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IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION

ARBITRATION PETITION NO. 75 OF 2024

Meta Arch Pvt. Ltd.

...Petitioner

Versus

The Provincial Society of The Congregation
of Jesus And Mary Through Authorised
Signatories Sister

...Respondent

Mr. Shivam Harshad Nimbalkar *i/b Mr. Satyam Harshad Nimbalkar*
for the Petitioner.

Mr. S.R. Firodiya *for the Respondent.*

CORAM : SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN, J.

DATE : APRIL 3, 2025

PC :

1. This is a Petition under Section 11 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 (***“the Act”***), seeking appointment of an arbitrator in connection with disputes and differences that are said to have arisen between the parties under a Consultancy Service Proposal dated October 16, 2018. The arbitration agreement is contained in Clause 9 (found at Page Nos.56 and 57 of the Petition). In the interest of brevity, the arbitration agreement is not being extracted here. Suffice it to say that this matter falls within the jurisdiction of this Court.

2. It is seen from the record that by a letter dated June 18, 2018 the Petitioner was appointed as an architect for consultancy services in terms of letter of offer dated June 15, 2018 at the site set out in that letter. There is a proposal letter which contains an arbitration agreement in Clauses 9.3 to

9.8. It is also seen from the record that after this date, the Respondent wrote a letter dated October 19, 2018 to the municipal authorities authorizing certain persons from the Petitioner's office to collect the sanctioned drawings and any related files relevant to the aforesaid project. The correspondence between the parties does not point to the fact that the arbitration agreement can be wished away.

3. The primary objection from the Respondent is that the arbitration clause contained in the proposal document which has merely been received does not demonstrate a binding agreement containing an unequivocal submission of disputes to arbitration.

4. Be that as it may, considering the flow of correspondence it cannot be ruled out that the Petitioner was indeed appointed as an architect for consultancy services referred to in the correspondence and the terms and conditions governing such appointment included the arbitration clause. In any case, it shall be open to the Respondent to file an appropriate application under Section 16 of the Act and demonstrate to the Arbitral Tribunal that the issues are not arbitrable or that the proposal which is evidently accepted related to some other activity and not the activity for which invocation has been made. These are all facets of merit which fall in domain of the Arbitral Tribunal and it would not be appropriate for this Court to pronounce upon these issues when it is satisfied that an arbitration agreement can be discerned from the correspondence between the parties.

5. The scope of review under Section 11 is explicitly set out in Section 11(6A) of the Act. It is now trite law, with particular regard to the Supreme Court's decision rendered by a seven-judge Bench in the *Interplay Judgement*¹ followed by multiple others, including *SBI General*² and *Patel*³ that the Section 11 Court ought not to venture beyond examining the existence of a validly existing arbitration agreement that has been formally executed. Even questions of existential substance is a matter that falls squarely in the domain of the arbitral tribunal, in view of Section 16 of the Act.

6. Being satisfied that an arbitration agreement is validly in existence, and that arbitration has been duly invoked, it is in the fitness of things to refer the disputes and differences between the parties in connection with the aforesaid Agreement dated October 16, 2018 to arbitration by a Sole Arbitrator.

7. Consequently, this Petition is *finally disposed of* in the following terms:-

A] Mr. Aniesh Jadhav, a learned advocate of this Court is hereby appointed as the Sole Arbitrator to adjudicate upon the disputes and differences between the parties arising out of and in connection with the Agreement referred to above;
Email: anieshjadhav@gmail.com

1 In Re: Interplay Between Arbitration Agreements under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 and Stamp Act, 1899 - (2024) 6 SCC 1

2 SBI General Insurance Co. Ltd. Vs. Krish Spinning - 2024 SCC OnLine SC 1754

3 Ajay Madhusudan Patel Vs. Jyotindra S. Patel - 2024 SCC OnLine SC 2597

B] A copy of this Order will be communicated to the Learned Sole Arbitrator by the Advocates for the Petitioner within a period of one week from the date on which this order is uploaded on the website of this Court. The Petitioner shall provide the contact and communication particulars of the parties to the Arbitral Tribunal along with a copy of this Order;

C] The Learned Sole Arbitrator is requested to forward the statutory Statement of Disclosure under Section 11(8) read with Section 12(1) of the Act to the Advocates for the Petitioner so as to enable them to file the same in the Registry of this Court. The Registry of this Court shall retain the said Statement on the file of this Petition and a copy of the same shall be furnished by the Advocates for the Petitioner to the Respondent;

D] The parties shall appear before the Learned Sole Arbitrator on such date and at such place as indicated, to obtain appropriate directions with regard to conduct of the arbitration including fixing a schedule for pleadings, examination of witnesses, if any, schedule of hearings etc. At such meeting, the parties shall provide a valid and functional email address along with mobile and landline numbers of the respective Advocates of the parties to the Arbitral Tribunal. Communications to such email addresses shall constitute valid service of correspondence in connection with the arbitration;

E] All arbitral costs and fees of the Arbitral Tribunal shall be borne by the parties equally in the first instance, and shall be subject to any final Award that may be passed by the Tribunal in relation to costs.

8. Needless to say, nothing contained in this order is an expression of an opinion on merits of the matter or the relative strength of the parties. All issues on merits are expressly kept open to be agitated before the arbitral tribunal appointed hereby.

9. All actions required to be taken pursuant to this order shall be taken upon receipt of a downloaded copy as available on this Court's website.

[SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN, J.]