

# It is the responsibility of the cinema hall to provide free and pure water | रसरंग में आपके अधिकार: मुफ्त और शुद्ध पानी मुहैया करवाना सिनेमाघर की जिम्मेदारी

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## Your rights in Rasrang: It is the cinema hall's responsibility to provide free and pure water

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Every year around 15.7 crore people go to watch movies in India. This number is increasing year by year. Although now single screens are decreasing and multiplexes are also under pressure from OTT apps, there is still a different craze to watch movies in many cinemas. Then the success of films is considered only when they are a hit at the box office. Let us talk today about the legal rights of cinema goers i.e. consumers.

**Drinking Water** Access to drinking water is a human right. Although cinemas generally do not allow the consumption of outside food and beverages inside their premises, in 2015, in the Rupsi Multiplex case, the National Consumer Disputes Redressal

Commission (NCRDC) had directed cinemas to install water coolers inside the cinema hall or cinema premises and provide potable and pure drinking water to the audience through them, before imposing a ban on the consumption of outside drinking water. The Commission held that making the customer buy drinking water without providing it free of cost was tantamount to unfair trade practice.

**Outside food** The Supreme Court in 2023 upheld the argument of cinema halls that outside food should not be brought into the premises. The court said, "The commercial logic of preventing moviegoers from carrying their own food into the cinema hall is an important aspect of the business. If the owners are not allowed to determine various aspects of their business, economic activity will come to a standstill." However, the Supreme Court asked cinema halls to consider the requests of those moviegoers who are suffering from "chronic diseases and who have received special dietary instructions from their doctors." The court said that this permission can be given on a case-by-case basis.

**Charging above MRP** Can cinema halls charge higher MRP for products that are generally available at a lower price? In *Big Cinema vs Manoj Kumar*, the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCRDC) investigated the case of cinema halls selling 'Aquafina' water bottles manufactured by Pepsi at a higher price. According to the consumer, the normal bottle of Aquafina water at that time was priced at Rs 16, but the cinema hall sold it at Rs 30. The dispute was decided in favour of the consumer at the district and state levels, but the cinema hall took it to the National Commission. Since Pepsi was not a party to the case, the NCDRC asked it to appear and state its case. Pepsi never said that it had different MRPs for the same product and maintained silence on the matter. The NCDRC held this practice of dual MRPs to be in violation of the Legal Metrology Act, 2000 and the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 (which were in force at the time). The Commission upheld the decisions of the District and State Commissions and imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh on the cinema hall.

**(The author is also the Secretary, CASC.)**

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