CHAPTER : 7
EVALUATION OF CONSUMER PROTECTION MOVEMENT IN GUJARAT
SYNOPSIS

7.1 The First Wave (1960-1969)- Period of Unawareness.
7.5 Limitations and Action Plan for Consumer Movement in Gujarat.
The Fourth wave of consumer protection – between 1990 and 1999 – “Take-off Stage of Consumer Movement”.

7.1 The First Wave (1960 – 1969) – Period of unawareness:

General Conditions:

On 1st May 1960 Gujarat became an independent State. Moreover the country was also facing number of problems. There was scarcity of food grains and other essential commodities in the whole country. Because of the scarcity the goods were distributed through fair price shop under the public distribution system. The scarcity created heavenly situation for black marketers and hoarders who charged unreasonably high price from the needy consumers. The Government had its own existing machinery to control the situation under the administration enforcement of various laws. The Government also performed its functions under the public distribution scheme. Some consumers were aware but there was lack of willingness to get the legal protection available to them. Moreover, the need for obtaining essential commodities was so great that the question of filing a complain hardly arose in the mind of consumers. Moreover, the country was also not self
reliant in essential commodities. The consumers also accepted the fact that situation though unwillingly. We can say that some were aware of their exploitation but did not bother to get justice through complaint or legal actions. The consumer organisations were almost absent. The concepts like consumer protection, consumerism, consumer education, consumer awareness etc. were new to their ears. During this period it was found that the rich became richer and the poor became poorer. Monopolies were created and economic powers concentrated in few hands. Consumers Co-Operative Societies prevailed during this period, and to that extent only consumers were protected.

- **Mass Media**
  Print media and radio were powerful tools of mass communication. There were number of articles in newspapers, magazines, etc. on price rise and remedies to control them.

- **Important Events:**
  In 1960s Independent Gujarat State established on 1st May 1960.
In 1962 “Grahak Suraksha Vibhag” of Jyotisangh established in Ahmedabad.

In 1962 India-China war took place.

In 1969 Surat Consumers Association was formed in Surat – South Gujarat.


The Wave witnessed Consumer Awareness in its making. In this decade in 1972 the Government of Gujarat introduced a scheme for encouraging consumer organisations to come-up and they were also offered grant for their activities in consumer protection. Under the scheme new consumer organisations were established gradually. In 1973 – 1974 a statewide movement was launched against the price rise of essential commodities.

In 1978 C.E.R.C. came on the Scenario of consumer movement. From the beginning C.E.R.C. worked powerfully for consumer protection. This was because of:
1. Scientific and planned approach.
2. Professionalism in Management
3. Legal actions.

From the initial years C.E.R.C. filed several cases against the policies and practices of corporate houses and Government Departments which were against the interest of consumers. They proved that legal action is a powerful weapon in the hands of consumers. The achievement of C.E.R.C. gave confidence to the consumers regarding better future. Over and above the legal actions consumer awareness programmes are also organised. All these programmes are properly publicised and the proceedings of the programme are properly documented for future guidance, reference and research.

In 1975 United Nations prepared detailed guideline on consumer protection and guided all the nations to follow.

1975 Mrs. Gandhi's 20 point economic programme in which point number 17 was regarding consumer protection. These points were highlighted through various activities and the programmes of the Government both Central and State.

It is at this stage where the awareness took place. Awareness and consumer reactions have their roots in experiencing the unjust, unreasonable and unethical actions. In 1980 "Jagrat Grahak" – a consumer interest group established in Baroda. In 1981 Gujarat State Civil Supplies Corporation was established to manage activities of public distribution system. This corporation is solely owned by the Government of Gujarat. Because of its separate entity it enjoys greater freedom in management compared to Government Departments. It looks after other schemes of welfare of the needy.

14\textsuperscript{th} February 1986 an apex body – Consumer Affairs & Protection Agency of Gujarat (CAPAG) was created by the Government of Gujarat to guide, accelerate and monitor consumer movement in Gujarat.
C P Act 1986 Introduced:

Due to the efforts and discussions between Government and Consumer activist the Consumer Protection Act 1986 was established. This is a long awaited Umbrella Law granting protection to consumers in all activities providing economical and efficient legal protection. Under this act many cases are handle at National, State and District Level. Gradually the effectiveness of Consumer Protection Act 1986 and Consumer Protection Rules increased.

The state Consumer Protection Council and Central Consumer Protection Council (both advisory bodies in which consumers representatives are given membership) meet regularly and discuss and plan for protecting consumers in various areas.


1. In the Fourth Wave the cumulative effect of the earlier three waves can be also seen. The consumer movement has grown due the efforts in the last three decades. District Consumer
Grievance, Redressal Forum (District Forum) and State Consumer Grievance, Redressal Commission have started functioning smoothly. Several cases are filed with these courts and speedy judgement is provided to the customers/consumers. Even the patient getting Doctors services is a customer of Doctors service and hence protection from mental service has also been covered under the scope of Consumer Protection Act 1986.

2. On the basis of our study we can say that, due to the implementation of Consumer Protection Act, 1986, the Corporate Houses have become highly careful in planning their policies and publicity of their product/services.

2.1 Corporate Houses have formed their code of ethics by which self-regulation can be applied.

2.2 Corporate Houses have started being highly concern to know the reactions and complains if any which can help them in providing a better quality of the product to the consumer. For this purpose many organisations have established Consumer Grievance Cell or Consumer Service Centre.
2.3 Consumer Organisations have started conducting various programmes for consumer awareness. They have started publishing magazines, books on Consumer Protection; they organise Seminars, Workshops, exhibitions, and even celebrating world consumer day (15th March) every year. Some of them are undertaking research projects also.

2.4 The Press, electronic media, radio, etc. takes a note of Consumer Protection as a useful and required branch of knowledge and so, they do have regular Programmes and articles, newsworthy events are highlighted by the news agencies in their media. As a result consumer movement has grown.

2.5 In the activities of Consumer Organisation there is an increasing participation of consumers. The number of complains filed have increased which means that the consumers have started initiating actions against injustice.

From 1998-99 Gujarat Government has increased the grant of Consumer Organisation from Rs.60,000 per year to Rs. 1,00,000 per year.
C.E.R.C. - has started setting up product Testing Laboratory – “Testing Organisation For Research in Chemical and Health Hazards” (TORCH) of an International Standard in Ahmedabad. It has started functioning, it will taste products of mass consumption namely, Food Products, Electrical appliances of domestic use and pharmaceutical products including Ayurved and Herbal Products.

C.E.R.C. is going to set-up an Information Resource Centre

The scope of consumer movement has widened Air, Water and Soil Pollution are the topics taken-up for discussion. There is a better scope for utilising information technology for exchange of information. Internet, Email, etc. can be used very effectively.

Inspite of, lot of protection given to the consumer, cases of consumer exploitation will not be difficult to find because offenders are always ahead of law-makers.

7.5 Limitations & Action Plan of Consumer Movement in Gujarat:

The world is concerned about having pollution free environment with Information Technology the world would become very close and
so exchange of information will be easy. The consumer movement should be focused on Rural Areas, Tribal Areas and for the deprived and needy people.

All the consumer organisations are managing their activities in a manner they like, but certain priority areas should be identified and collective efforts should be applied, so that quick result can be obtained on priority issues concerning masses.

Certain basic facilities should not be ignored such as availability of water, purity in food, quality pharmaceutical products, medical and health services, traffic and road safety, environment friendly packaging, effective enforcement of laws, amendment of existing laws, More information centres, can be created for consumers, more product testing laboratories are required. Some self-testing equipment should be manufactured or made available so that individual can test the products if such an instrument is available to him. In times to come consumers will be more quality conscious

Compared to population of the state the no. of consumer organisations are very less to take car of consumers. Employees of...
the consumer organisations should be trained to make them more effective on the job.

The Government should give more attention to the consumer movement.