IN THE WEST BENGAL REAL ESTATE APPELLATE TRIBUNAL, KOLKATA

DATED THIS THE 18th DAY OF AUGUST 2023

PRESENT SRI GOUR SUNDAR BANERJEE, HON'BLE JUDICIAL MEMBER AND SRI SUBRAT MUKHERJEE, HON'BLE ADMINISTRATIVE MEMBER

APPEAL NO. WBREAT / APPEAL No. - 01/2023

BETWEEN

SHRI MOTILAL JHALANI Flat No. 302, Radha Krishna Apartment, Hanskhali Pool, Andul Road, Bakultala, Howrah – 711 109.

AND

M/s Bengal Shrachi Housing Development Ltd. Shrachi Towers, 686, Anandpur, EM Byepass, Kolkata – 700 107.

JUDGEMENT

The instant Appeal is filed by the Appellant Shri Motilal Jhalani against the Respondent M/s Bengal Shrachi Housing Development Ltd. challenging the impugned order no. 2 dated 06/04/2023 passed by West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority in complaint case no. wbrera.com (physical) 000038 by which the complaint of the Appellant was dismissed by the Ld. W.B. RERA Authority..

Before proceeding further it may be mentioned that for the sake of convenience and avoiding repetition, Appellant / Complainant Shri Motilal Jhalani hereinafter is referred in short as Appellant and M/s Bengal Shrachi Housing Development Ltd. Hereinafter is referred in short as Respondent and West Bengal Real Estate (Regulation and development) Act, 2016 is referred in short as RERA Act and West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority is referred in short as RERA Authority.

The background which compelled the Appellant to file this Appeal is that, Appellant / Complainant filed the impugned complaint before the WBRERA Authority stating that he booked a flat on 19/02/2011 alongwith application money of Rs. 50,000/- (fifty thousand) from the Respondent Company and Respondent subsequently informed him vide letter dated 20/12/2012 that one flat no. 3C - MAZE - 2 is allotted to him by lottery with assurance that the allotment letter will be issued later and assuring possession of the flat within 33 months from the date of plan can be sanctioned. Subsequently, Respondent issued a letter on 22/06/2016 that in view of a notification dated 17/08/2015 by the Housing Board, Govt. of West Bengal, the rate of flat was revised and enhanced and subsequently sent several letters to him for acceptance of the revised price but Complainant / Appellant always gave reply that the said revised price is not applicable to him as the flat was allotted to him on 27/02/2012 at the price of Rs. 11,40,000/- but in spite of that Respondent illegally issued to him an allotment letter dated 23/11/2017 claiming Rs. 22,79,806/- as revised price of the flat instead of Rs. 11,40,000/-. Hence the complaint filed before the WBRERA Authority praying for possession of the flat at Rs. 11,40,000/- and compensation and cost.

The Respondent O.P. Company namely M/s Bengal Shrachi Housing Development Ltd. duly contested the case before the WBRERA Authority denying all the allegations of the complainant and their case is that Complainant / Appellant had approached the Respondent for allotment of 2 BHK having no. 3C – MAZE 2 at "Green Wood Nest Complex" on

16/02/2011 by sending an application accepting the GTC along with payment of booking amount of Rs. 50,000/- and subsequently Respondent intimated the Appellant about selection of his name through lottery on 20/07/2011 regarding allotment of flat No. 3C – MAZE 2 in the said complex and as the project was being delayed due to delayed sanction of plan, the Respondent intimated the same to the Appellant vide letter dated 10/08/2012 asking the complainant to either get refund of the booking amount with interest or to wait for completion of the project due to force majeure condition and the Complainant / Appellant had chosen to wait till the completion of the project vide his letter dated 10/08/2012 and thereafter, as the Housing Board, Govt. of West Bengal had enhanced the sell price of the flat of the project through Notification bearing No. 738-H-I/IM-2/2007(PT) dated 17/08/2015, Respondent communicated the same to the Appellant by letter dated 22/06/2016 with a parallel offer either taking refund of the booing amount with interest or confirm of the acceptance of revised rates for allotment of subject flat to complainant. It is further case of the Respondent that Complainant / Appellant vide his letter dated 07/07/2016 agreed to the revised rate and subsequently the building plan of the project was sanctioned by Authority concerned on 26/05/2017 and the construction of the "Green Wood Nest Complex", had started from 04/08/2017 onwards and subsequently the allotment letter was issued to the complainant on 23/11/2017 and Complainant / Appellant after accepting such allotment letter had further acted upon the same by making payment of Rs. 4,30,589/- on 22/12/2017 and claimed that at this stage the Complainant cannot challenge the revised rate of the flat and prayed for rejection of the complaint and considering the submission of both sides, Ld. WBRERA Authority dismissed the complaint filed by the Appellant vide Order No. 2 dated 06/04/2023 and being aggrieved with that Order the Complainant / Appellant filed this Appeal before this Tribunal.

The Respondent Company appeared before this Appellate Tribunal and duly contested the Appeal by filing notarised W.O. and copies of documents. The Respondent's case in short is that as per application of Appellant for booking of a MIG group flat at "Green Wood Nest Complex" agreeing to GTC and making booking amount of Rs. 50,000/-, the Respondent Company intimated him that he was selected for allotment of flat No. 3C-MAZE-2 but the allotment letter was not issued at that stage. It is their further case that vide letter dated 10/08/2012 they intimated Appellant about delay for starting construction on the ground stated therein with offer to either get refund of the paid amount with interest or to wait for completion of project due to force majeure conditions and vide letter dated 10/08/2012 Appellant chosen to wait till completion of the project and vide letter dated 17/08/2015 due to the notification of Housing Department, Govt. of West Bengal regarding enhancement of the price of the flat, the same was communicated to the Appellant vide letter dated 22/06/2016 and vide letter dated 07/07/2016 Appellant agreed to the revised rate and pursuant to the Appellant's approval, the plan of the project was sanctioned and from 04/08/2017 the construction of "Green Wood Nest Complex" had started and on 23/11/2017 the allotment letter issued to the Appellant and on 22/12/2017 the Appellant, after accepting such allotment letter had further acted upon the same by making payment of Rs. 4,30,589/- on that date.

It is the further case of the Respondent that after acceptance of the revised rate, the Appellant can not dispute against the revised date. The Appellant's case on the same subject matter was dismissed by the Ld. Consumer District Forum vide order dated 28/06/2019 and the Appellant did not challenge the said order of dismissal and at a much belated stage, the Appellant approach WBRERA Authority in 2023 which is not maintainable and prayed for dismissal of Appeal filed against the Respondent before this Tribunal.

ISSUES

Considering the averments of both sides following issues are framed as stated below:

- 1. Is the case barred by Law of Limitation?
- 2. Is the case barred by non-joinder of necessary parties?
- 3. Has the Appellant estopped from challenging the delay in handing over the subject flat?
- 4. Is the Appellant liable to pay the revised / enhanced price and whether the subject Govt. Notification is applicable to Appellant?
- 5. What relief or reliefs if any, the Appellant is entitled to?
- 6. Whether the impugned Judgement passed by the WBRERA Authority is sustainable in Law?

ARGUMENTS OF THE PARTIES

It may be mentioned that Appellant himself pleaded this case for him without appointing any Ld. Lawyer, he filed written argument wherein he argued his case as stated in memorandum of Appeal as well as also argued that the Respondent committed breach of the terms of GTC by sending allotment letter dated 23/11/2017 and subject notification of Housing Department, Govt. of West Bengal is not applicable to him as it came into operation on 17/08/2015. He further argued that allotment letter dated 23/11/2017 was received by him on 21/12/2017 as the Respondent intentionally posted the same after 25 days of the allotment latter dated 23/11/2017 and he had only one day left for submission of the allotment letter in the office of the Respondent and claimed that the allotment letter dated 23/11/2017 itself is illegal. He also argued that he explained the reason in his document regarding payment of Rs. 4,30,589/- he further argued that Ld. Consumer Court has dismissed his case as the claimed amount was beyond the Pecuniary Jurisdiction of the District Forum. He further argued that he accepted the allotment letter and he always stated in his letter that "If it is applicable to him he accepts the same," he further argued that the case was not bad for non-joinder of necessary parties and also argued his case by making oral submission and prayed for allowing his Appeal.

The Respondent also filed written argument stating their case as stated in the W.O. Ld. Lawyer further argued that after accepting the GTC and allotment letter, the Appellant cannot dispute the revised rate and is now estopped from challenging the same and also cannot challenge the matter of delay in commencement of the project and his conduct is hit by doctrine of Approbate and Reprobate and doctrine of estoppel, waiver and acquiescence, he further argued that the complaint before the WERERA Authority was liable to be rejected as it was filed in the 2023 i.e. after 5 years of the dismissal order by Ld. Consumer Court on 28/06/2019. He further argued that notification of the Housing Board regarding revised rate cannot be questioned as the project of the Respondent was initiated pursuant to the issuance of the said notification.

In support of his claim Ld. Lawyer for the Respondent referred several rulings cited in (1965)2 SCR547, (1970) 1 SCC 613, order of National Consumer Redressal Commission dated 29/07/2097 in original petition no. 238 of 1993 regarding price determine by the Board, 2017 SCC on line CAL 762 (2005)7 SCC 605, order of Consumer Court dated 09/04/2018 in CC/156/2018, (2011)10 SCC 420, (2009)14 SCC 253, (2022)2 SCC 573: 2021 SCC on line SC1132, (1993)3 SCC 114, 2003 SUPP (4) SCR 543 dated 09/10/2003, 1990 Krishena Kumar and another etc. Vs. Union of India and others on 13/07/1990.

DECISION WITH REASONS

The issue number 1, 2, 3 are taken up together for the sake of convenience.

On perusal of record it reveals that the Appeal is not barred by Law of Limitation as it is filed within prescribed 60 days (on 26/05/2023) from the date of impugned order dated 06/04/2023.

Now, let us take the issue of non-joinder of parties. It is settled Principle of Law that a necessary party is one without whom no order can be made effectively and a proper party is one in whose absence no effective order can be made but whose presence is necessary for complete and final decision on the question. Section 99 of CPC provides that no decree shall be reversed or substantially varied, nor shall any case be remanded in Appeal on account of any mis-joinder or non-joinder of the parties or causes of action or any error, defect or irregularity in any proceedings in the suit not affecting the merits of the case. It is needless to say that as per RERA Act, this bench is not bound to follow the provisions of the CPC in strict sense but is to follow the Principle of Natural Justice. In this case all the matters relating to the marketing etc. of the project was being conducted by the Respondent Company. So mere absence of Housing Board will not restrict this bench to adjudicate the matter in dispute and accordingly it cannot be said that suit is bad for non-joinder of necessary party.

Regarding issue No. 3 i.e. delay in handing over the subject flat; it is not the case of the Appellant that he suffered from delay in handing over the flat to him. In this matter we may take note of the letter dated 10/08/2012 of the Respondent Company informing the Appellant about cause of delay and vide letter dated 10/08/2012 Appellant confirmed the Respondent that he has decided to go ahead with his allotment in the project and wait for its completion. Under these circumstances, at this stage Appellant cannot raise any question regarding delay of the project and as such this issue number 3 is disposed of in favour of the Respondent.

Now all the issues No. 4, 5, 6 are taken up together for consideration as these are inter related with one another.

On careful consideration of material documents in record it reveals that there is no dispute regarding booking of subject flat by the Appellant at the price of Rs. 11,40,000/- by signing the application (Sl. No. 3940) on 16/02/2011 by depositing booking amount of Rs. 50,000/- accepting the terms and conditions (GTC) annexed with application form. It is also not disputed that Respondent issued provisional allotment letter dated 27/02/2012 informing that Appellant was selected for allotment of flat No 3C - MAZE - 2 in the lottery held on 20/07/2011. There is also no dispute that vide letter dated 10/08/2012 Respondent informed the Appellant that due to force majeure the starting of the project is being delayed and vide letter dated 10/08/2012 Appellant informed the Respondent that he decided to go ahead of the project and wait for its completion. There is also no dispute that vide letter dated 22/06/2016, Respondent informed the Appellant that due to notification No. 738 - H1/1AM - 2/2007 (Pt) dated 17/08/2015 (w.e.f. 17/08/2015), the sell price of the subject flat will be calculated in terms of the said notification and gave Appellant 3 weeks time to confirm the Respondent about acceptance of changed price and if Appellant declined to accept the changed price and opt for getting refund of deposited money, in that case Respondent will refund the entire deposited money with interest to Appellant. It further reveals from the letter dated 07/07/2016 issued by Appellant in reply of the letter dated 22/06/2016 of Respondent that he (Appellant) accepts the same (revised price), if it is applicable to him and he will refer the same to his legal advisor, it further reveals from the letter dated 19/07/2016 of Respondent that Appellant was asked to inform the Respondent within 15 days whether he is willing to accept the changed price or disagree and in reply of the letter dated 19/07/2016, Appellant informed the Respondent vide letter dated 25/07/2016 that he accepts each and every terms and conditions.

There is also no dispute that Respondent issued a letter dated 23/11/2017 along with payment schedule of Rs. 22,79,806.00 + other charges asking the Appellant to pay the same along with duly signed allotment letter in failure of which allotment of Appellant will liable to be cancelled.

There is also no dispute that Appellant deposited the duly signed allotment letter along with cheque of Rs. 4,30,589/- in the office of Respondent.

Now, it is the case of the Appellant that he received the allotment letter dated 23/11/2017 (with revised rate) on 21/12/2017 for acceptance of the same by 22/12/2017 and he had only one day left in his hand and for this reason he had to accept the allotment letter dated 23/11/2017 as he had no other alternative and non-receipt would have resulted the O.P. to refund the application money and cancel the allotted flat and deduction of other charges.

Now let us consider the contention of the Appellant.

Though it is claimed that he received the letter dated 23/11/2017 on 21/12/2017, nothing is filed to prove the same. It is settled Principle of Law that the Party who asserts any fact must prove the same.

Now if we consider the material documents on record, we find that firstly on 12/06/2016 Respondent informed the Appellant regarding enhancement of price of subject flat due to Government Notification dated 17/08/2015 and asked the Appellant to inform his willingness within 3 weeks, whether he is willing to proceed and accept the revised rate and vide reply letter dated 07/07/2016, Appellant informed the Respondent that he accepts the same if it is applicable to him and again vide letter dated 19/07/2016 Respondent asked the Appellant to confirm his willingness or unwillingness regarding changed price by 15 days and vide reply letter dated 25/07/2016 Appellant confirmed the Respondent that he accepts each and every terms and conditions and subsequently Appellant personally rushed to the office of Respondent and deposited the signed allotment letter dated 23/11/2017 along with cheque of Rs. 4,30,589/-.

In such circumstances, there is no room for Appellant to claim that he did not receive sufficient time to accept the revised rate and he had no other alternative but to accept the same.

Now let us see the claim of Appellant regarding applicability in the subject Notification dated 17/08/2015 of Housing Department, Govt. of West Bengal to this project.

It reveals from the GTC annexed with application form of booking which was submitted by the Appellant to the Respondent duly signed by him, states that (in item no.42.5), "If due to such change in specification total price increases, the allottee shall be bound to pay such increase on demand by Company". More over it is in the GTC (general terms and condition) that the date of starting this project will be from the date of sanction of plan or submitting duly signed allotment letter, whichever is later.

Letter dated 26/05/2017 issued by Rajarhat Panchayat Samity proves that approval of B+G+12 building plan has been made by the Panchayat Samity on the date of 26/05/2017 and the subject Notification of the Housing Department came into effect on 17/08/2015. So it is clear that construction of the project was started (due to force majeure) after the issuance of the subject Notification and accordingly it can safely be said that the subject Notification issued by Housing Department, Govt. of West Bengal is applicable to the subject project and it is settled Principle of Law that the Tribunal had nothing to do about the fixation of revised of price of project and in this respect we may take note observation of the National Consumer of the Disputes Redressal Commission order dated 29/05/1997 passed in the case of National Consumers Awareness Group (Regd.) Vs. Housing Commissioner, Punjab Housing Development Board that "the price is determined by the Board in accordance with the procedure evolved by it and there is no statutory control over the fixation of the price and same cannot, therefore, be interfered with".

It is the claim of the Appellant vide his letter dated 07/07/2016, 26/12/2017 that he accepts the revised rate if it is applicable to him and project and when it is proved that the revised rate vide Govt. Notification dated 17/08/2015 is applicable to this project then it cuts the root of claim of Appellant that he did not accept the revised rate.

- a) Where the obligation under a contract are fully performed and discharge of contract by performance is acknowledged by a full and final discharge voucher / receipt, nothing survives in regard to such discharged contracts.
- b) Where the parties to the contract by mutual agreement accept the performance of altered modified and substituted obligation and

confirmed in writing the discharge of contract by performance of the altered, modified or substituted obligation.

c) Where the parties to a contract by mutual agreement absolve each other from performance of their respective obligation..... and confirmed that there are no outstanding claim or disputes".

It is further observed in Para 30 (in R.L. Kalathia & Co. Vs. State of Gujarat) it is held that in case of final settlement has been reached amicably between the parties even by making certain adjustment and without any misrepresentation or fraud or coercion, then, the acceptance of money as full and final settlement it is not open to either of the parties to lay any claim / demand against other party. In this instant case nothing has been proved as regard practice of any fraud by the Respondent and in view of discussion made above, it can safely be said, by performance and conduct of the Appellant and Respondent, that final settlement has been reached between the parties by making certain adjustment without any misrepresentation and as such it is not open to the Appellant to lay any further demand against the Respondent. It is observed in Para 32 in the said judgement of Hon'ble Court that the transaction stood concluded between the parties not on account of an unintentional error but after the extensive and exhaustive bilateral deliberation with a clear intention to bring about a quietus to the dispute and this negotiation, therefore are self explanatory steps of the intent and conduct of the parties to end the dispute and not to carry it further. In this instant case also after extensive and exhaustive bilateral deliberations with clear intention, parties came to the conclusion regarding revised rate and as such this

negotiation are self explanatory steps of the intent and conduct of the parties to end the dispute and not to carry it further.

Hon'ble Supreme Court observed in (2011) 10 SCC 420 in Para 33 relying on the Judgement of R.N. Gosain Vs. Yashpat Dhir, (1992 4 SCC 683) that "Law does not permit a person to both approbate and reprobate. This liberty is based on the doctrine of election which postulates that no party can accept and reject the same instrument and that a person cannot say that any one time that a transaction is valid and thereby obtain some advantage, to which he could only be entitled on the footing that it is valid, and then turn around and say it is a void for the purpose of securing some other advantage". It is further observed in Para 34 "that a party cannot be permitted to 'blow hot and cold', 'fast and loose' or 'approbate and reprobate', where one knowingly accept the benefit of a contract or conveyance or an order, is estopped to deny validity or binding effect on him on such contract or conveyance or order. This rule is applied to do equality, further ; it must not be applied in a manner as to violate the principles of right and good conscience.

In this instant case also law does not permit the Appellant to accept the advantage, like allotment of flat, on the other hand raising dispute regarding revised rate and applicability of Govt. Notification and in the facts and circumstances of this case, by performance, conduct, accepted the offer of Respondent regarding price adjustment for allotment of the flat and accordingly the dispute comes to an end and thereafter the Appellant can not take a complete somersault and agitate the issue that the offer (of revised rate) made by the Respondent had not been accepted by him.

In this instant case also, fully knowing the general terms and condition (GTC) annexed with application (booking) form Appellant booked the flat and in reply of offer (of refund of booking amount with interest) of Respondent, Appellant confirmed the Respondent for proceeding with the project till completion and confirmed the revised rate and subsequently acted upon by making payment at revised rate and in spite of judgement, on 28/06/2019 of Ld. Consumer Court that revised rate is applicable to him but could not pass effective judgement due to lack of pecuniary jurisdiction and Appellant did not file Appeal / case before the proper forum against this judgement of Ld. Consumer Court and waited till 2023 and thereafter filed this complaint before the West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority in 2023 and as such Acquiescence came into play. When Acquiescence take place it pre supposes knowledge against a particular act and from the knowledge comes passive acceptance, therefore, instead of taking any action against alleged refusal to perform the original contract (i.e. price of flat at Rs. 11,40,000/-), despite adequate knowledge of its terms and instead being allowed to continue by consciously ignoring it and thereafter proceeding further, Acquiescence does take place as a consequence, it reintroduces a new implied agreement between the parties and in such situation, it is not open to the party @ Appellant that acquiesced itself to insist upon the compliance of the original terms @ for giving flat at old price of Rs. 11, 40,000/- as per original terms at the time of booking 19/02/2012 (SCC on line Web addition, (c) 2023 EBC Publishing Private Limited page 2, July 19, 2023).

It was the argument of the Appellant himself that the agreement was one sided agreement and as such it is not applicable to him. In this regard we may take note of the observation of Hon'ble Supreme Court that **"Term of a contract will not be final and binding if it is shown that the flat purchaser had no option but to sign of the dotted line, on a contract framed by the builder**" but this Principle is not applicable in this case because the Appellant himself got several opportunities and options to confirm or reject the terms and conditions as well as of the new offer of Respondent but without rejecting the same he consciously confirmed to proceed with the project at revised rate.

Thus, regard being had to the facts and circumstances of this case and material documents on record it is held that the Appellant is not entitled to get any relief as prayed for and the issue No. 4, 5 are disposed of accordingly. The ruling referred by Ld. Lawyer for the Respondent stated in (1969) 1 SCC 613, 2017 SCC on line CAL 762, (2005) 7 SCC 605 (1965) 2 SCR 547, (1993) 3 SCC 114 2003 SUPP (4) SCR 543, 1990 ASIR 782 are not applicable in this case as the facts of these rulings are different from this instant case.

Regarding issue No. 6, the impugned judgement passed by the WBRERA Authority is sustainable in law with some modification.

Hence it is,

ORDERED

That the instant Appeal being No. (**REAT/APPEAL No. – 01/2023**) is dismissed on contest but without cost, considering the peculiar nature of this case. **The impugned order No. 2 dated 06/04/2023 passed by West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority in wbrera.com (physical) 000038 is hereby confirmed with some modification** that Appellant Shri Motilal Jhalani is hereby given a liberty to confirm the Respondent M/s Bengal Shrachi Housing Development Ltd. within 15 days of this order or receipt of authenticated copy of this order, whichever is earlier, whether he (Appellant) is ready or willing to purchase the subject flat at revised rate as per payment schedule given by the Respondent vide its letter dated 23/11/2017 and if Appellant confirmed the Respondent within the prescribed time limit as stated above that he is agree to pay the revised rate and also deposits the balance money to the Respondent Company within further 1 month of his confirmation, in that case, Respondent Company will hand over the possession of the subject flat to the Appellant within 1 month of payment of price of subject flat as per payment schedule dated 23/11/2017 after complying all the legal formalities regarding handover of subject flat in favour of the Appellant.

It is further ordered, that if Appellant Shri Motilal Jhalani fails to inform and confirm the Respondent Company regarding acceptance of subject flat at revised rate within prescribed time limit as stated above, in that case Respondent Company will refund the entire money including booking amount (-GST amount if deposited) deposited by Appellant with interest at the rate of SBI prime lending rate + 2% from the dated of deposit of the amount till the date of refund of money to the Appellant within 30 days of the date of this Judgement.

Failure on the part of either party regarding compliance of this judgement, party concerned will be at liberty to file execution case before the West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority for implementation of this Judgement. Let the record (which was called for) of West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority along with a copy of this Judgement be sent to the West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority for information and necessary action.

Let the authenticated copy of this Judgement be handedover to the Appellant and Respondent free of cost at once and also send the copy of the Judgement to the West Bengal Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Secretary incharge, West Bengal Real Estate Appellate Tribunal and all concerned as usual. Let a further copy of Judgment be sent by post to the Housing Department, Govt. of West Bengal for information.

Dictated

Shri Gour Sundar Banerjee Judicial Member West Bengal Real Estate Appellate Tribunal Shri Subrat Mukherjee Technical/Administrative Member West Bengal Real Estate Appellate Tribunal