

Consumer Disputes and Consumer Redressal Forums in India

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Abstract: Consumer Court is the special purpose court, mainly in India that deals with cases regarding consumer disputes and grievances. These are judiciary set ups by the government to protect the consumer rights. Its main function is to maintain the fair practices by the sellers towards consumers. Consumers can file a case against a seller if they are harassed or exploited by sellers. The court will only give a verdict in favour of the consumers/customers if they have proof of exploitation, i.e., bills or other documents. If a consumer does not have the proper documents required for filing a case then it would be very difficult for the consumer to win or even file a case. A nation level court works for the whole country and deals with amount more than Rs 1 crore. A state level court works at the state level with cases valuing less than 20 lakhs and : A district level court works at the district level with cases valuing upto 20 lakhs. The District Consumer Forum is established in all the District of India, The State Consumer Commission is established in all the State Capitals of India, The "National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission" situated in New Delhi and the governing law is "Consumer Protection Act, in India". It is important to note that the goods purchased or services availed for commercial purposes cannot be challenged under the Consumer Protection Act of India.

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I. Introduction

Consumer protection is a group of laws and organizations designed to ensure the rights of consumers as well as fair trade competition and the free flow of truthful information in the marketplace. The laws are designed to prevent businesses that engage in fraud or specified unfair practices from gaining an advantage over competitors; they may also provide additional protection for the weak and those unable to take care of themselves. Consumer protection laws are a form of government regulation, which aim to protect the rights of consumer.

In India, Consumer Protection Act of 1986 is the law governing consumer protection. Under this law, Separate Consumer tribunals have been set up throughout India in each and every district in which a consumer [complaint can be filed by both the consumer of a goods as well as of the services] can file his complaint on a simple paper without paying any court fees and his complaint will be decided by the Presiding Officer of the District Level. Appeal could be filed to the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions and after that to the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC). The procedures in these tribunals are relatively less formal and more people friendly and they also take less time to decide upon a consumer dispute when compared to the years long time taken by the traditional Indian Judiciary. In recent years, many effective judgement have been passed by some state and National Consumer Forums.

The Grievance redressal mechanism of an organization is the gauge to measure its efficiency and effectiveness as it provides important feedback on the working of the Organization. The main purpose of a Grievance Policy is to place an appropriate mechanism whereby the Customer who believe(s) that he/ she has been wronged by any act of the Company is afforded a fair opportunity to redress his/ her Grievance. Putting the importance and necessity of consumer protection and redressal of grievances in mind, this chapter reviews the frameworks for consumer dispute resolution and redress in India.

II. Review of Literature

Padma and Karnik (1990)¹ in their book entitled 'Complaints Handling' target those people of consumer protection groups who deal with complaints. The authors explain the entire process of Complaint Handling in a simple effective language using actual complaints handling by consumer Education and Research centre as examples. They stress the need for scientific approach to complaints handling. The broad areas covered in this book are process, follow-up and analysis of complaints and setting up a complaints service. The authors make it clear that the main objective of a consumer protection group is bringing about a just and fair solution to any complaint lodged with them by the consumer. According to them when complaints throw light

on the paucity of laws in a particular area, the consumer protection groups can lobby for new laws or amendments in existing law.

Reddy and Ramesh (1998)² conducted a study on the role of an independent agency to protect the consumer interest in twin cities of Hyderabad and Secundrabad. Hyderabad forum received 12,116 cases since its inception, of which 8,051 (66%) have been dispensed of and 4,065 (34%) cases were pending. Study also reported that only 19 per cent of them were fully aware of the Consumer Protection Acts and more than half of the respondents were partially aware of the consumer rights and 30 per cent were not aware of it. Awareness of consumer protection was more among men than the women. From the above studies reviewed it was clear that maximum number of respondents were aware of consumer welfare programmers i.e., Consumer Protection Act but very few consumers utilized the facilities.

Sreevidya (1993)³ in her dissertation work entitled 'Consumer Justice and Public Utility Services' assesses the working formula under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 for rendering justice to the public utility Services.

Lizzy (1996)⁴ in her PhD thesis entitled 'Women and Consumer Protection' highlights the role of women in promoting consumerism in Kerala. She also suggests various measures for the speedy functioning of the consumer disputes redressal agencies in Kerala.

Sreevidya (1993)⁵ in her dissertation work entitled 'Consumer Justice and Public Utility Services' assesses the working formula under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 for rendering justice to the public utility Services.

III. Need of the study

The need of this paper is to study the performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies with disposal of cases, cases filed, Pending with comparative statement in the National Commission, State Commission and District Consumer forums.

Objectives of the study:

The following objectives of present study are:

1. To understand the functioning of Consumer Redressal Forums.
2. To suggest measures that would help to improve the effectiveness of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies.
3. Analyses of this study would helpful for future researchers.

Research Methodology:

The Data were classified, tabulated and arranged according to the needs of the study. The Annual Reports from 31.12 2014 to 31.12.18 were analyzed. The present study has incorporated with the collection of Secondary information from different relevant books, journals, published report of Government, articles, and information has been collected from different websites for the study.

Techniques of analysis of data:

The collected data has been presented with the tables and descriptive analysis techniques like percentage etc.

Limitations of the Study:

This study totally based on evaluates the performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies regarding number of cases filed/disposed of/ pending. The data were collected for Five years (2014-2018).

IV. Consumer Disputes In India

Consumer dispute means dispute where the person against whom a complaint has been made, denies or disputes the allegation contained in the complaint. Before reviewing the consumer redressal forums, it is important to know the different types of consumer disputes. A consumer can approach consumer forum for redressal of following types of disputes.

- 1 Electricity consumption and Bills
- 2 Insurance
- 3 Medical facilities
- 4 Hospitals
- 5 Phone manufacturers (Nokia, Samsung, LG etc.)
- 6 Telecommunication companies (Airtel, Idea, Tata Indicom, Reliance etc.)
- 7 Builder and Developers
- 8 Hotel and Restaurants (Maurya Sherton, Hayaat etc.)
- 9 Airlines (Air India, Jet Airways, Go, Indigo, Lufthansa etc.)
- 10 Travel Agencies (makemytrip.com, yatra.com, clertrip.com etc.)
- 11 Auto Companies (TATA, Maruti, Honda, Hyundai etc.)

- 12 Banking Services
- 13 Sale and purchase of consumables and any other goods
- 14 Manufacturer of any goods
- 15 Any other service provider
- 16 Deficiency in service
- 17 Defect in goods
- 18 Main Service Providers in our country are:
- 19 Telecommunication companies
- 20 Electricity Distribution Companies
- 21 Builders
- 22 Shopkeepers
- 23 Manufacturer of Goods
- 24 Auto Companies
- 25 Banks
- 26 Transport Companies or Government including Railways
- 27 Service Stations
- 28 Repair Centers

The above mentioned list is not exhaustive. The categorization of disputes will depend upon the facts. It is essential that public authorities have a place and play an active role in consumer policy and justice. The simple fact that one or several authorities are responsible for consumer policy has an influence on consumer protection and the role of consumer organizations. Some Member States have a single public authority that deals with consumer law; some have several public authorities that are competent. Yet, in other Member States, consumer organizations are the only body responsible for enforcement of consumer protection law.

V. Consumer Courts In India

Protecting the interests of consumers has been one of the major concerns of the Indian Government. Several policies and legislations have been in place in order to promote the concerns of the consumers and grant them the rights of choice, safety, information and redressal. Accordingly, there is a well-placed departmental set up both at the Central and State level in the form of a separate department.

Fostering the development of effective, low cost ways for consumers to resolve their disputes and obtain monetary compensation for losses sustained is a key consumer policy objective. The particular features of consumer disputes require tailored mechanisms that can provide consumers with access to remedies that do not impose a cost, delay and burden disproportionate to the economic value at stake. Hence, in India, under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986, consumer courts have been established for the redressal of consumer grievances.

**Table 1.1
FUNCTIONAL AND NON-FUNCTIONAL
(STATE COMMISSIONS/DISTRICT FORUMS)**

| Sr. No. | States | As on | Whether SC Functional or Non-Functional | No. of District fora | Functional | Non-Functional |
|---------|----------------------|------------|---|----------------------|------------|----------------|
| 1 | Andhra Pradesh | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 17 | 17 | 0 |
| 2 | A & N Islands | 30.06.2015 | Yes | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 3 | Arunachal Pradesh | 30.06.2017 | Yes | 18 | 18 | 0 |
| 4 | Assam | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 23 | 21 | 2 |
| 5 | Bihar | 30.06.2014 | Yes | 38 | 33 | 5 |
| 6 | Chandigarh | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 23 | 21 | 2 |
| 7 | Chattisgarh | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 27 | 20 | 7 |
| 8 | Daman & Diu | 31.03.2011 | Yes | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 9 | Dadra & Nagar Haveli | 31.03.2011 | Yes | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 10 | Delhi | 30.06.2017 | Yes | 11 | 10 | 1 |
| 11 | Goa | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 12 | Gujrat | 31.12.2016 | Yes | 38 | 38 | 0 |
| 13 | Haryana | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 21 | 21 | 0 |
| 14 | Himachal Pradesh | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 12 | 8 | 4 |
| 15 | Jammu & Kashmir | 30.06.2014 | Yes | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| 16 | Jharkhand | 30.06.2017 | Yes | 24 | 24 | 0 |
| 17 | Karnataka | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 31 | 31 | 0 |
| 18 | Kerala | 30.09.2015 | Yes | 14 | 14 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|----------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|----|
| 19 | Lakshadweep | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 20 | Madhya Pradesh | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 51 | 51 | 0 |
| 21 | Maharashtra | 31.12.2015 | Yes | 40 | 40 | 0 |
| 22 | Manipur | 31.12.2015 | Yes | 9 | 4 | 5 |
| 23 | Meghalaya | 31.03.2015 | Yes | 11 | 7 | 4 |
| 24 | Mizoram | 30.06.2015 | Yes | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| 25 | Nagaland | 30.09.2015 | Yes | 11 | 11 | 0 |
| 26 | Orissa | 31.03.2015 | Yes | 31 | 31 | 0 |
| 27 | Pondicherry | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| 28 | Punjab | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 20 | 20 | 0 |
| 29 | Rajasthan | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 37 | 37 | 0 |
| 30 | Sikkim | 31.03.2015 | Yes | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 31 | Tamil Nadu | 30.06.2017 | Yes | 31 | 31 | 0 |
| 32 | Telangana | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| 33 | Tripura | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 4 | 4 | 0 |
| 34 | Uttar Pradesh | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 79 | 79 | 0 |
| 35 | Uttarakhand | 30.11.2017 | Yes | 13 | 11 | 2 |
| 36 | West Bengal | 30.09.2017 | Yes | 23 | 23 | 0 |
| | TOTAL | | | 691 | 659 | 32 |

Source: ncdr.nic.in/National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission, Delhi.

Consumer Court is the name given to special purpose courts, mainly in India, that deal with cases regarding consumer disputes and grievances. These are judiciary set ups by the government to protect the consumer rights. If any consumer is cheated by the seller he/she can approach the redressal forum to seek justice. Their main function is to maintain the fair practices by the sellers towards consumers.

Consumer Protection Act provides for the creation of consumer courts. The central government is given the responsibility to create and maintain the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in New Delhi. The state government is given the responsibility to create a State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission at the state level and a District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum at the district level.

5.2.a. National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

The National Commission was constituted in the year 1988. The National Consumer Court must ordinarily be functioning in New Delhi and is presided over by a person who is currently or has been in the past a judge of the Supreme Court. The President of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC) is appointed by the Central Government after consultation with the Chief Justice of India. The National Consumer Commission has a minimum of four other members and is appointed by a committee chaired by a Supreme Court judge as recommended by the Chief Justice of India. Members of the NCDRC can have a term of up to five years or up to 70 years, whichever is earlier.

If your complaint seeks more than one crore rupees of compensation from a company, then the National Consumer Commission has the pecuniary jurisdiction over your complaint. In order to attain the objects of the Consumer Protection Act, the National Commission has also been conferred with the powers of administrative control over all the State Commissions by calling for periodical returns regarding the institution, disposal and pendency of cases. It is empowered to issue instructions regarding: (1) adoption of uniform procedure in the hearing of the matters; (2) prior service of copies of documents produced by one party to the opposite parties; (3) speedy grant of copies of documents; and (4) generally over-seeing the functioning of the State Commissions or the District Forums to ensure that the objects and purposes of the Act are best served without in any way interfering with their quasi-judicial freedom.

The National Consumer Court handles five types of complaints:

- Appeals from State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions
- Consumer complaints that occurred in India, except in the State of Jammu and Kashmir
- Cases from State Consumer Commissions where there has been accusations or proof of material irregularity or illegal activities
- Cases where ex-parte (where verdicts have been passed in the absence of either parties) orders have to be set aside.
- Complaints that has been sought or need to be transferred from one State Consumer Commission to another in the interest of justice.

If you are not satisfied by the verdict from the National Consumer Court, you can appeal in the Supreme Court, within a period of 30 days. If a verdict has been given against the company, it can appeal only after depositing 50% of the compensation to be paid to you or Rs.50000/-, whichever is lesser.

Commission-wise detail of complained filed, disposed off and pending has been given in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2
Detail of Consumer complaints filed, disposed off and Pending at the National, State and District Forums (Updated on 28.01.2018)

| Sr. No. | Name of Agency | Cases since inception | | | |
|---------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|---------|---------------------|
| | | Filed | Disposed off | Pending | % of total Disposal |
| 1 | National Commission | 117430 | 100419 | 17011 | 85.51% |
| 2 | State Commissions | 757887 | 649606 | 108281 | 85.71% |
| 3 | District Forums | 4062476 | 3759249 | 303227 | 92.54% |
| | TOTAL | 4937793 | 4509274 | 428519 | 91.32% |

Source: ncdr.nic.in/National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission, Delhi.

Table 1.2 depicts that since the inception of consumer protection Act, out of total filed cases, 85.51 per cent of cases have been disposed off by the National commission, 85.71 per cent of cases have been disposed off by state commission and 92.54 per cent of cases have been disposed off by district forums.

5.2.b. State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

Under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 a State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission shall be set up by the State Government for the respective State. At present there are 35 State Commissions functioning in differ States. The law provides that the State Consumer Commission function in the state capital, but the government has the powers to move it as needed. The President of the State Consumer Commission shall be or should have been a High Court judge and should be appointed only after consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court with the states jurisdiction. The remaining members of the commission are appointed by a committee with the President of the State Consumer Court as its chairman, and they can have a term of up to five years or up to 67 years, whichever is earlier.

The State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission deals with a pecuniary jurisdiction of only those complaints where the compensation sought is higher than twenty lakhs but lesser than one crore.

The State Consumer Forum usually hears cases of three types:

- Appeals from District Consumer Forums
- Cases against companies that operates an office or a branch in the state.
- Cases where the actual reason why you are filing the complaint (such as signing of an agreement or payment of a bill) partially or fully occurred within the state.

The State Consumer Court also has the powers to transfer a case from one District Consumer Forum to another Forum provided there is such a request or it is in the interest of the law. If you are not satisfied by the verdict from the State Consumer Court, you can appeal in the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, within a period of 30 days. If a verdict has been given against the company, it can appeal only after depositing 50% of the compensation to be paid to you or Rs.35000/-, whichever is lesser.

Table 1.3
The state-wise details of cases filed, disposed off and pending in the state commission has been shown in Table1.3.

| Sr.No | Name of State | As on | Cases filed | Cases disposed of | Cases Pending | % of Disposal |
|-------|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | National Commission | 30.09.2018 | 124418 | 105070 | 19348 | 84.45 |
| 1 | Andhra Pradesh | 31.08.2018 | 33360 | 32319 | 1041 | 96.88 |
| 2 | A&N Islands | 30.06.2015 | 111 | 106 | 5 | 95.50 |
| 3 | Arunachal Pradesh | 30.09.2017 | 104 | 95 | 9 | 91.35 |
| 4 | Assam | 31.08.2018 | 3140 | 2623 | 517 | 83.54 |
| 5 | Bihar | 31.08.2018 | 19765 | 17586 | 2179 | 88.98 |
| 6 | Chandigarh | 31.08.2018 | 21560 | 20795 | 765 | 96.45 |
| 7 | Chattisgarh | 30.09.2018 | 13795 | 13488 | 307 | 97.77 |
| 8 | Oaman & Diu and DNH | 31.03.2011 | 25 | 20 | 5 | 80.00 |
| 9 | Delhi | 30.09.2018 | 49858 | 42336 | 7522 | 84.91 |
| 10 | Goa | 30.09.2018 | 3234 | 3021 | 213 | 93.41 |
| 11 | Gujarat | 31.08.2018 | 57938 | 52526 | 5412 | 90.66 |
| 12 | Haryana | 31.08.2018 | 52315 | 49446 | 2869 | 94.52 |

| | | | | | | |
|----|------------------|------------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| 13 | Himachal Pradesh | 30.09.2018 | 10137 | 9762 | 375 | 96.30 |
| 14 | Jammu & Kashmir | 31.05.2016 | 9038 | 7549 | 1489 | 83.53 |
| 15 | Jharkhand | 30.06.2018 | 6460 | 5649 | 811 | 87.45 |
| 16 | Karnataka | 31.08.2018 | 59129 | 49152 | 9977 | 83.13 |
| 17 | Kerala | 31.05.2018 | 31180 | 28139 | 3041 | 90.25 |
| 18 | Lakshadweep | 31.08.2018 | 18 | 16 | 2 | 88.89 |
| 19 | Madhya Pradesh | 31.08.2018 | 54074 | 44132 | 9942 | 81.61 |
| 20 | Maharashtra | 31.05.2018 | 92356 | 73948 | 18408 | 80.07 |
| 21 | Manipur | 31.08.2018 | 170 | 164 | 6 | 96.47 |
| 22 | Meghalaya | 31.12.2015 | 300 | 285 | 15 | 95.00 |
| 23 | Mizoram | 31.03.2015 | 242 | 218 | 24 | 90.08 |
| 24 | Nagaland | 30.09.2015 | 165 | 136 | 29 | 82.42 |
| 25 | Odisha | 30.06.2018 | 26055 | 19069 | 6986 | 73.19 |
| 26 | Puducherry | 30.09.2018 | 1331 | 1081 | 50 | 95.58 |
| 27 | Punjab | 31.07.2018 | 39259 | 38043 | 1216 | 96.90 |
| 28 | Rajasthan | 31.08.2018 | 67739 | 63069 | 4670 | 93.11 |
| 29 | Sikkim | 30.09.2018 | 77 | 69 | 8 | 89.61 |
| 30 | Tamil Nadu | 31.08.2018 | 29226 | 25060 | 4166 | 85.75 |
| 31 | Telangana | 31.08.2018 | 3717 | 1625 | 2092 | 43.72 |
| 32 | Tripura | 30.09.2018 | 1834 | 1814 | 20 | 98.91 |
| 33 | Uttar Pradesh | 30.06.2018 | 85843 | 60529 | 25314 | 70.51 |
| 34 | Uttarakhand | 30.06.2018 | 6267 | 5282 | 985 | 84.28 |
| 35 | West Bengal | 30.09.2017 | 32422 | 27314 | 5108 | 84.25 |
| | Total | | 812044 | 696466 | 115578 | 85.77 |

Source: [scdrc.nic.in/State Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission, Delhi](http://scdrc.nic.in/State%20Consumer%20Dispute%20Redressal%20Commission,%20Delhi).

Table 1.3 reveals that consumers in all the States and Union Territories have filed cases/complaints against the wrong done by the service/goods providers. The percentage of disposal of cases is highest in Tripura (that is, 98.91 per cent) and lowest in Telangana (that is 43.72 per cent).

The State Commission shall ordinarily function in the State Capital but may perform its functions at such other place as the State Government may, in consultation with the State Commission, notify in the Official Gazette, from time to time.

5.2.c. District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum

Under the Act, the State Government shall establish a District Forum in each district of the State, though, more than one District Forum may be established in a district if it is deemed fit. Presently, there are 659 District Forums functioning in different States. The President and members are directly/indirectly appointed by the state government and he shall be eligible to be a district judge. All members of the court can have a term of up to five years or up to 65 years, whichever is earlier. The District Consumer Forum cannot conduct a hearing without the President and at least one other member.

This consumer court deals with complaints where the compensation sought is less than twenty lakhs. This limit is commonly known as the 'pecuniary jurisdiction' of the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum.

A District Consumer Forum can hear cases for any company that operates an office or a branch in the district. It can also hear cases provided the actual reason why you are filing the complaint (such as sale or maintenance service that led to the defect) partially or fully occurred within the district. For this same reason, it is very important that you do not do business with any company that does not have local representation or one that makes you sign an agreement regarding the jurisdiction of the dispute.

The law provides that the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum has the same powers as a civil court under Code of Civil Procedure 1908, but you may be surprised as to how much of this power in law books actually manifests when put to practice. The District Consumer Forum can order the company to take the following actions once it hears the complaint and decides that the company is at fault:

- 1 Correct deficiencies in the product to what they claim
- 2 Repair defect free of charges
- 3 Replace product with similar or superior product
- 4 Issue a full refund of the price
- 5 Pay compensation for damages/ costs/ inconveniences
- 6 Withdraw the sale of the product altogether
- 7 Discontinue or not repeat any unfair trade practice or the restrictive trade practice
- 8 Issue corrective advertisement for any earlier misrepresentation

If one is not satisfied with the verdict from the District Consumer Court, you can appeal in the State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission within a period of 30 days.

If a verdict has been given against the company, it can appeal only after depositing 50% of the compensation to be paid to you or Rs.25000/-, whichever is lesser.

There are important differences regarding the (legal) position of consumer organizations in relation to different authorities. The rights and possibilities which consumer organizations have at their disposal may vary significantly from country to country, but also within the national context. Consumer organizations may be explicitly designated and granted the status of an “interested party” in the procedures initiated by a certain authority, e.g. a “consumer protection” authority. They may be entitled to request certain measures to be taken, to receive responses to complaints they filed with the authority within a certain time period and they may even have the right to challenge decisions taken by the authority before courts. This special status may be granted in relation to a consumer authority, but not in relation to a competition authority for example. Consumer organizations can use such a “qualified” position to put more pressure on public authorities and to render the enforcement system more efficient.

State-wise details of cases filed, disposed off and pending in district forums has been given in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4
State Wise details of cases filed, disposed off and pending in District Forums

| Sr.No | Name of State | As on | Cases filed | Cases disposed of | Cases Pending | % of Disposal |
|-------|---------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1 | Andhra Pradesh | 31.08.2018 | 120453 | 118803 | 1650 | 98.63 |
| 2 | A&N Islands | 30.06.2015 | 767 | 720 | 47 | 93.87 |
| 3 | Arunachal Pradesh | 30.09.2017 | 515 | 486 | 29 | 94.37 |
| 4 | Assam | 31.08.2016 | 16157 | 14736 | 1421 | 91.21 |
| 5 | Bihar | 31.08.2018 | 103003 | 88050 | 14953 | 85.48 |
| 6 | Chandigarh | 31.08.2018 | 59713 | 58446 | 1267 | 97.88 |
| 7 | Chattisgarh | 30.09.2018 | 53975 | 47614 | 6361 | 88.21 |
| 8 | Oaman & Diu and DNH | 31.03.2011 | 56704 | 55070 | 1634 | 97.12 |
| 9 | Delhi | 31.05.2018 | 49039 | 41795 | 7244 | 85.23 |
| 10 | Goa | 30.09.2018 | 7499 | 7374 | 125 | 98.33 |
| 11 | Gujarat | 31.08.2018 | 232413 | 213429 | 18984 | 91.83 |
| 12 | Haryana | 31.08.2018 | 263956 | 256513 | 7443 | 97.18 |
| 13 | Himachal Pradesh | 30.09.2018 | 66727 | 64256 | 2471 | 96.30 |
| 14 | Jammu & Kashmir | 31.12.2017 | 20729 | 18855 | 1937 | 90.68 |
| 15 | Jharkhand | 30.06.2018 | 40756 | 36698 | 4058 | 90.04 |
| 16 | Karnataka | 31.08.2018 | 203231 | 194485 | 8746 | 95.70 |
| 17 | Kerala | 31.05.2018 | 213628 | 203490 | 10138 | 95.25 |
| 18 | Lakshadweep | 31.08.2018 | 89 | 79 | 10 | 88.76 |
| 19 | Madhya Pradesh | 31.08.2018 | 243777 | 222065 | 21712 | 91.09 |
| 20 | Maharashtra | 30.06.2018 | 409830 | 369712 | 40117 | 90.21 |
| 21 | Manipur | 31.12.2015 | 1297 | 1240 | 57 | 95.61 |
| 22 | Meghalaya | 31.03.2015 | 1005 | 925 | 80 | 92.04 |
| 23 | Mizoram | 30.06.2015 | 3771 | 3733 | 38 | 98.99 |
| 24 | Nagaland | 30.09.2015 | 652 | 598 | 54 | 91.72 |
| 25 | Odisha | 30.06.2018 | 113352 | 105682 | 7670 | 93.23 |
| 26 | Puducherry | 30.09.2018 | 3282 | 3096 | 186 | 94.33 |
| 27 | Punjab | 31.07.2018 | 200451 | 193226 | 7225 | 96.40 |
| 28 | Rajasthan | 31.08.2018 | 385326 | 350936 | 34390 | 91.08 |
| 29 | Sikkim | 30.09.2018 | 416 | 387 | 29 | 93.03 |
| 30 | Tamil Nadu | 31.08.2018 | 119544 | 110562 | 8982 | 92.49 |
| 31 | Telangana | 31.08.2018 | 93532 | 88523 | 5009 | 94.64 |
| 32 | Tripura | 31.07.2018 | 3863 | 3748 | 115 | 97.02 |
| 33 | Uttar Pradesh | 30.06.2018 | 700458 | 622173 | 78285 | 88.82 |
| 34 | Uttarakhand | 30.06.2018 | 42092 | 38898 | 3194 | 92.41 |
| 35 | West Bengal | 30.09.2017 | 117350 | 109547 | 7803 | 93.35 |
| | Total | | 3949415 | 3645951 | 303464 | 92.32 |

Source: ncdr.nic.in/ National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission, Delhi.

Table 1.4 reveals that District Forums in Mizoram has disposed off 98.99 per cent of cases, which highest among the states/UTs. The lowest percentage is recorded in Delhi (that is, 88.23per cent).

A person cannot file a complaint in a consumer court if two years have elapsed after the cause of action (such as payment of a bill or the incident that started the dispute with the company).

If a consumer is not satisfied by the decision of the District Forum, he/she can challenge the same before the State Commission and against the order of the State Commission a consumer can come to the National Commission.

To provide speedy and simple redressal to consumer disputes, a quasi-judicial machinery is sought to be set up at the District, State and Central levels. These quasi-judicial bodies will observe the principles of natural justice and have been empowered to give reliefs of a specific nature and to award, wherever appropriate, compensation to consumers. Penalties for non-compliance of the orders given by the quasi-judicial bodies have also been provided.

Sum Up

Consumer Court is the special purpose court, mainly in India that deals with cases regarding consumer disputes and grievances. These are judiciary set ups by the government to protect the consumer rights. Its main function is to maintain the fair practices by the sellers towards consumers. Consumers can file a case against a seller if they are harassed or exploited by sellers. The court will only give a verdict in favour of the consumers/customers if they have proof of exploitation, i.e., bills or other documents. If a consumer does not have the proper documents required for filing a case then it would be very difficult for the consumer to win or even file a case. A nation level court works for the whole country and deals with amount more than Rs 1 crore. A state level court works at the state level with cases valuing less than 20 lakhs and : A district level court works at the district level with cases valuing upto 20 lakhs. The District Consumer Forum is established in all the District of India, The State Consumer Commission is established in all the State Capitals of India, The "National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission" situated in New Delhi and the governing law is "Consumer Protection Act, in India". It is important to note that the goods purchased or services availed for commercial purposes cannot be challenged under the Consumer Protection Act of India.

Suggestions: Following are some of the suggestions to

- 1 The consumer cases should be finalized within reasonable time period so that faith of the consumers on the consumer protection commission and forums could be enhanced.
- 2 The Government should encourage the voluntary consumer organizations to set up their branch offices at the district level or if possible at the block level. So that the consumers can get proper information related to consumer awareness, consumer rights and responsibilities and knowledge related to how to file the complaints.
- 3 There should be proper publicity of consumer rights and consumer protection legislations on television, radio, newspapers, magazines and internet.
- 4 In spreading awareness, social media and new media can play an important role. Blogs, twitter, Face book etc. should be used to educate people.
- 5 For more effective performance of Consumer Disputes Redressal Agencies Central and States Government provide adequate staff to the National, State and District forums.
- 6 Government should provide more facilities to the State and District forums staff for continuing daily work to clear the pending cases.
- 7 The central and state Government should identify the reasons for delays in disposal of cases.
- 8 Voluntary Consumer Organization should be more active and take initiation to clear the pending cases.

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