CHAPTER - IV

FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS
This chapter deals with summarisation of various findings and suggestions for the improvement of electricity services. Grievances of the people keep mounting. Everybody complains that nobody listens to their complaints. These fall on deaf ears and there is hardly any redress ever in sight. This scenario is obviously very unfortunate for the functioning of our democracy. The present study has brought forth into limelight many problems of electrical consumers which are rather findings of the study presented as follows:

Electricity - A major input for industrial development

Electrical energy is one of the most important inputs required for rapid industrialisation. It has also become a necessity in the life of the common man. An industry has always to use certain processes which have to be operated by automotive power and the cheapest and the most convenient mode of
available power is electricity. One cannot imagine an industry having no supply of electricity. In fact for certain industries electricity is the major rawmaterial.

**Rural electricity consumers facing problems**

Village economy in India is basically agro-based economy. Unless agriculture is mechanised and modernised, no improvement in the socio-economic life of 80 per cent of the people in rural India can be effected within a stipulated period of time. With the existing agricultural knowledge and know-how of farmers, the national farm production can be boosted up provided farmers are facilitated with assured irrigation for their land all through the year. Canal irrigation as compared to lift irrigation is undoubtedly a time taking and costly proposition both on the part of the Government and the farmers. The only alternative is to harness the underground water resource through wide lift irrigation system which necessitates rapid electrification of rural area. Though much of the rural India has been electrified, the frequent fluctuations in power supply non-repairs to the burnt transformers, power shortages, etc, have very much affected the crop prospects. Farmers often complain that their yield per hectare is lost due to insufficient power supply to the agricultural pumpsets. Maintenance of sufficient power supply to the agricultural sector is very essential if the fruits of rural electrification are to be realised.
Negligence of Electricity authorities constitutes deficiency of service under Consumer Protection Act

Consumer Protection Act has become a been to the aggrieved electricity consumers. Consumers can seek compensation for the inconveniences suffered by them due to lapses in the services rendered by electricity department. All unheard and unattended grievances of electricity consumers can be represented to the consumer forums for redressal. Such grievances after due representation to the forum shall be settled within 90 days as per the Consumer Protection Act. Many consumers have been awarded compensation by forums for the lapses on the part of electricity authorities.

Grievances are varied in nature : The study reveals that electricity consumers face several problems. They are as follows.

High Bills : A large number of consumers have complained that they often received wrong bills and their requests for rectification of wrong bills were not satisfactorily attended by the electricity department.

Non-supply of bills and hasty disconnections : Sometimes without any fault on the part of consumers, the electricity department either disconnects the connections or unduly fined the consumers. This sort of problem arose upon non-servising of bills to the consumers in time.
Insufficient supply of electricity: Irregular power cuts, insufficiency in supply of electricity, frequent breakdowns have become regular features of electricity supply in Pavagada area. Proper distribution of power supply must be ensured.

Accumulated bills proved burdensome: Sometimes consumers received bills with accumulated arrears, instead they should have been served in time. Incorrect and irregular metre readings, negligence irresponsibility of the department, lack of proper administration, inefficiency of the staff and heavy demand for new connections are some of the reasons for such problems.

High voltage and low voltage problems: The frequent high/now voltage fluctuations in power supply have resulted in a big loss to the consumers. Many consumers complained that their costly domestic items like TVs, bulbs, etc., were damaged due to such voltage fluctuations.

Defective Meters: Non-functioning of meters, meter jumpings, creeping effect in meters, meters erected with initial wrong readings (in case of new connections) are some of the problems revealed in the study.

Defective and dangerous transformers: The study reveals the existence of defective transformers which often results in irregular supply of electricity and voltage fluctuations. Sometimes
transformers are found to be fenceless endangering the passersby. Animals found often electrocuted due to such fenceless transformers.

Loose connections in the mainwire: Several of the consumers complained that due to loose wire connection (main wire from the board to the pole) or non-replacement of such old wires resulting in power disruption thus causing inconvenience to consumers.

Consumers are apathetic: The study reveals that most of the consumers are not assertive and their inclination to lodge a complaint is low.

Ignorance of legislation: Majority of the consumers are neither aware of Karnataka Electricity Board Act nor the Consumer Protection Act. Therefore, a lot of awareness has to be created about the pertinent laws.

Authorities not bothered about complaints: The study reveals that the authorities are neither bothered about the compliance with the grievances submitted to them nor at least cared to give replies to the consumer complaints.

Complaint to the Consumer Redressal Forums Best Way: The quality of service will improve only if more number of consumers prefer to make complaints in the consumer forums. Complainants need not engage any lawyer or even to incur any cost when they present their problems to such forums.
High Degree of satisfaction about forum's decisions: The study reveals that though a few electricity consumers approached consumer forums for redressal of their grievances against electricity department, the decisions given by the forums highly satisfied them. Thus consumer courts operating in the country are able to provide effective remedies in a quick and inexpensive manner and to that extent there is some sort of relief for the consumers.

The following are some of the major suggestions of the study:

SUGGESTIONS

1. The consumer has a right to expect efficient courteous service. Hence, those managing public utilities including electricity services should find ways and means to render wholesome and efficient service to the consumers.

2. Public utility services adopt a highly professional attitude in the future, for which privatization coupled with regulation and accountability of public utilities is very important.

3. Efficiency in service has to be improved and new public utilities must operate on business principles of economy and efficiency.
4. SEB's are really autonomous bodies therefore if there is political interference effecting its efficient functioning, they should resist it.

5. The State should not interfere with the electricity boards. Rather than negotiating the price, they should be questioning the relationship of heat rate vis-a-vis plant load factor and the steps taken to improve them.

6. Electricity undertakings energizing the connections should be thoroughly checked and controlled as per rules on Nuclear Power plant or the national or inter-state grid to ensure safety. For the sake of safety, the authorities must comply with the standards of environmental clean air and water.

7. Consumers in both the rural and urban sector must avoid constructing their houses below or very near to the electricity lines for their own safety.

8. In case of electrical accidents resulting into loss of a person, animals, etc. suitable compensations must be made to the affected parties by the SEB/Licencee Company.

9. The Electricity Boards should not take the word of the licence contractor as regards the safety of the wiring but should adopt some kind of random sampling plan to have a check on their work.
10. It is an accepted factor, all over the world, that monopolies tend to abuse or misuse their monopolistic power. Privatisation is not the same thing as introducing competition because private companies still have a monopoly in their area of operation. The consumer must be made to be aware of this.

11. Public utility services should not be monopolies of the State because if monopolies are bad, State monopolies are worse.

12. Capacity should be used to the maximum, even if it leads to inadequate capacities and non-availability of power. Generating capacity in excess of its "average", needs to take care of peak demand and planned outages must be introduced.

13. For efficient working of generating plants electricity companies should assure themselves of good labour relations, efficient fuel management and an integrated and well-planned system.

14. To redress complaints effectively, quickly and inexpensively SEBs and PUC Licencees like AEC should be set up as they have been found to be working effectively in Telephones, Posts etc. Internal mechanisms like a consumer complaints review committee, with active participation of consumer groups. In addition, regular Adalats like those already working in Telephones and Posts should be set up.
This system apart from redressal of grievances also gives a transparent look to the whole process.

15. Competent advocates should be appointed by the Board to represent the consumer cases before the consumer courts to adequately assist the courts in coming to a fair conclusion.

16. The Board should come up with specific data regarding the exact number of complaints received in each category. The Board should also furnish details as to the line of action adopted and time taken to resolve the complaints brought to its notice.

17. With regard to informal methods, arbitration by department officer should be avoided as he will have a pro-department bias.

18. Principle of natural justice should be applied to all disputes between consumers and electricity boards.

19. Consumers should cooperate by complying with various regulations of the Board like proper earthing at premises, using standard electrical fittings, etc.

20. For reducing the Transmission and Distribution Losses, Energy Audit for identifying system elements responsible for excessive losses, should be conducted.
21. There should be greater coordination among Central Government agencies with regard to power resources to avoid causing delay and harassment to the Electricity Boards.

22. The consumer should not be made to bear the expenditure caused by the inefficiency of the Electricity Board. A consumer is willing to pay for standard cost and quality and not for inefficiency of the Electricity Board itself. All additional costs due to T & D losses must be borne by the Board itself.

23. Tariff incentives to induce shifting of demand from peak hours to off-peak hours must be formulated and working hours of factories must be restricted according to it.

24. If the present high rate of electricity consumption goes on, very soon there shall be darkness at noon. Therefore, tariff incentives and disincentives for shifting patterns of usage and penalties for misuse of electrical power must be introduced.

25. A bureau of industrial costing and pricing should be asked to set up tariffs of coal and gas.

26. Resource rich areas (i.e. coal) should be given priority for establishing power stations instead of transmitting power to far flung areas. Distance to which power is transmitted
should be given due consideration. i.e. the longer the
distance, the higher the rate of charge for consumption.

27. Power resources, at subsidised rates should be made
available to all farmers in rural areas. Instead of being
concentrated in the hands of medium and big farmers who
are actually pockets of votes for politicians.

28. Instead of giving capital intensive electricity to rural areas,
non-conventional energy sources like solar energy should
be tapped.

29. Action is to be initiated to cut down farmers' dependence
on the central grid systems where, when the power is
transmitted over the long network of electric poles there
is a high likelihood of power theft as well as leakage.
Rural dependence on central grid systems must be reduced.

30. Long term strategy for energy sector is to be formulated.
Stress should be made upon energy conservation and demand
managements.

31. Tariff of electricity should be decided after due considera-
tion has been given to the allocation and efficient usage of
national resources.

32. To set up a private sector power plant clearance is needed
from 17 different authorities ranging from airport, state
electricity board, CEA, DGTD, environment, forest etc.
To get clearance from the last two is very difficult. Efforts should be made to simplify this procedure.

33. Quality of meters should be improved.

34. To reduce theft of power following suggestions were made.
   a) Introduction of meter boxes that are sealed/welded.
   b) It should be done in such a manner that the consumer does not have an access to the meters.
   c) Frequent checking and deterrent punishment as per law for theft of electricity should be introduced. This should be supervised by independent staff.
   d) In case of reported theft, incremental recovery should be made from the dues pending for last 2-3 years.

35. Utilities should submit a comprehensive and factually correct report regarding demand-supply position. They should also highlight what time bounds schemes they are undertaking to tackle the various problems.

36. Street light should have separate connections so that they are not affected during load shedding.

37. Consumers should be vigilant and prevent utilities from charging them for overheads like upkeep of decorative fountains and other wasteful uses of electricity.
38. The 66 KV sub-stations, provided within reasonable distance of 20-30 KM all over the State, will have to be supported by extra high tension grid system of 220 KV or 400 KV systems to avoid technical complaints.

39. According to the TATKAL YOJANA, Electricity Boards may consider giving electrical connections on priority basis for agricultural pumps sets akin to the services rendered by MTNL for release of Telephones.

40. For the emergency services like hospitals, police stations and public places, for Eg. cinema halls/theatres, alternative electrical feeders may be considered.

41. SEBs may consider having dialogue(s) with the Bank(s) in the villages and establish arrangements to get their bills/payments collected through them, failing which they may consider sending their representatives to the village on the specified dates and during specified times, to ease out the problem of travelling long distances by the rural consumers.

42. Professional and managerial inputs in the form of chartered accountants, cost accountants and other experts should be involved in preparing the ground work for taking these issues to the consumer courts or common courts.
43. To help the public utility services in interpreting, quantifying and analysing their business, inter-firm comparison, through use of various management ratios are some effective tools and techniques which could be used.

44. Quality of business operation, in terms of additional profits or reduced cost, should be given due consideration in the future by the public utility services.

45. With improved technology like computerisation in the power sector and with the adequate power generation to eradicate power cuts immediate action has to be taken by the Electricity Board to render better services to consumer public. This in turn not only improve financial position of the power sector but also the whole economy will be benefited which also facilitate higher GNP as a whole.

46. New substations and powerful transformers to supply uninterrupted electricity must be installed.

47. Proper maintainance of the staff by higher authorities by delegation of work and fixing responsibility and accountability for the work to be accomplished are important. Field staff should be vigilant and careful with regard to regular supply and frequent break down of electricity, and timely collection of electric bills.
48. Procedure in getting and using electricity should be made easier as far as possible and the cases of the rural people should be taken up on priority basis for supply of electricity.

49. The officers of the electricity board should not only be responsible for supply of the electricity but also educate the villagers how to make a complaint to the authorities concerned.

50. Alternative system of energy like solar energy, wind, thermal and others must be chosen instead of excessively depending on thermal and hydro-electricity.

CONCLUSION

Electricity has an all pervading significance in the development of economy. It is largely needed by all sections of society, industry and trade. Since electricity is a paid service and that too its cost has become high now-a-days consumers cannot keep quite if the supply of power is not properly maintained. The various kinds of grievances as revealed by this study need urgent attention by the departmental authorities of electricity consumers also have to realise their rights guaranteed to them under Consumer Protection Act and be assertive so that the quality of service by public utility service organisations like Electricity Boards would improve.

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