Two day National Workshop

on

Consumer Protection and Empowerment in India

In collaboration with G.T.N. Arts College, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu

(Aug.20-21, 2015)

A two day national workshop on “Consumer Protection and Empowerment in India” was organized by the Centre for Consumer Studies, IIPA, New Delhi in collaboration with PG and Research Department of Commerce, GTN Arts College, Dindigul on August 20-21, 2015. The workshop was sponsored by Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India. 133 participants which included academicians, students from various colleges and universities from seven Districts of Tamil Nadu participated in the workshop.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- explain the various provisions of the Consumer Protection Act and other legislations having a bearing on Consumer Protection;
- understand the need and importance of Consumer Protection and Welfare and the role of various stakeholders;
- to enhance the knowledge and skill of the participants in the area of Consumer Protection and Consumer Welfare and
- discuss the legal dimensions of Consumer Protection in different service sectors

Dignitaries during the Inaugural Session
The workshop started with a prayer and welcoming the dignitaries by Dr. M. Ponniah, Workshop Coordinator and in his Introductory Remarks he presented the workshop’s objectives, the expected outcome from the technical sessions of two days. He said that the purpose of the workshop is to create awareness among various stakeholders on various issues of consumer protection.

Dr. N. Krishnamurthy, Principal, G.T.N. Arts College, Dindigul delivered the Presidential Address and he urged the participants to be aware of the consumer rights while making purchase decisions. He stressed that consumer’s movement is a people’s movement for removing dissatisfaction amongst consumers for a healthy environment, free of exploitation at the hands of traders and manufacturers and such type of programmes are a stepping stone towards achieving awareness at all ends.

Justice V. Balasundararukumar, District Judge, District Consumer Forum, Virudhunagar District while delivering the Inaugural Address, citing the importance of Consumer Protection Act he explained many cases with practical examples. He said many hospitals claim that they are giving free medical treatment for various diseases but they are collecting money in one or the other forms. He enlightened the participants about remedies available for consumer grievances and disputes and urged the participants to be aware of their rights as consumers.
Prof. Suresh Misra, Chair Professor, CCS talked about the concept of consumer protection, details about the factors affecting consumers in the changing economy. He in his session talked about impact of business on individual consumers. He talked about the genesis of consumer rights and briefed the participants about the protection of consumer interest against 3D’s. This session provided an overview of the law and policy framework for Consumer Protection and Consumer Welfare in India and Consumer Protection Act/Rules which gave a comprehensive picture of various consumer laws and particularly the Consumer Protection Act.

Technical Session - II
12.15 pm - 01.15 pm
Topic: Consumer Education and Awareness
Resource Person: Dr. Mamta Pathania, Assistant Professor, IIPA, New Delhi

Dr. Mamta Pathania focused on Consumer Education and Awareness, highlighting the various schemes and programmes of the Department of Consumer Affairs aimed at generating awareness which requires sustained efforts on the part of each and every individual as a consumer. She explained how the consumers are exploited and how to get important information about Consumer Protection Act. She stressed, consumers have to be aware of their rights and responsibilities which are two sides of the same coin. She highlighted that the best way of learning is by developing an ability to question ourselves, before making any buying decision.
Technical Session - III
02.00 pm - 03.00 pm
Topic: Banking Services and Consumer
Resources Person: Dr. B. Tamil Mani, Professor, Department of Co-operation,
Gandhi Gram Rural University, Gandhi Gram

Dr. Tamil Mani briefly explained how the consumers can make use of the bank services and how to get redressal while applying the consumer rights in the changing bank environment. He deliberated about the various services being provided by banks, and the kind of deficiencies generally encountered by the customers. The session focused on the do’s and don'ts in the banking sector.

Technical Session - IV
03.00 pm - 04.00 pm
Topic: Consumer Protection and Legal Framework
Resources Person: Dr S. Raja Mohan, Professor, Alagappa Institute of Management, Alagappa University, Karaikudi

Dr. S.Rajamohan, Professor, Alagappa University highlighted about the consumer issues while buying products or hiring services. He stressed on the legal framework of Consumer Protection Act. It was a session which gave a comprehensive picture of the law relating to Consumer Protection.
Dr. R. Chakkravarthy spoke about the medical malpractices and the medical negligence in the hospitals. He said, because of the long duration of the appeals in the court, no one is willing to file a case. He stressed that the consumers must change their mindset to make use of the provisions of Consumer Protection Act, 1986. He said that the consumers need to be vigilant and careful while availing services of the doctors and must ask to provide them copy of their medical records which is also their right.

DAY II

Technical Session - VI
10.00 am-11.00 am
Topic: Food Safety and Consumer
Resource Person: Dr. Mamta Pathania, Assistant Professor,
IIPA, New Delhi.

Dr. Mamta Pathania spoke about “Food Safety and Consumer”. She told that food being the most important part of all our life therefore consumers should ensure the quality, freshness, nutritive value of the food before consuming it. She highlighted that industries /manufacturers should follow the basic parameters to produce food in hygienic conditions and ensure quality assurance of the processed food with the help of appropriate process technology, trained managers, etc. Her session dealt with an overview of certain aspects dealing with food safety myths and realities and focused on the importance of safe and healthy eating habits making the participants aware of the legal provisions under the law for food safety.

Technical Session – VII
11.15 pm-12.15 pm
Topic: Consumer Grievances and Redressal in Tamil Nadu
Resource Person: Dr. N. Sundaram, Professor, VIT University, Vellore

Dr. N. Sundaram spoke about the “Consumer Grievances Redressal Mechanism in Tamil Nadu”. He shared some of the findings of his study which was based on the functioning of these bodies in Tamil Nadu, figuring the statistics on the function of the three -tier consumer grievances redressal machinery in Tamil Nadu.
He stressed that consumer should check the quality marks with symbols while making a purchase and highlighted about the redressal mechanism in different service sectors, making the consumers aware about their rights and the remedies available therein.

Technical Session – VIII
12.15 pm – 01.15 pm

Topic: Misleading Advertising and Consumer

Resource Person: Prof. Suresh Misra, Chair Professor, IIPA, New Delhi

Prof. Suresh Misra in his session on “Misleading Advertising and Consumer” focused on the impact of media and the advertisements on the buying behavior of rural consumers and also highlighted how the consumers fall into the trap of misleading advertisements due to lack of awareness.

Valedictory Session

In the Valedictory Session, Dr. M. Inbalakshmi, Associate Professor welcomed the gathering. Dr. N. Krishnamoorthy, Principal, G.T.N. Arts College, Dindigul presided over the function. The Valedictory Address was delivered by Dr. N. Markkendayan, Academic Director, G.T.N. Arts College. While addressing the participants he said that government spends money to create awareness among students /teachers to take the consumer movement to rural areas. He stressed a change in the attitude of consumers is required for those who inspite of being aware don’t raise their voice if anything goes wrong. He said that teachers and students are the pillars of the consumer movement and they should lead the torch of consumer awareness forward and such programmes are important in this direction.
Dr. U. Natarajan, Vice Principal (SSC), G.T.N. Arts College, Dindigul while addressing the participants stressed that the consumer awareness and education should be taken to the rural masses and the present workshop is good initiative on the part of IIPA and thanked CCS, IIPA for all the efforts for the present workshop.

The participants gave their feedback about the two day workshop and gave assurance that they will give an outreach to the consumer movement by taking the awareness to their institutions, family, friends, neighbors in letter and spirit.

The Workshop ended with a Vote of Thanks by Dr. M. Ponniah, Workshop Coordinator. The programme was extensively covered by both print and electronic media. It was widely covered by all the local newspapers which aimed at creating awareness in masses about the Consumer Protection Act and the various provisions for the welfare of consumers. (Press clippings attached)

(Mamta Pathania)  
(Suresh Misra)

Workshop Coordinators