
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION
ARBITRATION PETITION NO. 195 OF 2024

M/s. Craft Publicity through its Proprietor Sujit Gajanan Thakur ...Petitioner

Versus

Zen Media LLP ...Respondent

Mr. Avinash H. Fatangare, a/w Sandesh V. Kate, i/b Archana S. Shelar, for the Petitioner.

Mr. Ashutosh M. Kulkarni, a/w Gaurav Sharma & Akshay R. Kulkarni, for Respondent.

CORAM : SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN, J.

DATE : MARCH 13, 2025

PC :

1. This Petition has been filed 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 an agreements dated October 24, 2023 and July 1, 2024 (***“Agreements”***). The arbitration agreement is contained in Clauses 16.2 and 1.12 (found at Pages 41 and 48 of the Petition collectively). 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 apparent from the record that the arbitration agreement was invoked by Petitioner on October 4, 2024. To the said invocation, a

reply dated October 7, 2024 is filed.

3. The existence of the arbitration agreement is not in dispute. Whether the disputes are arbitrable is the objection being raised. Therefore, no useful purpose would be served in keeping this matter pending any further. 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 decisions of 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.

4. 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 agreements to arbitration by a Sole Arbitrator.

5. In these circumstances, the Petition is hereby ***finally disposed of***, in terms of the following order:

a) Mr. Aditya Bapat, an advocate of this Court, is hereby appointed as the Sole Arbitrator to adjudicate upon

¹ *In Re: Interplay Between Arbitration Agreements Under Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 & Stamp Act, 1899 – (2024) 6 SCC 1*

² *SBI General Insurance Co. Ltd. v. Krish Spinning – 2024 SCC OnLine SC 1754*

³ *Ajay Madhusudan Patel v. Jyotrindra S. Patel – 2024 SCC OnLine SC 2597*

the disputes and differences between the parties arising out of and in connection with the Agreement referred to above;

Office Address:-

2nd Floor, New Wadia Building,

Dalal Street, Mumbai – 400 001

Email ID: adityasbapat@gmail.com

- 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 parties within a period of two weeks from receipt of a copy of this Order;
- 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.]