

KEY CONCEPTS

- Agreement ■ Contract ■ Void Agreement ■ Quantum Meruit ■ Contingent Contract ■ Quasi Contract
- Bailment and Pledge ■ E-Contract

Learning Objectives

To understand:

- General Principles relating to the formation and Enforceability of Contracts
- Types of Contracts
- Offer and Acceptance
- Consideration
- Capacity to Contract
- Free Consent
- Termination of Contract
- Remedies for breach of Contract
- Indemnity and Guarantee
- Bailment and Pledge
- Agency and types of Agents
- E-Contracts
- Joint Venture Agreements

Lesson Outline

- Formation of an Agreement, intention to create legal relationship
- Essential elements of a Valid Contract
- Kinds of offer, communication, acceptance and revocation of offer and acceptance
- Consideration
- Exceptions of Consideration
- Void, Voidable & Illegal Contracts: Flaws in Contract and Free Consent
- Certain relations resembling those of contract (Quasi Contracts)
- Discharge or Termination of Contracts
- Remedies for Breach of Contract
- Contract of Indemnity and Guarantee (sections 124 to 147)
- Contract of Bailment and Pledge
- Law of Agency
- Joint venture/ foreign collaboration/ multinational agreement
- E-contracts
- Lesson Round-Up
- Glossary
- Test Yourself
- List of Further Readings and References

The new criminal laws i.e. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 have repealed Indian Penal Code 1860, Criminal Procedure Code 1973 and Indian Evidence Act 1872 (old criminal laws) respectively.

Therefore, by virtue of Section 8 of General Clauses Act 1897, the references to the old criminal laws, unless a different intention appears, be construed as references to the provision of new criminal laws.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- Indian Contract Act, 1872

FORMATION OF AN AGREEMENT, INTENTION TO CREATE LEGAL RELATIONSHIP

Meaning and Nature of Contract

The law relating to contract is governed by the Indian Contract Act, 1872. The Act came into force on the first day of September, 1872. The preamble to the Act says that it is an Act “to define and amend certain parts of the law relating to contract”. The Act is by no means exhaustive on the law of contract. It does not deal with all the branches of the law of contract. Thus, contracts relating to partnership, sale of goods, negotiable instruments, insurance etc. are dealt with by separate Acts.

The Indian Contract Act has defined contract in Section 2(h) as “an agreement enforceable by law”.

The Indian Contract Act mostly deals with the general principles and rules governing contracts. The Act is divisible into two parts. The first part (Section 1-75) deals with the general principles of the law of contract, and therefore applies to all contracts irrespective of their nature. The second part (Sections 124-238) deals with certain special kinds of contracts, namely contracts of Indemnity and Guarantee, Bailment, Pledge, and Agency.

These definitions indicate that a contract essentially consists of two distinct parts. First, there must be an agreement. Secondly, such an agreement must be enforceable by law. To be enforceable, an agreement must be coupled with an obligation.

A contract therefore, is a combination of the two elements: (1) an agreement and (2) an obligation.

Example

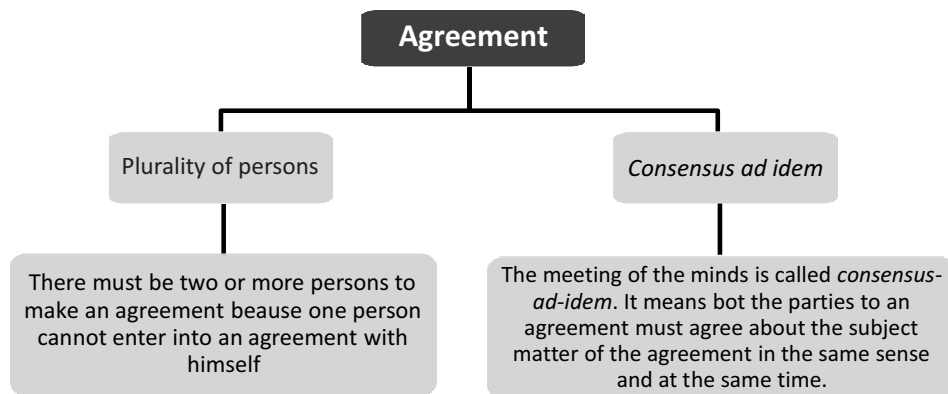
A orally agreed to supply goods to B and to receive payment against it. Is it an agreement?

Yes, it is an oral agreement.

Agreement

An agreement gives birth to a contract. As per Section 2(e) of the Indian Contract Act “every promise and every set of promises, forming the consideration for each other, is an agreement. It is evident from the definition given above that an agreement is based on a promise. What is a promise? According to Section 2(b) of the Indian Contract Act “when the person to whom the proposal is made signifies his assent thereto, the proposal is said to be accepted. A proposal, when accepted, becomes a promise. An agreement, therefore, comes into existence when one party makes a proposal or offer to the other party and that other party signifies his assent thereto. In nutshell, an agreement is the sum total of offer and acceptance.”

An analysis of the definition given above reveals the following characteristics of an agreement:



Obligation

An obligation is the legal duty to do or abstain from doing what one has promised to do or abstain from doing. A contractual obligation arises from a bargain between the parties to the agreement who are called the promisor and the promisee. Section 2(b) says that when the person to whom the proposal is made signifies his assent thereto, the proposal is said to be accepted; and a proposal when accepted becomes a promise. In broad sense, therefore, a contract is an exchange of promises by two or more persons, resulting in an obligation to do or abstain from doing a particular act, where such obligation is recognised and enforced by law.

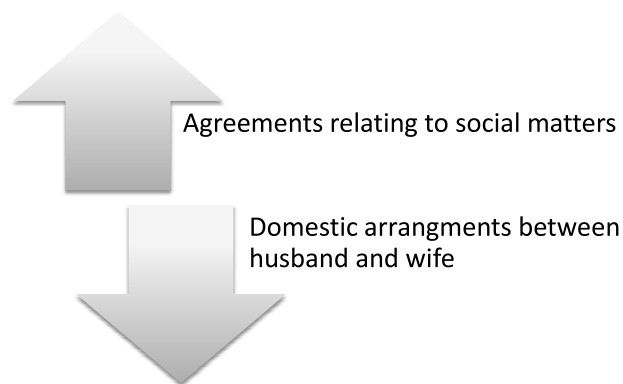
Rights and Obligations

Where parties have made a binding contract, they have created rights and obligations between themselves. The contractual rights and obligations are correlative, e.g., A agrees with B to sell his car for Rs. 10,000 to him. In this example, the following rights and obligations have been created:

- (i) A is under an obligation to deliver the car to B. B has a corresponding right to receive the car.
- (ii) B is under an obligation to pay Rs. 10,00,000 to A. A has a correlative right to receive Rs. 10,00,000.

Agreements which are not Contracts

Agreements in which the idea of bargain is absent and there is no intention to create legal relations are not contracts. These are:



- (a) **Agreements relating to social matters:** An agreement between two persons to go together to the cinema, or for a walk, does not create a legal obligation on their part to abide by it. Similarly, if I promise to take you for a dinner and break that promise, I do not expect to be liable to legal penalties. There cannot be any offer and acceptance to hospitality.
- (b) **Domestic arrangements between husband and wife:** In *Balfour v. Balfour (1919) 2 KB 571*, a husband working in Ceylone, had agreed in writing to pay a housekeeping allowance to his wife living in England. On receiving information that she was unfaithful to him, he stopped the allowance. Held, he was entitled to do so. This was a mere domestic arrangement with no intention to create legally binding relations. Therefore, there was no contract.

Three consequences follow from the above discussion:

- (i) To constitute a contract, the parties must intend to create legal relationship.
- (ii) The law of contract is the law of those agreements which create obligations, and those obligations which have their source in agreement.
- (iii) Agreement is the genus of which contract is the specie and, therefore, all contracts are agreements but all agreements are not contracts.

Intention to Create Legal Relations

Intention to Create Legal Relations is an essential element of a valid contract is that there must be an intention among the parties that the agreement should be attached by legal consequences and create legal obligations. If there is no such intention on the part of the parties, there is no contract between them. Agreements of a social or domestic nature do not contemplate legal relationship. As such they are not contracts.

A proposal or an offer is made with a view to obtain the assent to the other party and when that other party expresses his willingness to the act or abstinence proposed, he accepts the offer and a contract is made between the two. But both offer and acceptance must be made with the intention of creating legal relations between the parties. The test of intention is objective. The Courts seek to give effect to the presumed intention of the parties. Where necessary, the Court would look into the conduct of the parties, for much can be inferred from the conduct. The Court is not concerned with the mental intention of the parties, but rather with what a reasonable man would say, was the intention of the parties, having regard to all the circumstances of the case.

For example, if two persons agree to assist each other by rendering advice, in the pursuit of virtue, science or art, it cannot be regarded as a contract. In commercial and business agreements, the presumption is usually that the parties intended to create legal relations. But this presumption is rebuttable which means that it must be shown that the parties did not intend to be legally bound.

Other Important Types of Contracts

Contingent Contract (section 31)

As per Section 31, a contingent contract is a contract to do or not to do something, if some event *collateral to such contract*, does or does not happen. For example, A contracts to sell B 10 bales of cotton for Rs. 20,000, if the ship by which they are coming returns safely. This is a contingent contract.

Contract of insurance and contracts of indemnity and guarantee are popular instances of contingent contracts.

Example

A contracts to sell B, 10 bales of cotton for Rs. 20,000, if the ship by which they are coming returns safely. This is a contingent contract.

Rules regarding contingent contracts

The following rules are contained in Section 32-36:

- (a) Contracts contingent upon the happening of a future uncertain event cannot be enforced by law unless and until that event has happened. If the event becomes impossible, the contract becomes void - Section 32.
 - (i) A makes a contract to buy B's house if A survives C. This contract cannot be enforced by law unless and until C dies in A's lifetime.
 - (ii) A contracts to pay B a sum of money when B marries C, C dies without being married to B. The contract becomes void.
- (b) Contracts contingent upon the non-happening of an uncertain future event can be enforced when the happening of that event becomes impossible and not before - Section 33.

A contracts to pay B a certain sum of money if a certain ship does not return. The ship is sunk. The contract can be enforced when the ship sinks.
- (c) If a contract is contingent upon how a person will act at an unspecified time, the event shall be considered to become impossible when such person does anything which renders it impossible that he should so act within any definite time or otherwise than under further contingencies - Section 34.
- (d) Contracts contingent on the happening of an event within a fixed time become void if, at the expiration of the time, such event has not happened, or if, before the time fixed, such event becomes impossible - Section 35.
- (e) Contracts contingent upon the non-happening of an event within a fixed time may be enforced by law when the time fixed has expired and such event has not happened or before the time fixed has expired, if it becomes certain that such event will not happen - Section 35.
- (f) Contingent agreements to do or not to do anything if an impossible event happens, are void, whether the impossibility of the event is known or not known to the parties to the agreement at the time when it is made- Section 36.

Law relating Other Important Types of Contracts

There are some special type of contracts. These are:

1. Indemnity
2. Guarantee
3. Bailment
4. Pledge
5. Joint Ventures, Collaborations and Multinational Agreements

It is necessary to understand these concepts for complete understanding of Contract Law. However, before understanding these topics basic understanding of contract law is beneficial. Therefore, these topics are covered later in the study material for proper understanding.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF A VALID CONTRACT

Section 10 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 provides that "all agreements are contracts if they are made by the free consent of parties competent to contract, for a lawful consideration and with a lawful object, and are not hereby expressly declared to be void".

Therefore, the essential elements of a valid contract are:

- (i) An offer or proposal by one party and acceptance of that offer by another party resulting in an agreement – consensus-ad-idem.
- (ii) An intention to create legal relations or an intent to have legal consequences.
- (iii) The agreement is supported by a lawful consideration.
- (iv) The parties to the contract are legally capable of contracting.
- (v) Genuine consent between the parties.
- (vi) The object and consideration of the contract is legal and is not opposed to public policy.
- (vii) The terms of the contract are certain.
- (viii) The agreement is capable of being performed i.e., it is not impossible of being performed.

Therefore, to form a valid contract there must be (1) an agreement, (2) based on the genuine consent of the parties, (3) supported by a lawful consideration, (4) made for a lawful object, and (5) between the competent parties.

Question: Can an agreement on ambiguous terms be valid?

No, The agreement shall be on valid terms.

Question: A & B, entered into contract in which A will send goods to B free of cost and B is not required to do anything against it. Is the contract valid?

No, a valid contract must have consideration unless falls into in to exempted category.

KINDS OF OFFER, COMMUNICATION, ACCEPTANCE AND REVOCATION OF OFFER AND ACCEPTANCE

Offer or Proposal and Acceptance

One of the early steps in the formation of a contract lies in arriving at an agreement between the contracting parties by means of an offer and acceptance. Thus, when one party (the offeror) makes a definite proposal to another party (the offeree) and the offeree accepts it in its entirety and without any qualification, there is a meeting of the minds of the parties and a contract comes into being, assuming that all other elements are also present.

What is an Offer or a Proposal?

A proposal is also termed as an offer. The word 'proposal' is synonymous with the English word "offer". An offer is a proposal by one person, whereby he expresses his willingness to enter into a contractual obligation in return for a promise, act or forbearance. The person making the proposal or offer is called the *proposer or offeror* and the person to whom the proposal is made is called the *offeree*.

1st Definition - Proposal: When one person signifies to another his willingness to do or to abstain from doing anything, with a view to obtaining the assent of that other to such act or abstinence, he is said to make a proposal. Section 2(a)

Kinds of Offers

There are generally 7 type of Offers with difference as to type of offers and their parties. They are as under:

1. **Particular offer/Specific Offer:** The offer is made and addressed to a certain person only. It can only be accepted by person to whom it has been made or its authorized person.

Example

A offers to sell his car to B on a consideration of Rs. 1,00,000/-. This is a type of particular offer.

2. **General Offer:** In general offers, the Offer are made to public at large and may be accepted by any one. Tickets are one such example of general offer. Tickets purchased for entrance into places of amusement, or tickets issued by railways or bus companies, clock- room tickets, and many other contracts set out in printed documents contain numerous terms, of many of which the party receiving the ticket or document is ignorant. If a passenger on a railway train receives a ticket on the face of which is printed "this ticket is issued subject to the notices, regulations and conditions contained in the current time-tables of the railway", the regulations and conditions referred to are deemed to be communicated to him and he is bound by them whether or not he has read them. He is bound even if he is illiterate and unable to read them. But it is important that the notice of the conditions is contemporaneous with the making of the contract and not after the contract has been made.

Example

Participation in Lottery, Purchasing the ticket of performance etc.

3. **Cross Offers:** When two parties gives offers to each other. This is not material that the counter offers are made with similar terms of different terms. Even when two offers were made with similar terms and no offer was accepted, there can be no concluded contract.

Example

A offers to sell his old mobile phone to B at a price of Rs. 10,000/-. B offers to purchase A's old mobile phone at a price of Rs. 10,000/-. There is no concluded contract.

4. **Open/Continuing/Standing Offer:** Where a person offers to another to supply specific goods, up to a stated quantity or in any quantity which may be required, at a certain rate, during a fixed period, he makes a standing offer. Thus, a tender to supply goods as and when required, amounts to a standing offer.

A standing offer or a tender is of the nature of a continuing offer. An acceptance of such an offer merely amounts to intimation that the offer will be considered to remain open during the period specified and that it will be accepted from time to time by placing order for specified quantities. Each successive order given, while the offer remains in force, is an acceptance of the standing offer as to the quantity ordered, and creates a separate contract. It does not bind either party unless and until such orders are given.

Where P tendered to supply goods to L upto a certain amount and over a certain period, L's order did not come up to the amount expected and P sued for breach of contract *Held:* Each order made was a separate contract and P was bound to fulfill orders made, but there was no obligation on L to make any order to all [*Percival Ltd. vs. L.C.C. (1918)*].

Example

A tender was floated to obtain raw coffee beans by a Company. The coffee beans were required to be provided as and when the order is placed. The tender was awarded to a partnership firm. There is no concluded contract. Contract will be concluded on placing of the order.

5. **Counter offer:** An offer made against an offer already made. In these offers, the contracts can be made only after acceptance of counter offer.

Example

A offers to sell his old mobile phone to B at a price of Rs. 10,000/-. B made a counter offer to purchase the said phone at a price of Rs. 9500/-. There is a situation of counter offer.

6. **Contracts by Post:** Contracts by post are subject to the same rules as others, but because of their importance, these are stated below separately:

- (a) An offer by post may be accepted by post, unless the offeror indicates anything to the contrary.
- (b) An offer is made only when it actually reaches the offeree and not before, i.e., when the letter containing the offer is delivered to the offeree.
- (c) An acceptance is made as far as the offeror is concerned, as soon as the letter containing the acceptance is posted, to offerors correct address; it binds the offeror, but not the acceptor.

An acceptance binds the acceptor only when the letter containing the acceptance reaches the offeror. The result is that the acceptor can revoke his acceptance before it reaches the offeror.

- (d) An offer may be revoked before the letter containing the acceptance is posted. An acceptance can be revoked before it reaches the offeror.
7. **Contracts over the Telephone:** Contracts over the telephone are regarded the same in principle as those negotiated by the parties in the actual presence of each other. In both cases an oral offer is made and an oral acceptance is expected. It is important that the acceptance must be audible, heard and understood by the offeror. If during the conversation the telephone lines go “dead” and the offeror does not hear the offerees word of acceptance, there is no contract at the moment. If the whole conversation is repeated and the offeror hears and understands the words of acceptance, the contract is complete [*Kanhaiyalal v. Dineshwarchandra* (1959) AIR, M.P. 234].

Rules Governing Offers

A valid offer must comply with the following rules:

- (a) An offer must be clear, definite, complete and final. It must not be vague. For example, a promise to pay an increased price for a horse if it proves lucky to promisor, is too vague and is not binding.
- (b) An offer must be communicated to the offeree. An offer becomes effective only when it has been communicated to the offeree so as to give him an opportunity to accept or reject the same.
- (c) The communication of an offer may be made by express words-oral or written-or it may be implied by conduct. A offers his car to B for Rs. 10,000. It is an express offer. A bus plying on a definite route goes along the street. This is an implied offer on the part of the owners of the bus to carry passengers at the scheduled fares for the various stages.

The communication of the offer may be general or specific. Where an offer is made to a specific person it is called specific offer and it can be accepted only by that person. But when an offer is addressed to an uncertain

body of individuals i.e. the world at large, it is a general offer and can be accepted by any member of the general public by fulfilling the condition laid down in the offer.

CASE LAWS

The leading case on the subject is ***Carlill v. Carbolic Smoke Ball Co.*** The company offered by advertisement, a reward of `100 to anyone who contacted influenza after using their smoke ball in the specified manner. Mrs. Carlill did use smoke ball in the specified manner, but was attacked by influenza. She claimed the reward and it was held that she could recover the reward as general offer can be accepted by anybody. Since this offer is of a continuing nature, more than one person can accept it and can even claim the reward. But if the offer of reward is for seeking some information or seeking the restoration of missing thing, then the offer can be accepted by one individual who does it first of all. The condition is that the claimant must have prior knowledge of the reward before doing that act or providing that information.

In India also, in the case of ***HarbhajanLal v. HarcharanLal (AIR 1925 All. 539)***, the same rule was applied. In this case, a young boy ran away from his fathers home. The father issued a pamphlet offering a reward of `500 to anybody who would bring the boy home. The plaintiff saw the boy at a railway station and sent a telegram to the boys father. It was held that the handbill was an offer open to the world at large and was capable to acceptance by any person who fulfilled the conditions contained in the offer. The plaintiff substantially performed the conditions and was entitled to the reward offered.

Example

A advertises in the newspapers that he will pay rupees one thousand to anyone who brings to him his lost cat. B without knowing of this reward finds A's lost cat and restore him to A. In this case since B did not know of the reward, he cannot claim it from A even though he finds A's lost cat and brings him to A.

Offer and invitation to offer

Invitation to offer is a communication to invite certain person(s) or public for making offer. The same may be understood from below mentioned examples:

- (a) *An invitation to treat or an invitation to make an offer:* e.g., an auctioneers request for bids (which are offered by the bidders), the display of goods in a shop window with prices marked upon them, or the display of priced goods in a self- service store or a shopkeepers catalogue of prices are invitations to an offer.
- (b) *A mere statement of intention:* e.g., an announcement of a coming auction sale. Thus, a person who attended the advertised place of auction could not sue for breach of contract if the auction was cancelled [***Harris v. Nickerson (1873) L.R. 8 QB 286***].
- (c) *A mere communication of information in the course of negotiation:* e.g., a statement of the price at which one is prepared to consider negotiating the sale of piece of land [***Harvey v. Facey (1893) A.C. 552***].

An offer that has been communicated properly continues as such until it lapses, or until it is revoked by the offeror, or rejected or accepted by the offeree.

Lapse of Offer

Section 6 deals with various modes of lapse of an offer. It states that an offer lapses if—

- (a) it is not accepted within the specified time (if any) or after a reasonable time, if none is specified;

- (b) it is not accepted in the mode prescribed or if no mode is prescribed in some usual and reasonable manner, e.g., by sending a letter by mail when early reply was requested;
- (c) the offeree rejects it by distinct refusal to accept it;
- (d) either the offeror or the offeree dies before acceptance;
- (e) the acceptor fails to fulfill a condition precedent to an acceptance;
- (f) the offeree makes a counter offer, it amounts to rejection of the offer and an offer by the offeree may be accepted or rejected by the offeror.

Revocation of Offer by the Offeror

An offer may be revoked by the offeror at any time before acceptance.

Like any offer, revocation must be communicated to the offeree, as it does not take effect until it is actually communicated to the offeree. Before its actual communication, the offeree, may accept the offer and create a binding contract. The revocation must reach the offeree before he sends out the acceptance. An offer to keep open for a specified time (option) is not binding unless it is supported by consideration.

Mode of Revocation

A proposal may be revoked in different ways. Revocation may be revoked either by act or by omission. Section 6 provides the following modes for revocation:

- (1) by the communication of notice of revocation by the proposer to the other party.
- (2) by the lapse of the time prescribed in such proposal for its acceptance, or, if no time is so prescribed, by the lapse of a reasonable time, without communication of the acceptance.
- (3) by the failure of the acceptor to fulfil a condition precedent to acceptance.
- (4) by the death or insanity of the proposer, if the fact of his death or insanity comes to the knowledge of the acceptor before acceptance.

Point no. 1 of the above is revocation by an act and 2 to 3 are revocation by omission.

Acceptance

A contract emerges from the acceptance of an offer. Acceptance is the act of assenting by the offeree to an offer. Under Section 2(b) of the Contract Act when a person to whom the proposal is made signifies his assent thereto, the proposal is said to be accepted. A proposal, when accepted becomes a promise.

Rules Governing Acceptance

- (a) Acceptance may be express i.e. by words spoken or written or implied from the conduct of the parties.
- (b) If a particular method of acceptance is prescribed, the offer must be accepted in the prescribed manner.
- (c) Acceptance must be unqualified and absolute and must correspond with all the terms of the offer.
- (d) A counter offer or conditional acceptance operates as a rejection of the offer and causes it to lapse, e.g., where a horse is offered for Rs. 1,000 and the offeree counter-offers Rs. 990, the offer lapses by rejection.
- (e) Acceptance must be communicated to the offeror, for acceptance is complete the moment it is communicated. Where the offeree merely intended to accept but does not communicate his intention to the offeror, there is no contract. Mere mental acceptance is not enough.

- (f) Mere silence on the part of the offeree does not amount to acceptance.

Ordinarily, the offeror cannot frame his offer in such a way as to make the silence or inaction of the offeree as an acceptance. In other words, the offeror can prescribe the mode of acceptance but not the mode of rejection.

- (g) If the offer is one which is to be accepted by being acted upon, no communication of acceptance to the offeror

is necessary, unless communication is stipulated for in the offer itself.

Thus, if a reward is offered for finding a lost dog, the offer is accepted by finding the dog after reading about the offer, and it is unnecessary before beginning to search for the dog to give notice of acceptance to the offeror.

- (h) Acceptance must be given within a reasonable time and before the offer lapses or is revoked. An offer becomes irrevocable by acceptance.

An acceptance never precedes an offer. There can be no acceptance of an offer which is not communicated. Similarly, performance of conditions of an offer without the knowledge of the specific offer, is no acceptance. Thus in **Lalman Shukla v. Gauri Dutt (1913)**, where a servant brought the boy without knowing of the reward, he was held not entitled to reward because he did not know about the offer.

CONSIDERATION

Need for Consideration

Consideration is one of the essential elements of a valid contract. The requirement of consideration stems from the policy of extending the arm of the law to the enforcement of mutual promises of parties. A mere promise is not enforceable at law. For example, if A promises to make a gift of Rs. 500 to B, and subsequently changes his mind, B cannot succeed against A for breach of promise, as B has not given anything in return. It is only when a promise is made for something in return from the promisee, that such promise can be enforced by law against the promisor. This something in return is the consideration for the promise.

Definition of Consideration

Sir Fredrick Pollock has defined consideration “as an act or forbearance of one party, or the promise thereof is the price for which the promise of the other is bought”.

It is “some right, interest, profit, or benefit accruing to one party or some forbearance, detriment, loss or responsibility, given, suffered or undertaken by the other” [**Currie v. Misa (1875) L.R. 10 Ex. 153**].

Section 2(d) of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 defines consideration thus: “when at the desire of the promisor, the promisee or any other person has done or abstained from doing, or does or abstains from doing, or promises to do or to abstain from doing something, such act or abstinence or promise is called a consideration for the promise”.

The fundamental principle that consideration is essential in every contract, is laid down by both the definitions but there are some important points of difference in respect of the nature and extent of consideration and parties to it under the two systems:

- (a) **Consideration at the desire of the promisor:** Section 2(d) of the Act begins with the statement that consideration must move at the desire or request of the promisor. This means that whatever is done must have been done at the desire of the promisor and not voluntarily or not at the desire of a third party. If A rushes to B’s help whose house is on fire, there is no consideration but a voluntary act. But if A goes to B’s help at B’s request, there is good consideration as B did not wish to do the act gratuitously.

- (b) **Consideration may move from the promisee or any other person:** In English law, consideration must move from the promisee, so that a stranger to the consideration cannot sue on the contract. A person seeking to enforce a simple contract must prove in court that he himself has given the consideration in return for the promise he is seeking to enforce.

In Indian law, however, consideration may move from the promisee or any other person, so that a stranger to the consideration may maintain a suit. In ***Chinnaya v. Ramaya, (1882) 4 Mad. 137***, a lady by a deed of gift made over certain property to her daughter directing her to pay an annuity to the donor's brother as had been done by the donor herself before she gifted the property. On the same day, her daughter executed in writing in favour of the donor's brother agreeing to pay the annuity. Afterwards the donee (the daughter) declined to fulfil her promise to pay her uncle saying that no consideration had moved from him. The Court, however, held that the uncle could sue even though no part of the consideration received by his niece moved from him. The consideration from her mother was sufficient consideration.

Doctrine of Privity of Contract and of Consideration

Privity of Contract

A stranger to a contract cannot sue both under the English and Indian law for want of privity of contract. The following illustration explains this point.

In *Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Co. v. Selfridge Ltd. (1915) A.C. 847*, D supplied tyres to a wholesaler X, on condition that any retailer to whom X re-supplied the tyres should promise X, not to sell them to the public below D's list price. X supplied tyres to S upon this condition, but nevertheless S sold the tyres below the list price. Held: There was a contract between D and X and a contract between X and S. Therefore, D could not obtain damages from S, as D had not given any consideration for S's promise to X nor was he party to the contract between D and X.

Thus, a person who is not a party to a contract cannot sue upon it even though the contract is for his benefit. A, who is indebted to B, sells his property to C, and C the purchaser of the property, promises to pay off the debt to B. In case C fails to pay B, B has no right to sue C for there is no privity of contract between B and C.

The leading English case on the point is *Tweddle v. Atkinson (1861) 1B and Section 393*. In this case, the father of a boy and the father of a girl who was to be married to the boy, agreed that each of them shall pay a sum of money to the boy who was to take up the new responsibilities of married life. After the demise of both the contracting parties, the boy (the husband) sued the executors of his father-in-law upon the agreement between his father-in-law and his father. Held: the suit was not maintainable as the boy was not a party to the contract.

Exception to the doctrine of privity of contract: Both the Indian law and the English law recognize certain exceptions to the rule that a stranger to a contract cannot sue on the contract. In the following cases, a person who is not a party to a contract can enforce the contract:

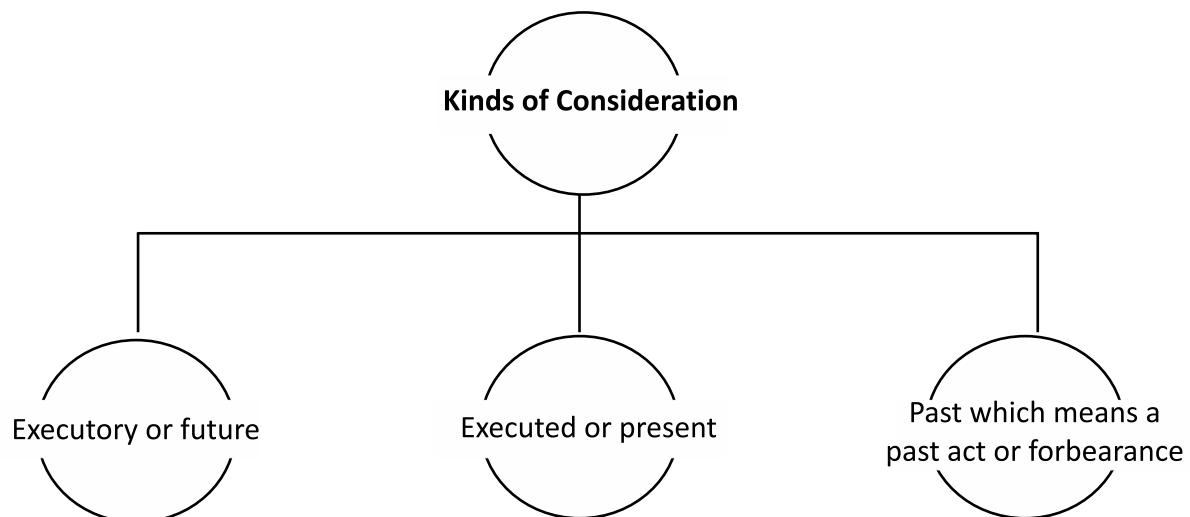
- (i) A beneficiary under an agreement to create a trust can sue upon the agreement, though not a party to it, for the enforcement of the trust so as to get the trust executed for his benefit. In *Khawaja Muhammad v. Hussaini Begum, (1910) 32 All. 410*, it was held that where a Mohammedan lady sued her father-in-law to recover arrears of allowance payable to her by him under an agreement between him and her own father in consideration of her marriage, she could enforce the promise in her favour in so far as she was a beneficiary under the agreement to make a settlement in her favour, and she was claiming as beneficiary under such settlement.

- (ii) An assignee under an assignment made by the parties, or by the operation of law (e.g. in case of death or insolvency), can sue upon the contract for the enforcement of his rights, title and interest. But a mere nominee (i.e., the person for whose benefit another has insured his own life) cannot sue on the policy because the nominee is not an assignee.
- (iii) In cases of family arrangements or settlements between male members of a Hindu family which provide for the maintenance or expenses for marriages of female members, the latter though not parties to the contract, possess an actual beneficial right which place them in the position of beneficiaries under the contract, and can therefore, sue.
- (iv) In case of acknowledgement of liability, e.g., where A receives money from B for paying to C, and admits to C the receipt of that amount, then A constitutes himself as the agent of C.
- (v) Whenever the promisor is by his own conduct estopped from denying his liability to perform the promise, the person who is not a party to the contract can sue upon it to make the promisor liable.
- (vi) In cases where a person makes a promise to an individual for the benefit of third party and creates a charge on certain immovable property for the purpose, the third party can enforce the promise though, he is stranger to the contract.

Privity of consideration

In India privity of consideration is not strictly applicable. It means that consideration may be paid by parties or any other person. The doctrine of privity of contract provides that a contract cannot confer rights or impose obligations upon any person who is not a party to the contract. It is applicable in India with certain exception like trust, covenant running with land, family settlements etc.

Kinds of Consideration



Consideration may be:

- (a) Executory or future which means that it makes the form of promise to be performed in the future, e.g., an engagement to marry someone; or
- (b) Executed or present in which it is an act or forbearance made or suffered for a promise. In other words, the act constituting consideration is wholly or completely performed, e.g., if A pays today Rs. 100 to a

shopkeeper for goods which are promised to be supplied the next day, A has executed his consideration but the shopkeeper is giving executory consideration—a promise to be executed the following day. If the price is paid by the buyer and the goods are delivered by the seller at the same time, consideration is executed by both the parties.

- (c) Past which means a past act or forbearance, that is to say, an act constituting consideration which took place and is complete (wholly executed) before the promise is made.

According to English law, a consideration may be executory or executed but never past. The English law is that past consideration is no consideration. *The Indian law recognizes all the above three kinds of consideration.*

Rules Governing Consideration

- (a) Every simple contract must be supported by valuable consideration otherwise it is formally void subject to some exceptions.
- (b) Consideration may be an act of abstinence or promise.
- (c) There must be mutuality i.e., each party must do or agree to do something. A gratuitous promise as in the case of subscription for charity, is not enforceable. For example, where A promises to subscribe Rs. 5,000 for the repair of a temple, and then refuses to pay, no action can be taken against him.
- (d) Consideration must be real, and not vague, indefinite, or illusory, e.g., a son's promise to "stop being a nuisance" to his father, being vague, is no consideration.
- (e) Although consideration must have some value, it need not be adequate i.e., a full return for the promise. Section 25 (Exp. II) clearly provides that "an agreement to which the consent of the promisor is freely given is not void merely because the consideration is inadequate". It is upon the parties to fix their own prices. For example, where A voluntarily agreed to sell his motor car for Rs. 500 to B, it became a valid contract despite the inadequacy of the consideration.
- (f) Consideration must be lawful, e.g., it must not be some illegal act such as paying someone to commit a crime.

If the consideration is unlawful, the agreement is void.

- (g) Consideration must be something more than the promisee is already bound to do for the promisor. Thus, an agreement to perform an existing obligation made with the person to whom the obligation is already owed, is not made for consideration. For example, if a seaman deserts his ship so breaking his contract of service and is induced to return to his duty by the promise for extra wages, he cannot later sue for the extra wages since he has only done what he had already contracted for: ***Stilk v. Myrick (1809)***.

EXCEPTIONS OF CONSIDERATION

When Consideration not Necessary

The general rule is that an agreement made without consideration is void. But Section 25 of the Indian Contract Act lays down certain exceptions which make a promise without consideration valid and binding.

Thus, an agreement without consideration is valid:

If it is expressed in writing and registered and is made out of natural love and affection between parties standing in a near relation to each other; or

If it is made to compensate a person who has already done something voluntarily for the promisor, or done something which the promisor was legally compellable to do; or

If it is a promise in writing and signed by the person to be charged therewith, or by his agent, to pay a debt barred by the law of limitation

Besides, according to Section 185 of the Indian Contract Act, consideration is not required to create an agency

In the case of gift actually made, no consideration is necessary. There need not be nearness of relation and even if it is, there need not be any natural love and affection between them

The requirements in the above exceptions are noteworthy. The first one requires written and registered promise.

The second may be oral or in writing and the third must be in writing.

Illustrations

A, for natural love and affection, promises to give his son B Rs. 10,000. A put his promise to B into writing and registered it. This is a contract.

A registered agreement between a husband and his wife to pay his earnings to her is a valid contract, as it is in writing, is registered, is between parties standing in near relation, and is for love and affection [*Poonoo Bibi v. FyazBuksh*, (1874) 15 Bom L.R. 57].

But where a husband by a registered document, after referring to quarrels and disagreement between himself and his wife, promised to pay his wife a sum of money for her maintenance and separate residence, it was held that the promise was unenforceable, as it was not made for love and affection [*Rajlucky Deb v. Bhootnath* (1900) 4 C.W.N. 488].

Whether Gratuitous Promise can be Enforced

A gratuitous promise to subscribe to a charitable cause cannot be enforced, but if the promisee is put to some detriment as a result of his acting on the faith of the promise and the promisor knew the purpose and also knew that on the faith of the subscription an obligation might be incurred, the promisor would be bound by promise (*KedarNath v. Gorie Mohan* 64).

It may be noted that it is not necessary that the promisor should benefit by the consideration, it is sufficient if the promisee does some act from which a third person is benefited and he would not have done that act but for the promise of the promisor.

For example, Y requests X for loan, who agrees to give loan to Y if S gives guarantee of repayment of the loan. S gives such a guarantee of repayment by Y. Thereupon X gives loan to Y. Here S will be promisor and X the promisee, but from X's action, benefit is derived by Y and not by S. X would not have given the loan to Y had S not given the guarantee of repayment of loan. Thus, the benefit conferred on Y by X at the request of S is a sufficient consideration on the part of X as against the promise of S to repay the loan. Alternatively, it may be said that the detriment which X suffered by giving loan to Y at the request of S is sufficient consideration on the part of X in respect of the promise of S to repay the loan.

Consideration therefore, is some detriment to the promisee or some benefit to the promisor. Detriment to one person and benefit to the other are the same things looked from two angles. Ordinarily a promisor is not bound by his promise, unless some consideration is offered by the promisee.

Terms Must be Certain

It follows from what has been explained in relation to offer, acceptance and consideration that to be binding, an agreement must result in a contract. That is to say, the parties must agree on the terms of their contract. They must make their intentions clear in their contract. The Court will not enforce a contract the terms of which are uncertain. Thus, an agreement to agree in the future (*a contract to make a contract*) will not constitute a binding contract e.g., a promise to pay an actress a salary to be "*mutually agreed between us*" is not a contract since the salary is not yet agreed: *Loftus v. Roberts (1902)*.

Similarly, where the terms of a final agreement are too vague, the contract will fail for uncertainty. Hence, the terms must be definite or capable of being made definite without further agreement of the parties.

The legal maxim, therefore, is "a contract to contract is not a contract". If you agree "subject to contract" or "subject to agreement", the contract does not come into existence, for there is no definite or unqualified acceptance.

Thus, a contract is always based upon:

- (i) Agreement (***consensus ad idem***) an unqualified acceptance of a definite offer;
- (ii) An intent to create legal obligations; and
- (iii) Consideration.

VOID, VOIDABLE & ILLEGAL CONTRACTS: FLAWS IN CONTRACT AND FREE CONSENT

There may be the circumstances under which a contract made under these rules may still be bad, because there is a flaw, vice or error somewhere. As a result of such a flaw, the apparent agreement is not a real agreement. Where there is no real agreement, the law has three remedies:

Firstly: The agreement may be treated as of no effect and it will then be known as void agreement.

Secondly: The law may give the party aggrieved the option of getting out of his bargain, and the contract is then known as voidable.

Thirdly: The party at fault may be compelled to pay damages to the other party.

(a) Void Agreement

A void agreement is one which is destitute of all legal effects. It cannot be enforced and confers no rights on either party. It is really not a contract at all, it is non-existent. Technically the words 'void contract' are a contradiction in terms. But the expression provides a useful label for describing the situation that arises when a 'contract' is claimed but in fact does not exist. For example, a minor's contract is void.

(b) Voidable Contract

A voidable contract is one which a party can put to an end. He can exercise his option, if his consent was not free. The contract will, however be binding, if he does not exercise his option to avoid it within a reasonable time. The consent of a party is not free and so he is entitled to avoid the contract, if he has given his consent due to misrepresentation, fraud, coercion or undue influence.

(c) Illegal Agreement

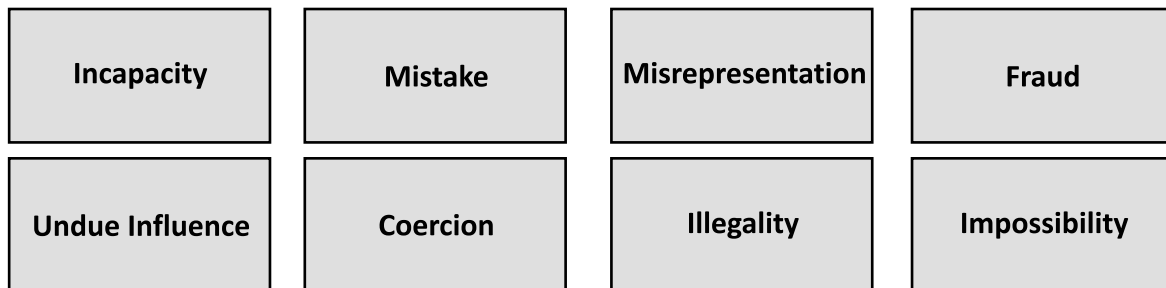
An illegal agreement is an unlawful agreement. The law prohibits agreements made with unlawful object or consideration. Such an agreement, like the void agreement has no legal effects as between the immediate parties. Further, transactions collateral to it also become tainted with illegality and are, therefore, not enforceable. Parties to an unlawful agreement cannot get any help from a Court of law, for no polluted hands shall touch the pure fountain of justice. On the other hand, a collateral transaction can be supported by a void agreement..

Example

A & B entered into contract in which A will steal a Diamond from a museum and B will give him Rs. 5,00,000/-. Is it a valid contract?

No, the consideration should not be illegal.

The chief flaws in contract are:

**Capacity to contract****Flaw in Capacity – Capacity and Persons**

In law, persons are either natural or artificial. Natural persons are human beings and artificial persons are corporations. Contractual capacity or incapacity is an incident of personality.

The general rule is that all natural persons have full capacity to make binding contracts. But the Indian Contract Act, 1872 admits an exception in the case of:

- (i) minors,
- (ii) lunatics, and
- (iii) persons disqualified from contracting by any law to which they are subject.

These persons are not competent to contract. Section 11 provides that every “person is competent to contract who is of the age of majority according to the law to which he is subject, and who is of sound mind, and is not disqualified from contracting by any law to which he is subject”. A valid agreement requires that both the parties should understand the legal implications of their conduct. Thus, both must have a mature mind. The legal yardstick to measure maturity according to the law of contract is, that both should be major and of sound mind and if not, the law would presume that the maturity of their mind has not reached to the extent of visualising the pros and cons of their acts, hence, a bar on minors and lunatics competency to contract.

The contractual capacity of a corporation depends on the manner in which it was created.

Minor's Contract

According to the Indian Majority Act, 1875, a minor is a person, male or female, who has not completed the age of 18 years. In case a guardian has been appointed to the minor or where the minor is under the guardianship of the Court of Wards, the person continues to be a minor until he completes his age of 21 years. According to the Indian Contract Act, no person is competent to enter into a contract who is not of the age of majority. It was finally laid down by the Privy Council in the leading case of *Mohori Bibi v. Dharmodas Ghose*, (1903) 30 Cal. 539, that a minor has no capacity to contract and minors contract is absolutely void. In this case, X, a minor borrowed Rs. 20,000 from Y, a money lender. As a security for the money advanced, X executed a mortgage in Y's favour. When sued by Y, the Court held that the contract by X was void and he cannot be compelled to repay the amount advanced by him.

Indian Courts have applied this decision to those cases where the minor has incurred any liability or where the liabilities on both sides are outstanding. In such cases, the minor is not liable. But if the minor has carried out his part of the contract, then, the Courts have held, that he can proceed against the other party. The rationale is to protect minors interest. According to the Transfer of Property Act, a minor cannot transfer property but he can be a transferee (person accepting a transfer). This statutory provision is an illustration of the above principle.

The following points must be kept in mind with respect to minors contract:

- (a) A minor's contract is altogether void in law, and a minor cannot bind himself by a contract. If the minor has obtained any benefit, such as money on a mortgage, he cannot be asked to repay, nor can his mortgaged property be made liable to pay.
- (b) Since the contract is void ab initio, it cannot be ratified by the minor on attaining the age of majority.
- (c) Estoppel is an important principle of the law of evidence. To explain, suppose X makes a statement to Y and intends that the latter should believe and act upon it. Later on, X cannot resile from this statement and make a new one.

In other words, X will be estopped from denying his previous statement. But a minor can always plead minority and is not estopped from doing so even where he had produced a loan or entered into some other contract by falsely representing that he was of full age, when in reality he was a minor.

But where the loan was obtained by fraudulent representation by the minor or some property was sold by him and the transactions are set aside as being void, the Court may direct the minor to restore the property to the other party.

Example

A minor fraudulently overstates his age and takes delivery of a motor car after executing a promissory note in favour of the trader for its price. The minor cannot be compelled to pay the amount to the promissory note, but the Court on equitable grounds may order the minor to return the car to the trader, if it is still with the minor.

Thus, according to Section 33 of the Specific Relief Act, 1963 the Court may, if the minor has received any benefit under the agreement from the other party require him to restore, so far as may be such benefit to the other party, to the extent to which he or his estate has been benefited thereby.

- (d) A minor's estate is liable to pay a reasonable price for necessaries supplied to him or to anyone whom the minor is bound to support (Section 68 of the Act).

The necessaries supplied must be according to the position and status in life of the minor and must be things which the minor actually needs. The following have also been held as necessaries in India.

Costs incurred in successfully defending a suit on behalf of a minor in which his property was in jeopardy; costs incurred in defending him in a prosecution; and money advanced to a Hindu minor to meet his marriage expenses have been held to be necessaries.

- (e) An agreement by a minor being void, the Court will never direct specific performance of the contract.
- (f) A minor can be an agent, but he cannot be a principal nor can he be a partner. He can, however, be admitted to the benefits of a partnership.
- (g) Since a minor is never personally liable, he cannot be adjudicated as an insolvent.
- (h) An agreement by a parent or guardian entered into on behalf of the minor is binding on him provided it is for his benefit or is for legal necessity. For, the guardian of a minor, may enter into contract for marriage on behalf of the minor, and such a contract would be good in law and an action for its breach would lie, if the contract is for the benefit of the minor (*Rose Fernandez v. Joseph Gonsalves*, 48 Bom. L. R. 673) e.g., if the parties are of the community among whom it is customary for parents to contract marriage for their children. The contract of apprenticeship is also binding.

However, it has been held that an agreement for service, entered into by a father on behalf of his daughter who is a minor, is not enforceable at law (*Raj Rani v. PremAdib*, (1948) 51 Bom. L.R. 256).

Lunatics Agreement

A person of unsound mind is a lunatic. That is to say for the purposes of making contract, a person is of unsound mind if at the time when he makes the contract, he is incapable of understanding it and of forming rational judgment as to its effect upon his interests.

A person of unsound mind cannot enter into a contract. A lunatics agreement is therefore void. But if he makes a contract when he is of sound mind, i.e., during lucid intervals, he will be bound by it.

A sane man who is delirious from fever, or who is so drunk that he cannot understand the terms of a contract, or form a rational judgement as to its effect on his interests cannot contract whilst such delirium or state of drunkenness lasts. A person under the influence of hypnotism is temporarily of unsound mind. Mental decay brought by old age or disease also comes within the definition.

Agreement by persons of unsound mind are void. But for necessaries supplied to a lunatic or to any member of his family, the lunatics estate, if any, will be liable. There is no personal liability incurred by the lunatic.

If a contract entered into by a lunatic or person of unsound mind is for his benefit, it can be enforced (for the benefit) against the other party but not vice-versa [*Jugal Kishore v. Cheddu*, (1903) 1 All. L.J 43].

Other Persons qualified and disqualified from contracting

Some statutes disqualify certain persons governed by them, to enter into a contract. For example, Oudh Land Revenue Act provides that where a person in Oudh is declared as a 'disqualified proprietor under the Act, he is incompetent to alienate his property.

Alien Enemies

A person who is not an Indian citizen is an alien. An alien may be either an alien friend or a foreigner whose sovereign or State is at peace with India, has usually contractual capacity of an Indian citizen. On the declaration of war between his country and India he becomes an alien enemy. A contract with an alien enemy becomes unenforceable on the outbreak of war.

For the purposes of civil rights, an Indian citizen of the subject of a neutral state who is *voluntarily* resident in hostile territory or is carrying on business there is an alien enemy. Trading with an alien enemy is considered illegal, being against public policy.

Foreign Sovereigns and Ambassadors

Foreign sovereigns and accredited representatives of foreign states, i.e., Ambassadors, High Commissioners, enjoy a special privilege in that they cannot be sued in Indian Courts, unless they voluntarily submit to the jurisdiction of the Indian Courts. Foreign Sovereign Governments can enter into contracts through agents residing in India. In such cases the agent becomes personally responsible for the performance of the contracts.

Professional Persons

In England, barristers-at law are prohibited by the etiquette of their profession from suing for their fees. So also are the Fellow and Members of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. But they can sue and be sued for all claims other than their professional fees. In India, there is no such disability and a barrister, who is in the position of an advocate with liberty both to act and plead, has a right to contract and to sue for his fees [*Nihal Chand v. Dilawar Khan*, 1933 All. L.R. 417].

Corporations

A corporation is an artificial person created by law, e.g., a company registered under the Companies Act, public bodies created by statute, such as Municipal Corporation of Delhi. A corporation exists only in contemplation of law and has no physical shape or form.

The Indian Contract Act does not speak about the capacity of a corporation to enter into a contract. But if properly incorporated, it has a right to enter into a contract. It can sue and can be sued in its own name. There are some contracts into which a corporation cannot enter without its seal, and others not at all. A company, for instance, cannot contract to marry. Further, its capacity and powers to contract are limited by its charter or memorandum of association. Any contract beyond such power is ultra vires and void.

Married Women

In India there is no difference between a man and a woman regarding contractual capacity. A woman married or single can enter into contracts in the same ways as a man. She can deal with her property in any manner she likes, provided, of course, she is a major and is of sound mind.

Under the English law, before the passing of the Law Reform (Married Women and Tortfeasors) Act, 1935, a husband was responsible for his wife's contracts but since 1935 this liability no longer arises unless the wife is acting as the husband's agent. Now, therefore, even in England a married woman has full contractual capacity, and can sue and be sued in her own name.

Free Consent: Flaw in Consent

The basis of a contract is agreement, i.e., mutual consent. In other words, the parties should mean the something in the same sense and agree voluntarily. It is when there is consent, that the parties are said to be consensus ad idem i.e. their minds have met. Not only consent is required but it must be a free consent. Consent is not free when it has been caused by coercion, undue influence, misrepresentation, fraud or mistake. These elements if present, may vitiate the contract.

When this consent is wanting, the contract may turn out to be void or voidable according to the nature of the flaw in consent. Where there is no consent, there can be no contract as in the case of mutual mistake. Where there is consent, but it is not free, a contract is generally voidable at the option of the party whose consent is not free. In the case of misrepresentation, fraud, coercion, undue influence, the consent of one of the parties is induced or caused by the supposed existence of a fact which did not exist.

Mistake (Sections 20 and 21)

The law believes that contracts are made to be performed. The whole structure of business depends on this as the businessmen depend on the validity of contracts. Accordingly, the law says that it will not aid any one to evade consequences on the plea that he was mistaken.

On the other hand, the law also realises that mistakes do occur, and that these mistakes are so fundamental that there may be no contract at all. If the law recognises mistake in contract, the mistake will render the contract void.

Effect of Mistake

A mistake in the nature of miscalculation or error of judgement by one or both the parties has no effect on the validity of the contract. For example, if A pays an excessive price for goods under a mistake as to their true value, the contract is binding on him [*Leaf v. International Galleries* (1950) 1 All E.R. 693].

Therefore, mistake must be a “vital operative mistake”, i.e. it must be a mistake of fact which is fundamental to contract. To be operative so as to render the contract void, the mistake must be:

- (a) of fact, and not of law or opinion;
- (b) the fact must be essential to agreement, i.e., so fundamental as to negative the agreement; and
- (c) must be on the part of both the parties.

Thus, where both the parties to an agreement are under a mistake as to a matter of fact essential to agreement, the agreement is void (Section 20). Such a mistake prevents the formation of any contract at all and the Court will declare it void. For example, A agrees to buy from B a certain horse. It turns out that the horse was dead at the time of bargain though neither party was aware of the fact. The agreement is void.

Mistake of Law and Mistake of Fact

Mistakes are of two kinds: (i) mistake of law, and (ii) mistake of fact. If there is a mistake of law of the land, the contract is binding because everyone is deemed to have knowledge of law of the land and ignorance of law is no excuse (*ignorantia juris non-excusat*).

But mistake of foreign law and mistake of private rights are treated as mistakes of fact and are excusable.

The law of a foreign country is to be proved in Indian Courts as ordinary facts. So mistake of foreign law makes the contract void. Similarly, if a contract is made in ignorance of private right of a party, it would be void, e.g., where A buys property which already belongs to him.

Mutual or Unilateral Mistake

Mistake must be mutual or bilateral, i.e., it must be on the part of both parties. A unilateral mistake, i.e., mistake on the part of only one party, is generally of no effect unless (i) it concerns some fundamental fact and (ii) the other party is aware of the mistake. For this reason, error of judgement on the part of one of the parties has no effect and the contract will be valid.

Mutual or Common Mistake as to Subject-matter

A contract is void when the parties to it assume that a certain state of things exist which does not actually exist or in their ignorance the contract means one thing to one and another thing to the other, and they contract

subject to that assumption or under that ignorance. There is a mistake on the part of both the parties. Such a mistake may relate to the existence of the subject matter, its identity, quantity or quality.

- (a) **Mistake as to existence of the subject matter:** Where both parties believe the subject matter of the contract to be in existence but in fact, it is not in existence at the time of making the contract, there is mistake and the contract is void.

In Couturier v. Hastie (1856), there was a contract to buy cargo described as shipped from port A to port B and believed to be at sea which in fact got lost earlier unknown to the parties and hence not in existence at the time of the contract. Held, the contract was void due to the parties mistake.

- (b) **Mistake as to identity of the subject matter:** Where the parties are not in agreement to the identity of the subject matter, i.e., one means one thing and the other means another thing, the contract is void; there is no consensus ad idem.

In Raffles v. Wichelhhaks (1864), A agreed to buy from B a cargo of cotton to arrive “ex Peerless from Bombay”. There were two ships called “Peerless” sailing from Bombay, one arriving in October and the other in December. A meant the earlier ship and B the latter. Held, the contract was void for mistake.

- (c) **Mistake as to quantity of the subject matter:** There may be a mistake as to quantity or extent of the subject matter which will render the contract void even if the mistake was caused by the negligence of a third-party.

In Henkel v. Pape (1870), P wrote to H inquiring the price of rifles and suggested that he might buy as many as fifty. On receipt of a reply he wired send three rifles. Due to the mistake of the telegraph clerk the message transmitted to H was send the rifles. H despatched 50 rifles. Held, there was no contract between the parties.

- (d) **Mistake as to quality of the subject-matter or promise:** Mistake as to quality raises difficult questions. If the mistake is on the part of both the parties the contract is void. But if the mistake is only on the part of one party difficulty arises.

The general rule is that a party to a contract does not owe any duty to the other party to disclose all the facts in his possession during negotiations. Even if he knows that the other party is ignorant of or under some misapprehension as to an important fact, he is under no obligation to enlighten him. Each party must protect his own interests unaided. In contract of sale of goods, this rule is summed up in the maxim *caveat emptor* (Let the buyer beware.) The seller is under no duty to reveal the defects of his goods to the buyer, subject to certain conditions.

Unilateral Mistake as to Nature of the Contract

The general rule is that a person who signs an instrument is bound by its terms even if he has not read it. But a person who signs a document under a fundamental mistake as to its nature (not merely as to its contents) may have it avoided provided the mistake was due to either-

- (a) the blindness, illiteracy, or senility of the person signing, or
- (b) a trick or fraudulent misrepresentation as to the nature of the document.

Unilateral Mistake as to the Identity of the Person Contracted With

It is a rule of law that if a person intends to contract with A, B cannot give himself any right under it. Hence, when a contract is made in which personalities of the contracting parties are or may be of importance, no other person can interpose and adopt the contract. For example, where M intends to contract only with A but enters into contract with B believing him to be A, the contract is vitiated by mistake as there is no *consensus ad idem*.

Mistake as to the identity of the person with whom the contract is made will operate to nullify the contract only if:

- (i) the identity is for material importance to the contracts; and
- (ii) the mistake is known to the other person, i.e., he knows that it is not intended that he should become a party to the contract.

In *Cundy vs. Lindsay* (1878) 3 A.C. 459, one Blenkarn posing as a reputed trader Blankiron, placed an order for some goods with M/s Lindsay and Co. The company, thought that it is dealing with Blankiron and supplied the goods. Blenkarn sold the goods to Cundy and did not pay to Lindsay. The latter sued Cundy. The Court held that there was no contract between Lindsay and Blenkarn and therefore Cundy has no title to the goods.

Misrepresentation (Section 18)

The term “misrepresentation” is ordinarily used to connote both “innocent misrepresentation” and “dishonest misrepresentation”. Misrepresentation may, therefore, be either (i) Innocent misrepresentation, or (ii) Wilful misrepresentation with *intent to deceive* and is called fraud.

Innocent Misrepresentation

If a person makes a representation believing what he says is true he commits innocent misrepresentation. Thus, any false representation, which is made with an honest belief in its truth is innocent. The effect of innocent misrepresentation is that the party misled by it can avoid the contract, but cannot sue for damages in the normal circumstances.

But in order to avoid a contract on the ground of misrepresentation, it is necessary to prove that:

- (i) there was a representation or assertion.
- (ii) such assertion induced the party aggrieved to enter into the contract.
- (iii) the assertion related to a matter of fact (and not of law as ignorance of law is no excuse).
- (iv) the statement was not a mere opinion or hearsay, or commendation (i.e., reasonable praise). For example an advertisement saying, “washes whiter than the whitest”.
- (v) the statement which has become or turned out to be untrue, was made with an honest belief in its truth. Damages for Innocent Misrepresentation.

Damages for Innocent Misrepresentation

Generally the injured party can only avoid the contract and cannot get damages for innocent misrepresentation. But in the following cases, damages are obtainable:

- (i) From a promoter or director who makes innocent misrepresentation in a company prospectus inviting the public to subscribe for the shares in the company;
- (ii) Against an agent who commits a breach of warranty of authority;
- (iii) From a person who (at the Courts discretion) is estopped from denying a statement he has made where he made a positive statement intending that it should be relied upon and the innocent party did rely upon it and thereby suffered damages;
- (iv) Negligent representation made by one person to another between whom a confidential relationship, like that of a solicitor and client exists.

Wilful Misrepresentation or Fraud (*Section 17*)

Fraud is an untrue statement made knowingly or without belief in its truth or recklessly, carelessly, whether it be true or false with the intent to deceive. The chief ingredients of a fraud are:

- (i) a false representation or assertion,
- (ii) of fact (and not a mere opinion),
- (iii) made with the intention that it should be acted upon,
- (iv) the representation must have actually induced the other party to enter into the contract and so deceived him,
- (v) the party deceived must thereby be indemnified, for there is no fraud without damages, and
- (vi) the statement must have been made either with the knowledge that it was false or without belief in its truth or recklessly without caring whether it was true or false.

It is immaterial whether the representation takes effect by false statement or with concealment. The party defrauded can avoid the contract and also claim damages.

Mere silence as to facts likely to affect the willingness of a person to enter into a contract is not fraud, unless silence is in itself equivalent to speech, or where it is the duty of the person keeping silent to speak as in the cases of contracts *uberrimae fidei*- (contracts requiring utmost good faith).

Contracts *Uberrimae Fidei*

There are contracts in which the law imposes a special duty to act with the utmost good faith i.e., to disclose all material information. Failure to disclose such information will render the contract voidable at the option of the other party.

Contracts *uberrimae fidei* are:

- (a) Contract of insurance of all kinds: The assured must disclose to the insurer all material facts and whatever he states must be correct and truthful.
- (b) Company prospectus: When a company invites the public to subscribe for its shares, it is under statutory obligation to disclose truthfully the various matters set out in the Companies Act. Any person responsible for non-disclosure of any of these matters is liable to damages. Also, the contract to buy shares is voidable where there is a material false statement or non-disclosure in the prospectus.
- (c) Contract for the sale of land: The vendor is under a duty to the purchaser to show good title to the land he has contracted to sell.
- (d) Contracts of family arrangements: When the members of a family make agreements or arrangements for the settlement of family property, each member of the family must make full disclosure of every material fact within his knowledge.

Difference between Fraud and Innocent Misrepresentation

1. Fraud implies an intent to deceive, which is lacking if it is innocent misrepresentation.
2. In case of misrepresentation and fraudulent silence, the defendant can take a good plea that the plaintiff had the means of discovering the truth with ordinary diligence. This argument is not available if there is fraud (Section 19- exception).
3. In misrepresentation the plaintiff can avoid or rescind the contract. In fraud, the plaintiff can claim damages as well.
4. If there is fraud, it may lead to prosecution for an offence of cheating under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Coercion

Coercion as defined in Section 15 means “the committing or threatening to commit any act forbidden by the Indian Penal Code, or unlawful detaining or threatening to detain, any property to the prejudice of any person whatever with the intention of causing any person to enter into an agreement”. Simply stated, the doing of any act forbidden by the Indian Penal Code is coercion even though such an act is done in a place where the Indian Penal Code is not in force. If A at the point of a pistol asks B to execute a promissory note in his favour and B to save his life does so he can avoid this agreement as his consent was not free. Even a threat to third-party, e.g., where A compels B to sign a document threatening to harm C, in case B does not sign would also amount to coercion.

It has been held that mere threat by one person to another to prosecute him does not amount to coercion. There must be a contract made under the threat and that contract should be one sought to be avoided because of coercion (*Ramchandra v. Bank of Kohlapur*, 1952 Bom. 715). It may be pointed out that coercion may proceed from any person and may be directed against any person, even a stranger and also against goods, e.g., by unlawful detention of goods.

Undue Influence

Under Section 16 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872, a contract is said to be produced by undue influence “where the relations subsisting between the parties are such that one of the parties is in a position to dominate the will of the other and uses that position to obtain an unfair advantage over the other”.

The elements of undue influence are (i) a dominant position, and (ii) the use of it to obtain an unfair advantage. The words “unfair advantage” do not limit the jurisdiction to cases where the transaction would be obviously unfair as between persons dealing on an equal footing. In the words of Lord Kingdon, “the principle applies to every case where influence is acquired and abused where confidence is reposed and betrayed”.

Sub-section (2) of Section 16 provides that a person is deemed to be in a position to dominate the will of another—

- (a) Where he holds a real or apparent authority over the other or where he stands in a fiduciary relation to the other, e.g., minor and guardian; trustee and beneficiary; solicitor and client. There is, however, no presumption of undue influence in the relation of creditor and debtor, husband and wife (unless the wife is a *parda-nishin* woman) and landlord and tenant. In these cases the party has to prove that undue influence has been exercised on him, there being no presumption as to existence of undue influence.
- (b) Where he makes a contract with a person whose mental capacity is temporarily or permanently affected by reason of age, illness or mental or bodily distress e.g., doctor and patient.

Illustration

A, having advanced money to his son B, during his minority, upon B's coming of age obtains, by misuse of parental influence a bond upon B for a greater amount than the sum due in respect of the advance. A employs undue influence.

A, a man enfeebled by disease or age is induced by B's influence over him as his medical attendant, to agree to pay B an unreasonable sum for his professional services. B employs undue influence.

A parent stands in a fiduciary relation towards his child and any transaction between them by which any benefit is procured by the parent to himself or to a third party, at the expense of the child will be viewed with jealousy by Courts of Equity and the burden will be on the parent or third-party claiming the benefit of showing that the child while entering into the transaction had independent advice, that he thoroughly understood the nature of transaction and that he was removed from all undue influence when the gift was made [*Marim Bibi v. Cassim Ebrahim* (1939) 184 I.C. 171 (1939) A.I.R. 278].

Where there is a presumption of undue influence, the presumption can be rebutted by showing that

- (i) full disclosure of all material facts was made,
- (ii) the consideration was adequate, and
- (iii) the weaker party was in receipt of independent legal advice.

Transaction with parda-nishin women

The expression '*parda-nishin* denotes complete seclusion. Thus, a woman who goes to a Court and gives evidence, who fixes rents with tenants and collects rents, who communicates when necessary, in matters of business, with men other than members of her own family, could not be regarded as a parda-nishin woman [*Ismail Musafee v. Hafiz Boo* (1906) 33 Cal. LR 773 and 33 I.A. 86]. The principles to be applied to transactions with parda-nishin woman are founded on *equity and good conscience* and accordingly a person who contracts with *parda-nishin* woman has to prove that no undue influence was used and that she had free and independent advice, fully understood the contents of the contract and exercised her free will. "The law throws around her a special cloak of protection" [*Kali Baksh v. Ram Gopal* (1914) L.R. 41 I.A. 23, 28-29, 36 All 81, 89].

Unconscionable transactions: An unconscionable transaction is one which makes an exorbitant profit of the others distress by a person who is in a dominant position. Merely the fact that the rate of interest is very high in a money lending transaction shall not make it unconscionable. But if the rate of interest is very exorbitant and the Court regards the transaction unconscionable, the burden of proving that no undue influence was exercised lies on the creditor. It has been held that urgent need of money on the part of the borrower does not itself place the lender in a position to dominate his will within the meaning of this Section [*Sunder Koer v. Rai Sham Krishen* (1907) 34 Cal. 150, C.R. 34 I.A. 9].

Legality of Object

One of the requisites of a valid contract is that the object should be lawful. Section 10 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872, provides, "All agreements are contracts if they are made by free consent of parties competent to contract for a lawful consideration and with a lawful object..." Therefore, it follows that where the consideration or object for which an agreement is made is unlawful, it is not a contract.

Section 23 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 provides that the consideration or object of an agreement is

- (i) lawful unless it is forbidden by law; or
- (ii) it is of such nature that if permitted it would defeat the provisions of law; or
- (iii) is fraudulent; or
- (iv) involves or implies injury to the person or property of another; or
- (v) the Court regards it an immoral or opposed to public policy.

In each of these cases the consideration or object of an agreement is said to be unlawful. *Every agreement of which the object or consideration is unlawful is void.*

Illustration

- (i) X, Y and Z enter into an agreement for the division among them of gains acquired by them by fraud. The agreement is void as its object is unlawful.

- (ii) X promises to obtain for Y an employment in the Government service and Y promises to pay Rs. 1,500 to X. The agreement is void, as the consideration for it is unlawful.
- (iii) X promises to Y to drop a prosecution which he has instituted against Y for robbery, and Y promises to restore the value of the things taken. The agreement is void as its object is unlawful.
- (iv) A who is B's mukhtr promises to exercise his influence, as such, with B in favour of C and C promises to pay Rs. 1,000 to A. The agreement is void because it is immoral.
- (v) An agreement by the proprietors of a newspaper to indemnify the printers against claims arising from libels printed in the newspaper is void as it implies or involves injury to the person of another.

Void and Illegal Contracts

A void contract is one which is destitute of legal effects altogether. An illegal contract too has no legal effect as between the immediate parties to the contract, but has the further effect of tainting the collateral contracts also with illegality. For instance A borrows from B Rs. 1,000 for lending to C a minor. The contract between A and C is void, but B can nevertheless recover the money from A, On the other hand, if A had borrowed Rs. 1,000 from B to buy a pistol to shoot C, the question whether B can recover the money hinges on whether B was aware of the purpose for which money was borrowed. If B had knowledge of the illegal purpose, he cannot recover. Therefore, it may be said *that all illegal agreements are void but all void agreements are not necessarily illegal.*

Consequence of Illegal Agreements

- (i) an illegal agreement is entirely void;
- (ii) no action can be brought by a party to an illegal agreement. The maxim is "Ex turpi cause non-oritur action" - from an evil cause, no action arises;
- (iii) money paid or property transferred under an illegal agreement cannot be recovered. The maxim is in *parti delicto potierest condition defendeties*- In cases of equal guilt, more powerful is the condition of the defendant;
- (iv) where an agreement consist of two parts, one part legal and other illegal, and the legal parts is separable from the illegal one, then the Court will enforce the legal one. If the legal and the illegal parts cannot be separated the whole agreement is illegal; and
- (v) any agreement which is collateral to an illegal agreement is also tainted with illegality and is treated as being illegal, even though it would have been lawful by itself [*Film Pratapchand v. Firm Kotri Re. AIR (1975) S.C. 1223*].

Exception to General Rule of no Recovery of Money or Property

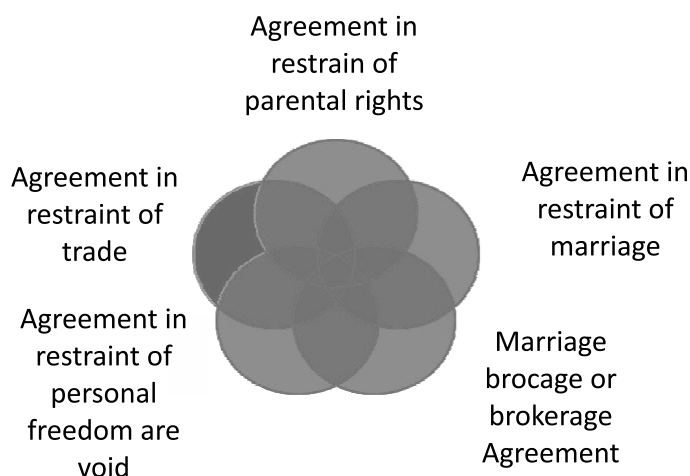
In the following cases, a party to an illegal agreement may sue to recover money paid or property transferred:

- (a) Where the transfer is not in *parti delicto* (equally guilty) with the defendant, i.e. the transferee. For example, where A is induced to enter into an illegal agreement by the fraud of B, A may recover the money paid if he did not know that the contract was illegal.
- (b) If the plaintiff can frame a cause of action entirely dependent of the contract.
- (c) Where a substantial part of the illegal transaction has not been carried out and the plaintiff is truly and genuinely repentant. [*Bigos v. Bonstead (1951), All E.R. 92*].

Agreements Void as being Opposed to Public Policy

The head public policy covers a wide range of topics. Agreements may offend public policy by tending to the prejudice of the State in times of war, by tending to the abuse of justice or by trying to impose unreasonable and inconvenient restrictions on the free choice of individuals in marriage, or their liberty to exercise lawful trade or calling. The doctrine of public policy is a branch of Common Law and like any other branch of Common Law it is governed by the precedents [*Gherulal Parakh v. Mahadeodas Maiya (1959) 2 S.C.R. (Suppl.) 406; AIR 1959 S.C. 781*]. The doctrine of public policy is not to be extended beyond the classes of cases already covered by it and no Court can invent a new head of public policy [*Lord Halsbury, Janson v. Driefontien Consolidated Mines (1902) A.C. 484, 491*]. It has been said by the House of Lords that public policy is always an unsafe and treacherous ground for legal decisions. Even if it is possible for Courts to evolve a new head of public policy, it should be done under extraordinary circumstances giving rise to incontestable harm to the society.

The following agreements are void as being against public policy but they are not illegal:



- (a) Agreement in restrain of parental rights: An agreement by which a party deprives himself of the custody of his child is void.
- (b) Agreement in restraint of marriage: An agreement not to marry at all or not to marry any particular person or class of persons is void as it is in restraint of marriage.
- (c) Marriage brokerage or brokerage Agreements: An agreement to procure marriage for reward is void. Where a purohit (priest) was promised Rs. 200 in consideration of procuring a wife for the defendant, the promise was held void as opposed to public policy, and the purohit could not recover the promised sum.
- (d) Agreements in restraint of personal freedom are void: Where a man agreed with his money lender not to change his residence, or his employment or to part with any of his property or to incur any obligation on credit without the consent of the money lender, it was held that the agreement was void.
- (e) Agreement in restraint of trade: An agreement in restraint of trade is one which seeks to restrict a person from freely exercising his trade or profession.

AGREEMENTS IN RESTRAINT OF TRADE VOID

Section 27 of the Indian Contract Act states that every agreement by which any one is restrained from exercising a lawful profession, trade or business of any kind, is, to that extent, void.

This Section is not happily worded and has been criticised by many authors. It appears from the wording that

every kind of restraint, whether total or partial falls within the prohibition of this Section. In English law the Courts have held that if a restraint is reasonable, it will be valid. Leading case on this point is *Nordenfelt v. Maxim Nordenfelt Guns Co.*, (1894) A.C. 535. N was an inventor and a manufacturer of guns and ammunition. He sold his world-wide business to M and promised not to manufacture guns anywhere in the world for 25 years. The House of Lords held that the restraint was reasonable as it was no more than is necessary for the protection of the company, the contract was binding. Whether a restraint is reasonable or not depends upon the facts of each case.

Our courts are not consistent on the point whether reasonable restraints are permitted or not. In *Madhub Chunder v. RaCoomar* (1874) 14 Bang. L.R. 76, A paid Rs. 900 to B's workman. B undertook to stop his business in a particular locality in Calcutta. He did not keep his promise. A's suit for the sum was dismissed since the agreement was void under Section 27. The reasonableness or otherwise of the restraint was not discussed. However, if a restrictive meaning is adopted, most of the ordinary mercantile agreements may be hit. Thus, the Courts have held that if the restraint is one which is really necessary for the carrying on business, the same is not prohibited. In *Mackenzie v. Sitarmiah*, (1891) 15 Mad. 79, A agreed to sell to B all the salt he manufactured and B agreed to buy such salt. A further agreed not to sell salt to third-parties. The Court held that the agreement was valid.

Other type of restraints is personal covenants between an employer and his employee whereby the latter agrees not to compete with the former or serve with any of his competitors after employment. This issue came before the Supreme Court in *Niranjan Shanker Golikari v. The Century Spinning and Manufacturing Co. Ltd.*, AIR 1967 S.C. 1098. In this case N entered into a bond with the company to serve for a period of five years. In case, N leaves his job earlier and joins elsewhere with company's competitor within five years, he was liable for damages. N was imparted the necessary training but he left the job and joined another company. The former employer instituted a suit against N. The Supreme Court, held that the restraint was necessary for the protection of the company's interests and not such as the Court would refuse to enforce.

In other case, it has been reiterated that the restriction should be reasonable taking into account the facts and circumstances of the case. In *Superintendence Company of India Ltd. v. Krishna Murgai* [(1981) 2 SCC 246], the Supreme Court laid down that a restraint beyond the term of service would be void and the only ground on which it can be justified is by showing it is necessary for the protection of the employer's goodwill.

The words "to the extent" in Section 27 make it clear that if in an agreement there are some covenants which are prohibited whereas the others are not and if the two parts can be separated then only those covenants which operate as restraint of trade would be void and not whole of the agreement itself. To illustrate, in *Brahmputra Tea Co. Ltd. v. Scarth* (1885) I.L.R. Cal. 545, the employee agreed with the employer firstly, not to compete with latter after leaving the job and, secondly, not to injure employer's interest during employment. The Court held that the first condition is a restraint of trade but the second is binding.

Example

A & B entered into contract in which A will not engage in the business of selling spices in Delhi. B paid Rs. 5,00,00/- as consideration to this agreement. Is this agreement void?

Yes, this agreement is void pursuant to section 27 of Indian Contract Act, 1872.

When Contracts in Restraint of Trade Valid

Prima facie every restraint of trade is void, but certain exceptions to this general rule are recognised. If a partial and reasonable restraint falls under any of the following exceptions, the contract will be enforceable:

- (a) Sale of goodwill: Where the seller of the goodwill of a business undertakes not to compete with the

purchaser of the goodwill, the contract is enforceable provided the restraint appears to be reasonable as to territorial limits and the length of time.

- (b) Partners agreements: Section 11(2) of the Indian Partnership Act permits contracts between partners to provide that a partner shall not carry on any business other than that of the firm while he is a partner.
- (c) Section 36(2) and Section 54 of the Indian Partnership Act provide that a partner may make an agreement with his partners that on ceasing to be a partner he will not carry on any business similar to that of the firm within specified period or within specified limits. The agreement shall be binding if the restrictions are reasonable.

Trade Combinations: An agreement, the object of which is to regulate business and not to restrain it is valid. Thus, an agreement in the nature of a business combination between traders or manufactures e.g. not to sell their goods below a certain price, to pool profits or output and to divide the same in an agreed proportion does not amount to a restraint of trade and is perfectly valid [*Fraser & Co. v. Laxmi Narain*, (1931) 63 All 316].

Negative stipulations in service agreements: An agreement of service by which a person binds himself during the term of the agreement not to take service with anyone else is not in restraint of lawful profession and is valid.

Wagering Agreements

The literal meaning of the word “wager” is a “bet”. Wagering agreements are nothing but ordinary betting agreements. For example, A and B enter into an agreement that if England's Cricket Team wins the test match, A will pay B Rs. 100 and if it loses B will pay Rs. 100 to A. This is a wagering agreement and nothing can be recovered by winning party under the agreement.

The essence of gaming and wagering is that one party is to win and the other to lose upon a future event which at the time of the contract is of an uncertain nature that is to say, if the event turns out one way A will lose; but if it turns out the other way he will win [*Thacker v. Hardy*, (1878) 4 OBD 685].

Wagering Agreements Void

In India except Mumbai, wagering agreements are void. In Mumbai, wagering agreements have been declared illegal by the Avoiding Wagers (Amendment) Act, 1865. Therefore, in Mumbai a wagering agreement being illegal, is void not only between the immediate parties, but taints and renders void all collateral agreements to it.

Thus, A bets with B and losses, applies to C for a loan, who pays B in settlement of A's losses. C cannot recover from A because this is money paid “under” or “in respect of” a wagering transaction which is illegal in Mumbai. But in respect of India such a transaction (i.e., betting) being only void, C could recover from A. Of course, if A refused to pay B the amount of the bet that he has lost, B could not sue A anywhere. Again, where an agent bets on behalf of his principal and loses and pays over the money to the winner, he cannot recover the money from his principal, if the transactions took place in Mumbai, but elsewhere he could recover. But if the agent wins, he must pay the winnings to the principal, as this money was received on behalf of the principal.

Sometimes, commercial transactions assume the form of wagering contracts. The sample test to find out whether a particular transaction is a wager or a genuine commercial transaction is: “Where delivery of the goods sold is intended to be given and taken, it is valid contract, but where only the differences are intended to be paid, it will be a wagering contract and unenforceable”.

In a wagering contract there must be mutuality in the sense that the gain of one party should be loss to the other on the happening of an uncertain event which is the subject matter of the contract.

Void Agreements

The following types of agreements are void under Indian Contract Act:

- (a) Agreement by or with a minor or a person of unsound mind or a person disqualified to enter into a contract - Section 11.
- (b) Agreement made under a mistake of fact, material to the agreement on the part of the both the parties - Section 20.
- (c) An agreement of which the consideration or object is unlawful - Section 23.
- (d) If any part of a single consideration for one or more objects, or any one or any part of any one of several considerations for a single object, is unlawful, the agreement is void - Section 24.
- (e) An agreement made without consideration subject to three exceptions provided to Section 25.
- (f) An agreement in restraint of marriage - Section 26.
- (g) An agreement in restraint of trade - Section 27.
- (h) An agreement in restraint of legal proceedings - Section 28.
- (h) Agreements, the meaning of which is not certain, or capable of being made certain - Section 29.
- (j) Agreement by way of wager- Section 30.
- (k) An agreement to enter into an agreement in the future.
- (l) An agreement to do an act impossible in itself - Section 56(1)

When contract becomes void

An agreement not enforceable by law is void *ab initio* - Section 2(g).

A contract which ceases to be enforceable by law becomes void when it ceases to be enforceable - Section 2(j)
A contract becomes void when, by reason of some event which the promisor could not prevent, the performance of the contract becomes impossible, e.g., by destruction of the subject- matter of the contract after the formation of the contract.

A contract becomes void by reason of subsequent illegality. A in India agrees to supply goods to B in Pakistan. After the formation of the contract war breaks out between India and Pakistan and the supply of goods to Pakistan is prohibited by legislation. The contract becomes void.

A contingent contract to do or not do to anything if an uncertain future event happens becomes void if the event becomes impossible.

Where a contract is voidable at the option of the aggrieved party, the contract becomes void when the option is exercised by him.

Restitution

When a contract becomes void, it is not to be performed by either party. But if any party has received any benefit under such a contract from the other party he must restore it or make compensation for it to the other party. A agrees to sell to B after 6 months a certain quantity of gold and receives Rs. `500 as advance. Soon after the agreement, private sales of gold are prohibited by law. The contract becomes void and A must return the sum of Rs. 500 to B.

Restitution is also provided for by Section 65 where an agreement is discovered to be void. A pays Rs. 500 in consideration of B's promising to marry, C, A's daughter C is dead at the time of the promise. The agreement is discovered to be void and B must pay back Rs. 500.

But there is no resolution where the parties are wholly incompetent to contract, e.g., where one of the parties is a minor. The minor cannot be asked to restore the benefit, e.g., a minor borrowed Rs. 1,000 from B, he cannot be asked to pay back Rs. 1,000 to B because the contract is void (*Mohori Bibis case*).

CERTAIN RELATIONS RESEMBLING THOSE OF CONTRACT (QUASI CONTRACTS)

Nature of Quasi-Contracts

A valid contract must contain certain essential elements, such as offer and acceptance, capacity to contract, consideration and free consent. But sometimes the law implies a promise imposing obligations on one party and conferring right in favour of the other even when there is no offer, no acceptance, no *consensus ad idem*, and in fact, there is neither agreement nor promise. Such cases are not contracts in the strict sense, but the Court recognises them as relations resembling those of contracts and enforces them as if they were contracts, hence the term quasi- contracts (i.e., resembling a contract).

A quasi-contract rests on the equitable principle that a person shall not be allowed to enrich himself unjustly at the expense of another. In truth, it is not a contract at all. It is an obligation which the law creates, in the absence of any agreement, when any person is in the possession of other persons money, or its equivalent, under such circumstances that in equity and good conscience he ought not to retain it, and which in justice and fairness belongs to another. It is the duty and not an agreement or intention which defines it. A very simple illustration is money paid under mistake. Equity demands that such money must be paid back.

Quasi-Contracts or Implied Contracts under the Indian Contract Act

The following types of quasi-contracts have been dealt within the Indian Contract Act—

- (a) Necessaries supplied to person incapable of contracting or to anyone whom he is illegally bound to support - Section 68.
- (b) Suit for money had and received - Section 69 and 72.
- (c) Quantum Meruit.
- (d) Obligations of a finder of goods - Section 71.
- (e) Obligation of person enjoying benefit of a non-gratuitous act - Section 70.

Example

R and S enter a contract under which R agrees to deliver Groceries at S's residence and S promises to pay Rs. 15,000 end of the month. However, R erroneously delivers the groceries at T's residence instead of S's.

When T gets home he assumes that the groceries was send by his uncle and consumed. In this case, even there is no contract between T and R, it may be treated as Quasi contract and T is Liable to pay for the groceries.

Necessaries

Contracts by minors and persons of unsound mind are void. However, Section 68 of the Indian Contract Act provides that their estates are liable to reimburse the trader, who supplies them with necessaries of life.

Suit for money had and received

The right to file a suit for the recovery of money may arise

- (a) Where the plaintiff paid money to the defendant (i) under a mistake, (ii) in pursuance of a contract the consideration for which has failed, or (iii) under coercion, oppression, extortion or other such means.

A debtor may recover, from a creditor the amount of an over-payment made to him by mistake. The mistake may be mistake of fact or a mistake of law.

- (b) Payment to third-party of money which another is bound to pay. For example, where A's goods are wrongfully attached in order to realise arrears of Government revenue due by B, and A pays the amount to save his goods from being sold, he is entitled to recover the amount from B.
- (c) Money obtained by defendant from third-parties. For example, where an agent has obtained a secret commission or a fraudulent payment from a third-party, the principle can recover the amount from the agent.

Quantum Meruit

The expression "*Quantum Meruit*" literally means "as much as earned" or reasonable remuneration. It is used where a person claims reasonable remuneration for the services rendered by him when there was no express promise to pay the definite remuneration, Thus, the law implies reasonable compensation for the services rendered by a party if there are circumstances showing that these are to be paid for.

The general rule is that where a party to a contract has not fully performed what the contract demands as a condition of payment, he cannot sue for payment for that which he has done. The contract has to be indivisible and the payment can be demanded only on the completion of the contract.

But where one party who has performed part of his contract is prevented by the other from completing it, he may sue on a *quantum meruit*, for the value of what he has done.

The claim on a *quantum meruit* arises when one party abandons the contract, or accepts the work done by another under a void contract.

The party in default may also sue on a "*quantum meruit*" for what he has done if the contract is divisible and the other party has had the benefit of the part which has been performed. But if the contract is not divisible, the party at fault cannot claim the value of what he has done.

Obligations of finder of lost goods

The liability of a finder of goods belonging to someone else is that of a bailee. This means that he must take as much care of the goods as a man of ordinary prudence would take of his own goods of the same kind. So far as the real owner of the goods is concerned, the finder is only a bailee and must not appropriate the goods to his own use. If the owner is traced, he must return the goods to him. The finder is entitled to get the reward that may have been offered by the owner and also any expenses he may have incurred in protecting and preserving the property.

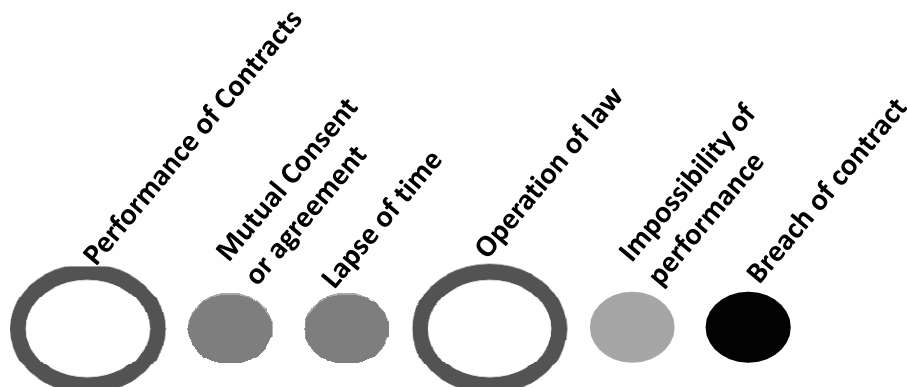
Obligation of a person enjoying benefit of non-gratuitous act

Section 70 of the Indian Contract Act provides that where a person lawfully does something for another person or delivers anything to him without any intention of doing so gratuitously and the other person accepts and enjoys the benefit thereof, the latter must compensate the former or restore to him the thing so delivered. For example, when one of the two joint tenants pays the whole rent to the landlord, he is entitled to compensation from his co-tenant, or if A, a tradesmen, leaves goods at B's house by mistake and B treats the goods as his own, he is bound to pay A for them.

DISCHARGE OR TERMINATION OF CONTRACTS

A contract is said to be discharged or terminated when the rights and obligations arising out of a contract are extinguished.

Contracts may be discharged or terminated by any of the following modes:



(a) Performance of Contracts (Section 37)

Section 37 of the Act provides that the parties to a contract must either perform or offer to perform their respective promises, unless such performance is dispensed with or excused under the provision of the Indian Contract Act, or any other law. In case of death of the promisor before performance, the representatives of the promisor are bound to perform the promise *unless a contrary intention appears from the contract*.

Tender of Performance (Section 38)

In case of some contracts, it is sometimes sufficient if the promisor performs his side of the contract. Then, if the performance is rejected, the promisor is discharged from further liability and may sue for the breach of contract if he so wishes. This is called discharge by tender.

To be valid, a tender must fulfil the following conditions

- i. it must be unconditional;
- ii. it must be made at a proper time and place;
- iii. it must be made under circumstances enabling the other party to ascertain that the party by whom it is made is able and willing then and there to do the whole of what he is bound, to do by his promise;
- iv. if the tender relates to delivery of goods, the promisee must have a reasonable opportunity of seeing that the thing offered is the thing which the promisor is bound by his promise to deliver;
- v. tender made to one of the several joint promisees has the same effect as a tender to all of them.

Who can demand performance?

Generally speaking, a stranger to contract cannot sue and the person who can demand performance is the party to whom the promise is made. But an assignee of the rights and benefits under a contract may demand performance by the promisor, in the same way as the assignor, (i.e., the promisee) could have demanded.

Effect of refusal of party to perform wholly

Section 39 provides that when a party to a contract has refused to perform or disabled himself from performing his promise in its entirety, the promisee may put an end to the contract unless he had signified by words or conduct his acquiescence in its continuance.

By whom contract must be performed

Under Section 40 of the Act, if it appears from the nature of the case that it was the intention of the parties to a contract that it should be performed by the promisor himself such promise must be performed by the promisor himself. In other cases, the promisor or his representative may employ a competent person to perform it.

Example

- (a) X promises to pay Rs. 1,000 to Y. X may either personally pay the money to Y or cause it to be paid to Y by another. If X dies before making payment, his representatives must perform the promise or employ some proper person to do so.
- (b) X promises to paint a picture for Y. X must personally perform the promise.

Devolution of Joint Liabilities

Under Section 42 of the Indian Contract Act, where two or more persons have made a joint promise then, *unless a contrary intention appears* from the contract all such persons should perform the promise. If any one of them dies, his representatives jointly with the survivor or survivors should perform. After the death of the last survivor, the representatives of all jointly must fulfil the promise.

Under Section 43 of the Indian Contract Act when two or more persons made a joint promise, the promisee may, in the *absence of an express agreement* to the contrary compel any one or more of such joint promisors to perform the whole of the promise. Each of two or more joint promisors may compel every other joint promisor to contribute equally with himself to the performance of the promise *unless a contrary intention appears from the contract*. If any one of two or more promisors make default in such contribution, the remaining joint promisors should bear the loss arising from such default in equal share.

Under Section 44 of the Act, where two or more persons have made a joint promise, a release of one of such joint promisors by the promisee does not discharge the other joint promisor(s); neither does it free the joint promisor so released from responsibility to the other joint promisor or joint promisors.

Devolution of Joint Rights

A promise may be made to two or more persons. The promisees are called joint promisees. For example, X may give a promise to repay Rs. 1,000 given by Y and Z jointly. In such case, *in the absence of a contrary intention*, the right to claim, performance rests with Y and Z. If Y dies, Y's representative jointly with Z may, demand performance. If Z also dies, the representatives of Y and Z may demand jointly performance from X.

Assignment

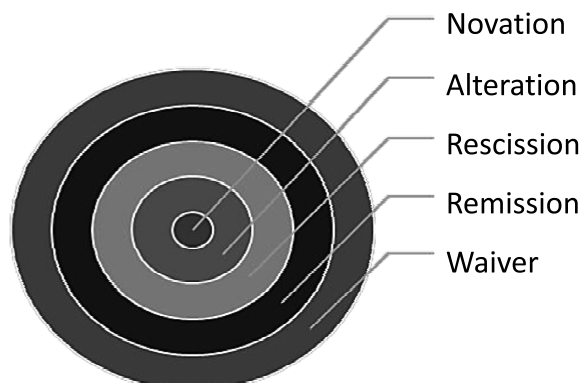
The promisee may assign rights and benefits of contract and the assignee will be entitled to demand performance by the promisor. But the assignment to be complete and effectual, must be made by an instrument in writing.

An obligation or liability under a contract cannot be assigned. For example, if A owes B Rs. 500 and A transfers the liability to C i.e. asks C to pay the sum to B, this would not bind B, and B may not consent to this arrangement, as he may know nothing of C's solvency. But if B consents to accept performance by C, there is a substitution of new contract and the old contract is discharged and all rights and liabilities under it are extinguished. This is technically called *novation*.

(b) Discharge by Mutual Agreement or Consent (Sections 62 and 63)

A contract may be discharged by the agreement of all parties to the contract, or by waiver or release by the party entitled to performance.

Methods stipulated under Sections 62 and 63 of the Indian Contract Act for discharging a contract by mutual consent are:



Novation – when a new contract is substituted for existing contract either between the same parties or between different parties, the consideration mutually being the discharge of the old contract.

Alteration – change in one or more of the material terms of a contract.

Rescission – by agreement between the parties at any time before it is discharged by performance or in some other way.

Remission – acceptance of a lesser sum than what was contracted for or a lesser fulfilment of the promise made.

Waiver – deliberate abandonment or giving up of a right which a party is entitled to under a contract, where upon the other party to the contract is released from his obligation.

(c) Discharge by Lapses of Time

The Limitation Act, in certain circumstance, affords a good defence to suits for breach of contract, and in fact terminates the contract by depriving the party of his remedy to law. For example, where a debtor has failed to repay the loan on the stipulated date, the creditor must file the suit against him within three years of the default. If the limitation period of three years expires and he takes no action he will be barred from his remedy and the other party is discharged of his liability to perform.

(d) Discharge by Operation of the Law

Discharge under this head may take place as follows:

- (a) By merger: When the parties embody the inferior contract in a superior contract.
- (b) By the unauthorised alteration of items of a written document: Where a party to a written contract makes any material alteration without knowledge and consent of the other, the contract can be avoided by the other party.
- (c) By insolvency: The Insolvency Act provides for discharge of contracts under particular circumstances. For example, where the Court passes an order discharging the insolvent, this order exonerates or discharges him from liabilities on all debts incurred previous to his adjudication.
- (e) Discharge by Impossibility or Frustration (Section 56).

A contract which is entered into to perform something that is clearly impossible is void. For instance, A agrees with B to discover treasure by magic. The agreement is void by virtue of Section 56 para 1 which lays down the principle that an agreement to do an act impossible in itself is void.

Sometimes subsequent impossibility (i.e. where the impossibility supervenes after the contract has been made) renders the performance of a contract unlawful and stands discharged; as for example, where a singer contracts to sing and becomes too ill to do so, the contract becomes void. In this connection, para 2 of Section 56 provides that a contract to do an act, which after the contract is made, becomes impossible or by reason of some event which the promisor could not prevent, unlawful, becomes void when the act becomes impossible or unlawful.

If the impossibility is not obvious and the promisor alone knows of the impossibility or illegally then existing or the promisor might have known as such after using reasonable diligence, such promisor is bound to compensate the promisee for any loss he may suffer through the non-performance of the promise in spite of the agreement being void *ab-initio* (Section 56, para 3).

In *Satyabarta Ghose v. Mugnuram* A.I.R. 1954 S.C. 44 the Supreme Court interpreted the term 'impossible' appearing in second paragraph of Section 56. The Court observed that the word 'impossible' has not been used here in the sense of physical or literal impossibility. The performance of an act may not be literally impossible but it may be impracticable and useless from the point of view of the object and purpose which the parties had in view; and if an untoward event or change of circumstances totally upsets the very foundation upon which the parties rested their bargain; it can very well be said that the promisor found it impossible to do the act which he promised to do. In this case, A undertook to sell a plot of land to B but before the plot could be developed, war broke out and the land was temporarily requisitioned by the Government. A offered to return earnest money to B in cancellation of contract. B did not accept and sued A for specific performance. A pleaded discharge by frustration. The Court held that Section 56 is not applicable on the ground that the requisition was of temporary nature and there was no time limit within which A was obliged to perform the contract. The impossibility was not of such a nature which would strike at the root of the contract.

Discharge by Supervening Impossibility

A contract will be discharged by subsequent or supervening impossibility in any of the following ways:

- (a) Where the subject-matter of the contract is destroyed without the fault of the parties, the contract is discharged.
- (b) When a contract is entered into on the basis of the continued existence of a certain state of affairs, the contract is discharged if the state of things changes or ceases to exist.
- (c) Where the personal qualifications of a party is the basis of the contract, the contract is discharged by the death or physical disablement of that party.

Discharge by Supervening Illegality

A contract which is contrary to law at the time of its formation is void. But if, after the making of the contract, owing to alteration of the law or the act of some person armed with statutory authority the performance of the contract becomes impossible, the contract is discharged. This is so because the performance of the promise is prevented or prohibited by a subsequent change in the law. A enters into contract with B for cutting trees. By a statutory provision cutting of trees is prohibited except under a licence and the same is refused to A. The contract is discharged.

Cases in which there is no supervening impossibility

In the following cases contracts are not discharged on the ground of supervening impossibility—

- (a) Difficulty of performance: The mere fact that performance is more difficult or expensive than the parties anticipated does not discharge the duty to perform.
- (b) Commercial impossibilities do not discharge the contract. A contract is not discharged merely because expectation of higher profits is not realised.

- (c) Strikes, lockouts and civil disturbance like riots do not terminate contracts unless there is a clause in the contract providing for non-performance in such cases.

Supervening impossibility or illegality is known as frustration under English Law.

(f) Discharge by Breach

Where the promisor neither performs his contract nor does he tender performance, or where the performance is defective, there is a breach of contract. The breach of contract may be (i) actual; or (ii) anticipatory. The actual breach may take place either at the time the performance is due, or when actually performing the contract. Anticipatory breach means a breach before the time for the performance has arrived. This may also take place in two ways – by the promisor doing an act which makes the performance of his promise impossible or by the promisor in some other way showing his intention not to perform it.

Anticipatory Breach of Contract

Breach of contract may occur, before the time for performance is due. This may happen where one of the parties definitely renounces the contract and shows his intention not to perform it or does some act which makes performance impossible. The other party, on such a breach being committed, has a right of action for damages.

He may either sue for breach of contract immediately after repudiation or wait till the actual date when performance is due and then sue for breach. If the promisee adopts the latter course, i.e., waits till the date when performance is due, he keeps the contract alive for the benefit of the promisor as well as for his own. He remains liable under it and enables the promisor not only to complete the contract in spite of previous repudiation, but also to avail himself of any excuse for non-performance which may have come into existence before the time fixed for performance.

In *Hochester v. De La Tour* (1853) E.R. 922, A hired B in April to act as a courier commencing employment from 1st June, but wrote to B in May repudiating the agreement, B sued A for breach of contract immediately after repudiation. A contended that there could not be breach of contract before June 1. *Held*, B was immediately entitled to sue and need not wait till 1st June, for his right of action to accrue.

In *Avery v. Bowden* (1856) 116 E.R. 1122, A hired B's ship to carry a cargo from Russia. Later on B repudiated the contract. A delayed taking action hoping B would change his mind before the performance date. War broke out between Russia and Britain before the performance date frustrating the contract. *Held*, A lost his right to sue B for damages by his delay.

In *Frost v. Knight* (1872) L.R. 7 Ex. 111, the law on the subject of anticipatory breach was summed up as follows:

“The promisee if he pleases may treat the notice of intention as inoperative and await the time when the contract is to be executed and then hold the other party responsible for all the consequences of non-performance: but in that case he keeps the contract alive for the benefit of the other party as well as his own; he remains subject to all his own obligations and liabilities under it, and enables the other party not only to complete the contract, if so advised, notwithstanding his previous repudiation of it, but also to take advantage of any supervening circumstances which would justify him in declining to complete it.”

REMEDIES FOR BREACH OF CONTRACT

Where a contract is broken, the injured party has several courses of action open to him. The appropriate remedy in any case will depend upon the subject-matter of the contract and the nature of the breach.

(i) Remedies for Breach of Contract

In case of breach of contract, the injured party may:

- (a) Rescind the contract and refuse further performance of the contract;

- (b) Sue for damages;
- (c) Sue for specific performance;
- (d) Sue for an injunction to restrain the breach of a negative term; and
- (e) Sue on quantum meruit.

When a party to a contract has broken the contract, the other party may treat the contract as rescinded and he is absolved from all his obligations under the contract. Under Section 65, when a party treats the contract as rescinded, he makes himself liable to restore any benefits he has received under the contract to the party from whom such benefits were received. Under Section 75 of the Indian Contract Act, if a person rightfully rescinds a contract, he is entitled to a compensation for any damage which he has sustained through the non-fulfilment of the contract by the other party. Section 64 deals with consequences of rescission of voidable contracts, i.e., where there is flaw in the consent of one party to the contract. Under this Section when a person at whose option a contract is voidable rescinds, the other party thereto need not perform any promise therein contained in which he is the promisor. The party rescinding a voidable contract shall, if he has received any benefit thereunder, from another party to such contract, restore such benefit so far as may be, to the person from whom it was received.

(ii) Damages for Breach of Contract

Under Section 73 of the Indian Contract Act, when a contract has been broken, a party who suffers by such breach is entitled to receive, from the party who has broken the contract, compensation for any loss or damage, caused to him thereby, *which naturally arose in the usual course of things from such breach or which the parties knew, when they made the contract to be likely to result from the breach of it.* Such compensation is not to be given for any remote and indirect loss or damage sustained by reason of the breach.

The foundation of the claim for damages rests in the celebrated case of *Hadley v. Baxendale*, (1854) 9 Ex. 341. The facts of this case were as follows:

There was a breakdown of a shaft in A's mill. He delivered the shaft to B, a common carrier to be taken to a manufacturer to copy and make a new one. A did not make known to B that delay would result in loss of profits. By some neglect on the part of B, the *delivery of the shaft was delayed in transit beyond a reasonable time.* As a result, the mill was idle for a longer period than it would otherwise have been, had there been no such delay. It was held, B was not liable for the loss of profits during the period of delay as the circumstances communicated to A did not show that the delay in the delivery of the shaft would entail loss of profits to the mill. In the course of the judgement it was observed:

“Where two parties have made a contract which one of them has broken, the damages which the other party ought to receive in respect of such breach of contract should be such as may fairly and reasonably be considered either arising naturally, i.e., according to the usual course of things from such breach of contract itself, or such as may reasonably be supposed to have been in the contemplation of both parties at the time they made the contract as the probable result of the breach of it. Now, if the special circumstances under which the contract was actually made were communicated by the plaintiffs to the defendants and thus known to both the parties, the damages resulting from the breach of such a contract which they would reasonably contemplate, would be the amount of injury which would ordinarily follow from a breach of contract under these special circumstances so known and communicated. But, on other hand, if these special circumstances were wholly unknown to the party breaking the contract, he at the most could only be supposed to have had in his contemplation, the amount of injury which would arise generally and in the great multitude of cases not affected by any special circumstances from such breach of contract. For, had the special circumstances been known, the parties might have specially provided for the breach of contract by special terms as to damages in that case and of this advantage it would be very unjust to deprive them.”

Liquidated and Unliquidated damages: Where the contracting parties agree in advance the amount payable in the event of breach, the sum payable is called *liquidated damages*.

Where the amount of compensation claimed for a breach of contract is left to be assessed by the Court, damages claimed are called *unliquidated damages*.

Unliquidated Damages

Those are of the following kinds:

- (a) general or ordinary damages,
- (b) special damages,
- (c) exemplary or punitive damages, and
- (d) nominal damages.

Ordinary Damages

These are restricted to pecuniary compensation to put the injured party in the position he would have been had the contract been performed. It is the estimated amount of loss actually incurred. Thus, it applies only to the proximate consequences of the breach of the contract and the remote consequences are not generally regarded. For example, in a contract for the sale of goods, the damages payable would be the difference between the contract price and the price at which the goods are available on the date of the breach.

Special Damages

Special damages are those resulting from a breach of contract under some peculiar circumstances. If at the time of entering into the contract, the party has notice of special circumstances which makes special loss the likely result of the breach in the ordinary course of things, then upon his-breaking the contract and the special loss following this breach, he will be required to make good the special loss. For example, A delivered goods to the Railway Administration to be carried to a place where an exhibition was being held and told the goods clerk that if the goods did not reach the destination on the stipulated date he would suffer a special loss. The goods reached late. He was entitled to claim special damages.

Exemplary Damages

These damages are awarded to punish the defendant and are not, as a rule, granted in case of breach of contract. In two cases, however, the court may award such damages, viz.,

- (i) breach of promise to marry; and
- (ii) wrongful dishonour of a customer cheque by the banker.

In a breach of promise to marry, the amount of the damages will depend upon the extent of injury to the party's feelings. In the bankers case, the smaller the amount of the cheque dishonoured, larger will be damages as the credit of the customer would be injured in a far greater measure, if a cheque for a small amount is wrongfully dishonoured.

Nominal Damages

Nominal damages consist of a small token award, e.g., a rupee of even 25 paise, where there has been an infringement of contractual rights, but no actual loss has been suffered. These damages are awarded to establish the right to decree for breach of contract.

Liquidated Damages and Penalty

Where the contracting parties fix at the time of contract the amount of damages that would be payable in case of breach, in English law, the question may arise whether the term amounts to “liquidated damages” or a “penalty”? The Courts in England usually give effect to liquidated damages, but they always relieve against penalty.

The test of the two is that where the amount fixed is a genuine pre-estimate of the loss in case of breach, it is liquidated damages and will be allowed. If the amount fixed is without any regard to probable loss, but is intended to frighten the party and to prevent him from committing breach, it is a penalty and will not be allowed.

In Indian law, there is no such difference between liquidated damages and penalty. Section 74 provides for “reasonable compensation” upto the stipulated amount whether it is by way of liquidated damages or penalty. For example, A borrows Rs. 500 from B and promises to pay Rs. 1,000 if he fails to repay Rs. 500 on the stipulated date. On A’s failure to repay on the given date, B is entitled to recover from A such compensation, not exceeding Rs. 1,000 as the Court may consider reasonable. (*Union of India v. Raman Iron Foundry*, AIR 1974 SC 1265).

(iii) Specific Performance

It means the actual carrying out by the parties of their contract, and in proper cases the Court will insist upon the parties carrying out this agreement. Where a party fails to perform the contract, the Court may, at its discretion, order the defendant to carry out his undertaking according to the terms of the contract. A decree for specific performance may be granted in addition to or instead of damages.

Specific performance is usually granted in contracts connected with land, e.g., purchase of a particular plot or house, or to take debentures in a company. In case of sale of goods, it will only be granted if the goods are unique and cannot be purchased in the market, e.g., a particular race horse, or one of special value to the party suing by reason of personal or family association, e.g., an heirloom.

Specific performance will not be ordered:

- (a) where monetary compensation is an adequate remedy;
- (b) where the Court cannot supervise the execution of the contract, e.g., a building contract;
- (c) where the contract is for personal service; and
- (d) where one of the parties is a minor.

(iv) Injunction

An injunction, is an order of a Court restraining a person from doing a particular act. It is a mode of securing the specific performance of a negative term of the contract, (i.e., where he is doing something which he promises not to do), the Court may in its discretion issue an order to the defendant restraining him from doing what he promised not to do. Injunction may be prohibitory or mandatory. In prohibitory, the Court restrains the commission of a wrongful act whereas in mandatory, it restrains continuance of a wrongful commission.

In *Lumley v. Wagner* (1852) 90 R.R. 125. W agreed to sing at L’s theatre and nowhere else. W, in breach of contract with L entered into a contract to sing for Z. *Held*, although W could not be compelled to sing at L’s theatre, yet she could be restrained by injunction from singing for Z.

CONTRACT OF INDEMNITY AND GUARANTEE (SECTIONS 124 TO 147)**Meaning of Indemnity**

A contract of indemnity is a contract by which one party promises to save the other party from loss caused to him by the conduct of the promisor himself, or by the conduct of any other person (Section 124).

Example

A contracts to indemnify B against the consequence of legal proceedings which C may take against B in respect of 3 lakh rupees. This is a contract of indemnity. The contract of indemnity may be express or implied.

The person who promises to indemnify or make good the loss is called the indemnifier and the person whose loss is made good is called the indemnified or the indemnity holder. A contract of insurance is an example of a contract of indemnity according to English Law. In consideration of premium, the insurer promises to make good the loss suffered by the assured on account of the destruction by fire of his property insured against fire.

Under the Indian Contract Act, the contract of indemnity is restricted to such cases only where the loss promised to be reimbursed, is caused by the conduct of the promisor or of any other person. The loss caused by events or accidents which do not depend on the conduct of any person, it seems, cannot be sought to be reimbursed under a contract of indemnity.

Rights of Indemnity Holder when Sued

Under Section 125, the promisee in a contract of indemnity, acting within the scope of his authority, is entitled to recover from the promisor—

1. all damages which he may be compelled to pay in any suit in respect of any matter to which the promise to indemnify applies;
2. all costs which he may be compelled to pay in any such suit if, in bringing or defending it, he did not contravene the orders of the promisor, and acted as if it would have been prudent for him to act in the absence of any contract of indemnity, or if the promisor authorised him to bring or defend the suit; and
3. all sums which he may have paid under the terms of any compromise of any such suit, if the compromise was not contrary to the orders of the promisor, and was one which it would have been prudent for the promisee to make in the absence of any contract of indemnity, or if the promisor authorised him to compromise the suit.

Meaning of Contract of Guarantee

A contract of guarantee is a contract to perform the promise, or discharge the liability of a third person in case of his default. The person who gives the guarantee is called the Surety, the person for whom the guarantee is given is called the Principal Debtor, and the person to whom the guarantee is given is called the Creditor (Section 126). A guarantee may be either oral or written, although in the English law, it must be in writing.

Illustration

Like a contract of indemnity, a guarantee must also satisfy all the essential elements of a valid contract. There is, however, a special feature with regard to consideration in a contract of guarantee. The consideration received by the principal debtor is sufficient for surety. Section 127 provides that anything done or any promise made for the benefit of the principal debtor may be a sufficient consideration to the surety for giving the guarantee.

Illustration

- (i) B requests A to sell and deliver to him goods on credit. A agrees to do so, provided C will guarantee the payment of the price of the goods. C promises to guarantee the payment in consideration of A's promise to deliver the goods. This is sufficient consideration for C's promise.
- (ii) A sells and delivers goods to B. C afterwards requests A to forbear to sue B for the debt for a year, and promises that if he does so, C will pay for them in default of payment by B. A agrees to forbear as requested. This is sufficient consideration for C's promise.

Like a contract of indemnity, a guarantee must also satisfy all the essential elements of a valid contract. There is, however, a special feature with regard to consideration in a contract of guarantee. The consideration received by the principal debtor is sufficient for surety. Section 127 provides that anything done or any promise made for the benefit of the principal debtor may be a sufficient consideration to the surety for giving the guarantee.

Distinction between Indemnity and Guarantee

A contract of indemnity differs from a contract of guarantee in the following ways:

- (a) In a contract of indemnity there are only two parties: the indemnifier and the indemnified. In a contract of guarantee, there are three parties; the surety, the principal debtor and the creditor.
- (b) In a contract of indemnity, the liability of the indemnifier is primary. In a contract of guarantee, the liability of the surety is secondary. The surety is liable only if the principal debtor makes a default, the primary liability being that of the principal debtor.
- (c) The indemnifier need not necessarily act at the request of the debtor; the surety gives guarantee only at the request of the principal debtor.
- (d) In the case of a guarantee, there is an existing debt or duty, the performance of which is guaranteed by the surety, whereas in the case of indemnity, the possibility of any loss happening is the only contingency against which the indemnifier undertakes to indemnify.
- (e) The surety, on payment of the debt when the principal debtor has failed to pay is entitled to proceed against the principal debtor in his own right, but the indemnifier cannot sue third-parties in his own name, unless there be assignment. He must sue in the name of the indemnified.

Example

Indemnity – X agree to Pay Y Rs. 50000/- in case of loss to any property of later during the use by former.

Guarantee - Z agree to Pay Y in case of loss to any property of later during the use by X.

Extent of Surety's Liability

The liability of the surety is co-extensive with that of the principal debtor unless the contract otherwise provides (Section 128). A creditor is not bound to proceed against the principal debtor. He can sue the surety without suing the principal debtor. As soon as the debtor has made default in payment of the debt, the surety is immediately liable. But until default, the creditor cannot call upon the surety to pay. In this sense, the nature of the surety's liability is secondary.

Section 128 only explains the quantum of a surety's obligation when terms of the contract do not limit it. Conversely it doesn't follow that the surety can never be liable when the principal debtor cannot be held liable. Thus, a surety is not discharged from liability by the mere fact that the contract between the principal debtor and creditor was voidable at the option of the former, and was avoided by the former. Where the agreement

between the principal debtor and creditor is void as for example in the case of minority of principal debtor, the surety is liable as a principal debtor; for in such cases the contract of the so-called surety is not collateral, but a principal contract [*Kashiba v. Shripat* (1894) 19 Bom. 697].

Kinds of Guarantees

A contract of guarantee may be for an existing debt, or for a future debt. It may be a specific guarantee, or it may be a continuing guarantee. A specific guarantee is given for a single debt and comes to an end when the debt guaranteed has been paid.

A continuing guarantee is one which extends to a series of transactions (Section 129). The liability of surety in case of a continuing guarantee extends to all the transactions contemplated until the revocation of the guarantee. As for instance, S, in consideration that C will employ P in collecting the rents of C's Zamindari, promises C to be responsible to the amount of Rs. 5,000 for the due collection and payment by P of these rents. This is a continuing guarantee.

Revocation of Continuing Guarantee

A continuing guarantee is revoked in the following circumstances:

- (a) By notice of revocation by the surety (Section 130): The notice operates to revoke the surety's liability as regards future transactions. He continues to be liable for transactions entered into prior to the notice [*Offord v. Davies* (1862) 6 L.T.S. 79].
- (b) By the death of the surety: The death of the surety operates, in the absence of contract [*Lloyds v. Harper* (188) 16 Ch. D. 290] as a revocation of a continuing guarantee, so far as regards future transactions (Section 131). But for all the transactions made before his death, the surety's estate will be liable.

Rights of Surety

A surety has certain rights against the creditor, (Section 141) the principal debtor (Sections 140 and 145) and the co-securities (Sections 146 and 147). Those are—

- (a) Surety's rights against the creditor: Under Section 141 a surety is entitled to the benefit of every security which the creditor has against the principal debtor at the time when the contract of suretyship is entered into whether the surety knows of the existence of such security or not; and, if the creditor loses or, without the consent of the surety parts with such security, the surety is discharged to the extent of the value of the security.
- (b) Rights against the principal debtor: After discharging the debt, the surety steps into the shoes of the creditor or is subrogated to all the rights of the creditor against the principal debtor. He can then sue the principal debtor for the amount paid by him to the creditor on the debtors default; he becomes a creditor of the principal debtor for what he has paid.

In some circumstances, the surety may get certain rights even before payment. The surety has remedies against the principal debtor before payment and after payment. In *Mamta Ghose v. United Industrial Bank* (AIR 1987 Cal. 180) where the principal debtor, after finding that the debt became due, started disposing of his properties to prevent seizure by surety, the Court granted an injunction to the surety restraining the principal debtor from doing so. The surety can compel the debtor, after debt has become due to exonerate him from his liability by paying the debt.

- (c) Surety's rights gains co-sureties: When a surety has paid more than his share of debt to the creditor, he has a right of contribution from the co-securities who are equally bound to pay with him. A, B and C are sureties to D for the sum of Rs. 3,000 lent to E who makes default in payment. A, B and C are liable, as

between themselves to pay Rs. 1,000 each. If any one of them has to pay more than Rs. 1,000 he can claim contribution from the other two to reduce his payment to only Rs. 1,000. If one of them becomes insolvent, the other two shall have to contribute the unpaid amount equally.

Discharge of Surety

A surety may be discharged from liability under the following circumstances:

- (a) By notice of revocation in case of a continuing guarantee as regards future transaction (Section 130.)
- (b) By the death of the surety as regards future transactions, in a continuing guarantee in the absence of a contract to the contrary (Section 131).
- (c) Any variation in the terms of the contract between the creditor and the principal debtor, without the consent of the surety, discharges the surety as regards all transactions taking place after the variation (Section 133).
- (d) A surety will be discharged if the creditor releases the principal debtor, or acts or makes an omission which results in the discharge of the principal debtor (Section 134). But where the creditor fails to sue the principal debtor within the limitation period, the surety is not discharged.
- (e) Where the creditor, without the consent of the surety, makes an arrangement with the principal debtor for composition, or promises to give time or not to sue him, the surety will be discharged (Section 135).
- (f) If the creditor does any act which is against the rights of the surety, or omits to do an act which his duty to the surety requires him to do, and the eventual remedy of the surety himself against the principal debtor is thereby impaired, the surety is discharged (Section 139).

If the creditor loses or parts with any security which at the time of the contract the debtor had given in favour of the creditor, the surety is discharged to the extent of the value of the security, unless the surety consented to the release of such security by creditor in favour of the debtor. It is immaterial whether the surety was or is aware of such security or not (Section 141).

CONTRACT OF BAILMENT AND PLEDGE

(a) Bailment

A bailment is a transaction whereby one person delivers goods to another person for some purpose, upon a contract that they are, when the purpose is accomplished to be returned or otherwise disposed of according to the directions of the person delivering them (Section 148). The person who delivers the goods is called the *bailor* and the person to whom they are delivered is called the *bailee*.

Bailment is a *voluntary delivery of goods for a temporary purpose* on the understanding that *they are to be returned in specie* in the same or altered form. The ownership of the goods remains with the bailor, the bailee getting only the possession. Delivery of goods may be actual or constructive, e.g., where the key of a godown is handed over to another person, it amounts to delivery of goods in the godown.

Gratuitous Bailment

A gratuitous bailment is one in which neither the bailor nor the bailee is entitled to any remuneration. Such a bailment may be for the exclusive benefit of the bailor, e.g., when A leaves his dog with a neighbour to be looked after in A's absence on a holiday. It may again be for exclusive benefit of the bailee, e.g., where you lend your book to a friend of yours for a week. In neither case any charge is made.

A gratuitous bailment terminates by the death of either the bailor or the bailee (Section 162).

Under Section 159 the lender of a thing for use may at any time require its return if the loan was gratuitous, even though he lent it for a specified time or purpose. But if on the faith of such loan made for a specified time or purpose, the borrower has acted in such a manner that the return of the thing lent before the time agreed upon would cause him loss exceeding the benefit actually derived by him from the loan, the lender must, if he compels the return, indemnify the borrower the amount in which the loss so occasioned exceeds the benefit so derived.

Bailment for Reward

This is for the mutual benefit of both the bailor and the bailee. For example, A lets out a motor-car for hire to B. A is the bailor and receives the hire charges and B is the bailee and gets the use of the car. Where, A hands over his goods to B, a carrier for carriage at a price, A is the bailor who enjoys the benefit of carriage and B is the bailee who receives a remuneration for carrying the goods.

Duties of Bailee

The bailee owes the following duties in respect of the goods bailed to him:

- (a) The bailee must take as much care of the goods bailed to him as a man of ordinary prudence would take under similar circumstances of his own goods of the same bulk, quality and value as the goods bailed (Section 151). If he takes this much care he will not be liable for any loss, destruction or deterioration of the goods bailed (Section 152). The degree of care required from the bailee is the same whether the bailment is for reward or gratuitous.

Of course, the bailee may agree to take special care of the goods, e.g., he may agree to keep the property safe from all perils and answers for accidents or thefts. But even such a bailee will not be liable for loss happening by an act of God or by public enemies.

- (b) The bailee is under a duty not to use the goods in an unauthorised manner or for unauthorised purpose (Section 153). If he does so, the bailor can terminate the bailment and claim damages for any loss or damage caused by the unauthorised use (Section 154).
- (c) He must keep the goods bailed to him separate from his own goods (Sections 155-157).

If the bailee without the consent of the bailor, mixes the goods of the bailor with his own goods, the bailor and the bailee shall have an interest, in proportion to their respective shares, in the mixture thus produced. If the bailee without the consent of the bailor, mixes the goods of the bailor with his own goods, and the goods can be separated or divided, the property in the goods remains in the parties respectively; but the bailee is bound to bear the expenses of separation, and any damages arising from the mixture.

If the bailee without the consent of the bailor mixes, the goods of the bailor with his own goods, in such a manner that it is impossible to separate the goods bailed from the other goods and deliver them back, the bailor is entitled to be compensated by the bailee for the loss of goods.

- (d) He must not set up an adverse title to the goods.
- (e) It is the duty of the bailee to return the goods without demand on the expiry of the time fixed or when the purpose is accomplished (Section 160). If he fails to return them, he shall be liable for any loss, destruction or deterioration of the goods even without negligence on his part (Section 161).
- (f) In the absence of any contract to the contrary, the bailee must return to the bailor any increase, or profits which may have accrued from the goods bailed; for example, when A leaves a cow in the custody of B to be taken care of and the cow gets a calf, B is bound to deliver the cow as well as the calf to A (Section 163).

Bailees Particular Lien (Section 170)

Where the goods are bailed for a particular purpose and the bailee in due performance of bailment, expands his skill and labour, he has in the absence of an agreement to the contrary a lien on the goods, i.e., the bailee can retain the goods until his charges in respect of labour and skill used on the goods are paid by the bailor. A gives a piece of cloth to B, a tailor, for making it into a suit, B promises to have the suit ready for delivery within a fortnight, B has the suit ready for delivery. He has a right to retain the suit until he is paid his dues. The section expresses the Common Law principle that if a man has an article delivered to him on the improvement of which he has to bestow trouble and expenses, he has a right to detain it until his demand is paid.

The right of lien arises only where labour and skill have been used so as to confer an additional value on the article.

Example

A gave clothes to B for Laundry. A denies to make full payment. B denied to return the clothes. Can B deny to return the goods?

Yes, he can deny to return the goods as a bailee.

Particular and General Lien

Lien is of two kinds: Particular lien and General lien. A particular lien is one which is available only against that property of which the skill and labour have been exercised. A bailee's lien is a particular lien.

A *general lien* is a right to detain any property belonging to the other and in the possession of the person trying to exercise the lien in respect of any payment lawfully due to him.

Thus, a general lien is the right to retain the property of another for a general balance of accounts but a particular lien is a right to retain only for a charge on account of labour employed or expenses bestowed upon the identical property detained.

The right of general lien is expressly given by Section 171 of the Indian Contract Act to bankers, factors, warfingers, attorneys of High Court and policy-brokers, provided there is no agreement to the contrary.

Duties of bailor

The bailor has the following duties:

- (a) The bailor must disclose all the known faults in the goods; and if he fails to do that, he will be liable for any damage resulting directly from the faults (Section 150). For example, A delivers to B, a carrier, some explosive in a case, but does not warn B. The case is handled without extraordinary care necessary for such articles and explodes. A is liable for all the resulting damage to men and other goods.

In the case of bailment for hire, a still greater responsibility is placed on the bailor. He will be liable even if he did not know of the defects (Section 150). A hires a carriage of B. The carriage is unsafe though B does not know this. A is injured. B is responsible to A for the injury.

- (b) It is the duty of the bailor to pay any extraordinary expenses incurred by the bailee. For example, if a horse is lent for a journey, the expense of feeding the horse would, of course, subject to any special agreement be borne by the bailee. If however the horse becomes ill and expenses have been incurred on its treatment, the bailor shall have to pay these expenses (Section 158).
- (c) The bailor is bound to indemnify the bailee for any cost or costs which the bailee may incur because of the defective title of the bailor of the goods bailed (Section 164).

Termination of bailment

Where the bailee wrongfully uses or dispose of the goods bailed, the bailor may determine the bailment (Section 153.)

As soon as the period of bailment expires or the object of the bailment has been achieved, the bailment comes to an end, and the bailee must return the goods to the bailor (Section 160). Bailment is terminated when the subject matter of bailment is destroyed or by reason of change in its nature, becomes incapable of use for the purpose of bailment.

A gratuitous bailment can be terminated by the bailor at any time, even before the agreed time, subject to the limitation that where termination before the agreed period causes loss in excess of benefit, the bailor must compensate the bailee (Section 159).

A gratuitous bailment terminates by the death of either the bailor or the bailee (Section 162).

Finder of Lost Goods

The position of a finder of lost goods is exactly that of a bailee. The rights of a finder are that he can sue the owner for any reward that might have been offered, and may retain the goods until he receives the reward. But where the owner has offered no reward, the finder has only a particular lien and can detain the goods until he receives compensation for the troubles and expenses incurred in preserving the property for finding out the true owner. But he cannot file a suit for the recovery of the compensation [Section 168].

Thus, as against the true owner, the finder of goods in a public or quasi public place is only a bailee; he keeps the article in trust for the real owner. As against every-one else, the property in the goods vests in the finder on his taking possession of it.

The finder has a right to sell the property—

- (a) where the owner cannot with reasonable diligence be found, or
- (b) when found, he refuses to pay the lawful charges of the finder and—
 - (i) if the thing is in danger of perishing or losing greater part of its value, or
 - (ii) when the lawful charges of the finder for the preservation of goods and the finding out of the owner amounts to two-thirds of the value of the thing (Section 169).

Carrier as Bailee

A common carrier undertakes to carry goods of all persons who are willing to pay his usual or reasonable rates. He further undertakes to carry them safely, and make good all loses, unless they are caused by act of God or public enemies. Carriers by land including railways and carriers by inland navigation, are common carriers. Carriers by Sea for hire are not common carriers and they can limit their liability. Railways in India are now common carriers.

Inn-keepers: The liability of a hotel keeper is governed by Sections 151 and 152 of the Contract Act and is that of an ordinary bailee with regard to the property of the guests.

C stayed in a room in a hotel. The hotel-keeper knew that the room was in an insecure condition. While C was dining in the dining room, some articles were stolen from his room. It was held that the hotel-keeper was liable as he should have taken reasonable steps to rectify the insecure condition of the rooms (*Jan & San v. Caneron* (1922) 44 All. 735).

(b) Pledge

Pledge or pawn is a contract whereby an article is deposited with a lender of money or promisee as security for the repayment of a loan or performance of a *promise*. The bailor or depositor is called the Pawnor and the bailee or deposittee the “Pawnee” (Section 172). Since pledge is a branch of bailment, the pawness is bound to

take reasonable care of the goods pledged with him. Any kind of goods, valuables, documents or securities may be pledged. The Government securities, e.g., promissory notes must, however, be pledged by endorsement and delivery.

The following are the essential ingredients of a pledge:

- (i) The property pledged should be delivered to the pawnee.
- (ii) Delivery should be in pursuance of a contract.
- (iii) Delivery should be for the purpose of security.
- (iv) Delivery should be upon a condition to return.

Rights of the Pawnee

No property in goods pawned passes to the pawnee, but the pawnee gets a “special property to retain possession even against the true owner until the payment of the debt, interest on the debt, and any other expense incurred in respect of the possession or for preservation of the goods pledged” (Section 173). The pawnee must return the goods to the pawnor on the tender of all that is due to him. The pawnee cannot confer a good title upon a *bona fide* purchaser for value.

Should the pawnor make a default in payment of the debt or performance of the promise at the stipulated time, the pawnee may-

- (i) file a suit for the recovery of the amount due to him while retaining the goods pledged as collateral security; or
- (ii) sue for the sale of the goods and the realisation of money due to him; or
- (iii) himself sell the goods pawned, after giving reasonable notice to the pawnor, sue for the deficiency, if any, after the sale.

If the sale is made in execution of a decree, the pawnee may buy the goods at the sale. But he cannot sell them to himself in a sale made by himself under (iii) above. If after sale of the goods, there is surplus, the pawnee must pay it to the pawnor (Section 176).

Rights of Pawnor

On default by pawnor to repay on the stipulated date, the pawnee may sell the goods after giving reasonable notice to the pawnor. If the pawnee makes an unauthorised sale without giving notice to the pawnor, the pawnor has the following rights—

- (i) He can file a suit for redemption of goods by depositing the money treating the sale as if it had never taken
- (ii) place; or He can ask for damages on the ground of conversion.

Pledge by Non-owners

- (a) Ordinarily, the owner of the goods would pledge them to secure a loan but the law permits under certain circumstances a pledge by a person who is not the owner but is in possession of the goods. Thus, a valid pledge may be created by the following non-owners.

A mercantile agent: Where a mercantile agent is, with the consent of the owner, in possession of goods or the documents of title to goods, any pledge made by him, when acting in the ordinary course of business of a mercantile agent, is as valid as if he were expressly authorised by the owner of the goods to make the same. But the pledge is valid only if the pawnee acts in good faith and has not at the time of the pledge notice that the pawnor has not the authority to pledge (Section 178).

- (b) *Pledge by seller or buyer in possession after sale*: A seller, left in possession of goods sold, is no more the owner, but pledge by him will be valid, provided the pawnee acted in good faith and had no notice of the sale of goods to the buyer (Section 30 of The Sale of Goods Act 1930).
- (c) *Pledge where pawnor having limited interest*: When the pawnor is not the owner of the goods but has a limited interest in the goods which he pawns, e.g., he is a mortgagee or he has a lien with respect of these goods, the pledge will be valid to the extent of such interest.
- (d) *Pledge by co-owner in possession*: One of the several co-owners of goods in possession thereof with the assent of the other co-owners may create a valid pledge of the goods.
- (e) *Pledge by person in possession under a voidable contract*: A person may obtain possession under a contract which is voidable at the option of the lawful owner on the ground of misrepresentation, fraud, etc. The person in possession may pledge the goods before the contract is avoided by the other party (Section 178A).

LAW OF AGENCY

Definition of Agent (Section 182)

An agent is a person who is employed to bring his principal into contractual relations with third-parties. As the definition indicates, an agent is a mere connecting link between the principal and a third-party. But during the period that an agent is acting for his principal, he is clothed with the capacity of his principal.

Creation of Agency

A contract of agency may be express or implied, (Section 186) but consideration is not an essential element in this contract (Section 185). Agency may also arise by estoppel, necessity or ratification.

- (a) *Express Agency*: A contract of agency may be made orally or in writing. The usual form of written contract of agency is the Power of Attorney, which gives him the authority to act on behalf of his principal in accordance with the terms and conditions therein. In an agency created to transfer immovable property, the power of attorney must be registered. A power of attorney may be general, giving several powers to the agent, or special, giving authority to the agent for transacting a single act.
- (b) *Implied Agency*: Implied agency may arise by conduct, situation of parties or necessity of the case.
 - (i) *Agency by Estoppel (Section 237)*: Estoppel arises when you are precluded from denying the truth of anything which you have represented as a fact, although it is not a fact. Thus, where P allows third-parties to believe that A is acting as his authorised agent, he will be estopped from denying the agency if such third-parties relying on it make a contract with A even when A had no authority at all.
 - (ii) *Wife as agent*: Where a husband and wife are living together, the wife is presumed to have her husband's authority to pledge his credit for the purchase of necessaries of life suitable to their standard of living. But the husband will not be liable if he shows that (a) he had expressly warned the tradesman not to supply goods on credit to his wife; or (b) he had expressly forbidden the wife to pledge his credit; or (c) his wife was already sufficiently supplied with the articles in question; or (d) she was supplied with a sufficient allowance.

Similarly, where any person is held out by another as his agent, the third-party can hold that person liable for the acts of the ostensible agent, or the agent by holding out. Partners are each others agents for making contracts in the ordinary course of the partnership business.

- (iii) *Agency of Necessity (Sections 188 and 189)*: In certain circumstances, a person who has been entrusted with another's property, may have to incur unauthorised expenses to protect or preserve it. Such an agency is called an agency of necessity. For example, A sent a horse by railway and on its arrival at the destination there was no one to receive it. The railway company, being bound to take reasonable steps to keep the horse alive, was an agent of necessity of A.

A wife deserted by her husband and thus forced to live separate from him, can pledge her husband's credit to buy all necessaries of life according to the position of the husband even against his wishes.

- (iv) *Agency by ratification (Sections 196-200)*: Where a person having no authority purports to act as agent, or a duly appointed agent exceeds his authority, the principal is not bound by the contract supposedly based on his behalf. But the principal may ratify the agent's transaction and so accept liability. In this way an agency by ratification arises. This is also known as *ex post facto* agency—agency arising after the event. The effect of ratification is to render the contract binding on the principal as if the agent had been authorised before hand. Also ratification relates back to the original making of the contract so that the agency is taken to have come into existence from the moment the agent first acted, and not from the date the principal ratified it.

Ratification is effective only if the following conditions are satisfied –

- (a) The agent must expressly contract as agent for a principal who is in existence and competent to contract.
- (b) The principal must be competent to contract not only at the time the agent acted, but also when he ratified the agent's act.
- (c) The principal at the time of ratification has full knowledge of the material facts, and must ratify the whole contract, within a reasonable time.
- (d) Ratification cannot be made so as to subject a third-party to damages, or terminate any right or interest of a third person.
- (e) Only lawful acts can be ratified.

Classes of Agents

Agents may be special or general or, they may be mercantile agents:

- (a) *Special Agent*: A special agent is one who is appointed to do a specified act, or to perform a specified function. He has no authority outside this special task. The third-party has no right to assume that the agent has unlimited authority. Any act of the agent beyond that authority will not bind the principal.
- (b) *General Agent*: A general agent is appointed to do anything within the authority given to him by the principal in all transactions, or in all transactions relating to a specified trade or matter. The third-party may assume that such an agent has power to do all that is usual for a general agent to do in the business involved. The third party is not affected by any private restrictions on the agent's authority.

Sub-Agent

A person who is appointed by the agent and to whom the principal's work is delegated is known as sub-agent. Section 191 provides that "a sub-agent is a person employed by, and acting under the control of the original agent in the business of the agency." So, the sub-agent is the agent of the original agent.

As between themselves, the relation of sub-agent and original agent is that of agent and the principal. A sub-agent is bound by all the duties of the original agent. The sub-agent is not directly responsible to the principal except for fraud and wilful wrong. The sub-agent is responsible to the original agent. The original agent is responsible to the principal for the acts of the sub-agent. As regards third persons, the principal is represented by sub-agent and he is bound and responsible for all the acts of sub-agent as if he were an agent originally appointed by the principal.

Mercantile Agent

Section 2(9) of the Sale of Goods Act, 1930, defines a mercantile agent as “a mercantile agent having in the customary course of business as such agent authority either to sell goods or consign goods for the purposes of sale, or to buy goods, or to raise money on the security of goods”. This definition covers factors, brokers, auctioneers, commission agents etc.

Factors

A factor is a mercantile agent employed to sell goods which have been placed in his possession or contract to buy goods for his principal. He is the apparent owner of the goods in his custody and can sell them in his own name and receive payment for the goods. He has an insurable interest in the goods and also a general lien in respect of any claim he may have arising out of the agency.

Brokers

A broker is a mercantile agent whose ordinary course of business is to make contracts with other parties for the sale and purchase of goods and securities of which he is not entrusted with the possession for a commission called brokerage. He acts in the name of principal. He has no lien over the goods as he is not in possession of them.

Del Credere Agent

A *del credere* agent is a mercantile agent, who in consideration of an extra remuneration guarantees to his principal that the purchasers who buy on credit will pay for the goods they take. In the event of a third-party failing to pay, the *del credere* agent is bound to pay his principal the sum owned by third-party.

Auctioneers

An auctioneer is an agent who sells goods by auction, i.e., to the highest bidder in public competition. He has no authority to warrant his principals title to the goods. He is an agent for the seller but after the goods have been knocked down he is agent for the buyer also for the purpose of evidence that the sale has taken place.

Partners

In a partnership firm, every partner is an agent of the firm and of his co-partners for the purpose of the business of the firm.

Bankers

The relationship between a banker and his customer is primarily that of debtor and creditor. In addition, a banker is an agent of his customer when he buys or sells securities, collects cheques dividends, bills or promissory notes on behalf of his customer. He has a general lien on all securities and goods in his possession in respect of the general balance due to him by the customer.

Duties of the Agent

An agent's duties towards his principal are as follows (which give corresponding rights to the principal who may sue for damages in the event of a breach of duty by the agent):

- (a) An agent must act within the scope of the authority conferred upon him and carry out strictly the instructions of the principal (Section 211).
- (b) in the absence of express instructions, he must follow the custom prevailing in the same kind of business at the place where the agent conducts the business (Section 211).
- (c) He must do the work with reasonable skill and diligence whereby the nature of his profession, the agent purports to have special skill, he must exercise the skill which is expected from the members of the profession (Section 212).
- (d) He must disclose promptly any material information coming to his knowledge which is likely to influence the principal in the making of the contract.
- (e) He must not disclose confidential information entrusted to him by his principal (Section 213).
- (f) He must not allow his interest to conflict with his duty, e.g., he must not compete with his principal (Section 215).
- (g) The agent must keep true accounts and must be prepared on reasonable notice to render an account.
- (h) He must not make any secret profit; he must disclose any extra profit that he may make.

Where an agent is discovered taking secret bribe, etc., the principal is entitled to (i) dismiss the agent without notice, (ii) recover the amount of secret profit, and (iii) refuse to pay the agent his remuneration. He may repudiate the contract, if the third-party is involved in secret profit and also recover damages.

- (i) An agent must not delegate his authority to sub-agent. A sub-agent is a person employed by and acting under the control of the original agent in the business of agency (Section 191). This rule is based on the principle: *Delegatus non-potest delegare* — a delegate cannot further delegate (Section 190).

But there are exceptions to this rule and the agent may delegate (i) where delegation is allowed by the principal, (ii) where the trade custom or usage sanctions delegation, (iii) where delegation is essential for proper performance, (iv) where an emergency renders it imperative, (v) where nature of the work is purely ministerial, and (vi) where the principal knows that the agent intends to delegate.

Rights of Agents

Where the services rendered by the agent are not gratuitous or voluntary, the agent is entitled to receive the agreed remuneration, or if none was agreed, a reasonable remuneration. The agent becomes entitled to receive remuneration as soon as he has done what he had undertaken to do (Section 219).

Certain classes of agents, e.g., factors who have goods and property of their principal in their possession, have a lien on the goods or property in respect of their remuneration and expense and liabilities incurred. He has a right to stop the goods in transit where he is an unpaid seller.

As the agent represents the principal, the agent has a right to be indemnified by the principal against all charges, expenses and liabilities properly incurred by him in the course of the agency (Sections 222-223).

Example

B, at Singapore, under instructions from A of Calcutta, contracts with C to deliver certain goods to him. A does not send the goods to B, and C sues B for breach of contract. B informs A of the suit, and A authorizes him to defend the suit. B defends the suit, and is compelled to pay damages and costs, and incurs expenses. A is liable to B (as an agent) for such damages, costs and expenses.

Extent of Agent's Authority

The extent of the authority of an agent depends upon the terms expressed in his appointment or it may be implied by the circumstances of the case. The contractual authority is the real authority, but implied authority is to do whatever is incidental to carry out the real authority. This implied authority is also known as apparent or ostensible authority. Thus, an agent having an authority to do an act has authority to do everything lawful which is necessary for the purpose or usually done in the course of conducting business.

An agent has authority to do all such things which may be necessary to protect the principal from loss in an emergency and which he would do to protect his own property under similar circumstances. Where butter was becoming useless owing to delay in transit and was therefore sold by the station master for the best price available as it was not possible to obtain instructions from the principal, the sale was held binding upon the principal.

Responsibilities of Principal to Third-parties

The effect of a contract made by an agent varies according to the circumstances under which the agent contracted.

There are three circumstances in which an agent may contract, namely—

- (a) the agent acts for a named principal;
- (b) the agent acts for an undisclosed principal; and
- (c) the agent acts for a concealed principal.

(a) Disclosed principal: Where the agent contracts as agent for a named principal, he generally incurs neither rights nor liabilities under the contract, and drops out as soon as it is made. The contract is made between the principal and the third-party and it is between these two that rights and obligations are created. The legal effect is the same as if the principal had contracted directly with the third-party.

The effect is that the principal is bound by all acts of the agent done within the scope of actual, apparent or ostensible authority. This ostensible authority of the agent is important, for the acts of a general agent are binding on the principal if they are within the scope of his apparent authority, although they may be outside the scope of his actual authority. Therefore, a private or secret limitation or restriction of powers of an agent do not bind innocent third-party.

(b) Undisclosed principal: Where the agent discloses that he is merely an agent but conceals the identity of his principal, he is not personally liable, as he drops out in normal way. The principal, on being discovered, will be responsible for the contract made by the agent.

(c) Concealed principal: Where an agent appears to be contracting on his own behalf, without either contracting as an agent or disclosing the existence of an agency (i.e., he discloses neither the name of the principal nor his existence), he becomes personally liable. The third-party may sue either the principal (when discovered) or the agent or both. If the third-party chooses to sue the principal and not the agent, he must allow the principal the benefit of all payments made by him to the agent on account of the contract before the agency was disclosed. The third-party is also entitled to get the benefit of anything he may have paid to the agent.

If the principal discloses himself before the contract is completed, the other contracting party may refuse to fulfil the contract if he can show that, if he had known who the principal in the contract was, or if he had known that the agent was not the principal, he would not have entered into the contract.

Principal Liable for Agent's Torts (Section 238)

If an agent commits a tort or other wrong (e.g., misrepresentation or fraud) during his agency, whilst acting within the scope of his actual or apparent authority, the principal is liable. But the agent is also personally liable, and he may be sued also. The principal is liable even if the tort is committed exclusively for the benefit of the agent and against the interests of the principal.

Personal Liability of Agent to Third-party

An agent is personally liable in the following cases:

- (a) Where the agent has agreed to be personally liable to the third-party.
- (b) Where an agent acts for a principal residing abroad.
- (c) When the agent signs a negotiable instrument in his own name without making it clear that he is signing it only as agent.
- (d) When an agent acts for a principal who cannot be sued (e.g., he is minor), the agent is personally liable.
- (e) An agent is liable for breach of warranty of authority. Where a person contracts as agent without any authority there is a breach of warranty of authority. He is liable to the person who has relied on the warranty of authority and has suffered loss.
- (f) Where authority is one coupled with interest or where trade, usage or custom makes the agent personally liable, he will be liable to the third-party.
- (g) He is also liable for his torts committed in the course of agency.

Meaning of Authority Coupled with Interest (Section 202)

An agency is coupled with an interest when the agent has an interest in the authority granted to him or when the agent has an interest in the subject matter with which he is authorised to deal. Where the agent was appointed to enable him to secure some benefit already owed to him by the principal, the agency was coupled with an interest. For example, where a factor had made advances to the principal and is authorised to sell at the best price and recoup the advances made by him or where the agent is authorised to collect money from third-parties and pay himself the debt due by the principal, the agencies are coupled with interest. But a mere arrangement that the agent's remuneration to be paid out of the rents collected by him, it does not give him any interest in the property and the agency is not the one coupled with an interest. An agency coupled with interest cannot be terminated in the absence of a contract to the contrary to the prejudice of such interest.

The principal laid down in Section 202 applies only if the following conditions are fulfilled:

- (a) The interest of the agent should exist at the time of creation of agency and should not have arisen after the creation of agency.
- (b) Authority given to the agent must be intended for the protection of the interest of the agent.
- (c) The interest of the agent in the subject matter must be substantial and not ordinary.
- (d) The interest of the agent should be over and above his remuneration. Mere prospect of remuneration is not sufficient interest.

Termination of Agency

An agency comes to an end or terminates—

- (a) By the performance of the contract of agency; (Section 201)
- (b) By an agreement between the principal and the agent;
- (c) By expiration of the period fixed for the contract of agency;
- (d) By the death of the principal or the agency; (Section 201)
- (e) By the insanity of either the principal or the agent; (Section 201)
- (f) By the insolvency of the principal, and in some cases that of the agent; (Section 201)
- (g) Where the principal or agent is an incorporated company, by its dissolution;
- (h) By the destruction of the subject-matter; (Section 56)
- (i) By the renunciation of his authority by the agent; (Section 201)
- (j) By the revocation of authority by the principal. (Section 201)

When Agency is Irrevocable

Revocation of an agency by the principal is not possible in the following cases:

- (a) Where the authority of agency is one coupled with an interest, even the death or insanity of the principal does not terminate the authority in this case (Section 202).
- (b) When agent has incurred personal liability, the agency becomes irrevocable.
- (c) When the authority has been partly exercised by the agent, it is irrevocable in particular with regard to obligations which arise from acts already done (Section 204).

Example

1. A gives authority to B to sell A's land, and to pay himself, out of the proceeds, the debts due to him from A. A cannot revoke this authority, nor can it be terminated by his insanity or death.
2. A authorizes B to buy 1,000 bales of cotton on account of A, and to pay for it out of A's moneys remaining in B's hands. B buys 1,000 bales of cotton in his own name, so as to make himself personally liable for the price. A cannot revoke B's authority so far as regards payment for the cotton.

When Termination Takes Effect

Termination of an agency takes effect or is complete, as regards the agent when it becomes known to the agent. If the principal revokes the agent's authority, the revocation will take effect when the agent comes to know of it. As regards the third-parties, the termination takes effect when it comes to their knowledge (Section 208). Thus, if an agent whose authority has been terminated to his knowledge, enters into a contract with a third-party who deals with him *bona fide*, the contract will be binding on the principal as against the third-party. The termination of an agent's authority terminates the authority of the sub-agent appointed by the agent (Section 210).

The revocation of agency as regards the agent and as regards the principal takes effect at different points of time. Section 209 charges the agent with duty to protect the principal's interest where the principal dies or becomes of unsound mind. It provides that when an agency is terminated by the principal dying or becoming of

unsound mind, the agent is bound to take, on behalf of the representatives of his late principal, all reasonable steps for the protection and preservation of the interest entrusted to him. So it is the duty of the agent to take all steps to protect the interest of his deceased principal on his death.

JOINT VENTURE/ FOREIGN COLLABORATION/MULTINATIONAL AGREEMENTS

International business professionals use the term “modes of entry” to describe the different methods and approaches available to enter markets and conduct business in other countries. One mode of entry is the joint venture where two or more organizations join together in a cooperative effort to further their business goals. The joint venture is one of the most common and effective means of conducting business internationally. The joint venture documents and agreements are critical to the success of the venture. The joint venture agreement forms the basis of the understanding between and among the parties. It is relied upon to ensure that all parties understand their roles, rights, responsibilities, and remedies in the conduct of the venture. Organizations enter into joint ventures in good faith but closely scrutinize the joint venture documents if anything goes awry.

The importance of the documents and the purpose of this part is to cover, step by step, the critical elements to consider and include in joint venture agreements. Equity participation, for example, may or may not be as important as operational control. Technical participation in the venture may or may not be as important as the intellectual property rights that may result from the venture. A key to developing joint venture agreements is to determine goals and objectives in advance and ensure that the interests are reflected in the agreement.

Selection of good local partner is the key to success of any joint venture. Personal interviews with a prospective joint venture partner should be supplemented with proper due diligence. Once a partner is selected generally the parties highlighting the basis of the future joint venture agreement sign a memorandum of understanding or a letter of intent. Before signing the joint venture agreement, the terms should be thoroughly discussed to avoid any misunderstanding at a later stage. Negotiations require an understanding of the cultural and legal background of the parties.

It is difficult to prepare a set frame of the terms and conditions. The conditions may differ according to the requirements.

While drafting a foreign collaboration agreement, the following factors should be kept in mind:

- Capability of the collaborator and the requirements of the party are clearly indicated.
- Clear definitions of technical terms are given.
- Specify if the product shall be manufactured/sold on exclusive or non-exclusive basis.
- Terms and conditions regarding nature of technical know-how, disclosure of drawings, specifications and other documents, furnishing of technical information in respect of processes with flow charts etc., plant outlay list of equipment, machinery and tool with specification have to be provided.
- Provisions for making available the engineers and/or skilled workers of the collaborator on payment of expenses relating to their stay per diem etc. are given.
- Details regarding specification and quality of the product to be manufactured are given.
- Quality control and trademarks to be used are also specified.
- Responsibility of the collaborator in establishing or maintaining assembly plants should be clearly determined and provided for.
- If sub-contracting of the work is involved, clarify if there would be any restrictions.
- The rate of royalty, mode of calculation and payment etc. Also, make provision as to who will bear the taxes/cess on such payments.
- Use of information and industrial property rights should also be provided for in the agreement.

- A clause on force majeure should be included.
- A clause that the collaborating company has to train the personnel of Indian company within a specified period should be incorporated. The clause should also specify the terms and conditions of such assistance, place of training, period of training and fees payable.
- A comprehensive clause on arbitration containing a clear provision as to the kind of arbitrator and place of arbitration should be included.
- There should be provision in the agreement for payment of interest on delayed payments.

E-CONTRACT

Electronic contracts are not paper based but rather in electronic form are born out of the need for speed, convenience and efficiency. In the electronic age, the whole transaction can be completed in seconds, with both parties simply affixing their digital signatures to an electronic copy of the contract. There was initially an apprehension amongst the legislatures to recognize this modern technology, but now many countries have enacted laws to recognize electronic contracts. The conventional law relating to contracts is not sufficient to address all the issues that arise in electronic contracts. The Information Technology Act, 2000 solves some of the peculiar issues that arise in the formation and authentication of electronic contracts.

As in every other contract, an electronic contract also requires the following necessary ingredients:

- An offer needs to be made
- The offer needs to be accepted
- There has to be lawful consideration
- There has to be an intention to create legal relations
- The parties must be competent to contract
- There must be free and genuine consent
- The object of the contract must be lawful
- There must be certainty and possibility of performance.

Basic Type of e-contracts

1. **Shrink wrap agreements:** In these type of agreements the product is wrapped. Terms and Conditions are placed with the product itself. These are End user Licence Agreements. Example: purchase of Anti Virus.
2. **Clickwrap Agreements:** These agreements requires the users to accept the proposal by clicking the "I agree". User agree by clicking on the agree button. Example: Creation of email id.
3. **Browse Wrap Agreements:** These agreements are entered by continued use of the website. By using the website, the user is deemed to have accepted the conditions. Example: Sale and Purchase on online platforms.
4. **Scroll Wrap Agreements:** In these agreements, Where users are required to scroll to the complete terms and conditions of the documents and give their implied consent. Example: Few mobile applications requires the user to scroll down.
5. **Sign-In Wrap Agreements:** In these agreements, user agree by signing in to a particular website or mobile application. User agree with the terms and conditions by Signing in.

E-contracts are binding only if they have all the essentials required under Indian Contract Act. If any term or condition are not in accordance with the law than the agreements are valid.

CASE LAWS***Trimex International FZE Ltd. Dubai (Petitioner) vs. Vedanta Aluminium Ltd., India (Respondent) on 22nd January, 2010***

This case may be referred to understand the position of law relating to contract concluded by emails. In this case, the court has held that an contract may be concluded by exchange of emails. It was stated:

As rightly pointed out by the learned senior counsel for the petitioner, when Mr A of Trimex opened the email of Mr. B of Vedanta at 3:06 PM on 16.10.2007, it came to his knowledge that an irrevocable contract was concluded. Apart from this, the mandate of Section 7 of the Indian Contract Act stipulated that an acceptance must be absolute and unconditional has also been fulfilled. It is true that in the first acceptance conveyed by the respondent contained a rider, namely, cancellation after 2 shipments which made acceptance conditional. However, taking note of the said condition, the petitioner requested the respondent to convey an unconditional acceptance which was readily done through his email sent at 3:06 PM with the words “we confirm the deal for 5 shipments”, which is unconditional and unqualified.

Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Limited v. Ratnagiri Gas and Power Private Limited & Ors. decided by Supreme Court on 09th November, 2023

In this case, in order to resolve the issue of non-payment of fixed charges, the first respondent filed a petition under Section 79 of the Electricity Act 2003 *inter alia* seeking the resolution of the issue of shortfall of domestic gas. Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) allowed the above petition and held the appellant liable to pay fixed capacity charges. CERC’s decision was upheld by (Appellate Tribunal For Electricity) APTEL. Later, the appeal was filed before the Hon’ble Supreme Court.

The issue arose before the Supreme Court for consideration was whether the CERC and APTEL were justified in affixing liability to pay fixed charges on the appellant. The dispute primarily turns on the terms of the Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). For the reasons stated hereafter, the court answered the issue in the affirmative.

The Apex Court said that a commercial document cannot be interpreted in a manner that is at odds with the original purpose and intendment of the parties to the document. A deviation from the plain terms of the contract is warranted only when it serves business efficacy better. The appellant’s arguments would entail reading in implied terms contrary to the contractual provisions which are otherwise clear. Such a reading of implied conditions is permissible only in a narrow set of circumstances.

LESSON ROUND-UP

- A contract is an agreement enforceable at law, made between two or more persons, by which rights are acquired by one or more to acts or forbearances on the part of the other or others.
- Every promise and every set of promises, forming the consideration for each other, is an agreement.
- All agreements are contracts if they are made by the free consent of parties competent to contract, for a lawful consideration and with a lawful object, and are not hereby expressly declared to be void.
- In flaw contract There may be the circumstances under which a contract made under these rules may still be bad, because there is a flaw, vice or error somewhere. As a result of such a flaw, the apparent agreement is not a real agreement.

- Section 27 of the Indian Contract Act states that every agreement by which any one is restrained from exercising a lawful profession, trade or business of any kind, is, to that extent, void.
- The literal meaning of the word “wager” is a “bet”. Wagering agreements are nothing but ordinary betting agreements.
- An agreement not enforceable by law is void *ab initio*.
- A contingent contract is a contract to do or not to do something, if some event collateral to such contract, does or does not happen. Contract of insurance and contracts of indemnity and guarantee are popular instances of contingent contracts.
- A quasi-contract rests on the equitable principle that a person shall not be allowed to enrich himself unjustly at the expense of another. In truth, it is not a contract at all. It is an obligation which the law creates, in the absence of any agreement, when any person is in the possession of one persons money, or its equivalent, under such circumstances that in equity and good conscience he ought not to retain it, and which in justice and fairness belongs to another. It is the duty and not an agreement or intention which defines it.
- A contract is said to be discharged or terminated when the rights and obligations arising out of a contract are extinguished.
- Where a contract is broken, the injured party has several courses of action open to him. The appropriate remedy in any case will depend upon the subject-matter of the contract and the nature of the breach.
- A contract of indemnity is a contract by which one party promises to save the other party from loss caused to him by the conduct of the promisor himself, or by the conduct of any other person.
- A bailment is a transaction whereby one person delivers goods to another person for some purpose, upon a contract that they are, when the purpose is accomplished to be returned or otherwise disposed of according to the directions of the person delivering them.
- Pledge or pawn is a contract whereby an article is deposited with a lender of money or promisee as security for the repayment of a loan or performance of a promise. The bailor or depositor is called the Pawnor and the bailee or deposittee the “Pawnee” (Section 172)
- Electronic contracts are not paper based but rather in electronic form are born out of the need for speed, convenience and efficiency. In the electronic age, the whole transaction can be completed in seconds, with both parties simply affixing their digital signatures to an electronic copy of the contract.

TEST YOURSELF

(These are meant for re-capitulation only. Answers to these questions are not to be submitted for evaluation)

1. Define consideration and state its essential features.
2. “No consideration, no contract”. Do you agree?
3. “The essence of every agreement is that there ought to be free consent on both the sides”. Discuss.
4. How does a contract differ from agreements?
5. Write short notes on:
 - (a) Reciprocal promises.
 - (b) Substituted Agent.
6. An agreement without Free Consent is Voidable. Analyse the Statement.

