

Abstract

The age old doctrine of 'caveat emptor' and unregulated laissez-faire system are now unacceptable. Today, a large number of countries all over the world have antitrust legislation and other laws as well as the groups of consumerists protecting the consumers to ensure that the trading standards are improved and that the restrictive and unfair trade practices are controlled.

Sri Lanka being a developing country, is eager to promote industrial development with social justice. The monopolistic restrictive and unfair trade practices adversely affect the free trade and commerce and harm the consumers. The attack on monopolistic and restrictive trade practices began in Sri Lanka, 1939 with passing of Price Control Ordinance. After this Ordinance various Acts and Ordinance passed for the protection of consumers were relatively few. Thus, for the first time, in the history of the socio-economic legislation of this country, a comprehensive legislation, namely, the Consumer Protection Act, 1979, was passed to provide for better protection of interests of consumers. The main thrust of this provided for speedy redress and compensation to consumers. The Act has given a new dimension in the field of consumer protection in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan Government had appointed by name or by office, a Commissioner of Internal Trade for the purpose of this Act. This Act has an Amendment by the Consumer Protection Amendment Act No.3 of 1980, and

Consumer Protection Societies are governed by this Amendment. These Consumer Protection Societies can pool the resources and ideas of membership and can speak with authority on their behalf. Such a strong, active and responsible consumer movement can amplify the voices of consumers heard both by the government and business sectors.

How-ever, the subject has not received much attention from academicians. There is a dearth of genuine literature on the subject. There is not even a single treatise which deals with the subject in a comprehensive manner in Sri Lanka . But the United Nations Guidelines for Consumer Protection gives the greater assistance by providing a contemporaneous theory on the subject.

The present study is a modest attempt in the above direction. The title of this research is, " The role of Consumer Protection Societies in Sri Lanka" , has purposely been adopted to indicate that, it covers not only the constitutional activities of consumer Protection societies, but also encompasses the other activities of the Consumer Protection Societies that collaborate with other relevant consumer protection organizations. It is argued, that the activities practiced by the Consumer Protection Societies in Sri Lanka have yet to reach there full potential.