

Introduction

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 is the act of the Parliament of India. This Act replaces the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. This Act helps to provide protection of consumer's interests, to establish authorities for effective, timely and proper administration and settlement of consumer disputes and other consumer related matters.

This Act was set to make consumer a king in a free market economy. The approach of "caveat amptor" meaning 'let the buyer beware' has now been changed to "caveat venditor" meaning 'let the seller beware.' This Act is clearly focused on giving consumer more power by taking transparency to another level.

Due to growing competition and attempt to increase their sales and market share may be tempted to engage in exploitative and unfair trade practices like defective and unsafe products, adulteration, false and misleading advertisements, the consumer protection act provides for setting up consumer dispute redressal commissions (CDRC).

According to the Consumer Protection Act 2019, a Consumer is a person who buys any goods or avails any services for a consideration, which has been paid or promised to pay or partly paid or partly promised or under any scheme of deferred payment. A consumer also includes a person who is using the goods or beneficiary of service with the approval of the buyer and applies to both online and offline transactions through electronic means of teleshopping or direct selling or multilevel marketing.

Redressal Agencies or Three-Tier Grievances Machinery under the Consumer Protection Act

The three redressal agencies under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 are District Commission, State Commission, and National Commission.

1. District Commission

A district commission includes a president (who can be a working or retired judge of the District Court) and two other members. They are appointed by the state government. One can file a complaint for goods and services of ₹1 crore or less in this agency. For the complaints filed, if the district commission feels a requirement, it sends the goods to the laboratory for testing and gives its decision based on the laboratory report and facts. If the aggrieved party is not happy with the jurisdiction of the district commission, then they can appeal against the judgment of this agency in the State Commission within 45 days.

2. State Commission

A state commission includes a president (who must be a working or retired judge of the High Court) and at least two other members. They are appointed by the state government. One can file a complaint of goods and services worth less than ₹10 crores and more than ₹1 crore in this agency. After receiving a complaint from the aggrieved party, the state commission contacts the party against whom the complaint has been filed. Also, for the complaints filed, if the state commission feels a requirement, it sends the goods to the laboratory for testing. If the aggrieved party is not happy with the jurisdiction of the state commission, then they can appeal against the judgment of this agency in the National Commission within 30 days by depositing 50% of the fine money.

3. National Commission

A national commission includes a president and four other members one of whom shall be a woman, and Central Government appoints them. One can file a complaint of goods and services worth more than ₹10 crores in this agency. After receiving a complaint from the aggrieved party, the national commission informs the party against whom the complaint has been filed. Also, for the complaints filed, if the state commission feels a requirement, it sends the goods to the laboratory for testing, and then gives judgement based on the reports.

If the aggrieved party is not happy with the jurisdiction of the national commission, then they can appeal against the judgment of this agency in the Supreme Court within 30 days by depositing 50% of the fine money.

Three Tier System of Redressal under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019

- The Consumer Protection Act provides for a three-tier system of quasi judicial agencies for redressing consumer grievances.
- They follow a hierarchy of district commission, state commission and national commission starting from the bottom to the top.
- These commission are setup with the purpose to promote, protect and enforce the rights of the consumer.
- These agencies act like consumer courts at the district, state and central levels for better protection of the interest of consumers and to provide simple, speedy and proper redressal of consumer disputes.
- There is at least one District Commission in every district and this has truly brought justice to the doorstep of every consumer.
- Then, there is one State Commission in each state and a national commission located in Delhi, named as National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.
- Provisions have been made in the Act for the circuit benches of the State Commission and National Commission to sit at other places also.
- Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions work to provide better and all round protection of consumers, to create framework for consumers to seek proper redressal, to provide speedy and timely redressal of grievances, to introduce effective and time bound administration and settlement of consumer disputes, and to provide rights to consumers, etc.

It is very important and necessary to give each commission such amount of powers which will ensure their autonomy and smooth functioning.

Basis	District Commission State	State commission	National commission
Meaning	A consumer dispute redressal forum at the district level establish by State Government is known	A consumer dispute redressal forum at the State level established by the State Government is	A consumer dispute redressal forum at the National level establish by the Central Government

	as District Commission.	known as State Commission.	by notification is known as National Commission.
Jurisdiction	Territorial Jurisdiction of District Commission is entire district in which it is established	It can entertain original cases as well as appeals against the order of District Commission which are within the geographical limits of the state.	It can entertain original cases as well as appeals against the order of State Commission and the Central Authority which are within the geographical limits of the state.
Composition	Not less than two and not more than such member of members as may be prescribed, in consultation with the Central Government.	Not less than four and not more than such member of members as may be prescribed, in consultation with the Central Government	Not less than four and not more than such number of members as may be prescribed, in consultation with the Central Government.
Minimum age of members	Members should be not less than 35 years of age.	Members should be not less than 35 years of age.	Members should be not less than 35 years of age.
Tenure	Five years or 65 years of age, whichever is earlier or till the completion of his term for which he has been appointed.	Five years or 67 years of age, whichever is earlier or till the completion of his term for which he has been appointed.	Fiver years or 70 years of age, whichever is earlier or till the completion of his term for which he has been appointed.
Presiding officer	A person who is sitting or retired or qualified to be District Judge, appointed by the Central Government.	A person who is sitting or retired or Judge of High Court shall, be appointed by the Central Government as the president of State Commission.	A person who is or has been a Judge of Supreme Court, shall be appointed by the Central Government by notification is known as the president of National Commission
Monetary Jurisdiction	Complaints can be filed if value of goods/services is upto Rs.1 crore.	Complaints can be filed if value of goods/services is more than Rs.1 crore & less than Rs. 10 crore	Complaints can be filed if value of goods/services is more than Rs. 10 crore.

Appeal against order	Aggrieved party if unsatisfied with the Jurisdiction of District Forum can file an appeal against the judgement in State Commission within 45 days by depositing 50% of that amount in the manner as may be prescribed.	Aggrieved party if unsatisfied with the Jurisdiction of State Commission can file an appeal against the judgement in National Commission within 30 days by depositing 50% of that amount in the manner as may be prescribed.	Aggrieved party if unsatisfied with the Jurisdiction of National Commission can file an appeal against the judgement in Supreme Court within 30 days by depositing 50% of that amount in the manner as may be prescribed.
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