ABSTRACT

According to the Consumer Protection Act 1986: "consumer" means any person who: buys any goods for a consideration which has been paid or promised or partly paid and partly promised, or under any system of deferred payment and includes any user of such goods other than the person who buys such goods for consideration paid or promised or partly paid or partly promised, or under any system of deferred payment when such use is made with the approval of such person, but does not include a person who obtains such goods for resale or for any commercial purpose.

Keywords: Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat

INTRODUCTION

Who Is A Customer?

"A Customer is the most important visitor on our premises. He is not an interruption in our work; he is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider to our business; he is the purpose of it. We are not doing him a favour by serving; rather he does us a favour by giving us an opportunity to do so."-Mahatma Gandhi.

What Gandhi Said About a Customer

- A Customer is the most important person ever - in person or by mail.
- A Customer is not dependent on us... we are dependent on him.
- A Customer is not an interruption of our work....he is the sole purpose of it. We are not doing a favour by serving him... He is doing us a favour by giving us the opportunity to do so.
- A Customer is not someone to argue or match wits with. Nobody even won an argument with a Customer.
- A Customer is a person who brings us his wants. It is our job to handle them profitably to him and ourselves.

"CONSUMER" In the Indian Context

- Hires or avails of any services for a consideration which has been paid or promised or partly paid and partly promised, or under any system of deferred payment and includes any beneficiary of such services other than the person who 'hires or avails of the services for consideration paid or promised, or partly paid and partly promised, or under any system of deferred payment, when such services are availed of with the approval of the first mentioned person but does not include a person who avails of such services for any commercial purposes.
• Explanation: — For the purposes of this clause, "commercial purpose" does not include use by a person of goods bought and used by him and services availed by him exclusively for the purposes of earning his livelihood by means of self-employment;

Consumer’s Rights

• Right to Safety
• Right to Information
• Right to select goods and services
• Right to be heard
• Right to seek redressal
• Right to receive after-sale services
• Right to consumer education

Responsibilities of the Consumers

The rights and duties go hand in hand. The consumer has to undertake the following responsibilities to assert his rights:

1. Obtain full information regarding quality and price before making any purchases.
2. Be careful about false and/or misleading.
3. Purchase goods having quality marks like ISI/ Agmark etc. as and where available for safety and quality.
4. Obtain proper receipt/cash memo for purchases made and guarantee/warranty card duly stamped and signed by the seller, wherever applicable.
5. Approach Consumer Forum for redressal of consumer grievance against sale of defective goods or deficient services or adoption of unfair or restrictive trade parties.
7. Regarding expiry date / manufacturing date.

Current Scenario

• Consumers finally have got a voice and a forum to air their grievances. Using consumer courts, many citizens have been able to get back their money from sloppy builders, dishonest shop keepers, shady sellers of all kinds, and even from Government organizations such as the railways, bus companies, and so forth.
• The enactment of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, a milestone in the history of socio-economic legislation in India, has considerably consolidated the process of consumer protection and has given rise, during the past few years, to new consumer jurisprudence.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the organization of the Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat Pune.
2. To study the adequacy and efficiency of the organization of Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat's organization in Pune District.
3. To study the consumer awareness in the Pune District.
Hypothesis

H1: Organization has to develop awareness of the consumer for their consumer rights.

H2: Consumer knows the legal rights and he takes benefits of his rights.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection-

Primary Data: Through well designed questionnaire administered to the Office Bearers, customers of the Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat in Pune Dist.

Secondary Data: Books, Periodicals, New Paper-Reports, Web sites etc.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The activities of the Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat as the name suggests have been spread over all over India. However keeping in view the time as well as the finance required the researcher has concentrated only on the organization aspect of the Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat in Pune District. The area covered is a vast one and as the movement of Grahak Panchayat was started from Pune District itself it has a well developed net work in the district. Hence by covering the entire Pune district we can get the pulse of the organization.

Profile Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat, Pune

- Established in 1974 by Shri. Bindumadhav Joshi in Pune. And got registered in Delhi as "AKHIL Vo BHARATIYA GRAHAK PANCHAYAT" (ABGP).
- It is a unique voluntary consumer organization working at National level covering the urban and rural area.
- Network all over the country including Andaman.
- Office at: 634, Sadashiv Peth, Gole Complex, Opposite Sweet Home, Pune 411030

Objectives Of The Grahak Panchayat

- To establish co-ordination between the manufacturers and the distributors in order to have social and economic equality.
- To provide goods at fair and reasonable prices. To encourage the production of essential goods.
- To educate the consumers and to make them aware about their wants.
- To protect and to safeguard the rights of the consumers.
- To create awareness amongst customers regarding their rights, powers etc.
- To eliminate agents from the distribution channels to establish direct contact with the consumers.
- To take steps against dishonest methods and practices overpricing, adulteration, duplicate products, illegal donations etc.
- To redress the complaints of the consumers.
- To create confidence amongst customers and to encourage social reforms.

Oath Taken By the Volunteers of ABGP

"In the name of God I do solemnly swear that from today I am the active member of the Grahak Panchayat and that I will strive hard to achieve success of the consumer movement. I believe that
customer interest is ultimately the national interest. I will attend to the Panchayat's work impartially and judiciously. I strongly believe in the moral values and status of labour. Vande Mataram!

**Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat**

- Akhil Bharatiya Grahak Panchayat is a federal type of organization led by the president and Mahamantri at National level, supported by the office bearers in the Central body. i.e. general secretary, treasurer and two secretaries. The Manarashtra State Organization is led by the State Organizer Known as “Prant Sanghathan Mantrr assisted by four deputy organizers having head office at Pune. The work of organization is divided into the following portfolios.
  - Organizational department.
  - Publicity work department.
  - Communication department.
  - Judicial and legal department.

**FINDINGS**

- Meetings are held at regular monthly interval.
- Attendance of the members at the meeting is good, still provides further scope for improvement.
- Women’s participation is there at the tahasil level and strong at the metropolitan level.(Pune & PCMC).
- Tahasil and Pune city and Pimpri Chinchwad area wise data relating to : holding meetings regularly, women's participation, complaints received, resolved, outstanding under broad categories - Electric Supply, services sector, electrical appliances and flats, other than goods and services has been graphically presented.
- Junner Tahasil and Pune city area appears to be efficiently functioning.
- Besides this collective complaints have also been resolved successfully.
- Organization has been well designed to achieve the targeted task.
- Subject matter specialization for solving the complaints received.

**SUGGESTIONS**

- Use of advanced technology for achieving higher efficiency.
- Meetings be conducted professionally: Circulation of agenda in advance, timely conducting the meetings, writing of minutes of the meetings etc.
- Visits of the officials from the District offices to the Tahasil level be increased.
- Reporting system be improved to receive written reporting.
- Greater emphasis is needed on creating awareness amongst the consumers.
- Organization of subject specific Adalats.
- Inclusion of Consumer Protection Act in School & College Syllabus.
- Strengthening of Infrastructure and Human Resources for the District Consumer Forums will expedite the disposal of consumer grievances / cases filed thereat.
- Govt.’s unconditional financial support be accepted by ABGP else it will have limitations to grow.
CONCLUSION

The role of Grahak Panchayat is very important for the customer for getting the justice regarding the product to trace the origin of the Consumer movement we can trace it back as to the emergence of the commerce and trade. Consumer is the one who actually use (consume) the goods or avails of the services. In India the movement is as old as trade and commerce. Even in Kautilya's Arthshastra, references are available about the concept of protection of consumers against the exploitation by trade and industry, short weighment and measurements, adulteration along with the punishment for these offences. However, there was no organized and systematic movement actually safeguarding the interests of consumers.

REFERENCES

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