



Working of District Consumer Forum, Chittoor: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Consumers constitute the largest economic group in any country and are considered to be the core of all our economic activities. They need greater attention from all dimensions of marketing sphere. The consumer is the forgotten man of the modern Indian economy. He is the least organized and the most centrifugal element in the circle of investment, production, sale and consumption, and is generally taken for granted as one who has anyhow to buy in order to live. Therefore, protection of their interests and rights is very important. As a matter of fact, this is the major goal of any modern welfare state. The District Consumer Redressal Forums play a vital role in protecting consumer rights.

1. Introduction

Consumer Protection Act, 1986 (Section 9) provides for establishment of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies. These are: (i) District Forum, established by the State Government in each district of the state (ii) State Commission, established by the State Government, in the state and (iii). National Commission established by the Central Government.¹

The State Government may, however, establish more than one Forum in a District, wherever necessary.

An aggrieved consumer may file a complaint with either of agencies, keeping in mind the provisions of sections 11, 17 and 21, which define their jurisdiction.

2. Objectives of the Study:

1. To Study the number of cases filed, disposed and pending at District Consumer Forum, Chittoor
2. To examine the sex-wise distribution of complainants at District Consumer Forum, Chittoor.
3. To observe the nature of cases filed at District Consumer Forum, Chittoor.

3. Jurisdiction of the District Forum

Section 11 provides that:

1. The District Forum shall have jurisdiction to entertain complaints where the value of goods or services and the compensation, if any, claimed is less than rupees twenty lakhs.
 - a) A complaint shall be instituted in a District Forum within the local limits of whose jurisdiction –
 - b) the opposite party or each of the opposite parties, where there are more than one, at the time of the institution of the complaint, actually and voluntarily resides or carries on business or personally works for gain; or
 - c) any of the opposite parties, where there are more than one, at the time of the institution of the complaint, actually and voluntarily resides or carries on business, or personally works for gain, provided that in such case either the permission of the District Forum is given, or the opposite parties who do not reside; or carry on business, or personally work for gain, as the case may be, acquiesce in such institution; or
 - d) the cause of action, wholly or in part, arises.

4. Manner in which complaint shall be made

Section 12 provides that a complaint, in relation to any goods sold or delivered or agreed to be sold or delivered or any service provided or agreed to be provided, may be filed with a District Forum by

- a) the consumer to whom such goods are sold or delivered or agreed to be sold or delivered or such service provided or agreed to be provided;
- b) any recognized consumer association, whether the consumer to whom the goods sold or delivered or agreed to be sold or delivered or service provided or agreed to be provided is a member of such association or not; or
- c) one or more consumers, where there are numerous consumers having the same interest, with the permission of the District Forum, on behalf of, or for the benefit of all consumers so interested; or
- d) the Central or State Government.

Explanation to section 12 provides that “recognized consumer association” means any voluntary consumer association registered under the Companies Act, 1956 or any other law for the time being in force.

5. An Overview of Cases Filed At Consumer Forum, Chittoor

In the present study a survey is conducted to know the working of the District Consumer Forum Chittoor, and the number of cases filed, pending and disposed by the Forum.

As per section 10 of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, the District Forum was formed in 1988 in Chittoor, and started functioning from 08.11.1988.

TABLE 1
Details of Cases Filed in the District Consumer Forum, Chittoor

S. No	Year of Filing	No. of Cases filed	No. of cases disposed	No. of Cases Pending
1	2000	05	05	---
2	2001	38	37	01
3	2002	114	114	---
4	2003	190	190	---
5	2004	255	255	---
6	2005	247	247	---
7	2006	458	443	15
8	2007	245	225	20
9	2008	205	200	05
10	2009	227	225	02
11	2010	300	295	05
12	2011	292	292	---
13	2012	252	250	02
14	2013	242	242	---
15	2014	246	245	01
16	2015	210	210	---
17	2016	215	215	---
18	2017	189	185	04
19	2018(upto June)	120	100	20
	Total	4050	3975	75

Source:- Records of the District Consumer Forum, Chittoor, 2017-18.³ Table 1 shows the year-wise filing and disposing of cases at District

Consumer Forum, Chittoor. The table reveals that the total number of cases filed in the Forum upto June 2018 were 4050, out of them, 3975 of the cases were disposed and 75 cases were pending. In the year 2018, highest cases were filed i.e., 458 and lowest cases were filed in the year 2000 i.e. 5. Regarding cases in pending, the highest of cases were pending (i.e. 20) in the year 2007 & 2018 and the lowest in the year 2001 and 2014 (i.e. 1).

TABLE 2
Sex-Wise Distribution of Complainants Reported at D.C.F., Chittoor

Sex	Cases	Percentage
Male	2920	72.10
Female	870	21.48
Organization or a group of persons	260	6.42
Total	4050	100.00

Source: Records of District Consumer Forum, Chittoor, 2017-18.

Table 2 reveals the sex-wise distribution of complainants reported at the District Consumer Forum, Chittoor. Most of the cases (complainants) about 2920 (72.1 per cent) were reported by the males and 870 (21.48 per cent) cases were reported by the females, and only 260 (6.42 per cent) were reported by the organizations or a group of persons. On the basis of complainant pattern, it can be inferred that males play a predominant role in filing complaints as against females or an organization or a group of persons.

TABLE 3
Nature of Cases Filed In D.C.F., Chittoor

Nature	No. of Cases	Percentage
Goods	1350	34.33
Service or any other	2700	66.67
Total	4050	100.00

Source: Records of District Consumer Forum, Chittoor, 2017-18

Table 3 reveals the nature of cases filed at District Consumer Forum, Chittoor. The cases filed at the Forum are divided into cases relating to goods and services or any other. It is evident from the table that most of the cases were related to services or other i.e, 2700 (66.67 per cent) and the cases relating to goods are 1350 (33.33 per cent). It is also evident that the grievances are more in purchasing of services than goods.

6. Findings of the District Forum

Section 14 provides that

- 1) If, after the proceeding conducted under section 13, the District Forum is satisfied that the goods complained against suffer from any of the defects specified in the complaint or that any of the allegations contained in the complaint about the services are proved, it shall issue an order to the opposite party directing him to take one or more of the following things, namely:
 - a) to remove the defect pointed out by the appropriate laboratory from the goods in question;
 - b) to replace the goods with new goods of similar description which shall be free from any defect;
 - c) to return to the complainant the price, or as the case may be, the charges paid by the complainant;
 - d) to pay such amount as may be awarded by it as compensation to the consumer for any loss or injury suffered by the consumer due to the negligence of the opposite party. ⁴
- 2) Every order made by the District Forum under sub-section (1) shall be signed by all the members constituting it, and if there is any difference of opinion, the order of the majority of the members constituting it shall be order of the District Forum.
- 3) Subject to the foregoing provisions, the procedure relating to the conduct of the meetings of the District Forum, its sittings and other matters shall be such as may be prescribed by the State Government. ⁵

7. Conclusion

A comprehensive awareness campaign would be of immense use to awaken the consumers. This can be done by the Government and Voluntary Organisations by exhibiting various possibilities of malpractices and its identification at the time of purchase.

It is suggested that the Government should organise, from time to time, Consumer Awareness Projects on a National level. This will include production and distribution of literature and audio-visual material concerning consumerism. There is a dire need for mass campaign for creating consumer awareness and strengthening the hands of the State Governments and consumer organisations in spreading consumer education.

We hope that in the years to come, the consumerism in the country, which is young, would gather the desired momentum and strength. An integrated approach is necessary wherein the State, the consumer, consumer organisations and business have to participate to promote and protect the interests of consumers. To reiterate, it is the consumer who has to play the predominant role.

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