

-: An alert consumer in changing Gujarat :-

A dynamic equilibrium of market forces and awareness among consumers is necessary to carry forward the growth with equity and provide comfort levels to people. Gujarat of late has witnessed a spurt in infrastructure, insurance, banking, retail business, entertainment activities and trade linked services. Many investors in various realms of business have opened outposts and thronged here to create wealth. Such wealth creation has been possible mainly due to the vibrancy of economy, stability of business, opportunities for income. Going by any indices, the State is marching ahead over other states beginning from cell phones to automobiles, television sets to home appliances, Textile clothes to gold making, credit cards to building of houses. What is utterly lacking to cope up with this ingress of service providers and goods creators, is the awareness levels of consumers with regard to their rights of choice, information, complaint and also redressing their grievances if they are robbed covertly or cheated overtly. Any kind of unfair trade business practice does attract the provisions of the consumer laws which interferes with or violates the rights of consumers for getting value of their money paid for goods and services.

Desires are innate to everyone. It is the art of advertisement or the market virus that transforms desires to make them into demands. Some times demands are also invented, fuelled and created by trade practices and business strategies. There can be no value judgment on these practices but the overall impact of these practices result in buying spree, aggressive sales and ceaseless market promotion measures.

Consumers have to be aware of the fact that nothing is free and mistake business for charity. The gain and loss senses are didactic in nature, but as consumer they have to sense everything in terms of how much? Why for? And in what numbers? If the goods sold are inferior or overpriced and there is defect in services or goods consumed, the consumer has to rise to occasion like a phoenix and shout at the top of voice to make his anger felt or the guilt exposed. There are forums of consumer organizations, consumer welfare offices at Taluka or district level attached to revenue offices and also the Director of Consumer Affairs which can express and carry their concerns or convert them into plaints by taking due cognizance at appropriate time. There have been success stories of cases of gluttony who after attending slimming classes, gained weight, than losing and have got compensated for being cheated as soft targets. The case of Zero interest for sale of motorbikes is another instance where the facts were proved untrue as they were posed. Impression of false nature like, goods once sold could not be returned have been proved wrong and all malls or shop establishments have been asked to make this appear as a writing on their wall for assuring customers about their security. Selling underweight goods, over priced items and damaged goods or likewise are areas where the consumers in Gujarat need to become armed to fight out Wrong bills and overcharging in any services provided including credit cards are some of the emerging service areas where consumerism is getting more active and the service providers getting wary and worried of this rising consciousness.

In short alertness is the key point and vigilance the hallmark for consumers in changing Gujarat. With competition becoming more intense, luring and attractive offers emerging as new business strategies, the consumers have to stay away from those areas where risks are imminent and firm up their minds to stand up for things like replacement or return of goods and demand compensation against any injury or loss caused.



- SK Manda