Quadrant II - Notes

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Module Name: Sale of Goods Act.

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Sale of Goods Act.

- Sale of commodities constitutes one of the important types of contracts under the law in India. India is one of the largest economies and also a great country where and thus has adequate checks and measures to ensure the safety and prosperity of its business and commerce community.
- The Sale of Goods Act, 1930 which defines and states terms related to the sale of goods and exchange of commodities.

Sale of Goods Act, 1930 – Important Terms

The Sale of Goods Act, 1930 herein referred to as the Act, is the law that governs the sale of goods in all parts of India. It doesn't apply to the state of Jammu & Kashmir. The Act defines various terms which are contained in the act itself. Let us see below:

I. Buyer and Seller

As per the sec 2(1) of the Act, a buyer is someone who buys or has agreed to buy goods. Since a sale constitutes a contract between two parties, a buyer is one of the parties to the contract.

The Act defines seller in sec 2(13). A seller is someone who sells or has agreed to sell goods. For a sales contract to come into existence, both the buyers and seller must be defined by the Act. These two terms represent the two parties of a sales contract.

A faint difference between the definition of buyer and seller established by the Act and the colloquial meaning of buyer and seller is that as per the act, even the person who agrees to buy or sell is qualified as a buyer or a seller. The actual transfer of goods doesn't have to take place for the identification of the two parties of a sales contract.

II. Goods

One of the most crucial terms to define is the goods that are to be included in the contract for sale. The Act defines the term "Goods" in its sec 2(7) as all types of movable property. The sec 2(7) of the Act goes as follows:

"Every kind of movable property other than actionable claims and money; and includes stock and shares, growing crops, grass, and things attached to or forming part of the land which are agreed to be severed before sale or under the contract of sale will be considered goods"

As you can see, shares and stocks are also defined as goods by the Act. The term actionable claims mean those claims which are eligible to be enforced or initiated by a suit or legal action. This means that those claims where an action such as recovery by auction, suit, refunds etc. could be initiated to recover or realize the claim.

1. Existing Goods

The goods that are referred to in the contract of sale are termed as existing goods if they are present (in existence) at the time of the contract. In sec 6 of the Act, the existing goods are those goods which are in the legal possession or are owned by the seller at the time of the formulation of the contract of sale. The existing goods are further of the following types:

A) Specific Goods

According to the sec 2(14) of the Act, these are those goods that are "identified and agreed upon" when the contract of sale is formed. For example, you want to sell your mobile phone online. You put an advertisement with its picture and information. A buyer agrees to the sale and a contract is formed. The mobile, in this case, is specific good.

B) Ascertained Goods:

This is a type not defined by the law but by the judicial interpretation. This term is used for specific goods which have been selected from a larger set of goods. For example, you have 500 apples. Out of these 500 apples, you decide to sell 200 apples. To sell these 200 apples, you will need to separate them from the 500 (larger set). Thus you specify 200 apples from a larger group of unspecified apples. These 200 apples are now the ascertained goods.

C) Unascertained Goods:

These are the goods that have not been specifically identified but have rather been left to be selected from a larger group. For example, from your 500 apples, you decide to sell 200 apples but you don’t specify which ones you want to sell. A seller will have the liberty to choose any 200 apples from the lot. These are thus the unascertained goods.

2. Future Goods

In sec 2(6) of the Act, future goods have been defined as the goods that will either be manufactured or produced or acquired by the seller at the time the contract of sale is made. The contract for the sale of future goods will never have the actual sale in it, it will always be an agreement to sell.

For example, you have an apple orchard with apples in it. You agree to sell 1000 apples to a buyer after the apples ripe. This is a sale that has to occur in the future but the goods have been identified already and the agreement made. Such goods are known as future goods.

3. Contingent Goods

Contingent goods are actually a subtype of future goods in the sense that in contingent goods the actual sale is to be done in the future. These goods are part of a sale contract that has some contingency clause in it. For example, if you sell your apples from your orchard when the trees are yet to produce apples, the apples are a contingent good. This sale is dependent on the condition that the trees are able to produce apples, which may not happen.

III. Delivery

The delivery of goods signifies the voluntary transfer of possession from one person to another. The objective or the end result of any such process which results in the goods coming into the possession of the buyer is a delivery process. The delivery could occur even when the goods are transferred to a person other than the buyer but who is authorized to hold the goods on behalf of the buyer.

There are various forms of delivery as follows:

- ***Actual Delivery***: If the goods are physically given into the possession of the buyer, the delivery is an actual delivery.
- ***Constructive delivery***: The transfer of goods can be done even when the transfer is effected without a change in the possession or custody of the goods. For example, a case of the delivery by attornment or acknowledgment will be a constructive delivery. If you pick up a parcel on behalf of your friend and agree to hold on to it for him, it is a constructive delivery.
- ***Symbolic delivery***: This kind of delivery involves the delivery of a thing in token of a transfer of some other thing. For example, the key of the godowns with the goods in it, when handed over to the buyer will constitute a symbolic delivery.

IV. The Document of Title to Goods

From the Sec 2(4) of the act, we can say that this "includes the bill of lading, dock-warrant, warehouse keeper's certificate, railway receipt, multimodal transport document, warrant or order for the delivery of goods and any other document used in the ordinary course of business as proof of the possession or control of goods or authorizing or purporting to authorize, either by endorsement or by delivery, the possessor of the document to transfer or receive goods thereby represented."

V. Mercantile Agent [Section 2(9)]

Mercantile agent is someone who has authority in the customary course of business, either to sell or consign goods under the contract on behalf of the one or both of the parties. Examples include auctioneers, brokers, factors etc.

VI. Property [Section 2(11)]

In the Act, property means 'ownership' or the general property i.e. all ownership right of the goods. A sale constitutes the transfer of ownership of goods by the seller to the buyer or an agreement of the same.

VII. Insolvent [Section 2(8)]

The Act defines an insolvent person as someone who ceases to pay his debts in the ordinary course of business or cannot pay his debts as they become due, whether he has committed an act of insolvency or not.

VIII. Price [Section 2(10)]

In the Act, the price is defined as the money consideration for a sale of goods.

IX. Quality of Goods

In Sec 2(12) of the Act, the quality of goods is referred to as their state or condition.