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* **IN THE HIGH COURT OF DELHI AT NEW DELHI**

+ CS(COMM) 514/2025 with I.A. 13419/2025, I.A. 13420/2025, I.A. 13421/2025, I.A. 13422/2025, I.A. 13423/2025, I.A. 13424/2025 & I.A. 13425/2025

ANKUR WARIKOO & ANR.

.....Plaintiffs

Through: Ms. Swathi Sukumar, Senior Advocate with Mr. Rishabh Sharma, Mr. Abhishek Shivpuri, Mr. Rajdeep, Mr. Ritik, Mr. Rishabh and Mr. Mayank Bhargava, Advocates.

versus

JOHN DOE & ORS.

.....Defendants

Through: None.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE AMIT BANSAL

ORDER

% **26.05.2025**

I.A. 13420/2025 (u/s 12A of the Commercial Courts Act, 2015)

1. As the present suit contemplates urgent interim relief, in light of the judgment of the Supreme Court in *Yamini Manohar v. T.K.D. Krithi*, 2023 SCC Online SC 1382, exemption from the requirement of pre-institution mediation is granted.

2. The application stands disposed of.

I.A. 13421/2025 (u/s 149 of the CPC)

3. Counsel appearing on behalf of the plaintiffs submits that the requisite court fees shall be paid within two weeks.

4. The aforesaid statement of counsel for the plaintiffs is taken on



record.

5. The application is disposed of.

I.A. 13422/2025 (u/O-XI Rule 1(4) of the CPC)

6. The present application has been filed on behalf of the plaintiffs seeking leave to file additional documents under the Commercial Courts Act, 2015.

7. The plaintiffs are permitted to file additional documents in accordance with the provisions of the Commercial Courts Act, 2015 and the Delhi High Court (Original Side) Rules, 2018 within thirty (30) days.

8. Accordingly, the application is disposed of.

I.A. 13423/2025 (seeking exemption from effecting advance service of the plaint paperbook upon the defendant no.1)

9. The plaintiff seeks urgent interim relief against the defendant no.1 (John Doe) who have published and circulated fabricated/ deep fake content and associated fraudulent schemes on social media platforms.

10. Therefore, in the peculiar facts and circumstances of this case, exemption from effecting advance service of the plaint paperbook upon the defendant no.1 is granted.

11. The application stands disposed of.

I.A. 13424/2025 (seeking exemption from filing Legal Proceeding Certificates)

12. This application is filed on behalf of the plaintiffs seeking exemption from filing the legal proceeding certificates of the registered trade marks of the plaintiff no.2.

13. For the reasons stated in this application, the plaintiffs are exempted from filing the legal proceeding certificates at this stage.

14. The application stands disposed of.



I.A. 13425/2025 (seeking exemption from filing legible/ typed/ clear copies of documents, etc.)

15. Allowed, subject to the plaintiffs filing legible/ typed/ clear copies of documents within four (4) weeks.

16. The application stands disposed of.

CS(COMM) 514/2025

17. Let the plaint be registered as a suit.

18. Issue summons.

19. Summons be issued to the defendants through all permissible modes. The summons shall state that the written statement(s) shall be filed by the defendants within thirty (30) days from the date of the receipt of summons. Along with the written statement(s), the defendants shall also file affidavit(s) of admission/ denial of the documents of the plaintiff, without which the written statement(s) shall not be taken on record.

20. Liberty is given to the plaintiffs to file replication(s), if any, within thirty (30) days from the receipt of the written statement(s). Along with the replication(s) filed by the plaintiffs, affidavit(s) of admission/ denial of the documents of the defendants be filed by the plaintiffs.

21. The parties shall file all original documents in support of their respective claims along with their respective pleadings. In case the parties are placing reliance on a document, which is not in their power and possession, its detail and source shall be mentioned in the list of reliance, which shall also be filed with the pleadings.

22. If any of the parties wish to seek inspection of any documents, the same shall be sought and given within the timelines.

23. List before the Joint Registrar on 4th August, 2025 for completion of



service and pleadings.

24. List before the Court on 8th October, 2025.

I.A. 13419/2025 (u/O XXXIX Rules 1 and 2 of CPC, 1908)

25. The present suit has been filed seeking permanent injunction restraining the defendants from infringement of personality and publicity rights and passing off, along with other ancillary reliefs.

26. The plaintiff no.1 is stated to be a well-known personal finance education influencer, entrepreneur, best-selling author and public speaker having a significant online presence and following across various social media platforms. He is renowned for his practical insights on entrepreneurship, career management, personal growth, productivity and personal finance.

27. In the year 2014, he was featured in Fortune India's '40 Under 40'. In 2019, the plaintiff no.1 began his journey as a content creator, particularly in the fields of personal finance, career management and personal growth. He currently has over 15.1 million followers across various social media platforms. In 2022, Forbes India recognised him for his content in the field of business and finance, placing him among India's top 100 Digital Stars. As on date, he has authored four books, for one of which, he was awarded Crossword Bestseller Award in 2024.

28. The plaintiff no.1 has regularly appeared in various interviews and talk shows, delivered lectures and featured in several news articles. He enjoys massive digital footprint which demonstrates his widespread public recognition and influence. Several domestic and international brands have partnered with the plaintiff no.1 to promote their products/ services on social media. Therefore, it is submitted that social media users see the plaintiff



no.1 in the content posted not just from his own profile but also through other profiles/ accounts which post with his authorisation.

29. It is submitted that the plaintiff no.1 is a celebrity in his own right and has valid and enforceable personality rights. The plaintiff no.1's name, image, voice, likeness, and overall persona are exclusively associated with him and his own business activities.

30. The plaintiff no.2 (M/s Zaan WebVeda Private Limited) was founded by the plaintiff no.1 in 2020. Under the mark 'WebVeda by Ankur Warikoo', on its online platform, the plaintiff no.2 provides practical courses for work and life. The plaintiff no.2 relies heavily on the brand value of the plaintiff no.1. The plaintiff no.2 has also obtained registration for the mark 'Warikoo' in classes 35 and 41 in India, the details of which are given below. Therefore, any unauthorized use of the mark 'Warikoo' amounts to infringement thereof.

S. No.	Mark	Owner	Class/ Registration No.	Validity Date
1.	Warikoo (word)	Plaintiff No. 2	41/ 5374189	17.03.2022
2.	Warikoo (word)	Plaintiff No. 2	35/ 5374190	17.03.2022

31. The plaintiff no.2's website prominently displays the registered mark 'Warikoo' to assert its commitment to provide high-quality services and accessibility. In the year 2023-24 and 2024-25, the plaintiff no.2 had a total revenue of Rs. 15,46,87,896/- and Rs. 13,71,01,241/- respectively. By virtue of continuous and uninterrupted use, widespread promotion and exceptional services, the marks 'WebVeda by Ankur Warikoo' and 'Warikoo' have acquired formidable goodwill and reputation along with significant



consumer recognition and knowledge. The members of public and trade recognize the said marks and associate them solely with the plaintiffs.

32. The defendant no.1/ John Doe(s) are unidentifiable third-parties, who create, publish and make available the infringing content in the form of deep fakes featuring the plaintiff no.1 giving investment advice and asking he viewers to join a WhatsApp group for more such tips on stocks that would skyrocket in the upcoming days.

33. The defendant no.2 owns, manages and controls social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp where such deep fakes are widely circulating. The defendants no.3 and 4 are Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Ministry of Electronic and Information Technology (Meity) respectively and they have been arrayed for the limited purpose of ensuring compliance with takedown orders and intermediary obligations under law.

34. The deep fakes are designed to trap innocent investors and unsuspecting followers into joining suspicious WhatsApp groups, wherein the participants are asked to make risky trades and investments by putting money into unknown and suspicious digital applications/ accounts. Often, after such participants put in their money, the account where the money is deposited, is frozen and they are not permitted to withdraw the money.

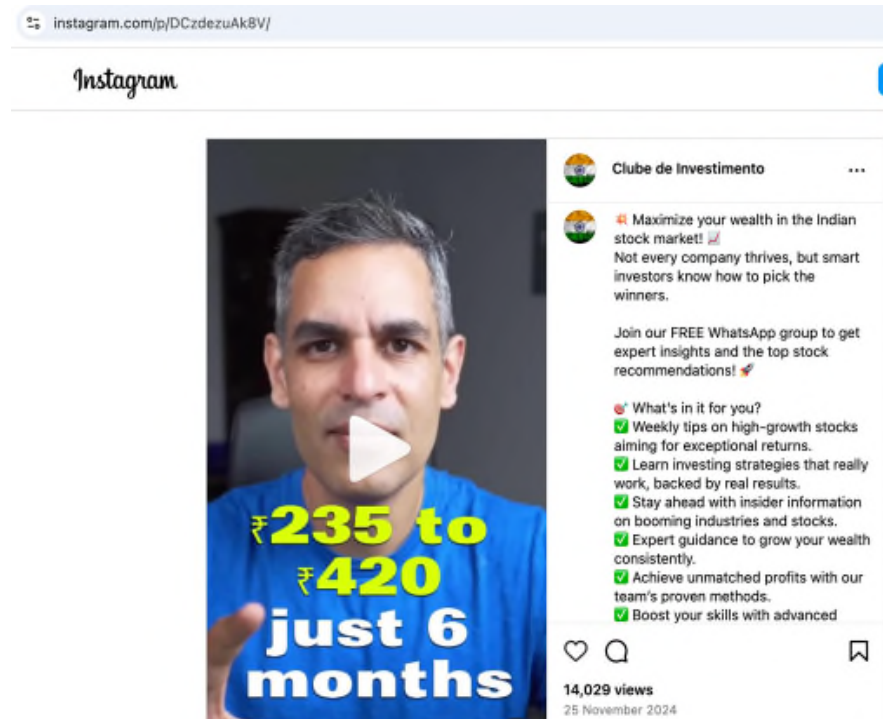
35. It is the Plaintiffs' case that the Deep Fakes started surfacing sometime around August-September 2024.

36. As and when any unauthorised image, video or any deep fake content comes to the attention of the plaintiffs, they initiate action by flagging it on the BRP tool of the defendant no.2. However, many such deep fakes continue to circulate and have not been taken down effectively and



efficaciously by the defendant no.2. There have also been instances where the same deep fake content has been published by two different accounts, in which case after the plaintiffs would flag/ report both such deep fakes, the defendant no.2 would take down one and leave the other without providing any justification.

37. In the deep fakes, the plaintiff no.1 has been falsely shown to recommend to his audience to join WhatsApp groups for stock tips. Illustrative content in the deep fakes, along with the audio therein, is reproduced below:



“Attention, investors your big opportunity is here, six months ago, we recommended NTPC stock at ₹235 and today it sold to ₹420. If you had invested ₹1,00,000, you’d now have ₹180,000 in your pocket today, we’re about to we’re reveal another skyrocketing stock in our free WhatsApp group. One that could bring you incredible returns. Don’t miss out. Join our free WhatsApp group now to get this exclusive stock tip and maximise your profits.”

38. Neither the plaintiff no.1 has ever recorded any such video and made



such claims/ statements nor has he ever endorsed any such WhatsApp groups for stock/ investment tips. In the deep fakes, likeness, image and name etc. (in different combination) of the plaintiff no.1 have been misused by the defendant no.1 to deceive the public at large.

39. The infringing actions, if permitted to continue, would result in immense financial and reputational loss to the plaintiff no.1 and disturb his standing as a leading personal finance educator in the digital space. The infringing actions would also have serious consequences for innocent and unsuspecting investors. A table consisting of some of the illustrative infringing links is provided below:

S.No.	Page Name	Web Link
1.	Pro Investors Hub	https://www.instagram.com/p/DJCD5D2APfi/ (Published on 29.04.2025, Status: Active)
2.	Pro Investors Hub	https://www.instagram.com/p/DJIzeBjg_pb/ (Published on 02.05.2025, Status: Active)
3.	Pro Investors Hub	https://www.instagram.com/p/DJCGLT4s-DK/ (Published on 29.04.2025, Status: Active)
4.	Ryan Yerger Martinez	https://www.instagram.com/p/DJCN8lSsvBp/ (Published on 29.04.2025, Status: Active)
5.	Stock Picks Daily	https://www.instagram.com/p/DI8v4_psFAk/ (Published on 27.04.2025, Status: Active)
6.	Ryan Yerger Martinez	https://www.instagram.com/p/DI3GbHJA_fF/ (Published on 25.04.2025, Status: Active)
7.	Cameron Hegmann	https://www.instagram.com/p/DHIguElA2c_/ (Published on 13.03.2025, Status: Active)
8.	Pro Investors Hub	https://www.instagram.com/p/DGgEz1ggUrf/ (Published on 25.02.2025, Status: Active)
9.	Pro Investors	https://www.instagram.com/p/DGIZDgTAGMk/ (Published on 16.02.2025, Status: Active)



	Hub	Active)
10.	Rsads	https://www.instagram.com/p/DDeAL2sAgZu/?utm (Published on 12.12.2024, Status: Active)
11.	Clube De Investimento	https://www.instagram.com/p/DCzdezuAk8V/ (Published on 25.11.2024, Status: Active)

40. Upon discovering the deep fakes, the plaintiff no.1 promptly reported on the BRP portal of the defendant no.2 (for the deep fakes between 19th February, 2025 and 28th April, 2025).

41. When reporting on BRP portal did not yield results, the plaintiff no.1 made a formal complaint to the Cyber Crime Cell on 7th December, 2024. In the complaint, the plaintiff no.1 reported against 2 URLs on the defendant no.2's platform (Instagram). The 2 URLs were:

- a. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCrNN1mgW9t/> (video) (published on 22nd November, 2024, taken down only after 4th May, 2025, gained almost 66,000 views)
- b. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DDeAL2sAgZu/?utm> (image) (continues to be active)

42. The plaintiff no.1 reported that these accounts were running fake AI videos with his face and a fake voice luring people to join a WhatsApp investing group, created to scam people. However, the complaint was closed on 16th April, 2025 without resolution, or providing any reasons.

43. The plaintiff no.1, while complained to the Grievance Officer of the defendant no.2 on 16th December, 2024, also gave an illustrative list of URLs in respect of which the defendant no.2 failed to take any action. The cited URLs were:

- a. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCrNN1mgW9t/> (published on 22nd



November, 2024) (active at least till 4th May, 2025; now taken down)

b. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCya6DBMHY> (now taken down)

c. <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCzdezuAk8V/> (Still active)

44. Pertinently, all the aforesaid three links had the identical deep fake video. Yet <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCzdezuAk8V/> remains active till date. When Grievance Officer failed to take down the infringing content, the plaintiff no.1 filed an appeal with the Grievance Appellate Committee ('GAC') on 25th March, 2025. He provided the same infringing URLs, including <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCzdezuAk8V/>, to the Grievance Appellate Committee that were shared with the Grievance Officer. Strangely, *vide* Order dated 21st April, 2025, the Grievance Appellate Committee accepted the defendant no.2's representation that appeal was premature as it did not pertain to a specific decision by the Grievance Officer. Accordingly, the plaintiff no.1 was asked to go back to the defendant no.2 with regard to the deep fakes.

45. On the same day, *i.e.* on 21st April, 2025, the plaintiff no.1 refiled the complaint regarding the URL <https://www.instagram.com/p/DCzdezuAk8V/> with the defendant no.2 on the link shared in the Grievance Appellate Committee's order. While the plaintiff no.1 received the acknowledgment email with complaint no. 1499075847729117 from the defendant no.2, the infringing link remains active.

46. Similarly, with respect to the links reported on 6th May, 2025, including <https://www.instagram.com/p/DJCD5D2APfi/>, <https://www.instagram.com/p/DJCGLT4s-DK/> and <https://www.instagram.com/p/DJCN8lSsvBp/>, the plaintiff no.1 received the

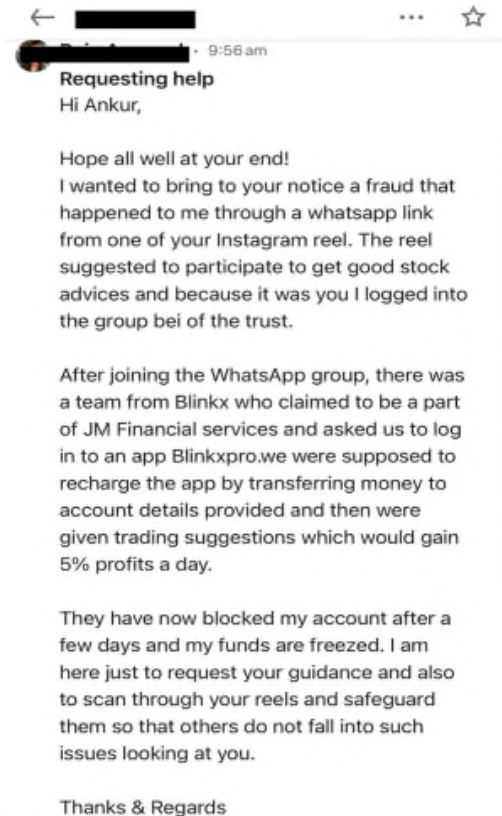


acknowledgment email with complaint no. 548746564955138 from the defendant no. 2. Yet, the aforesaid links remain active and are under review.

47. As a result of the aforesaid, the plaintiffs and the innocent unwary investors continue to suffer.

48. The possibility of harm is aggravated by the fact that the plaintiff no.1 is known for his content in the field of personal finance education which pertains to (i) how to budget for expenses, (ii) how to plan for emergencies and (iii) how to invest with a long-term horizon, etc. It is submitted that the plaintiff no.1 does not provide buy-sell tips in his content. However, given the broad common theme in the content posted by the plaintiff no.1 and in the deep fakes, unwary investors are far more likely to falsely believe that the plaintiff no.1 is the creator of the content in the deep fakes. Accordingly, continued circulation and/ or publication of the false and misleading posts featuring the plaintiff no.1 and depicting the plaintiff no.2's marks will have serious consequences not just for the plaintiffs but also for the public at large.

49. It is submitted that there are many innocent investors who have already lost their money believing that it was the plaintiff no.1 in the deep fakes. One such message received by the plaintiff no.1 on 21st April, 2025 is given below:



50. The business operations and revenue streams of the plaintiff no.2, which is intrinsically linked to the personal brand and reputation of the plaintiff no.1, has suffered a direct and significant adverse impact following the widespread circulation of the aforementioned malicious deep fake content featuring the plaintiff no.1.

51. Based on the averments made in the plaint and submissions made on behalf of the plaintiffs, it is evident that the defendant no.1 is circulating deep fake contents unauthorizedly using the name/ mark, face, voice, etc. of the plaintiff no.1.

52. In view of the above, a *prima facie* case is made out in favour of the plaintiffs and against the defendant no.1. Balance of convenience is also in favour of the plaintiffs and against the defendant no.1. Irreparable loss, harm



and injury would be caused to the plaintiffs in the defendant no.1 are allowed to continue publishing/ circulating the aforesaid deep fake contents.

53. None appears on behalf of the defendant no.2 despite advance service.

54. Issue Notice.

55. Notice be issued to the defendants through all permissible modes, including e-mail.

56. Reply(ies) be filed within four (4) weeks.

57. Rejoinder(s) thereto, if any, be filed within two (2) weeks thereafter.

58. Consequently, till the next date of hearing, the following directions are issued:

- a. The defendant no.1/ John Doe(s), their associates, partners, directors, principal officers, family members, servants, agents, or anyone acting for and on their behalf, during the pendency of the suit, are restrained from directly or indirectly misusing, misappropriating or exploiting the name, likeness, image, photos, videos, voice or any other aspects of the plaintiff no.1's persona, which are solely and exclusively associated and identified with him, for any illegal commercial and/ or personal gain, in any manner whatsoever including through the use of Artificial Intelligence, Deep Fake technology or any other technology, in any medium, format or platform;
- b. The defendant no.1/ John Doe(s), their associates, partners, directors, principal officers, family members, servants, agents, or anyone acting for and on their behalf, during the pendency of the suit, are restrained from misusing, misappropriating and exploiting the name, likeness, images, photos, videos and/ or infringing any rights of the plaintiff no.2, including that of the registered mark 'Warikoo' and from



claiming any association, connection and/ or endorsement with the plaintiffs;

- c. The defendants no.2 or any person acting for or on their behalf, during the pendency of the suit, are directed to forthwith remove/ disable access to the specific pages, URLs, profiles, accounts, videos, photos, text, content, social media groups, and channels as detailed in paragraph no.39 of this order (paragraph no.36 of the plaint) published on any platform owned, managed or controlled by them within 36 hours;
 - d. In case the plaintiffs, during the pendency of the present suit, discover any more false, fabricated and/ or deep fake content not originating from or associated with the plaintiffs, the plaintiffs shall be at liberty to approach the defendant no.2 requesting them to block/ take down, within 36 hours, any such post/ image/ video/ text/ or any other deep fake content, which is published on its platforms or utilizing its platforms. In case the defendant no.2 raises any doubt, the plaintiffs shall be at liberty to approach this Court for appropriate orders.
 - e. The defendants no.2 is directed to disclose on affidavit before this Court all available details including name, address, email address, contact details, organization and associations, URL, IP address, etc. associated with the page and deep fakes detailed in paragraph no.39 of this order (paragraph no.36 of the plaint) and of any other page and deep fake that may come into the plaintiff's knowledge in future.
59. Compliance of Order XXXIX Rule 3 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 be made within five (5) days.
60. List before the Joint Registrar on 4th August, 2025 for completion of



service and pleadings.

61. List before the Court on 8th October, 2025.

AMIT BANSAL, J

MAY 26, 2025

Vivek/-