Moderate Summary: The Indian Contract Act, 1872

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Interpretation -clause .—In this Act the following words and expressions are used in the following senses, unless a contrary intent ion appears from the context: — (a) When one person signifies to another his willingness to do or to abstain from doing anythin g, with a view to obtaining the assent of that other to such act or abstinence, he is said to make a proposal; 1. For the Statement of Objects and Reasons for the Bill which was based on a a report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to prepare a body of substantive law for India, dated 6th July, 1866, see Gazette of India, 1867 Extraordinary, p. 34; for the Report of the Select Committee, see ibid., Extraordinary, dated 28th March, 1872; for discussions in Council, see ibid., 1867, Supplement, p. 1064; ibid., 1871, p. 313, and ibid., 1872, p. 527. It has been amended in C.P. by C.P. Act 1 of 1915 and in C.P. and Berar by C.P. and Berar Act 15 of 1938. The Chapters and sections of the Transfer of Property Act, 1882 (4

of 188 2), which relate to contracts are, in places in which that Act is in force, to be taken as part of this Act —see Act 4 of 1882, s. 4. This Act has been extended to Berar by the Berar Laws Act, 1941 (4 of 1941) to Dadra and Nagar Haveli by Reg. 6 of 1963, s. 2 and Sch. I to Goa, Daman and Diu by Reg. 11 of 1963, s. 3 and Sch., (w.e.f. 1 -10-1965) to Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindivi Islands by Reg. 8 of 1965, s. 3 and Sch., to Pondicherry by Act 26 of 1968, s. 3 and Sch. and has been declared to be in f orce in — the Sonthal Parganas —see Sonthal Pargana s Settlement Regulation, 1872 (3 of 1872), s. 3, as amended by the Sonthal Parganas Justice and Laws Regulation, 1899 (3 of 1899), s. 3. Panth Piploda —see the Panth Piploda Law Regulation , 1929 (1 of 1929), s. 2. It has been declared, by notification under s. 3(a) of the Scheduled Districts Act, 1874 (14 of 1874), to be in force in — The Tarai of the Province of Agra —see Gazette of India, 1876, Pt. I, p. 505; the Districts of Hazari bagh, Lohardaga and Manbhum, and Pargana Dhalbhum and the Kolhan in the District of Singhbhum — see Gazette of India, 1881, pt. I, p. 504. —The District of Lohardaga included at this time the present District of Palamau which was separated in 1894. The District of Lohardaga is n ow called the Ranchi District —see Calcutta Gazette, 1899, pt. I, p. 44. 2. Subs. by Act 3 of 1951, s. 3 and Sch., for "except Part B States." 3. The words "except the State of Jammu and Kashmir" omitted by Act 34 of 2019, s. 95 and the Fifth Schedule (w.e.f. 31 -10- 2019). 4. The words "The enactments mentioned in the Schedule hereto are repealed to the extent specified in the third column thereof, but" rep. by Act 10 of 1914, s. 3 and the Second Schedule . 11 (b) When the person to whom the proposal is made signifies his assent thereto, the proposal is said to be accepted. A proposal, when accepted, be comes a promise; (c) The person maki ng the proposal is called the "promisor", and the person accepting the propos al is called the " promise e"; (d) 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 absta in from doing, something, such a ct or abstinence or promise is called a consideration for the promise; (e) Every promise and every set of promises, forming the consideration f or each other, is an agreement; (f) Promises which form the consideration or part of the consideration for each other are called reciprocal promises; (g) An agreement not enforce able by law is said to be void; (h) An agreement en forceable by law is a contract; (i) An agreement which is enforceable by law at the option of one or more of the parties thereto, but not at the option of the other or others, is a voidable contract; (j) A contract which ceases to be enforceable by law becomes void wh en it ceases to be enforceable. CHAPT ER I OF THE COMMUNICATION, ACCEPTANCE AND REVOCATION OF PROPOSALS 3. Communication, acceptan ce and revocation of proposals. —The communication of proposals, the acceptance of proposals, and the revocation of proposals and acceptances, respectively, are deemed to be made by any act or omission of the party proposing, accepting or revoking by which he i ntends to communicate such pro posal, accep tance or revocation, or which has the effect of communicating it. 4. Communication when complete .—The communication of a proposal is complete when it comes to the knowledge of the person to whom it is made. The communication of an acceptance is complete, — as against the proposer, when it is put in a course of transmission to him, so as to be out of the power of the acceptor; as against the acceptor, when it comes to the knowledge of the proposer. The communication of a revocation is complete, — as against the person who m akes it, when it is put into a course of transmission to the p erson to whom it is made, so as to be out of the po wer of the person who makes it; as against the person to whom it is made, w hen it comes to his knowledge. Illustrations (a) A proposes, by letter, to sell a house to B at a certain pri ce. The communication of the proposal is complete when B receives the letter. (b) B accepts A 's pro posal by a letter sent by post. The communication of the acceptance is complete, as against A when the letter is posted; as against B, when the letter is r eceived by A. (c) A re vokes his proposal by telegram. The revocation is complete as against A when the telegram is despatched. It is complete a s against B when B receives it. B revokes his acceptance by telegram. B's revocation is complete as against B when the telegram is despatched, and as against A when it reaches him. 12 5. 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of section 5 of Act (9 of 1872). —In section 5 of Indian contract Act, 1872, hereinafter in this Chapter referred to as the principal Act, at the end of the first paragraph, the following explanation shall inserted, namely: -- "Explanation —Where an invitation to a proposal contains a condition that any proposal made in response to such invitation shall be kept open for a specified time and a proposal is thereupon made acceptin g such condition, such proposal may not be revoked within such time." [Vide Uttar Pradesh Act, 57 of 1976, s. 2] 6. Revocation how made .—A proposal is revoked — (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 c ommunication of the acceptance; (3) by the failure of the acceptor to fulfil a co ndition precedent to acceptance; or (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. 7. Acceptance must be absolute .—In order to convert a proposal into a promise, the acceptance must— (1) be absolute and unqualified; (2) be expressed in some usual and reasonable manner, unless the proposal prescribes the manner in which it is to be accepted. If the proposal prescribes a manner in which it is to be accepted, and the acceptance is not made in such manner, the proposer may, within a reasonable time after the acceptance is communicated to him, insist that his proposal shall be accepted in the prescribed manner, and not otherwise; but if he fails to do so, he accepts the acceptance. 8. Acceptance by performing conditions, or receiving consideration .—Performance of the conditions of a proposal, or the acceptance of any consideration for a reciprocal promise which may be offered with a proposal, is an acc eptance of the proposal. 9. Promises, express and implied .—In so far as the proposal or acceptance of any promise is made in words, the promise is said to be express. In so far as such proposal or acceptance is made otherwise than in words, the promise is said to be implied. 13 CHAPTER II OF CONTRACTS, VOIDABL E CONTRACTS AND VOID AGREEMENTS 10. What agreements are contracts .—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. Nothing herein contained sha II affect any law in force in 1[India] and not hereby expressly repealed by which any contract is required to be made in writing2 or in the presence of witnesses, or any law relating to the registration of documents. 11. Who are competent to contract .—Every person is competent to contract who is of the age of majority according to the law to which he is subject3, and who is of sound mind, and is not disqualified from contracting by any I aw to which he is subject. 12. What is a sound mind f or the purposes of contracting .—A person is said to be of sound mind for the purpose of making a contract, if, at the time when he makes it, he is capable of understanding it and of forming a rational judgment as to its effect upon his interests. A person who is usually of unsound mind, but occasionally of sound mind, may make a con tract when he is of sound mind. A person who is usually of soun d mind, but occasionally of un sound mind, may not make a contract when he is of unsound mind. Illustrations (a) A patient in a lunatic asylum, who is at intervals of sound mind, may c ontract during those intervals. (b) 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 judgment as to its effect on his interests, cannot contract whilst such delirium or drunkenness lasts. 13. "Consent" defined .-Two or more persons are said to consent when they agree upon the same thing in the same sense. 14. "Free consent" defined .--Consent is said to be free when it is not caused by — (1) coercio n, as defined in section 15, or (2) undue influence, as defined in section 16, or (3) frau d, as defined in section 17, or (4) misrepresentation, as defined in section 18, or (5) mistake, subject to the provisions of sections 20, 21 and 22. Consent is said to be so caused when it would not have been given but for the exist ence of such coercion, undue influence, fraud, misrepresentation or mistake. 15. "Coercion" defined .—"Coercion" is the committing, or threatening to commit, any act forbidden by the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860)or the 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. 1. Subs. by Act 3 of 1951, s. 3 and Sch., for "Part A States and Part C States" which had been subs. by the A.O. 1950, for "the Provinces". 2. See e.g., s. 25, infra; the C opyright Act, 1957 (14 of 1957), s . 19; the Carriers Act, 1865 (3 of 1865) ss. 6 and 7; the Companies Act, 1956 (1 of 1956), ss. 12, 30, 46 and 109. 3. See the Indian Majority Act, 1875 (9 of 1875). 14 Explanation .—It is immaterial whether the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) is or is not in force in the place where the coercion is employed. Illustration A, on board an English ship on the high seas, causes B to enter into an agreement by an act amounting to criminal intimidat ion under the Indian Penal Code (45 of

1860). A afterwards sues B for breach of contract at Calcutta. A has employed coercion, although his act is not an offence by the law of England, and although section 506 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860) was not in force at the time when or place where the act was done. 1[16."Undue influence "defined .—(1) A contract is said to be induced 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 u nfair advantage over the other. (2) In particular and without prejudice to the gene rality of the foregoing principle, a person is deemed to be in a position t o 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; or (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. (3) Where a person who is in a position to dominate the will of another, enters into a contract with him, and the t ransaction appears, on the face of it or on the evidence adduced, to be unconscionable, the burden of proving that such contract was not induced by undue influence shall lie upon the person in a position to dominate the will of the other. Nothing in this s ub-section shall affe ct the provisions of section 111 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 (1 of 1872). Illustrations (a) 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 from B for a greater amount than the sum due in respect of the adva nce. A employs undue influence. (b) 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 servi ces. B employs undue influence. (c) A, being in debt to B, the money -lender of his village, contracts a fresh loan on terms which appear to be unconscionable. It lies on B to prove that the contract was not induced by undue influence. (d) A applies to a banker for a loan at a time when there is stringency in the money market. The banker declines to make the loan except at an unusually high rate of interest. A accepts the loan on these terms. This is a transaction in the ordinary course of business, and the contract is not induced by undue influence.] 17. "Fraud" defined .—"Fraud" means and includes any of the following acts committed by a party to a contract, or with his connivance, or by his agent2, with intent to deceive another party thereto of his agent, or to induce h im to enter into the contract: — (1) the suggestion, as a fact, of that which is not true, by one who does not bel ieve it to be true; (2) the active concealment