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Bad deal on wheels

Resident battles car company; says they replaced original parts with duplicates



Harish Kanchan with his Skoda at his home, Lokhandwala Complex, Andheri

PIK/ NARENDRA DANGIYA

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ON February 29 2008, Andheri resident and businessman, Harish Kanchan met with an accident on the Nasik-Mumbai highway. His car (A Skoda number: MH 06 AF 6115) hit a dead bull and went off-road. The undercarriage was damaged. Kanchan, who is into the construction business in Nasik, sent his car to dealers Nummer Eins Motors Pvt Ltd the authorized Skoda dealer in Ghatia, Chembur the same evening. Kanchan got his car back nearly 45 days later with several original Skoda parts replaced by duplicate parts.

Srinivas Sudhir, customer care, after sales, Skoda head office, Aurangabad had said earlier, "Yes, certain parts have been replaced. We are contemplating serious action against the dealer." Srinivas's statement was printed in a MID DAY report that appeared earlier.

Though the car was repaired subsequently at another dealer, Kanchan was determined to take the case to the consumer court. Raghu Kochar, accident in-charge at Nummer Eins claims that Kanchan is out to malign Nummer Eins with this case, "Kanchan wanted a 30 per cent discount and we did not agree to that. He said he

would spoil our name. Kochar also says that, "Kanchan took the car and only after some time said that the parts were false. One can do any manipulation within that time."

Kanchan though, refutes all the "rubbish" and says that Ramesh Karthik, consumer care, Skoda asked him to return the fake parts to Nummer Eins as Karthik claimed there was a police investigation into the matter. Kanchan was also asked to give a disclaimer absolving Nummer Eins and Skoda of fraud, which, "I refused to do." Kanchan says, "The aim was to destroy evidence (the fake parts). I have filed a police complaint with DGP Dilip Sawant, Zone 6, Chembur on July 1, 2008. I have filed a consumer complaint at the Bandra court on July 17, 2008."

'I was laughed at': Customer

After Harish Kanchan's reports began appearing in newspapers, several persons contacted him about similar complaints. Ramesh Agarwal, a Mumbai businessman bought a Skoda Octavia registration no MH 04 BQ 1411 on May 14, 2003 from Nummer Eins Motors India, Chembur. It was bought in his daughter's name, Ruchita Gupta. On July 21 last year, a water tanker in his

building damaged the front left side door. The next day, Agarwal took his car to the Nummer Eins garage. He says that he witnessed several other damaged parts as he visited the garage. Agarwal says that he finally paid a bill of Rs 84,000 and recovered his car in, "a scrap condition." It was not that which pained Agarwal. Agarwal says, "I was laughed at the garage when I used to lose my cool. They treated me like a joker." Accident-in-charge Raghu Kochar at Nummer Eins says that, "If the car was scrap why did Agarwal accept it from us? Also, are we mad that we would laugh at him? There was no argument or issue so why would we treat him like a joker?"

Indo-German relations involved

Matters have reached a head. Emails are being sent to the Indo-German Chamber of Commerce in Mumbai as Skoda is a Czech

make and is a subsidiary of Volkswagen, which is a German company. Kanchan has addressed an email to Bernhard Steinrucke, of the Indo-German chamber, an excerpt of which says, "I would like Skoda, and its parent company Volkswagen, to live up to their reputations of being globally respected brands and set an example for good business practices in India. This would include disciplinary action against the dealer in question, and stronger dealer certification and quality control." Steinrucke could not be reached for comment on the same.

Skoda says we will not favour anyone

Ramesh Karthik, head customer care and training, Skoda Auto India Pvt Ltd says, "Harish Kanchan and Nummer Eins both have lodged cross complaints with the police and also have issued legal notices. As a gesture from Skoda, I had requested Kanchan to give the parts under dispute to Skoda Auto India for inspection. Since the case is subjudice we will await the results of the legal proceedings and Skoda will take stringent action against the party which is guilty without favouring anyone."

"As far as Ramesh Agarwal's case is concerned, the case was brought to our notice on July 31, 2008 via mail. The case is over a year old and if the gentleman had any apprehensions or concerns at that point of time the same could have been brought to our notice. After a long lapse of time it becomes difficult to ascertain the mentioned concerns because the car is a user dependent machine."



Nummer Eins Motors India Pvt Ltd, the authorised Skoda dealer in Ghatia, Chembur

PIK/DAITA KUMBHAR