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**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT BOMBAY
ORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION**

COMM. ARBITRATION APPLICATION NO. 109 OF 2025

Workplace Accelerator Services

...Applicant

Versus

Vyakta Consulting Services Private Limited
and Anr.

...Respondents

Mr. Siddharth Sethi a/w *ms. Shreya Sirca*, *Mr. Deepak Anand*,
Mr. Juan D'souza and *Mr. Kunal Saini i/b JSA Advocates and*
Solicitors for the Applicant.
None for the Respondent.

CORAM : SOMASEKHAR SUNDARESAN, J.

DATE : MARCH 24, 2025

PC :

1. This Application 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 Agreement dated July 17, 2021 (***“Agreement”***). The arbitration agreement is contained in Clause 5(j) (found at Page 55 of the Application). 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 Invocation Notice dated September 11, 2024 was sent to the Respondents. While a notice dated September 19, 2024, i.e., after receipt of invocation notice has been received, it makes no reference to the invocation notice but refers to an

earlier legal notice dated June 13, 2024. In the said letter the Respondents have stated that no one was ever authorized to execute the Agreement in question and according to them, there is no arbitration agreement that has come into existence.

3. From a review of the record, it is evident that the Agreement in question is indeed signed by both the parties. There is evident existence of an arbitration agreement. Existential questions about substance of the agreement or procedural questions relating to execution of the Agreement and examination of evidence to determine such facets of the matter lies entirely in the domain of the Arbitral Tribunal. Consequently, no useful purpose would be served in keeping this matter pending any further on the docket of this Court.

4. 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.

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. Jyotrindra S. Patel - 2024 SCC OnLine SC 2597

5. 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 July 17, 2021 to arbitration by a Sole Arbitrator.

6. Consequently, this Application is *finally disposed of* in the following terms:-

A] Justice (Retd.) Anuja Prabhudesai, a former judge 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; E-mail : desaianuja@yahoo.com

B] A copy of this Order will be communicated to the Learned Sole Arbitrator by the Advocates for the Applicant within a period of one week from the date on which this order is uploaded on the website of this Court. The Applicant 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 Applicant 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 Application and a copy of the same shall be furnished by the Advocates for the Applicant to the Respondents;

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.

7. 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.

8. 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.]