v) Rights to consumer education :

Consumer has the right to acquire knowledge and informations about the product which will help them in proper selection of goods and services.

### 11.4. Responsibilities of Consumer

✓ Consumer has certain responsibilities to hear and he should be aware of these

duties, so that he can make his purchase judiciously. These duties are:-

#### a. Seeking appropriate informations :

It is consumer's responsibility to seek information about a product before purchasing it. He must read and gain information from literature given by manufactures or retailer or other sources. With the help of their informations, he can evaluate the product and take his decision.

b. **Checking weight and measures before making purchases :** Usually, seller often cheat the consumer by using unfair weights and measures. Consumer should ensure that he is purchasing a product with right weights and measures. He should check the weight and balance and remain vigilant, when the seller is measuring or weighing the product.

c) **Reading the label carefully-** When a consumer purchase packaged food, it is his duty to read the label of the product. Label should contain or have complete informations about the product. If it is incomplete, or informations are exaggerated then he should bring notice to the seller or producer.

d) **Beware of false and attractive advertisement.** Producer or seller use attractive advertisement to increase their sell and earn profit. Usually these products are not much attractive or not upto that quality as shown in the advertisement by sellers. So it is the duty



of the consumer not to mislead by the advertisement and go through them properly before making the purchase.

**e) Aware of misleading scheme :**

Today, every producer or seller use certain technique or introduce new scheme to increase their sales like, one soap free if you buy particular brand of toothpaste, free one mug if you buy one packet of milk powder of certain brand etc. Often a consumer is lured by such schemes and buy the product even when it is not necessary, but for getting one item free. The fact is that, the seller increases the price of the product to get the actual price which is included in the scheme. So it is the duty of the consumers to avoid these scheme.

**f) Procuring bill, cash receipt warranty etc.**

Usually, common donot ask for a bill on cash receipt at the time of purchase. Thus avoid the payment of sales tax. Later on, if the product comes out to be defective, he becomes helpless. So it is the duty of the consumer to collect bill, cash receipt and warranty card etc. at the time of purchase. It will help the consumer to go to consumer court for the redressal of his grievances.

**g) Purchasing standardised product :**

At the age of globalization, market is flooded with varieties of product. Some of them are standardised and some are not. But consumer should always buy

standardised product specially while buying the durable and electronic goods. Thus it is the duty of the consumer to see the standardised marks like 'ISI, F.P.O. AGMARK' on packaged items.

**h) Reporting malpractices, seek redressal in case of dissatisfaction.**

It is the responsibility of the consumer for reporting malpractice and voicing complaints against the seller and manufacturers. It is the duty to demand compensation for the loss he suffered on the purchase of faulty goods or services.

**i) Knowledge of consumer rights:**

It is known that the seller is trying to cheat the consumer to earn maximum profits. So the duty of the consumer is to be aware of his rights and if he is cheated by a seller or manufacturer while making purchase of goods, then he should not remain silent spectator, but also must lodge a complaint.

**10.5. Consumer Education :**

Now you know the problems faced by consumer in the market. If he is not careful enough in buying a particular item, he gets cheated easily. So consumer education is important. It helps the consumer in many ways in protecting himself from the malpractices of the seller and in making judicious purchases.

**10.5. (a) The advantage of consumer education are :**

a. This education helps a consumer in



making proper purchase by developing the ability to decide and select items intelligently.

b. Consumer education familiarises the consumer with problems which he faces while making purchases. This education help the consumer to inculcate the logical view point.

c. It provides the consumer full informations of marketing a particular commodity, from where to buy good quality product at reasonable prices, the shop providing additional facilities etc.

d. It helps consumer to make appropriate decision in purchasing as well as availing facilities or services and not to mislead by seller or advertisement.

e. Consumer education familiarises the consumer with the various standardisation marks and their marketing like ISI, F.P.O. Silk mark, wool Mark etc.

f. Another important help of consumer education is that- it familiarises the consumer about the various acts enacted by the government from time to time.

So in these days, consumer education help the consumer in getting maximum satisfaction by proper utilization of money and lead a comfortable life with better standard of living.

## 10.5 (b) Consumer Protection Act:

Now lets see what steps has been taken by government to protect consumer from exploitation Indian Government has

formulated various Acts and laws to protect the consumer and established consumer court at every district. These acts are :-

Prevention of food Adulteration Act, Grading and Marketing Act 1937, Weights and Measure Act- 1939, Drugs and cosmetic Act, Consumer Protection Act 1986 etc.)

Lets see what iconsumer Protection Act 1986 is-

✓**Consumer Protection Act 1986 :** This act is passed in 1986 by Government of India which is based on the principle of 'Self Help'. This indicates- consumers should help themselves to get protected against exploitative and unfair practices. This act gives rights to the consumer to place complains to concerned authority, if they face problem after purchasing, using commodity and services. Consumer can seek redressal and also claim compensation for any loss or injury suffered on account of the negligence of the seller.

✓**The salient features of this Act are:-**

**a. Application of the Act-** This Act is applied for both 'goods' and services. Goods, which is brought from manufactures or sellers and services are those, for which payments are made like. transport, telephones, electricity etc.

**b. Redressal Machinery :** Under



this Act, a Judicial system has been setup to provide relief to the consumer. This machinery consist of consumer forum, setup at various levels. Like in district level, at state level (it is called as state commission), in national level, which is known as National forum. Consumer can lodge his complain in these forum.)

In case of District court, it is headed by district session judge and assisted by two members. At state level, it is headed by a judge of High court and assisted by two more members and at national level, it is headed by a Judge of supreme court and assisted by four members. District court can dealt upto 20 lakhs corporation value.

State commission may dealt upto Rs. 1 crore and National commission has jurisdiction for entertaining cases of high value and appeals coming up against orders of state commission. Supreme court is the final deciding authority.

Have you heard about such news of compensation? Or have you gone through such news in newspaper? If you face such problem, you can also approach to these forum or court.

### **Expeditious Disposal :**

This act has provision to settle all grievances within 90 days from the date of notice received by the opposite party. This is applicable to those which do not require any laboratory analysis or tests.

But in case of laboratory testing, this is extended to five months. This is done to prevent consumer from long waiting for justice.

**Advisory Bodies :** Redressal Advisory bodies also known as consumer protection council and central consumer protection council has been set up at state and national level. This council helps and advise consumer to exercise their rights.

**No court fee-** court fee is not required if complaints are lodge under consumer protection act. So poor consumer can seek redressal without any additional expenditure .

### **Redressal Procedure :**

It is true that even if consumer's complaint is genuine or useless, he files the complaint in proper shape, address and submit to appropriate authority, along with documents yet he cannot expect justice. So it is important to keep certain points in mind.

On the basis of the Consumer Protection Act 1986. –

A consumer, consumer organization, state, central government can lodged a complain. In case of more than one, a joint complaint, can also be lodged.

Secondly the level of court where a complaint is to be lodged is determined by the amount of compensation



## CONSUMER PROTECTION AND EDUCATION

Thirdly, complaint can be lodged personally or through post.

Fourthly the dependent should be informed about the complaint by registered post lodging the complaint.

Fifthly, the complainant, should ensure that the complaint is genuine before filling. Incumbent like bill, cash receipt, guarantee card should be filled and attached along with the complain to prove its validity.

Lastly, the complaint form should be filled up with all details of complaint, loss and compensation demand.

### National Award for consumer protection

In order to motivate youth to participate in different consumer

protection programme, Government of India has introduced national award for consumer protection. Any youth belonging to the age group of 15 to 35 years, engaged in such consumer protection related activities is able to receive this award. This award is given annually and carry a prize amount of Rs. 10000/-, 15000/- and 20000/- along with a letter of commendation.

### World consumer Right day :

Consumer Right Day is also observed on 15th march every year throughout the world. It is celebrated to make consumer aware of their rights. At first, it was celebrated in 1962 by American President with four rights. Later the number of right has increased to eight.

## SUMMARY

- A consumer is one who buy goods, services to satisfy wants.
- Consumer faces a number of problems while making purchases.
- Consumer have rights like Right to safety, to be informed to choose, to be heard, to consumer educations, to redressal. etc.
- Apart from rights, there are certain duties of consumers he should be aware of his duties, make purchases judiciously and should not misuse his rights.
- Consumer education helps the consumer in many ways in protecting himself from the malpractices of the seller as well as help in making judicious purchases.
- Consumer protection Act was passed to safeguard consumers of all over the country.
- Consumer aids are anything that help and guide the consumer in selecting a product.



**EXERCISE****1. Very short answer question.**

- a) Who is a consumer?
- b) Mention any two problems face by consumer.
- c) State two rights of consumer
- d) Name two consumer aids.
- e) Name two food items which bear ISI mark.
- f) Write full name of F.P.O.

**2. Short answer questions.**

- a) Define consumer. State any two common problem face by the consumer.
- b) Mention any three duties of consumer.
- c) What are the uses of consumer education.
- d) What do you understand by ISI? Name two product carrying ISI mark.
- e) What do you understand by standardisation marks. Discuss its importance.
- f) What is the effect of advertisement on consumer's buying?

**3. Long answer questions.**

- a) Who is consumer ? What are the problems consumer faces in the market?
- b) What are the rights and responsibilities of consumer?
- c) What is consumer education? How it helps consumer in making purchase of items?
- d) What is label? Give an account of the requisite of an ideal label.
- e) What is consumer protection Act? Discuss the salient feature of consumer protection Act 1986