

(2022) 01 DEL CK 0024

In the Delhi High Court

Case No : Civil Suit (COMM) No. 562 Of 2021

Western Infrabuild Products Llp

APPELLANT

Vs

M/S. Western Steel India & Anr

RESPONDENT

Date of Decision : 05-01-2022

Acts Referred:

Court Fees Act, 1870 — Section 16
Code Of Civil Procedure, 1908 — Section 89

Citation : (2022) 01 DEL CK 0024

Hon'ble Judges : Suresh Kumar Kait, J

Bench : Single Bench

Advocate : Sachin Gupta, Dhruv Sampat

Final Decision : Disposed Of

Judgement

Suresh Kumar Kait, J

The hearing has been conducted through video conferencing.

I.A. 102/2022 (u/O. XXIII Rule 3 r/w S. 151 CPC)

1. The present application has been jointly filed by plaintiff and defendants praying for issuance of decree in terms of prayer clause 31 (a), (b) & (c)

of the present suit and for refund of entire Court fees.

2. The captioned suit has been filed by the plaintiff seeking permanent injunction restraining infringement of copyright, trade mark/ trading

name/corporate name, passing off, unfair competition, delivery up, damages, etc. against the defendants.

3. This court is informed that the plaintiff and defendants have amicably resolved their disputes out of court, in terms as stated in Paragraph 2 of the present application.

4. Learned counsel for the plaintiff submits that in terms of settlement, the present suit be decreed against defendants.

5. Upon hearing learned counsel for the parties and upon perusal of the application and in specific contents of Para-2 thereof, this Court finds that the settlement reached between the parties is valid and lawful.

6. Accordingly, the present joint application filed by the plaintiff and defendants is allowed.

7. Needless to say, parties shall be bound by the terms of settlement reached between them.

8. The application stands disposed of accordingly.

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9. In view of order passed in IA No. 102/2022 (u/O XXIII Rule 3 r/w Section 151 CPC), the present suit is decreed qua defendants in terms of

Paragraph No.2 of said application, i.e. I.A. 102/2022 which shall form part of decree sheet. Decree sheet be accordingly drawn.

10. Learned counsel also submits that since the subject matter of the suit stands amicably resolved, therefore, in terms of Section 16 of the Court Fees

Act, the entire court fees be refunded to the plaintiff.

11. Learned counsel for plaintiff has relied upon judgment passed by Honâ??ble Supreme Court in the case of The High Court of Judicature at

Madras rep. by its Registrar General vs. M.C. Subramaniam & Ors. (2021) 3 SCC 560. The relevant paras of the said judgment are reproduced as

under:

â??....23. We find ourselves in agreement with the approach taken by the High Courts in the decisions stated supra. The purpose of Section

69-A is to reward parties who have chosen to withdraw their litigations in favour of more conciliatory dispute settlement mechanisms, thus

saving the time and resources of the Court, by enabling them to claim refund of the court fees deposited by them. Such refund of court fee,

though it may not be connected to the substance of the dispute between the parties, is certainly an ancillary economic incentive for pushing

them towards exploring alternative methods of dispute settlement. As the Karnataka High Court has rightly observed in Kamalamma, the

parties who have agreed to settle their disputes without requiring judicial intervention under Section 89 CPC are even more deserving of

this benefit. This is because by choosing to resolve their claims themselves, they have saved the State of the logistical hassle of arranging for a third-party institution to settle the dispute. Though arbitration and mediation are certainly salutary dispute resolution mechanisms, we also find that the importance of private amicable negotiation between the parties cannot be understated. In our view, there is no justifiable reason why Section 69-A should only incentivise the methods of out-of-court settlement stated in Section 89 CPC and afford step-brotherly treatment to other methods availed of by the parties.

24. Admittedly, there may be situations wherein the parties have after the course of a long-drawn trial, or multiple frivolous litigations, approached the Court seeking refund of court fees in the guise of having settled their disputes. In such cases, the Court may, having regard to the previous conduct of the parties and the principles of equity, refuse to grant relief under the relevant rules pertaining to court fees.

However, we do not find the present case as being of such nature.

25. Thus, even though a strict construction of the terms of Section 89 CPC and Section 69-A of the 1955 Act may not encompass such private negotiations and settlements between the parties, we emphasise that the participants in such settlements will be entitled to the same benefits as those who have been referred to explore alternate dispute settlement methods under Section 89 CPC. Indeed, we find it puzzling that the petitioner should be so vehemently opposed to granting such benefit. Though the Registry/State Government will be losing a one-time court fee in the short term, they will be saved the expense and opportunity cost of managing an endless cycle of litigation in the long term. It is therefore in their own interest to allow Respondent 1's claim.

26. Thus, in our view, the High Court was correct in holding that Section 89 CPC and Section 69-A of the 1955 Act be interpreted liberally.

In view of this broad purposive construction, we affirm the High Court's conclusion, and hold that Section 89 CPC shall cover, and the benefit of Section 69-A of the 1955 Act shall also extend to all methods of out-of-court dispute settlement between parties that the Court subsequently finds to have been legally arrived at. This would, thus, cover the present controversy, wherein a private settlement was arrived

at, and a memo to withdraw the appeal was filed before the High Court. In such a case as well, the appellant i.e. Respondent 1 herein would be entitled to refund of court fee.â??

12. Concurring with afore-noted decision of Honâ??ble Supreme Court in The HC of Judicature at Madras, Rep. by its Registrar General (Supra), the plaintiff is entitled to refund of entire court fees. Registry is directed to issue necessary certificate/ authorization in favour of the plaintiff to seek refund before the appropriate authorities.

13. With aforesaid directions, the present suit stands decreed accordingly.

14. Accordingly, the present suit stands disposed of.

15. The date already fixed, i.e. 16.02.2022, stands cancelled.