

UNIT-9: AGENCY

LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this unit, you would be able to understand:

- ◆ The relationship between agent and principal and the intention behind adoption of such course of agency.
- ◆ Rights and obligations of an agent as well as the circumstances under which the agent is personally liable for the acts done by him on behalf of the principal and the legal position of the agent, the principal and the third parties involved.
- ◆ Terms 'sub-agent' and 'substituted agent' and to distinguish between the two.

UNIT OVERVIEW



A relationship of agency is established when one party (agent) is authorized by another party (principal) to act on his/ her behalf. Such relationships are initiated when one party desires to extend his/her activities beyond his/her present limits or capacity. In modern life, it would be impossible for a man to do everything by himself. Thus, he needs agents, to perform activities. A relationship of agency is commonly visible in all business transactions. These include hiring employees or retaining the services of other professionals such as an attorney, design professional, software developer etc. An agent has the potential to form contracts on behalf of the principal and in doing so, will bind the principal. As a result, the relationship of agency is one of trust and confidence and an agent must perform his/her activities in a capable and conscientious manner. The law of agency is contained in sections 182 to 238 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872.



9.1 WHAT IS AGENCY?

The Indian Contract Act, 1872 does not define the word 'Agency'. However, section 182 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 defines Agent and Principal as:

Agent means a person employed to do any act for another or to represent another in dealing with the third persons and

The principal means a person for whom such act is done or who is so represented.

Test of Agency

- (a) Whether the person has the capacity to bind the principal and make him answerable to the third party.
- (b) Whether he can establish privity of contract between the principal and third parties.

If the answer to these questions is in affirmative (Yes), then there is a relationship of agency.

Thus, 'Agency' is a comprehensive word used to describe the relationship between one person and another, where the first mentioned person brings the second mentioned person into legal relation with others.

The Rule of Agency is based on the maxim "*Qui facit per alium, facit per se*" i.e., he who acts through an agent is himself acting.

***Qui facit per alium,
facit per se***



9.2 APPOINTMENT AND AUTHORITY OF AGENTS

Who may employ an agent: According to Section 183, “any person who has attained majority according to the law to which he is subject, and who is of sound mind, may employ an agent.” Thus, a minor or a person of unsound mind cannot appoint an agent.

Person qualified to appoint agent must be

- major
- sound mind

Who may be an agent:

According to Section 184 of the Act any person may become an agent i.e. even a minor or a person of unsound mind may become an agent and the principal shall be bound by his acts. But as a rule of caution, a minor or a person of unsound mind should not be appointed as an agent because he is incompetent to contract and in case of his misconduct or negligence, the principal shall not be able to proceed against him.

Example 1: P appoints Q, a minor, to sell his car for not less than ₹ 2,50,000. Q sells it for ₹ 2,00,000. P will be held bound by the transaction and further shall have no right against Q for claiming the compensation for having not obeyed the instructions, since Q is a minor and a contract with a minor is ‘void-ab-initio’.

Consideration not necessary: According to Section 185, no consideration is necessary to create an agency. The acceptance of the office of an agent is regarded as a sufficient consideration for the appointment.

9.3 CREATION OF AGENCY

In the words of Desai J, of the Supreme Court of India “The relation of agency arises whenever one person called the agent has the authority to act on behalf of another called the principal and consents to act. The relationship has genesis in a contract”.

The relationship of the principal and the agent may be created in any of the following ways —

The authority may be express or implied: According to Section 186, the authority of an agent may be express or implied.

1. **Definitions of express and implied authority [Section 187]**

Express Authority: An authority is said to be express when it is given by words, spoken or written.

Example 2: A is residing in Delhi and he has a house in Kolkata. A authorizes B under a power of attorney, as caretaker of his house. Agency is created by express agreement.

Example 3: If a customer of a bank wishes to transact his banking business through an agent, the bank will require written evidence of the appointment of the agent and will normally ask to see the registered power of attorney appointing the agent.

2. **Implied Authority:** An authority is said to be implied when it is to be inferred from the circumstances of the case, conduct of the parties and things spoken or written, or in the ordinary course of dealing, may be accounted from the circumstances of the case.

If a person realises rent and gives it to the landlord, he impliedly acts for the landlord as an agent.

Example 5: A owns a shop in Selampur, living himself in Kolkata and visiting the shop occasionally. The shop is managed by B, and he is in the habit of ordering goods from C in the name of A for the purposes of the shop, and of paying for them out of A's funds with A's knowledge. B has an implied authority from A to order goods from C in the name of A for the purposes of the shop.

Implied Agency includes:-

- a. **Agency by Estoppel [Section 237]:** Where the principal by his conduct or statement willfully induces another person to believe that a certain person is his agent, he is subsequently prevented or estopped from denying the fact of agency.

According to section 237 of the Contract Act, an agency by estoppel may be created when following essentials are fulfilled:

1. the principal must have made a representation;
2. the representation may be express or implied;
3. The representation must state that the agent has an authority to do certain act although really he has no authority;
4. The principal must have induced the third person by such representation; and
5. The third person must have believed the representation and made the contract on the belief of such representation.

Example 6: A consigns goods to B for sale and gives him instructions not to sell below a fixed price. C being ignorant of B's instruction enters into a contract with B to buy the goods at a price lower than the reserved price. A is bound by the contract. A cannot plead that he had given instructions to B to not sell the goods below certain price. An agency by estoppel is, consequently, deemed between A and B.

Example 7: If Piyal (the principal) has for several months permitted Sunil to buy goods on credit from Prasad and has paid for the goods bought by Sunil, Piyal cannot later refuse to pay Prasad who had supplied goods on credit to Sunil in the belief that he was Piyal's agent and was buying the goods on behalf of Piyal. Piyal is estopped from now asserting that Sunil is not his agent because on earlier occasions he permitted Prasad to believe that Sunil was his agent and Prasad had acted in that belief.

- b. **Agency by Necessity:** An agency of necessity arises due to some emergent circumstances. In emergency a person is authorised to do what he cannot do in ordinary circumstances. Thus, where an agent is authorised to do certain act, and while doing such an act, an emergency arises, he acquires an extra-ordinary or special authority to prevent his principal from loss.

Example 8: Raja has a large farm on which Shyam is the caretaker. When Raja is in Canada, there is a huge fire on the farm. Shyam becomes an agent of necessity for Raja so as to save the property from being destroyed by fire. Raja (the principal) will be liable for any expenses, Shyam (his agent of necessity) incurred to put out the fire and save the farm from destruction during Raja's absence from the country.

3. **Agency by Operation of Law:** When law treats one person as an agent of other. For example, a partner is the agent of the firm for the purposes of the business of the firm.
4. **Rights of person as to acts done for him without his authority, Effect of ratification [Section 196]:** Where acts are done by one person on behalf of another, but without his knowledge or authority, he may elect to ratify or to disown such acts. If he ratifies them, the same effects will follow as if they had been performed by his authority. In simple words, "Ratification" means approving a previous act or transaction. Ratification may be express or implied by the conduct of the person on whose behalf the act was done.

Example 9: X who is Y's agent has on 10th January 2022 purchases goods from Z on credit without Y's permission. After the purchase, on 20th January 2022, Y tells X that he will accept responsibility to pay for the purchases although at the time of purchase the agent had no authority to buy on credit. Y's subsequent statement on 20th January 2022 amounts to a ratification of the agent's (X's) purchase of goods on 10th January 2022.

Essentials of a valid Ratification

- a. **Ratification may be expressed or Implied [Section 197]:** Ratification may be expressed or may be implied in the conduct of the person on whose behalf the acts are done.

Example 10: A, without authority, buys goods for B. Afterwards B sells them to C on his own account; B's conduct implies a ratification of the purchase made for him by A.

Example 11: A, without B's authority, lends B's money to C. Afterwards B accepts interests on the money from C. B's conduct implies a ratification of the loan.

- b. **Knowledge requisite for valid ratification [Section 198]:** No valid ratification can be made by a person whose knowledge of the facts of the case is materially defective.

Example 12: A has an authority from P to buy certain goods at the market rate. He buys at a higher rate but P accepts the purchase. Afterwards P comes to know that the goods purchased by A for P belonged to A himself. The ratification is not binding on P.

- c. **The whole transaction must be ratified [Section 199]:** There can be ratification of an act in entirety or its rejection in entirety. The principal cannot ratify a part of the transaction which is beneficial to him and reject the rest.

- d. **Ratification cannot injure third person [Section 200]:** When the interest of third parties is affected, the principle of ratification does not apply. Ratification cannot relate back to the date of contract if third party has in the intervening time acquired rights.

Example 13: A, not being authorized thereto by B, demands on behalf of B, the delivery of a chattel, the property of B, from C, who is in possession of it. This demand cannot be ratified by B, so as to make C liable for damages for his refusal to deliver.

Example 14: A holds a lease from B, terminable on three months' notice. C, an unauthorized person, gives notice of termination to A. The notice cannot be ratified by B, so as to be binding on A.

- e. **Ratification within reasonable time:** Ratification must be made within a reasonable period of time.
- f. **Communication of Ratification:** Ratification must be communicated to the other party.

- g. **Act to be ratified must be valid:** Act to be ratified should not be void or illegal, for e.g. payment of dividend out of capital, forgery of signatures, any other criminal offence, or anything which is not permitted under law.



9.4 EXTENT OF AGENT'S AUTHORITY

The agent's authority is governed by two principles, namely (a) in normal circumstances and (b) in emergency.

- (a) **Agent's authority in normal circumstances [Section 188]:** An agent having an authority to do an act has authority to do every lawful thing which is necessary in order to do such act.

An agent having an authority to carry on a business has authority to do every lawful thing necessary for the purpose, or usually done in the course, of conducting such business.

Example 15: A is employed by B, residing in London, to recover at Mumbai a debt due to B. A may adopt any legal process necessary for the purpose of recovering the debt and may give a valid discharge for the same.

Example 16: A constitutes B as his agent to carry on his business of a shipbuilder. B may purchase timber and other materials, and hire workmen, for the purposes of carrying on the business.

- (b) **Agent's authority in an emergency [Section 189]:** An agent has authority, in an emergency, to do all such acts for the purpose of protecting his principal from loss as would be done by a person of ordinary prudence, in his own case, under similar circumstances.

To constitute a valid agency in an emergency, following conditions must be satisfied.

- (i) Agent should not be in a position or have any opportunity to communicate with his principal within the time available.
- (ii) There should have been actual and definite commercial necessity for the agent to act promptly.
- (iii) the agent should have acted bonafide and for the benefit of the principal.
- (iv) the agent should have adopted the most reasonable and practicable course under the circumstances, and
- (v) the agent must have been in possession of the goods belonging to his principal and which are the subject of contract.

Example 17: An agent who has authority for sale of goods may repair it if necessary.

Example 18: A consigns perishable goods to B at Srinagar, with directions to send them immediately to C at Tamandu. B may sell the good if they begin to perish before reaching its destination.

9.5 SUB-AGENTS

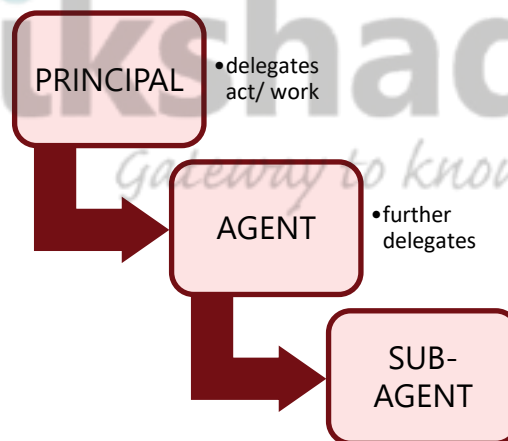
When agent cannot delegate [Section 190]: An agent cannot lawfully employ another to perform acts which he has expressly or impliedly undertaken to perform personally, unless by the ordinary custom of trade a sub-agent may, or from the nature of the agency, a sub-agent must, be employed.

“Sub-agent” defined [Section 191]: A “Sub-agent” is a person employed by, and acting under the control of, the original agent in the business of the agency.

Analysis: Sub agency refers to case where an agent appoints another agent. The appointment of sub agent is not lawful, because the agent is a delegatee and a delegatee cannot further delegate. This is based on the Latin principle “**delegatus non potest delegare**”.

Delegatus Non Potest

Delegare



A contract of agency is of a fiduciary character. It is based on the confidence reposed by the principal in the agent and that is why a delegatee cannot further delegate.

Exception where an agent can appoint Sub-agent:

- (1) The appointment of a sub agent would be valid if the terms of appointment originally contemplated it.
- (2) Sometimes **customs of the trade** may provide for appointment of sub agents.

In both these cases the sub agent would be treated as the agent of the principal.

- (3) Where in the course of the agent's employment, **unforeseen emergency** arise making it necessary for him to delegate the authority that was given to him by the principal.

Representation of principal by sub-agent properly appointed [Section 192]: Where a sub-agent is properly appointed,

- (1) Principal is liable to third parties for the acts of the sub-agent.
- (2) **Agents responsibility for sub agents:** The agent is responsible to the principal for the acts of the sub-agent.
- (3) **Sub-agents liability to principal:** The sub-agent is responsible for his acts to the agent, but not to the principal, except in case of fraud or willful wrong.

Agent's responsibility for sub-agent appointed without authority [Section 193]: Where an agent, without having authority to do so, has appointed a person to act as a sub-agent,

- (1) the agent is responsible for his acts both to the principal and to third persons;
- (2) the principal is not responsible for the acts of the sub agent,
- (3) the sub agent is not responsible to the principal at all. He is answerable only to the agent.

Example 19: A, a carrier, agreed to carry 60 bags of cotton waste from Morvi to Bhavnagar by a truck. A asked B, another carrier, to carry the goods. The goods were damaged in transit. Held, A was liable even though it was proved that B was the carrier.

9.6 SUBSTITUTED AGENT

Substituted Agent is a person appointed by the agent to act for the principal, in the business of agency, with the knowledge and consent of the principal. Substituted agents are not sub agents. They are agents of the principal.

Relation between principal and person duly appointed by agent to act in business of agency [Section 194]: Where an agent, holding an express or implied authority to name another person to act for the principal in the business of the agency, has named another person accordingly, such person is not a sub-agent, but an agent of the principal for such part of the business of the agency as is entrusted to him.

Example 20: A directs B, his solicitor, to sell his estate by auction, and to employ an auctioneer for the purpose. B names C, an auctioneer, to conduct the sale. C is not a sub-agent, but is A's agent for the conduct of the sale.

Example 21: A authorizes B, a merchant in Kolkata, to recover the moneys due to A from C & Co. B instructs D, a solicitor, to take legal proceedings against C & Co. for the recovery of the money. D is not a sub-agent, but is a solicitor for A.

Agent's duty in naming such person [Section 195]: In selecting such agent for his principal, an agent is bound to exercise the same amount of discretion as a man of ordinary prudence would exercise in his own case; and, if he does this, he is not responsible to the principal for the acts or negligence of the agent so selected.

Example 22: A instructs B, a merchant, to buy a ship for him. B employs a ship surveyor of good reputation to choose a ship for A. The surveyor makes the choice negligently and the ship turns out to be unseaworthy and is lost. B is not, but the surveyor is, responsible to A.

Example 23: A consigns goods to B, a merchant, for sale. B in due course, employs an auctioneer in good credit to sell the goods of A, and allows the auctioneer to receive the proceeds of the sale. The auctioneer afterwards becomes insolvent without having accounted for the proceeds. B is not responsible to A for the proceeds.

9.7 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SUB-AGENT AND A SUBSTITUTED AGENT

Both a sub-agent and a substituted agent are appointed by the agent. But, however, the following are the points of distinction between the two.

S.no	Sub Agent	Substituted Agent
1.	A sub-agent does his work under the control and directions of agent.	A substituted agent works under the instructions of the principal.
2.	The agent not only appoints a sub-agent but also delegates to him a part of his own duties.	The agent does not delegate any part of his task to a substituted agent.
3.	There is no privity of contract between the principal and the sub-agent.	Privity of contract is established between a principal and a substituted agent.
4.	The sub-agent is responsible to the agent alone and is not generally responsible to the principal.	A substituted agent is responsible to the principal and not to the original agent who appointed him
5.	The agent is responsible to the principal for the acts of the sub-agent.	The agent is not responsible to the principal for the acts of the substituted agent.

6.	The sub-agent has no right of action against the principal for remuneration due to him.	The substituted agent can sue the principal for remuneration due to him.
7.	Sub-agents may be improperly appointed.	Substituted agents can never be improperly appointed.
8.	The agent remains liable for the acts of the sub-agent as long as the sub-agency continues.	The agent's duty ends once he has named the substituted agent.



9.8 DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF AN AGENT

- (i) **Duty to follow instructions or customs:** According to Section 211 an agent is bound to conduct the business of his principal according to the direction given by the principal, or, in the absence of any such directions, according to the customs which prevails in doing business of the same kind at the place where the agent conducts such business. When the agent acts otherwise and any loss is sustained by the Principal, he must indemnify him, and, if any profit accrues, he must account for it.

Example 24: A, an agent is engaged for managing the business of B, in which it is a custom to invest money at hand for interest. If A omits to make such investment he must indemnify B for the losses i.e. for the interest B would have obtained for such investment.

Example 25: B, a broker, in whose business it is not the custom to sell on credit, sells goods of A on credit to C. C, before payment, becomes insolvent. B will have to indemnify A for the losses.

- (ii) **Duty of reasonable care and skill:** According to section 212, an agent is bound to conduct the business of the principal with as much skill as is generally possessed by persons engaged in similar business, unless the principal has notice of his want of skill.

The agent is always bound to act with reasonable diligence, and to use such skill as he possesses; and to make compensation to his principal in respect of the direct consequences of his own neglect, want of skill or misconduct, but not in respect of loss of damage which are indirectly or remotely caused by such neglect, want of skill or misconduct.

Example 26: A, a merchant in Kolkata, has an agent, B, in London, to whom a sum of money is paid on A's account, with orders to remit. B retains the money for a considerable time. A, in consequence of not receiving the money, becomes insolvent.

B is liable for the money and interest from the day on which it ought to have been paid, according to the usual rate, and for any further direct loss- e.g. by variation of rate of exchange-but not further.

Example 27: A, an agent for the sale of goods, having authority to sell on credit, sells to B on credit, without making the proper and usual enquiries as to the solvency of B. B, at the time of such sale is insolvent. A must compensate his principal for the loss sustained by him.

Example 28: A, an insurance-broker, employed by B to effect an insurance on a ship, omits to see that the "usual clauses" are inserted in the policy. The ship is afterwards lost. In consequence of the omission nothing can be recovered from the underwriters. A is bound to make good the loss to B.

Example 29: A, a merchant in England, directs B, his agent at Mumbai, who accepts the agency, to send him 100 bales of cotton by a certain ship. B, having it in his power to send the cotton, omits to do so. The ship arrives safely in England. Soon after her arrival the price of cotton rises. B is bound to make good to A the profit which he might have made by the 100 bales of cotton at the time the ship arrived, but not any profit he might have made by the subsequent rise.

- (iii) **Duty to render proper accounts [Section 213]:** An agent is bound to render proper accounts to his principal on demand. Rendering accounts does not mean showing the accounts but the accounts supported by vouchers. (*Anandprasad vs. Dwarkanath*)
- (iv) **Agent's duty to communicate with principal [Section 214]:** It is the duty of an agent, in cases of difficulty, to use all reasonable diligence in communicating with his principal, and in seeking to obtain his instructions.
- (v) **Duty not to deal on his own account:** Agent should not deal on his own account without first obtaining the consent of the principal, otherwise the principal may—
- (a) repudiate the transaction, (Section 215)
 - (b) claim from the agent any benefit which may have resulted to him from the transaction. (Section 216)

Example 30: A directs B to sell A's estate. B buys the estate for himself in the name of C. A, on discovering that B has bought the estate for himself, may repudiate the sale if he can show that B has dishonestly concealed any material fact, or that the sale has been disadvantageous to him.

Example 31: A directs B to sell A's estate. B, on looking over the estate before selling it, finds a mine on the estate which is unknown to A. B informs A that he wishes to buy the estate for himself, but conceals the discovery of the mine. A allow B to buy,

in ignorance of the existence of the mine. A, on discovering that B knew of the mine at the time he bought the estate, may either repudiate or accept the sale at his option.

Example 32: A directs B, his agent, to buy a certain house for him. B tells A it cannot be bought and buys the house for himself. A may, on discovering that B has bought the house, compel him to sell it to A at the price he gave for it.

- (vi) **Duty not to make secret profits:** It is the duty of an agent not to make any secret profit in the business of agency. His relationship with the principal is of fiduciary nature and this requires absolute good faith in the conduct of agency.

Secret Profit means any advantage obtained by the agent over and above his agreed remuneration and which he would not have been able to make but for his position as agent.

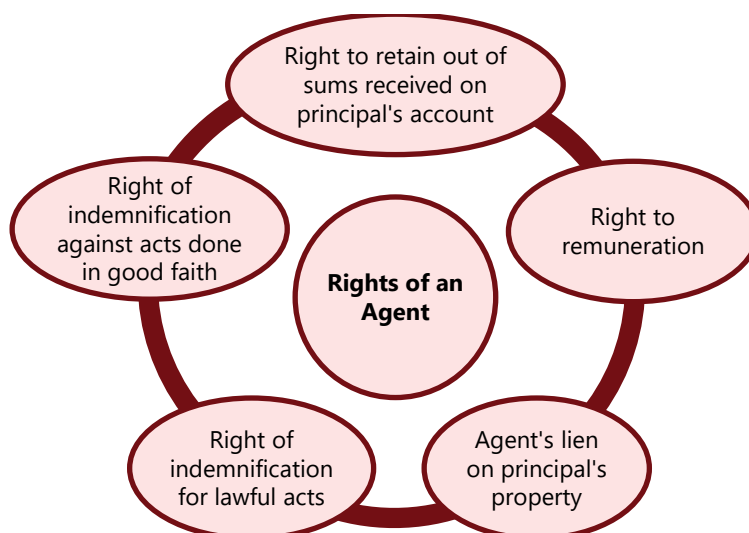
- (vii) **Duty not to delegate:** According to section 190, an agent cannot lawfully employ to perform acts which he has expressly or impliedly undertaken to perform personally, unless by the ordinary custom of trade a sub-agent may, or, from the nature of agency, a sub-agent, must be employed.

- (viii) **Agent's duty to pay sums received for principal [Section 218]:** Subject to such deductions, the agent is bound to pay to his principal all sums received on his account.

- (ix) **Duty not to use any confidential information received in the course of agency against the principal.**



9.9 RIGHTS OF AN AGENT



- (i) **Right of retain out of sums received on principal's account [Section 217]:** This section empowers the agent to retain, out of any sums received on account of the principal in the business of the agency for the following payments:
- (a) all moneys due to himself in respect of advances made
 - (b) in respect of expenses properly incurred by him in conducting such business
 - (c) such remuneration as may be payable to him for acting as agent.

The right can be exercised on any sums received on account of the principal in the business of agency.

- (ii) **Right to remuneration [Section 219]:** The agent in the normal course is entitled for remuneration as per the contract. In the absence of any agreed amount of remuneration, he is entitled for usual remuneration which is customary in the business. However, an agent who is guilty of misconduct in the business of the agency is not entitled to any remuneration in respect of that part of the business which he has misconducted [Section 220].

Example 33: A employs B to recover ₹1,00,000 from C, and invest it in securities that give good returns. B recovers the amount and lays out ₹ 90,000 on good securities but lays out ₹ 10,000 on securities which he ought to provide poor returns, whereby A loses ₹ 2,000. B is entitled to remuneration for recovering the ₹ 1,00,000 and for investing the ₹ 90,000. He is not entitled to any remuneration for investing the ₹ 10,000, and he must indemnify A for ₹ 2000.

Example 34: A employs B to recover ₹ 1,00,000 from C. Because of B's misconduct the money is not recovered. B is entitled to no remuneration for his services and must make good the loss.

- (iii) **Agent's lien on principal's property [Section 221]:** In the absence of any contract to the contrary, an agent is entitled to retain the goods, papers and other property, whether movable or immovable, of the principal received by him, until the amount due to himself for commission, disbursement and services in respect of the same has been paid or accounted for him.

The conditions of this right are:

- a. The agent should be lawfully entitled to receive from the principal a sum of money by way of commission earned or disbursement made or services rendered in the proper execution of the business of agency.
- b. The property over which the lien is to be exercised should belong to the principal and it should have been received by the agent in his capacity and

during the course of his ordinary duties as an agent. If the agent obtains possession of the property by unlawful means, he cannot exercise particular lien.

The agent's right to lien is lost in the following cases:

- (a) When the possession of the property is lost.
- (b) When the agent waives his right. Waiver may arise out of agreement express or implied.
- (c) The agent's lien is subject to a contract to the contrary.

(iv) Right to indemnity:

- a. **Right of indemnification for lawful acts [Section 222]:** The principal is bound to indemnify the agent against all consequences of lawful acts done in exercise of his authority.

Example 35: 'A' residing in Delhi appoints 'B' from Mumbai as an agent to sell his merchandise. As a result 'B' contracts to deliver the merchandise to various parties. But A fails to send the merchandise to B and B faces litigations for non-performance. Here, A is bound to protect B against the litigations and all costs, expenses arising of that.

- b. **Right of indemnification against acts done in good faith [Section 223]:** Where the agent acts in good faith on the instruction of principal, agent is entitled for indemnification of any loss or damage from the principal.

Example 36: Where P appoints A as his agent and directs him to sell certain goods which in fact turned out to be not those belonging to P and if third parties sue A for this act, A is entitled for reimbursement and indemnification for such act done in good faith.

However, the agent cannot claim any reimbursement or indemnification for any loss etc. arising out of acts done by him in violation of any penal laws of the country.

- c. **Non-liability of employer of agent to do a criminal act:** According to section 224, where one person employs another to do an act which is criminal, the employer is not liable to the agent, either upon an express or an implied promise, to indemnify him against the consequences of that act.

Example 37: A employs B to beat C and agrees to indemnify him against all consequences of the act. B thereupon beats C and has to pay damages to C for so doing. A is not liable to indemnify B for those damages.

Example 38: B, the proprietor of a newspaper, publishes, at A's request, a libel upon C in the paper, and A agrees to indemnify B against the consequences of the publication, and all costs and damages of any action in respect thereof. B is sued by C and has to pay damages, and also incurs expenses. A is not liable to indemnify B.

- (v) **Right to compensation for injury caused by principal's neglect [Section 225]:** Section 225 provides that the principal must compensate his agent in respect of injury caused to such agent due to principal's neglect or want of skill. Thus, every principal owes to his agent the duty of care, and not to expose him to unreasonable risks.

Example 39: A employs B as a bricklayer in building a house and puts up the scaffolding himself. The scaffolding is unskillfully put up, and B is in consequence hurt. A must compensate B.

9.10 PRINCIPAL'S LIABILITY TO THIRD PARTIES

An agent does all acts on behalf of the principal but incurs no personal liability. The liability remains that of the principal unless there is a contract to the contrary. This is because there is no privity of contract and passing of consideration between the agent and third party. An agent also cannot personally enforce contracts entered into by him on behalf of the principal.

- (i) **Principal's liability for the Acts of the Agent [Section 226]:** Principal liable for the acts of agents which are within the scope of his authority.

Example 40: A buys goods from B, knowing that he is an agent for their sale, but not knowing who is the principal. B's principal is the person entitled to claim from A the price of the goods, and A cannot, in a suit by the principal, set off against that claim a debt due to himself from B.

Example 41: A, being B's agent with authority to receive money on his behalf, receives from C, a sum of money due to B. C is discharged of his obligation to pay the sum in question to B.

- (ii) **Principal's liability when agent exceeds authority [Section 227]:** When an agent does more than he is authorised to do, and when the part of what he does, which is within his authority, can be separated from the part which is beyond his authority, so much only of what he does as is within his authority is binding as between him and his principal.

Example 42: A, being owner of a ship and cargo, authorizes B to procure an insurance for ₹ 4,00,000 on the ship. B procures a policy for ₹ 4,00,000 on the ship, and another for the like sum on the cargo. A is bound to pay the premium for the policy on the ship, but not the premium for the policy on the cargo.

Principal not bound when excess of agent's authority is not separable [Section 228]: Where an agent does more than he is authorized to do, and what he does beyond the scope of his authority cannot be separated from what is within it, the principal is not bound to recognize the transaction.

Example 43: A authorizes B to buy 500 sheep for him. B buys 500 sheep and 200 lambs for one sum of ₹ 6,00,000. A may repudiate the whole transaction.

Example 44: A authorizes B to draw bills to the extent ₹ 200 each. B draws bills in the name of A for ₹ 1,000 each. A may repudiate the whole transaction.

Exception: Liability of principal inducing belief that agent's unauthorized acts were authorized [Section 237]: When an agent has, without authority, done acts or incurred obligations to third persons on behalf of his principal, the principal is bound by such acts or obligations, if he has by his words or conduct induced such third persons to believe that such acts and obligations were within the scope of the agent's authority.

Example 45: A consigns goods to B for sale, and gives him instructions not to sell under a fixed price. C, being ignorant of B's instructions, enters into a contract with B to buy the goods at a price lower than the reserved price. A is bound by the contract.

Example 46: A entrusts B with negotiable instruments endorsed in blank. B sells them to C in violation of private orders from A. The sale is good.

- (iii) **Consequences of notice given to agent [Section 229]:** Any notice given to or information obtained by the agent, provided it be given or obtained in the course of the business transacted by him for the principal, shall, as between the principal and third parties, have the same legal consequence as if it had been given to or obtained by the principal.

Example 47: A is employed by B to buy from C certain goods of which C is the apparent owner, and buys them accordingly. In the course of the treaty for the sale, A learns that the goods really belonged to D, but B is ignorant of that fact. B is not entitled to set off a debt owing to him from C against the price of the goods. Thus, the knowledge of the agent is treated as the knowledge of the principal.

- (iv) **Principal's liability for the agent's fraud, misrepresentation or torts [Section 238]:** Misrepresentations made, or frauds committed, by agents acting in the course of their business for their principals, have the same effect on agreements made by

such agents as if such misrepresentations or frauds had been made, or committed, by the principals; but misrepresentations made, or frauds committed, by agents, in matters which do not fall within their authority, do not affect their principals.

Example 48: A, being B's agent for the sale of goods, induces C to buy them by a misrepresentation, which he was not authorized by B to make. The contract is voidable, as between B and C, at the option of C.

Example 49: A, the captain of B's ship, signs bills of lading without having received on board the goods mentioned therein. The bills of lading are void as between B and the pretended consignor.



9.11 PERSONAL LIABILITY OF AGENT TO THIRD PARTIES

Agent cannot personally enforce, nor be bound by, contracts on behalf of principal

[Section 230]: In the absence of any contract to that effect, an agent cannot personally enforce contracts entered into by him on behalf of his principal, nor is he personally bound by them. He can neither sue nor be sued on contracts made by him on his principal's behalf.

EXCEPTIONS: In the following exceptional cases, the agent is presumed to have agreed to be personally bound:

- (1) Where the contract is made by an agent for the sale or purchase of goods for a **merchant resident abroad/foreign principal**: – When an agent has entered into a contract for the sale or purchase of goods on behalf of a principal resident abroad, the presumption is that the agent undertakes to be personally liable for the performances of such contract.
- (2) Where the agent **does not disclose the name of his principal or undisclosed principal**; (Principal unnamed): when the agent does not disclose the name of the principal then there arises a presumption that he himself undertakes to be personally liable.
- (3) **Non-existent or incompetent principal**: Where the principal, though disclosed, cannot be sued, the agent is presumed to be personally liable.

Example 50: An agent who contracts for a minor, the minor being not liable, the agent becomes personally liable. This result, may not, however, follow where the other party already knows that the principal is a minor.

- (4) **Pretended agent** – if the agent pretends but is not an actual agent, and the principal does not rectify the act but disowns it, the pretended agent will be himself liable (Section 235).
- (5) **When agent exceeds authority**- When the agent exceeds his authority, misleads the third person in believing that the agent he has the requisite authority in doing the act, then the agent can be made liable personally for the breach of warranty of authority.

RIGHTS OF THIRD PARTIES

- i. **Rights of parties to a contract made by undisclosed agent [Section 231]:** If an agent makes a contract with a person who neither knows, nor has reason to suspect, that he is an agent, his principal may require the performance of the contract; but the other contracting party has, as against the principal, the same right as he would have had as against the agent if the agent had been the principal.

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

Example 51: SS bought for himself a ticket of IPL match at Wankahde Stadium through AB because on personal grounds Stadium management would not have issued the ticket to SS. Stadium management may repudiate the contract and refuse SS to enter the stadium.

- ii. **Performance of contract with agent supposed to be principal [Section 232]:** When agent does not disclosed that he is acting as an agent and the principal requires the performance of the contract then the principal can obtain such performance subject to the rights and obligations subsisting between the agent and the other party to the contract.

Example 52: A, who owes 50,000 rupees to B, sells 1,00,000 rupees worth of rice to B. A is acting as agent for C in the transaction, but B has no knowledge nor reasonable ground of suspicion that such is the case. C cannot compel B to take the rice without allowing him to set off A's debt.

- iii. **Option to Third Person- sue the Agent or the Principal:**

- a. **Right of person dealing with agent personally liable [Section 233]:** In cases where the agent is personally liable, a person dealing with him may hold either him or his principal, or both of them, liable.

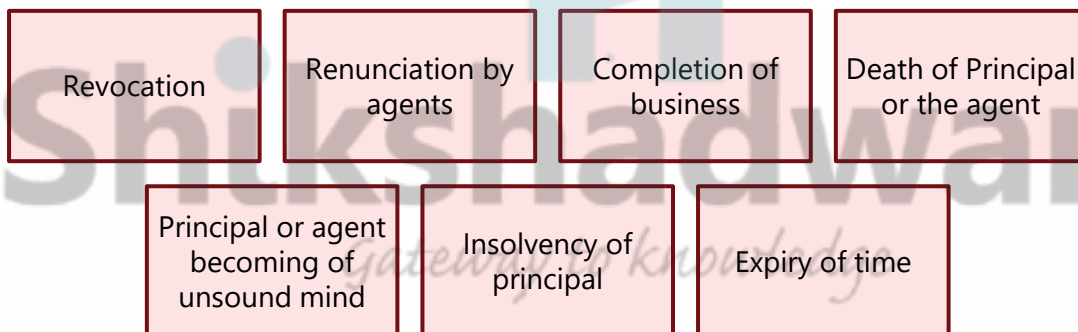
Example 53: A enters into a contract with B to sell him 100 bales of cotton, and afterwards discovers that B was acting as agent for C. A may sue either B or C, or both, for the price of the cotton.

- b. **Consequence of inducing agent or principal to act on belief that principal or agent will be held exclusively liable [Section 234]:** When a person who has made a contract with an agent induces the agent to act upon the belief that the principal only will be held liable, or induces the principal to act upon the belief that the agent only will be held liable, he cannot afterwards hold liable the agent or principal respectively.

9.12 REVOCATION OF AUTHORITY

Termination of agency [Section 201]

Termination of agency means putting an end to the legal relationship between principal and agent. Section 201 provides for the following modes of termination:



- a. **Revocation:** An agency may be terminated by the principal revoking the authority of the agent. Principal may revoke the authority given to his agent at any time before the authority has been exercised so as to bind the principal [Section 203]. However, the principal cannot revoke the authority given to his agent after the authority has been partly exercised so far as regards such acts and obligations as arise for acts already done in the agency. [Section 204]

Example 54: A authorizes B to buy 1,000 bales of cotton on account of A, and to pay for it out of A's money 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.

Example 55: A authorizes B to buy 1,000 bales of cotton on account of A, and to pay for it out of A's money remaining in B's hands. B buys 1,000 bales of cotton in A's

name, and so as not to render himself personally liable for the price. A can revoke B's authority to pay for the cotton.

Compensation for revocation by principal [Section 205]: If there is premature revocation of agency without sufficient cause, the principal must compensate the agent, for such revocation.

Notice of revocation [Section 206]: When the principal, having justification to do so, revokes the authority, he must give reasonable notice of such revocation to the agent, otherwise, he can be liable to pay compensation for any damage caused to the agent (Section 206).

Revocation and renunciation may be expressed or implied [Section 207]: Revocation of agency may be expressed or implied in the conduct of the principal.

Example 56: A empowers B to let A's house. Afterwards A lets it himself. This is an implied revocation of B's authority.

- b. **Renunciation by agent [Section 206]:** An agent may renounce the business of agency in the same manner in which the principal has the right of revocation. In the first place, if the agency is for a fixed period, the agent would have to compensate the principal for any premature renunciation without sufficient cause. [Section 205] Secondly, a reasonable notice of renunciation is necessary. Length of notice (time period of notice) is to be determined by the same principles which apply to revocation by the principal. If the agent renounces without proper notice, he shall have to make good any damage thereby resulting to the principal. [Section 206]
- c. **Completion of business:** An agency is automatically and by operation of law terminated when its business is completed. Thus, for example, the authority of an agent appointed to sell goods ceases to be exercisable when the sale is completed.
- d. **Death or insanity:** An agency is determined automatically on the death or insanity of the principal or the agent. Winding up of a company or dissolution of partnership has the same effect. Act done by agent before death would remain binding.
- e. **Principal's insolvency:** An agency ends on the principal being adjudicated insolvent.
- f. **On expiry of time:** Where an agent has been appointed for a fixed term, the expiration of the term puts an end to the agency, whether the purpose of agency has been accomplished or not. An agency comes to an automatic end on expiry of its term.

When the agency is irrevocable?

When the agent is personally interested in the subject matter of agency the agency becomes irrevocable. **Section 202** states that "where the agent has himself an interest in the property

which forms the subject matter of the agency, the agency cannot, in the absence of an express contract, be terminated to the prejudice of such interest.”

Example 57: 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.

Example 58: A consigns 1000 bales of cotton to B, who has made advances to him on such cotton, and desires B to sell the cotton, and to repay himself, out of the price, the amount of his own advances. A cannot revoke this authority, nor it is terminated by his insanity or death.

Effects of Termination [Section 208]

When termination of agent’s authority takes effect as to agent, and as to third persons

[Section 208]: The termination of the authority of an agent does not, so far as regards the agent, take effect before it becomes known to him, or, so far as regards third persons, before it becomes known to them.

Example 59: A directs B to sell goods for him and agrees to give B five per cent commission on the price fetched by the goods. A afterwards, by letter, revokes B’s authority. B, after the letter is sent, but before he receives it sells the goods for ₹ 1,00,000. The sale is binding on A, and B is entitled to ₹ 5,000 as his commission.

Example 60: A, at Chennai, by letter directs B to sell for him some cotton lying in a warehouse in Mumbai, and afterwards, by letter, revokes his authority to sell, and directs B to send the cotton to Chennai. B, after receiving the second letter, enters into a contract with C, who knows of the first letter, but not of the second, for the sale to him of the cotton. C pays B the money, with which B absconds. C’s payment is good as against A.

Example 61: A directs B, his agent, to pay certain money to C. A dies, and D takes out probate to his will. B, after A’s death, but before hearing of it, pays the money to C. The payment is good as against D, the executor.

Agent’s duty on termination of agency by principal’s death or insanity [Section 209]:

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 interests entrusted to him.

Termination of sub-agent’s authority [Section 210]

The termination of the authority of an agent causes the termination (subject to the rules herein contained regarding the termination of an agent’s authority) of the authority of all sub-agents appointed by him.

SUMMARY

Agency: Relation between an agent and his principal created by an express/ implied agreement authorising an agent by his principal to create contractual relations with third parties. Person so appointed to represent the principal is called as agent whereas a person who appoints an agent to represent him as per his directions and authority is called as principal.

- Agency can be either expressed or implied.
- **Sub-agent:** Person appointed by the original agent in the business of agency under his direction and control and being responsible to the principal for acts of a sub-agent.
- **Substituted agent:** Person is named by the agent expressly or impliedly to act for the principal in the business of agency.
- **Ratification:** Where acts are done by one person on behalf of another, but without his knowledge or authority, he may elect to ratify or to disown such acts. If he ratifies them, the same effects will follow as if they had been performed by his authority. Ratification may be expressed or may be implied in the conduct of the person on whose behalf the acts are done.
- **Revocation of authority:** An Agency is terminated (a) by the principal revoking his authority; or (b) by the agent renouncing the business of the agency; or (c) by the business of the agency being completed; or (d) by either the principal or agent dying or becoming of unsound mind; or (e) by either the principal or agent dying or becoming of unsound mind.
- **Duties and obligations of an Agent:** (a) Conduct the business according to principal's directions (b) Conduct the business with the skill and diligence (c) Render proper accounts (d) Communicate with principal in cases of difficulty (e) Repudiation of the transaction by principal (f) Not to deal on his own account (g) Agent's duty to pay sums received for principal.
- **Rights of an Agent:** (a) Right of retain out of sums received on principal's account (b) Right to remuneration (c) Agent's particular lien on principal's property (d) Right of indemnification for lawful acts (e) Right of indemnification against acts done in good faith.

AGENCY (SECTION 172-238)

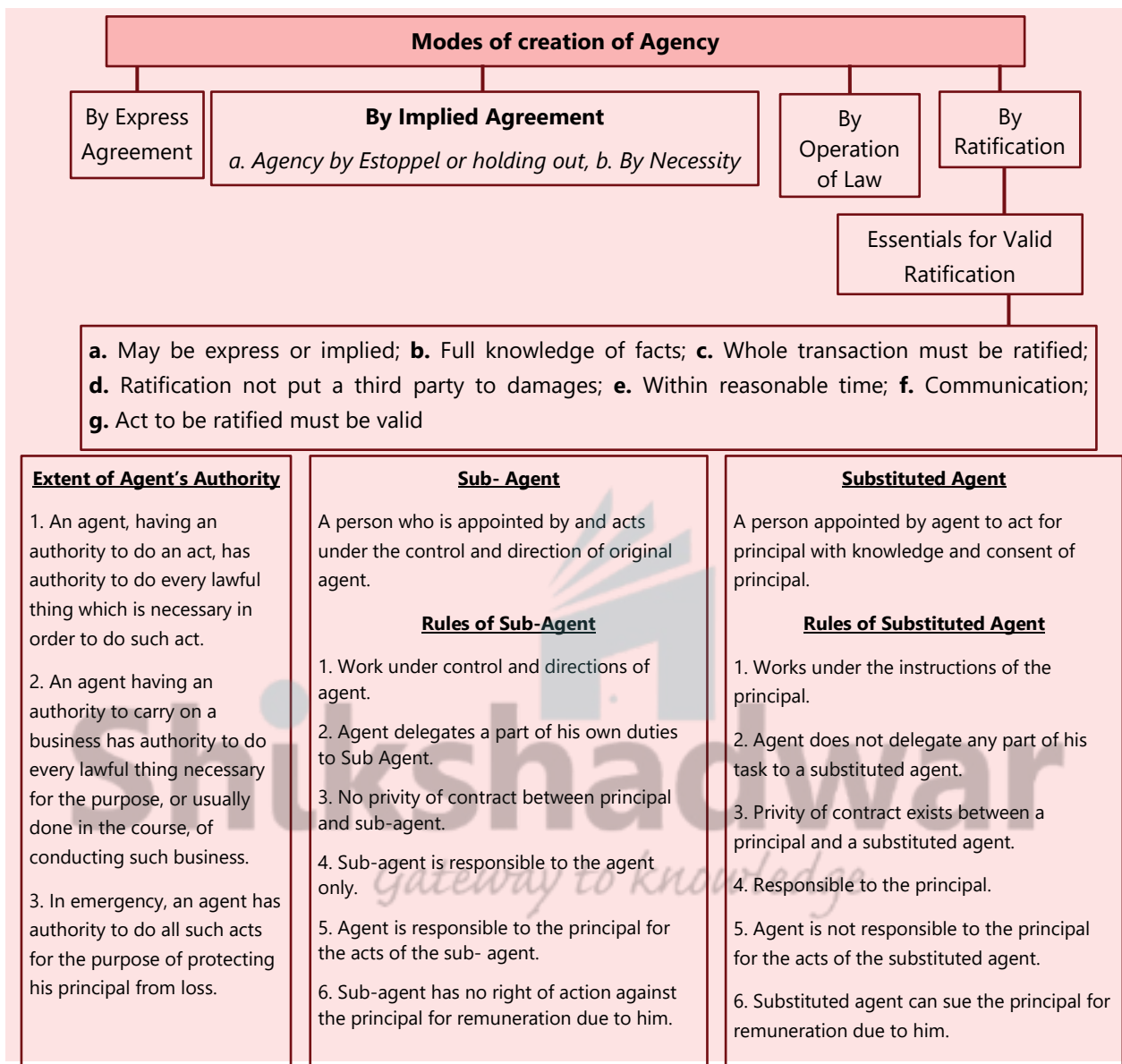
Agency: Relation between an agent and his principal created by an express/ implied agreement authorising an agent by his principal to create contractual relations with third parties.

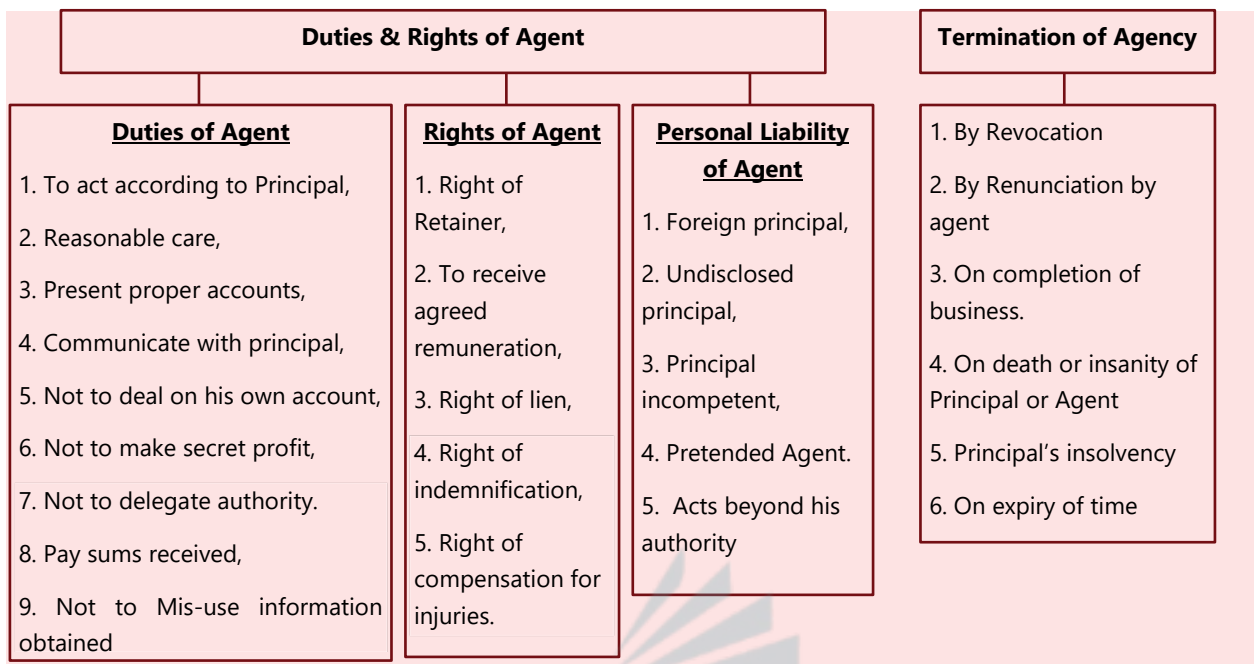
Agent: Person employed to do any act for another, or to represent another.

Principal: person for whom such act is done or who is so represented.

Who can be Agent: any person including minor, Person of unsound mind

Who can appoint an Agent: Major, Person of sound mind





TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Multiple Choice Questions

1. A person employed to do any act and represent is called
 - (a) agent
 - (b) principal
 - (c) owner
 - (d) servant
2. Who can become an agent?
 - (a) Both Minor & Adult
 - (b) Minor
 - (c) Adult person
 - (d) Dead person
3. To create an agency, which is not required?
 - (a) Principal
 - (b) consideration

- (c) *agent*
(d) *third party*
4. _____ is a person employed by, and acting under the control of original agent in the business of agency
- (a) *A substituted agent*
(b) *A sub agent*
(c) *A mercantile agent*
(d) *An universal agent*
5. A substituted agent acts on behalf of _____
- (a) *Principal*
(b) *Sub-agent*
(c) *Agent*
(d) *None of these*
6. The power given to agent is
- (a) *reasonable & unreasonable*
(b) *expressed & implied*
(c) *legal & illegal*
(d) *all above*
7. On whose insolvency the agency is terminated?
- (a) *Sub agent*
(b) *Agent*
(c) *Principal*
(d) *Del credere*
8. Under which circumstances agent become personally responsible?
- (a) *beyond authority*
(b) *fraudulent transactions*
(c) *fraud*
(d) *All of above*

9. *It is the duty of the agent to protect and preserve the interest on behalf of the principal's representative in case of _____*
- (a) *Death of the principal*
 - (b) *Insolvency of the principal*
 - (c) *Both (a) & (b)*
 - (d) *None of these*
10. *Agent should not to deal on his own account without first obtaining the consent of the principal, otherwise the principal may—*
- (a) *repudiate the transaction,*
 - (b) *claim from the agent any benefit which may have resulted to him from the transaction,*
 - (c) *Either (a) or (b)*
 - (d) *Both (a) & (b)*

Descriptive Questions

1. *A appoints M, a minor, as his agent to sell his watch for cash at a price not less than ₹ 700. M sells it to D for ₹ 350. Is the sale valid? Explain the legal position of M and D, referring to the provisions of the Indian Contract Act, 1872.*
2. *State with reason whether the following statement is correct or incorrect: Ratification of agency is valid even if knowledge of the principal is materially defective.*
3. *Rahul, a transporter was entrusted with the duty of transporting tomatoes from a rural farm to a city by Aswin. Due to heavy rains, Rahul was stranded for more than two days. Rahul sold the tomatoes below the market rate in the nearby market where he was stranded fearing that the tomatoes may perish. Can Aswin recover the loss from Rahul on the ground that Rahul had acted beyond his authority?*
4. *Mr. Ahuja of Delhi engaged Mr. Singh as his agent to buy a house in West Extension area. Mr. Singh bought a house for ₹ 20 lakhs in the name of a nominee and then purchased it himself for ₹ 24 lakhs. He then sold the same house to Mr. Ahuja for ₹ 26 lakhs. Mr. Ahuja later comes to know the mischief of Mr. Singh and tries to recover the excess amount paid to Mr. Singh. Is he entitled to recover any amount from Mr. Singh? If so, how much? Explain.*
5. *Comment on the statement 'Principal is not always bound by the acts of a sub-agent'.*

6. ABC Ltd. sells its products through some agents and it is not the custom in their business to sell the products on credit. Mr. Pintu, one of the agents sold goods of ABC Ltd. to M/s. Parul Pvt. Ltd. (on credit) which was insolvent at the time of such sale. ABC Ltd. sued Mr. Pintu for compensation towards the loss caused due to sale of products to M/s. Parul Pvt. Ltd. Will ABC Ltd. succeed in its claim?
7. R is the wife of P. She purchased sarees on credit from Nalli. Nalli demanded the amount from P. P refused. Nalli filed a suit against P for the said amount. Decide in the light of provisions of the Indian Contract Act, 1872, whether Nalli would succeed.
8. Bhupendra borrowed a sum of ₹ 3 lacs from Atul. Bhupendra appointed Atul as his agent to sell his land and authorized him to appropriate the amount of loan out of the sale proceeds. Afterward, Bhupendra revoked the agency.

Decide under the provisions of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 whether the revocation of the said agency by Bhupendra is lawful.

ANSWERS/HINTS

Answers to MCQs

1.	(a)	2.	(a)	3.	(b)	4.	(b)	5.	(a)	6.	(b)
7.	(c)	8.	(d)	9.	(c)	10.	(d)				

Answers to the Descriptive Questions

1. According to the provisions of Section 184 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872, as between the principal and a third person, any person, even a minor may become an agent. But no person who is not of the age of majority and of sound mind can become an agent, so as to be responsible to his principal. Thus, if a person who is not competent to contract is appointed as an agent, the principal is liable to the third party for the acts of the agent. Thus, in the given case, D gets a good title to the watch. M is not liable to A for his negligence in the performance of his duties.
2. **Incorrect:** Section 198 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 provides that for a valid ratification, the person who ratifies the already performed act must be without defect and have clear knowledge of the facts of the case. If the principal's knowledge is materially defective, the ratification is not valid and hence no agency.
3. **Agent's authority in an emergency (Section 189 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872):** An agent has authority, in an emergency, to do all such acts for the purpose of protecting his principal from loss as would be done by a person of ordinary prudence, in his own case, under similar circumstances.

In the instant case, Rahul, the agent, was handling perishable goods like 'tomatoes' and can decide the time, date and place of sale, not necessarily as per instructions of the Aswin, the principal, with the intention of protecting Aswin from losses.

Here, Rahul acts in an emergency as a man of ordinary prudence, so Aswin will not succeed against him for recovering the loss.

4. The problem in this case, is based on the provisions of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 as contained in Section 215 read with Section 216. The two sections provide that where an agent without the knowledge of the principal, deals in the business of agency on his own account, the principal may:

- (1) repudiate the transaction, if the case shows, either that the agent has dishonestly concealed any material fact from him, or that the dealings of the agent have been disadvantageous to him.
- (2) claim from the agent any benefit, which may have resulted to him from the transaction.

Therefore, based on the above provisions, Mr. Ahuja is entitled to recover ₹ 6 lakhs from Mr. Singh being the amount of profit earned by Mr. Singh out of the transaction.

5. **The statement is correct.** Normally, a sub-agent is not appointed, since it is a delegation of power by an agent given to him by his principal. The governing principle is, 'a delegate cannot delegate'. (Latin version of this principle is, "***delegates non potest delegare***"). However, there are certain circumstances where an agent can appoint sub-agent.

In case of proper appointment of a sub-agent, by virtue of Section 192 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 the principal is bound by and is held responsible for the acts of the sub-agent. Their relationship is treated to be as if the sub-agent is appointed by the principal himself.

However, if a sub-agent is not properly appointed, the principal shall not be bound by the acts of the sub-agent. Under the circumstances the agent appointing the sub-agent shall be bound by these acts and he (the agent) shall be bound to the principal for the acts of the sub-agent.

6. **To conduct the business of agency according to the principal's directions (Section 211 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872):** An agent is bound to conduct the business of his principal according to the direction given by the principal, or, in the absence of any such directions, according to the custom which prevails in doing business of the same kind at the place where the agent conducts such business. When the agent acts otherwise, if any loss be sustained, he must make it good to his principal, and, if any profit accrues, he must account for it.

In the present case, Mr. Pintu, one of the agents, sold goods of ABC Ltd. to M/s Parul Pvt. Ltd. (on credit) which was insolvent at the time of such sale. Also, it is not the custom in ABC Ltd. to sell the products on credit.

Hence, Mr. Pintu must make good the loss to ABC Ltd.

7. The position of husband and wife is special and significant case of implied authority. According to the Indian Contract Act 1872, where the husband and wife are living together in a domestic establishment of their own, the wife shall have an implied authority to pledge the credit of her husband for necessaries. However, the implied authority can be challenged by the husband only in the following circumstances.
- (1) The husband has expressly forbidden the wife from borrowing money or buying goods on credit.
 - (2) The articles purchased did not constitute necessities.
 - (3) Husband had given sufficient funds to the wife for purchasing the articles she needed to the knowledge of the seller.
 - (4) The creditor had been expressly told not to give credit to the wife.

Further, where the wife lives apart from husband without any of her fault, she shall have an implied authority to bind the husband for necessaries, if he does not provide for her maintenance.

Since, none of the above criteria is being fulfilled; Nalli would be successful in recovering its money.

8. According to Section 202 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872 an agency becomes irrevocable where the agent has himself an interest in the property which forms the subject-matter of the agency, and such an agency cannot, in the absence of an express provision in the contract, be terminated to the prejudice of such interest.

In the instant case, the rule of agency coupled with interest applies and does not come to an end even on death, insanity or the insolvency of the principal.

Thus, when Bhupendra appointed Atul as his agent to sell his land and authorized him to appropriate the amount of loan out of the sale proceeds, interest was created in favor of Atul and the said agency is not revocable. The revocation of agency by Bhupendra is not lawful.