



2025:DHC:10318



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\* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**  
+ **ARB.P. 1643/2025**

Date of Decision: **07.11.2025**

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

MR BHANU ARORA

.....Petitioner

Through: Ms.Astha Gupta, Adv.

versus

MR ADITYA BHUTANI & ANR.

.....Respondents

Through: Mr. Shyamal Kumar, Adv. for R-2

**CORAM:**

**HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PURUSHAINDRA KUMAR KAURAV**

**JUDGEMENT**

**PURUSHAINDRA KUMAR KAURAV, J. (ORAL)**

1. Heard learned counsel appearing for the parties.
2. The present petition has been filed under Section 11 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 ('the Act'), seeking appointment of an Arbitrator, to adjudicate upon the disputes that have arisen between the parties.
3. An objection has been raised by Mr. Shyamal Kumar, learned counsel for respondent No. 2, regarding the maintainability of the present petition as against respondent No. 2. It is submitted that the purported Receipt-cum-Agreement dated 05.10.2023 is not between the petitioner and respondent No. 2, but between the petitioner and respondent No. 1. Therefore,



respondent No. 2 has been unnecessarily impleaded.

4. In addition to the above submissions, Mr. Shyamal Kumar further submits that, by an award dated 12.05.2025, the impleadment application filed by the petitioner was rejected by the learned Arbitrator appointed pursuant to the Collaboration Agreement dated 06.01.2023 entered into between respondent No. 1 and respondent No. 2.

5. According to him, the learned Arbitrator, by the award dated 12.05.2025, has unequivocally held that the petitioner has no rights whatsoever *qua* the Collaboration Agreement dated 06.01.2023.

6. On the other hand, Ms. Ashta Gupta, learned counsel appearing for the petitioner contends otherwise. She relies on the judgment in the case ***Cox and Kings v. SAP India Pvt. Ltd. and Ors.***<sup>1</sup>, ***Jaya Bhandari and Ors. v. Malhan Builders and Ors.***<sup>2</sup> and ***Kasturi v. Iyyamperumal***<sup>3</sup>.

7. The Receipt-cum-Agreement dated 05.10.2023 is extracted as under;

*“ADVANCE PAYMENT RECEIPT*

*1. Received by Mr Aditya Bhutani, S/o Late Sh. Hans Raj Bhutani, R/O 122 Third Floor Kalkaji Extension New Delhi 110019 with thanks from Mr. Bhanu Arora, S/o Late Krishan Arora, R/o E 390 First Floor GK II New Delhi 110048, an advance Payment of Rs.5 Lakhs vide 1st cheque bearing no. 232, drawn on HDFC Bank, M Block, GK-2 Branch and 2nd payment of Rs.15 Lacs vide 2nd cheque bearing no. 235, drawn on HDFC Bank, M Block, GK-2 Branch, towards sale and transfer of all my rights in property bearing address E-135, Greater Kailash-1, New Delhi-110048, being the entire first floor, alongwith all connected rights, in accordance with the terms of the agreement to sell dated 10/03/2023 and subsequent assurance by Mr. Bhutani that the General Power of Attorney and consequent Sale deed in favour of Mr. Arora will be executed within a period of ten (10) days and one month respectively from date of execution present receipt.*

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<sup>1</sup> MANU/SC/1310/2023

<sup>2</sup> MANU/DE/2096/2010

<sup>3</sup> 2005 AIR (SC) 2813



- 2. Mr. Aditya Bhutani further assures Mr Bhanu Arora that demolition is completed and the construction of E-135, Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi-110048 in accordance with collaboration agreement dated 06/01/2023, entered between Mr Aditya Bhutani with Mrs. Vijay Bala Kapoor shall commence immediately upon the execution of General Power of Attorney i.e., within, next ten days.*
- 3. Mr. Bhanu Arora assures Mr. Aditya Bhutani that the balance sale consideration amounting to Rs. 2.80 Cr shall be payable by Mr. Bhanu Arora to Mr Aditya Bhutani, in accordance with Clause 5 and 6 of the agreement to sell dated 10/03/2023 i.e., at the time of execution of sale deed.*
- 4. In case of any dispute arising out of the agreement to sell dated 10/03/2023 or the present receipt, the parties shall refer the disputes resolved by Arbitration, in Delhi."*
8. The same clearly indicates that respondent No. 2 is neither a signatory nor a party to the said receipt. In these circumstances, and keeping in view the fact that arbitration proceedings pertaining to the Collaboration Agreement dated 06.01.2023 are already ongoing between respondent No. 1 and respondent No. 2, it is evident that respondent No. 2 has been unnecessarily impleaded in the present petition. Accordingly, the name of respondent No. 2 stands deleted.
9. Despite service, no one appears for respondent No.1.
10. A *prima facie* perusal of the Receipt-cum-Agreement dated 05.10.2023 indicates that the parties agreed to resolve their disputes through arbitration. In these circumstances, there is no impediment to appointing an Arbitrator in respect of the disputes that have arisen between the petitioner and respondent No. 1.
11. The law with respect to the scope and standard of judicial scrutiny under Section 11(6) of the Act has been fairly well settled. This Court in



***Pradhaan Air Express Pvt Ltd v. Air Works India Engineering Pvt Ltd***<sup>4</sup>, has extensively dealt with the scope of interference at the stage of Section 11. Furthermore, this Court, in ***Axis Finance Limited Vs. Mr. Agam Ishwar Trimbak***<sup>5</sup> has held that the scope of inquiry under Section 11 of the Act is limited to a *prima facie* examination of the *existence* of an arbitration agreement. Further, it was also reiterated that the objections relating to the arbitrability of disputes are not to be entertained by a referral Court acting under Section 8 or 11 of the Act. The relevant extract of the aforesaid decision reads as under: -

*19. In In Re: Interplay , the Supreme Court confined the analysis under Section 11 of the Act to the existence of an arbitration agreement and under Section 8 of the Act to the existence and validity of an arbitration agreement. Under both the provisions, examination was to be made at the touchstone of Section 7 of the Act. Further, issues pertaining to the arbitrability of the dispute fell outside the scope of both Section 11(6A) and Section 8 of the Act. The material part of the judgement of the Supreme Court in In Re: Interplay reads as under:*

*164. The 2015 Amendment Act has laid down different parameters for judicial review under Section 8 and Section 11. Where Section 8 requires the referral Court to look into the prima facie existence of a valid arbitration agreement. Section 11 confines the Court's jurisdiction to the examination of the existence of an arbitration agreement. Although the object and purpose behind both Sections 8 and 11 is to compel parties to abide by their contractual understanding, the scope of power of the referral Courts under the said provisions is intended to be different. The same is also evident from the fact that Section 37 of the Arbitration Act allows an appeal from the order of an arbitral tribunal refusing to refer the parties to arbitration under Section 8, but not from Section 11. Thus, the 2015 Amendment Act has legislatively overruled the dictum of Patel Engineering (supra) where it was held that Section 8 and Section 11 are complementary in nature. Accordingly, the two provisions cannot be read as laying down a similar standard. 165. The legislature confined the scope of reference under Section 11(6A) to the*

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<sup>4</sup> 2025 SCC OnLine Del 3022

<sup>5</sup> 2025:DHC:7477



*examination of the existence of an arbitration agreement. The use of the term “examination” in itself connotes that the scope of the power is limited to a prima facie determination. Since the Arbitration Act is a self-contained code, the requirement of “existence” of an arbitration agreement draws effect from Section 7 of the Arbitration Act. In Duro Felguera (supra), this Court held that the referral Courts only need to consider one aspect to determine the existence of an arbitration agreement – whether the underlying contract contains an arbitration agreement which provides for arbitration pertaining to the disputes which have arisen between the parties to the agreement. Therefore, the scope of examination under Section 11(6A) should be confined to the existence of an arbitration agreement on the basis of Section 7. Similarly, the validity of an arbitration agreement, in view of Section 7, should be restricted to the requirement of formal validity such as the requirement that the agreement be in writing. This interpretation also gives true effect to the doctrine of competence-competence by leaving the issue of substantive existence and validity of an arbitration agreement to be decided by arbitral tribunal under Section 16. We accordingly clarify the position of law laid down in Vidya Drolia (supra) in the context of Section 8 and Section 11 of the Arbitration Act. 166. The burden of proving the existence of arbitration agreement generally lies on the party seeking to rely on such agreement. In jurisdictions such as India, which accept the doctrine of competence-competence, only prima facie proof of the existence of an arbitration agreement must be adduced before the referral Court. The referral Court is not the appropriate forum to conduct a minitrial by allowing the parties to adduce the evidence in regard to the existence or validity of an arbitration agreement. The determination of the existence and validity of an arbitration agreement on the basis of evidence ought to be left to the arbitral tribunal. This position of law can also be gauged from the plain language of the statute. 167. Section 11(6A) uses the expression “examination of the existence of an arbitration agreement.” The purport of using the word “examination” connotes that the legislature intends that the referral Court has to inspect or scrutinize the dealings between the parties for the existence of an arbitration agreement. Moreover, the expression “examination” does not connote or imply a laborious or contested inquiry. On the other hand, Section 16 provides that the arbitral tribunal can “rule” on its jurisdiction, including the existence and validity of an arbitration agreement. A “ruling” connotes adjudication of disputes after admitting evidence from the parties. Therefore, it is evident that the referral Court is only*



*required to examine the existence of arbitration agreements, whereas the arbitral tribunal ought to rule on its jurisdiction, including the issues pertaining to the existence and validity of an arbitration agreement. A similar view was adopted by this Court in Shin-Etsu Chemical Co. Ltd. v. Aksh Optifibre Ltd.” [Emphasis supplied]*

20. The effect of *In Re: Interplay* was further explained by a Three Judge Bench of the Supreme Court in *SBI General Insurance Co. Ltd. v. Krish Spinning*<sup>6</sup> wherein the Court declared *Vidya Drolia* and *NTPC Ltd.*’s findings qua scope of inquiry under Section 8 and Section 11 of the Act to no longer be compatible with modern principles of arbitration. The material portions of the judgement read as under:

*“114. In view of the observations made by this Court in In Re : Interplay (supra), it is clear that the scope of enquiry at the stage of appointment of arbitrator is limited to the scrutiny of prima facie existence of the arbitration agreement, and nothing else. For this reason, we find it difficult to hold that the observations made in Vidya Drolia (supra) and adopted in NTPC v. SPML (supra) that the jurisdiction of the referral Court when dealing with the issue of “accord and satisfaction” under Section 11 extends to weeding out ex-facie non-arbitrable and frivolous disputes would continue to apply despite the subsequent decision in In Re : Interplay (supra). ... 118. Tests like the “eye of the needle” and “ex-facie meritless”, although try to minimise the extent of judicial interference, yet they require the referral Court to examine contested facts and appreciate prima facie evidence (however limited the scope of enquiry may be) and thus are not in conformity with the principles of modern arbitration which place arbitral autonomy and judicial non-interference on the highest pedestal.” [Emphasis supplied]*

21. Similarly, in *BGM and M-RPL-JMCT (JV) v. Eastern Coalfields Ltd*<sup>7</sup> the Supreme Court succinctly explained the effect of *In Re: Interplay* on a Referral Court’s powers under Section 11 of the Act. The relevant part of the judgement is as under:

15. ...

*(a) Section 11 confines the Court's jurisdiction to the examination regarding the existence of an arbitration agreement.*

*(b) The use of the term “examination” in itself connotes that the scope of the power is limited to a prima facie determination.*

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<sup>6</sup> 2024 SCC OnLine SC 1754

<sup>7</sup> 2025 SCC OnLine SC 1471



*(c) Referral Courts only need to consider one aspect to determine the existence of an arbitration agreement — whether the underlying contract contains an arbitration agreement which provides for arbitration pertaining to the disputes which have arisen between the parties to the agreement. Therefore, the scope of examination under Section 11(6-A) should be confined to the existence of an arbitration agreement on the basis of Section 7. Such a legal approach will help the Referral Court in weeding out prima facie non-existent arbitration agreements.*

*(d) The purport of using the word “examination” connotes that the legislature intends that the Referral Court has to inspect or scrutinise the dealings between the parties for the existence of an arbitration agreement. However, the expression “examination” does not connote or imply a laborious or contested inquiry.*

*(e) The burden of proving the existence of arbitration agreement generally lies on the party seeking to rely on such agreement. Only prima facie proof of the existence of an arbitration agreement must be adduced before the Referral Court. The Referral Court is not the appropriate forum to conduct a mini-trial by allowing the parties to adduce the evidence in regard to the existence or validity of an arbitration agreement. The determination of the existence and validity of an arbitration agreement on the basis of evidence ought to be left to the Arbitral Tribunal.*

*(f) Section 16 provides that the Arbitral Tribunal can “rule” on its jurisdiction, including the existence and validity of an arbitration agreement. A “ruling” connotes adjudication of disputes after admitting evidence from the parties. Therefore, when the Referral Court renders a prima facie opinion, neither the Arbitral Tribunal, nor the Court enforcing the arbitral award is bound by such a prima facie view. If a prima facie view as to the existence of an arbitration agreement is taken by the Referral Court, it still allows the Arbitral Tribunal to examine the issue in depth.*

*[Emphasis supplied]*

22. Thus from the above-mentioned authorities it is clear that a Court’s scope of inquiry under Section 11 of the Act has been limited to a prima facie examination of the existence of an arbitration agreement while the adjudication under Section 8 is to be made for both existence and validity. Further, the examination so undertaken under both the said provisions must be within the confines of Section 7 of the Act. Objections relating to arbitrability of disputes are not to be entertained by a referral Court acting under Section 8 or 11 of the Act.”



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12. Accordingly, this Court appoints Mr. Kanwal Jeet Arora, District and Sessions Judge (Retd.) (Mobile No: +91 9910384733, e-mail id: [arorakanwaljeet@yahoo.com](mailto:arorakanwaljeet@yahoo.com)) as the sole Arbitrator.

13. The Sole Arbitrator may proceed with the arbitration proceedings, subject to furnishing to the parties the requisite disclosures as required under Section 12 of the Act.

14. The Sole Arbitrator shall be entitled to fee in accordance with the IV<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Act or as may otherwise be agreed to between the parties and the learned Sole Arbitrator.

15. The parties shall share the arbitrator's fee and arbitral cost, equally.

16. All rights and contentions of the parties in relation to the claims/counter claims are kept open, to be decided by the Sole Arbitrator on their merits, in accordance with law.

17. Needless to state, nothing in this order shall be construed as an expression of opinion of this Court on the merits of the controversy. All rights and contentions of the parties in this regard are reserved. Let a copy of the said order be sent to the Sole Arbitrator through electronic mode as well.

18. Accordingly, the instant petition stands disposed of.

**PURUSHAINDRA KUMAR KAURAV, J**

**NOVEMBER 7, 2025**

*Pallavi/SPH*