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**CHAPTER IX      CONSUMER EDUCATION AND BUYMANSHIP**

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Meaning of Consumer Education

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## CHAPTER - IX

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### CONSUMER EDUCATION & BUYMANSHIP

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The aim of consumer education is to enable the modern consumer to identify his need and to choose wisely to get the best value for his money.

The consumer education movement should teach consumers how to seek, use and evaluate consumer information, how to do their shopping so that it ensures the best buy in relation to other resources, values and life styles. Consumer education is totally lacking in the rural areas which has to be given priority now.

The modes of education could be formal or informal. Formally the school students could be taught about the various facets of consumer protection as a part of regular curriculum or through lectures, seminars and group discussions. At the informal level, the education has to target at the society, as a whole. People have to be motivated to adopt socially desirable consumption standards. In doing so the voluntary organisations, could bring out publications, brochures and other informative articles. They could educate the consumers to insist for packed, properly labelled and graded products of consumable nature. They could apprise them of the need to conserve the scarce resources like water, energy etc. which are important assets of the nation. They could also educate them about the provisions of Consumer Protection Act and the remedies available to them.

Government on its part has also initiated a number of measures. Consumer education being crucial to the programme, support of media particularly radio and T.V. is sought for this purpose.

Consumer education refers to conscious preparation of an individual so that he is not deceived in anyway. Consumer must be educated about his supremacy, his role in supporting the trade and industry, his rights and duties and the way he should make wise purchases.

The consumer education that is given should help the consumer to :

1. Develop Skills to make informal decisions in the purchase of goods and services in the light of personal values, maximum utilisation of resources available alternatives, ecological considerations and changing economic conditions.
2. Become knowledgeable about the laws rights and methods of recourse in order to participate effectively and self confidently in the market place and take appropriate action to seek redressal.
3. Develop an Understanding of the consumer citizen role in economic social and government systems and how to influence those systems to make them responsive to consumer needs.

The functions of consumer education can be broadly set out as follows:

1. Achieving competence to life within one's income budgeting and saving.

2. Achieving competence to determine the best ways and best products to buy.
3. Developing an understanding of market facilities including co-operatives.
4. Understanding credit use and credit costs-the use of cash or hire purchase when buying.
5. Learning to use and utilise community facilities what government services are available for the citizens use.
6. Developing an ability to understand and judge consumer information - how to view and analyse advertising.
7. Fighting exploitation - practical steps to identify, confront and eliminate consumer exploitation.
8. Knowing the common adulterants used in the adulteration of foods, drugs, and cosmetics and the simple methods of testing to detect the presence of these adulterants.
9. Knowing the basic provisions of the laws enacted for the protection of consumers and the authorities concerned for the enforcement of these laws.

Consumer education seeks to teach the individual how to obtain maximum advantage of each day's living.

Efforts should be made to initiate and spread the philosophy of consumer education to rural as well as urban areas. They should ultimately turn consumers into an important enlightened pressure group. The Urge of consumer education should come from the government, business community, voluntary agencies and consumers themselves.

It is a mistake to think that consumer education goes against the interests of the producers. For from that, it will preserve and promote loyalty of the consumers towards products. Consumerism and consumer education assume special significance for two important reasons :

- [i] consumer welfare is the corner stone of business. The reason is simple viz. more satisfaction induces regular market for commodities and
- [ii] by promoting socially desirable consumption pattern, a country could march towards a better, highly integrated social and economic development.

There is a need to disseminating the right kind of information through all available modes of communication. This information has to be provided in the local languages in the most lucid, illustrative and illuminating manner. The media like newspapers, periodicals, radio and television can be used for propogating the basic ideas of consumerism. The Government can also rely on film shows which will be more fruitful than lectures and seminars.

#### BUYMANSHIP:

Buymanship, as opposed to Salesmanship is a by-product of Consumer Education. There are professional sellers but amateur buyers. The reason for this state of affairs is not far to seek. There is abundant literature on salesmanship, advertisement and sales promotion for fostering salesmanship. The literature on buymanship, on the other hand, is inadequate and not readily available. 'Buymanship' is the word coined by Mr. Sherlekar to nurture it with same vigour and strength as "Salesmanship".

Better buymanship substitutes rational or intelligent action for emotional consumer action in the market. Better buymanship is insurance against high pressure salesmanship, aggressive advertising and high powered sales promotion. An alert and informed consumer is his own best friend and can protect himself from exploitation.

How to be an intelligent buyer?

1. Be prepared with adequate and up - to - date information about buying. Such information can be collected from consumer magazines, like 'Keemat', advertisements and buying guides.
2. Never rush to any transaction involving goods and services with which you are not familiar.
3. Compare the prices of same or similar goods in other stores and make sure that the price is competitive.
4. Get a written quotation for any repair, maintenance or construction you get done setting out in detail exactly what the quotation includes.
5. Get any guarantee or warranty in writing and that the term and condition are understood. Seek competent advice if in doubt before the purchase is completed.
6. Bait advertisement is used to lure innocent consumers into a store. Watch for lures and traps such as baits and switch advertising, deceptive labels, etc. The low priced advertised items are not shown on the counters and the salesman may persuade the consumer to buy expensive item.
7. Never sign a contract [or an agreement to sale] on the spur of the moment, because the moment you sign a contract it becomes a commitment.

8. Never automatically believe whatever a salesman tells. Salesmen often say re-assuring things to persuade people to buy. Most firms don't take responsibility for anything their salesmen say unless it is covered in the contract.
9. Guard against the temptation of 'free gifts'. There is no such thing as 'free gifts' in business. The consumer is made to pay for it in one way or another.
10. It is desirable to have price comparison study of a product in several stores. Shopping around before actual buying helps in saving. Consumers who shop around comparing quantity, quality and price get a definite reduction in their purchase bills.

It is not true that the consumer gets whatever he pays for. There is no close relationship between price and quality. Sellers want the consumers believe that higher price means higher quality. Out of 100 items surveyed in one survey, it was found that only 25 had significant price correlation, 20 items actually had negative correlation [i.e. lower price was associated with high quality] The remaining 55 items had a very low correlation.

Shopping around is justifiable particularly while buying costly articles.

11. Bargain for lower prices and other concessions or services. Careful buyer should compel the shopkeeper to give price reductions directly or indirectly.
12. Buy in seasons. During certain seasons, buying is profitable. Seasonal sales, annual sales, one day sales, reduction sales etc. can give about 15 - 20% savings.

13. Read carefully labels, warranties and freshness date or expiry date particularly for foods and medicines.
14. Check the quantity; donot be fooled by the size of the package.  
Check deceptive packaging. For example, a bottle may have false bottom.  
Donot be misled by the vague terms such as 'family size' 'giant size' 'economy pack'. Such labels are meaningless. Check the labels to know the actual net weight, measure or count.
15. Check the prices and totals on the bills. When unit pricing becomes universal, price checking becomes convenient. Find out if there are mistakes in calculations and totals.
16. Purchase by quantity not by rupees worth. Never ask for a 'handful' or 'thirty paise worth',or 'a rupees worth' .  
Purchase by volume, weight or count and note the price per unit.
17. Credit purchases cost more and result in future worries.  
Always adopt cash and carry system. Purchasing on credit gives more room to the traders for exploitation.
18. Keep record of your purchases. Preserve bills or receipts  
This will help in redressing the grievances.  
Consumer Education leads to Buymanship which is a shield against all atrocities or modern business. Better buymanship is a counter-part of modern salesmanship and ensures equal and balanced contest in the market.

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