



Basics of Consumer Protection Act : A Review

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Abstract

India passed its new Consumer Protection Act in 1986. The author points out that the Act is a landmark in the history of the consumer protection movement in India. It concerns mainly the regulation of consumer disputes and creates specific redress agencies at district, state, and Union level. It also contains general provisions for consumer rights and for the organization of the consumer interest.

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Introduction

Besides the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, we consume a variety of things in our daily lives such as cell phones, digital cameras, soaps, perfumes, cosmetics, among other things. Thus, all of us are consumers in the literal sense of the term. When we buy things from the market as a consumer, we expect value for money, i.e., quality, quantity, right price, information about the mode of use, etc. However, there may be instances where a consumer is cheated.

In such cases, most of us do not know whom to approach to seek redressal. Moreover, a majority of us also are unaware of our “rights” as a consumer and often hesitate to complain or even stand up to unfair practices. We also don't have the recourse of costly litigation to seek justice and we continue to bear such injustice.

This is where consumer forums, which can help you seek justice against unfair practices without incurring exorbitant litigation costs, come in.

The below article provides basic information about the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, its advantages for consumers, basic rights of the consumers, and consumer redressal forums among other things.

Consumer Protection Act, 1986

The Consumer Protection Act, 1986, was enacted to provide a simpler and quicker redressal to consumer grievances. The Act seeks to promote and protect the interest of consumers against deficiencies and defects in goods or services. It also seeks to secure the rights of a consumer against unfair trade practices, which may be practiced by manufacturers and traders. The agenda of a consumer forum is to provide relief to both parties and discourage long litigation. In a process called 'informal adjudication', forum officials mediate between the two parties and urge compromise.

The Act applies to all goods and services unless specifically exempted by the Union Government and covers all sectors, whether private, public, or cooperative.

This Act has provided a machinery whereby consumers can file their complaints. These complaints will then be heard by consumer forums with special powers so that action can be taken against erring