

**BEFORE THE ADJUDICATING OFFICER
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA
(ADJUDICATION ORDER NO: Order/SBM/PP/2018-19/1580-1583)**

UNDER SECTION 15-I OF THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA ACT, 1992 READ WITH RULE 5 OF THE SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA (PROCEDURE FOR HOLDING INQUIRY AND IMPOSING PENALTIES BY ADJUDICATING OFFICER) RULES, 1995.

In respect of:

Noticee	PAN
Mr. Kirtikumar Rasiklal Shah	AKQPS8463F
Ms. Alakaben Kirtibhai Shah	CPAPS2335R
Mr. Karan Kirtibhai Shah	BQYPS0082D
Mr. Keval Kirtikumar Shah	DFNPS6796L

In the matter of

SMS Techsoft (India) Ltd.

FACTS OF THE CASE

1. Securities and Exchange Board of India (hereinafter referred to as '**SEBI**') observed that during the period February – March 2013, several Short Text Messages (**SMSs**) were sent to the investors, with predominantly buy recommendations that were made in the scrip of SMS Techsoft (India) Ltd (hereinafter referred to as '**STL**'/'**Company**'). In view of the SMSs mentioning buy recommendations in the scrip of STL, SEBI conducted an examination in the matter and based on the observations/findings contained therein, an interim order dated November 05, 2013 (followed by a corrigendum dated November 18, 2013) was passed against 38 persons/entities, including Mr. Kirtikumar Rasiklal Shah (hereinafter referred to as '**Noticee 1**'), Ms. Alakaben Kirtibhai Shah (hereinafter referred to as '**Noticee 2**'), Mr. Karan Kirtibhai Shah

(hereinafter referred to as '**Noticee 3**') and Mr. Keval Kirtikumar Shah (hereinafter referred to as '**Noticee 4**') wherein, the 38 persons/entities named in the interim order, were, *inter alia*, restrained from accessing the securities market and also prohibited from buying, selling or dealing in the securities market, either directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever, till further directions. Further, vide the interim order dated November 5, 2013, the 38 persons/entities, including Noticee 1, 2, 3 and 4 were directed to keep in an escrow account, jointly and severally, within 30 days of the date of interim order, an amount of Rs 6,00,11,512/- that they have earned as ill-gotten profit which they have realized as sale proceeds of the shares allotted to them in the preferential allotment made by STL on March 15, 2012.

2. Pursuant to the interim order, SEBI undertook an investigation in the matter of STL for the period March 13, 2013 to November 05, 2013 (hereinafter referred to as "**investigation period**"/"**relevant period**") and consequent to the completion of the investigation, enforcement proceedings were initiated by SEBI against the persons/entities mentioned in the aforementioned interim order and also against Noticee 1, Noticee 2, Noticee 3 and Noticee 4 (hereinafter collectively referred to as '**the Noticees**'). It was observed that the Noticees had collectively acquired 39,83,500 shares of STL on March 15, 2012, which resulted in their acquisition of shares of STL constituting 11.36% of the total share capital of the company. It is noted that these shares were acquired by the Noticees as a result of allotment of shares in the preferential allotment made by the company on March 15, 2012.
3. In this context, it was observed that while making the disclosures w.r.t the above transactions involving acquisition of 39,83,500 shares of STL, which were required under the provisions of Regulation 29(1) of the SEBI (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2011 (hereinafter referred to

as '**SAST Regulations**'), the Noticees had declared in their respective disclosure formats submitted to the stock exchange i.e. BSE that they were 'persons acting in concert' (**PACs**). Further, pursuant to investigations conducted by SEBI, the investigation report (IR) also mentioned the fact that Noticees were PACs w.r.t the above mentioned acquisition of 39,83,500 shares of STL. The Noticees also shared common address. Therefore, in the context of the present proceedings, the Noticees are also hereinafter referred to as PACs.

4. During the course of investigations, it was observed by SEBI that the Noticees have allegedly failed to make the necessary disclosures, which were required to be made by them under the provisions of Regulation 29(2) r/w Regulation 29(3) of the SAST Regulations w.r.t change in their shareholding in the company as a result of the sale of shares of the company by them during the relevant period.
5. The paid up share capital of the company, which is listed on the BSE was Rs 35,05,72,000 (represented by 35,05,72,000 shares of face value of Rs 1/- per share). It is alleged that the Noticees have failed to make the necessary disclosures to the Company and to the BSE, in terms of the aforementioned provisions of SAST Regulations w.r.t change in their shareholding in STL during the relevant period, within two working days of their transaction, which resulted in cumulative change in their shareholding in the company by more than 2% of the total share capital of the company. Therefore, it is alleged that Noticees have violated the provisions of Regulation 29(2) r/w Regulation 29(3) of the SAST Regulations. In view of the above reasons, adjudication proceedings have been initiated against the Noticees under the provisions of section 15A(b) of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992 (hereinafter referred to as '**SEBI Act**').

APPOINTMENT OF ADJUDICATING OFFICER

6. The undersigned was appointed as the Adjudicating Officer, vide order dated September 08, 2016 under Section 15-I of the SEBI Act read with Rule 3 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Procedure for Holding Inquiry and Imposing Penalties by Adjudicating Officer) Rules, 1995 (hereinafter referred to as '**Adjudication Rules**') to inquire into and adjudge under the provisions of section 15A(b) of the SEBI Act, the aforementioned alleged violation of the provisions of law by the Noticees.

SHOW CAUSE NOTICE, REPLY AND PERSONAL HEARING

7. Show Cause Notice ref. A&E/EAD-3/SBM/32493/2017 dated December 21, 2017 (hereinafter referred to as '**SCN**') was issued to the Noticees in terms of Rule 4 of the Adjudication Rules to show cause as to why an inquiry should not be initiated against the Noticees and penalty, if any, be not imposed on them for their alleged failure to make the necessary disclosures under the provisions of Regulations 29(2) r/w 29(3) of the SAST Regulations w.r.t their transactions in the scrip of STL during the relevant period.
8. The allegations made against the Noticees in the SCN are summarized as under:-
 - a. STL made a preferential allotment of 300,00,000 equity shares of Rs 10 each to 31 persons/entities out of which certain persons/entities acquired the shares along with their PACs. They have disclosed themselves as 'persons acting in concert' (hereinafter referred to as 'PACs') while filing/making the disclosures to the stock exchange under Regulation 29(1) of SEBI (SAST) Regulations, 2011.

Table I

Name of Entity	Name of PAC	No. of shares	% to total shareholding
Kirti R Shah	Alka K Shah, Karan K Shah, Keval K Shah	39,83,500	11.36%

- b. The persons/ entities belonging to some of the PAC groups have sold shares of STL due to which the combined shareholding of some entities (along with their PACs) have undergone change by more than 2% of the total share capital of the company. Such trades of the persons/ entities belonging to the PAC group for which SAST disclosures are required to be made are detailed out in Table II. Thus, the disclosures were required to be made by the Noticees (as PACs) under the provisions of Regulation 29(2) of SEBI (SAST) Regulations, 2011.

Table II - Details of transactions in STL by the persons/ entities belonging to the PAC Groups for which SAST disclosures are required to be made-

PAC Group 1: Opening balance (no. of shares held on March 12, 2013 (prior to expiry of lock-in period)					3,98,35,000	11.36%	
Sr. No.	Name of entity / PAC	Date of transaction	No. of shares transacted	Type of Transaction	Shareholding of PAC Group post transaction	% Shareholding of PAC Group post transaction	Disclosures made on
1	Karan K Shah	20/06/2013	15,00,000	On market sale	3,16,10,000	9.02%	-
2	Karan K Shah	23/09/2013	80,75,000	On market sale	1,99,10,000	5.68%	26/09/2013
3	Kirtikumar R Shah	21/10/2013	99,50,000	On market sale	99,60,000	2.84%	-

- c. It was therefore alleged in the SCN that the aforesaid violation, if established, would make the Noticees liable for monetary penalty under the provisions of section 15A (b) of the SEBI Act.

9. In response to the SCN, a letter dated January 30, 2018 was received from one Mr. Vishal Acharya, Advocate, who represented the Noticees. The Authorised Representative stated that Noticees were not aware of the alleged transactions that resulted in the contravention of the provisions of SAST Regulations, as aforesaid.
10. In the interest of natural justice and in order to conduct an inquiry in terms of Rule 4(3) of the Adjudication Rules, the Noticees were granted an opportunity of personal hearing on August 24, 2018 at SEBI, Western Regional Office, Ahmedabad. During the course of hearing, Noticees were represented by their Authorised Representative, Mr Vishal Acharya. Thereafter, the authorised representative made additional submissions in the matter on behalf of the Noticees vide letter dated September 04, 2018 wherein the Noticees, *inter alia*, mentioned the following:--
- a. Noticees are no way connected with the said act of sale transaction of shares of STL as the same was done by Ranka Group.
 - b. If the entities were knowingly involved in the said activity, they would have provided their own email IDs and mobile number which they possess.

CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES AND FINDINGS

11. I have carefully perused the submissions of the Noticees (both oral and written) in the said matter, the facts and circumstances of the case and the material on record.
12. Before dealing with the aforesaid charges in seriatim, the relevant legal provisions allegedly violated by the Noticees, which have been mentioned in the SCN are mentioned as under:-

SAST Regulations, 2011

Disclosure of acquisition and disposal.

29.(2) Any person, who together with persons acting in concert with him, holds shares or voting rights entitling them to five per cent or more of the shares or voting rights in a target company, shall disclose the number of shares or voting rights held and change in shareholding or voting rights, even if such change results in shareholding falling below five per cent, if there has been change in such holdings from the last disclosure made under sub-regulation (1) or under this sub-regulation; and such change exceeds two per cent of total shareholding or voting rights in the target company, in such form as may be specified.

(3) The disclosures required under sub-regulation (1) and sub-regulation (2) shall be made within two working days of the receipt of intimation of allotment of shares, or the acquisition of shares or voting rights in the target company to,—

- (a) every stock exchange where the shares of the target company are listed; and*
- (b) the target company at its registered office.*

13. The issue for examination in this case and the findings thereon are as follows:-

Whether the Noticees as PACs, have violated the provisions of Regulations 29(2) r/w 29(3) of the SAST Regulations, 2011 with regard to their transactions in the scrip of STL during the relevant period?

As already mentioned above, in the context of disclosure filings made by the Noticees to BSE under Regulation 29(1) of SAST Regulations w.r.t their acquisition of 39,83,500 shares of STL, the Noticees have declared in the respective disclosure formats that they were PACs. I observe that the Noticees, as PACs, have collectively acquired 39,83,500 shares of STL on March 15, 2012, which accounted for 11.36% of the total share capital of the company. I find that the Noticees were allotted these shares in the preferential allotment made by the company on March 15, 2012. As per the material made available, I note that Noticee 1 was allotted 9,95,000 shares of STL, Noticee 2 was allotted 9,96,000 shares, Noticee 3 was allotted 9,95,000 shares and Noticee 4 was allotted 9,97,500 shares of STL in the aforementioned preferential allotment

made by the company on March 15, 2012. Subsequently, the shares of STL were split in the ratio of 1:10 w.e.f November 1, 2012 whereby, 39,83,500 shares which were collectively held by the Noticees were also split into 3,98,35,000 shares.

14. Subsequently, after the expiry of the lock in period of these shares, the Noticees sold 2,99,25,000 shares of the company during the period May 13, 2013 to October 21, 2013 through market transactions. I note from the table mentioned below, details of which were also annexed along with the SCN issued to the Noticees that there were a total of 12 sale transactions that were executed by the Noticees during the period May 13, 2013 to October 21, 2013, which resulted in the total shareholding of the Noticees in STL decreasing from 11.36 % to 2.34 % as on October 21, 2013. The transaction details of the Noticees in the scrip of the company during the period May 13, 2013 to October 21, 2013 are mentioned in the following table:-

TRADE DATE	Name of Entity/person	Sell Quantity	Shareholding	% to total capital	Cumulative change in shareholding	Cumulative change in %
12/03/2013	Opening Balance		3,98,35,000	11.36 %		
13/05/2013	KEVAL KIRTIKUMAR SHAH	1500000	38335000	10.93 %	15,00,000	0.43%
14/05/2013	KEVAL KIRTIKUMAR SHAH	1500000	36835000	10.51 %	30,00,000	0.85%
15/05/2013	KEVAL KIRTIKUMAR SHAH	1500000	35335000	10.08 %	45,00,000	1.28%
16/05/2013	KEVAL KIRTIKUMAR SHAH	1000000	34335000	9.79 %	55,00,000	1.57%
07/06/2013	KARAN KIRTIBHAI SHAH	425000	33910000	9.67 %	59,25,000	1.69%

19/06/2013	KEVAL KIRTIKUMAR SHAH	800000	33110000	9.44 %	67,25,000	1.92%
20/06/2013	KARAN KIRTIBHAI SHAH	1500000	31610000	9.02 %	82,25,000	2.34%
15/07/2013	KEVAL KIRTIKUMAR SHAH	1500000	30110000	8.59 %	97,25,000	2.77%
02/08/2013	KEVAL KIRTIKUMAR SHAH	1000000	29110000	8.30 %	1,07,25,000	3.06%
18/09/2013	KEVAL KIRTIKUMAR SHAH	1175000	27935000	7.97 %	1,19,00,000	3.39%
23/09/2013	KARAN KIRTIBHAI SHAH	8075000	19910000	5.68 %	2,00,25,000	5.68%
21/10/2013	KIRTIKUMAR RASIKLAL SHAH	9950000	9960000	2.84 %	29975000	8.52%

15. In terms of Regulations 29(2) r/w 29(3) of the SAST Regulations, an acquirer along with PACs, who collectively holds more than 5% of the shareholding of the target company, when acquire or sell shares or voting rights in such target company, which results in the collective shareholding of the acquirer and PACs changing by more than 2% of the total shareholding in the company, have to make the necessary disclosures regarding such change in their aggregate shareholding and voting rights in such target company, to every stock exchange where the shares of the target company are listed and also to the target company, within 2 working days of such acquisition/sale of shares or voting rights. As can be seen from the above Table, the Noticees, as PACs, were collectively holding more than 5% shareholding in the company (i.e. 11.36%) as on March 12, 2013. Subsequently, they sold 82,25,000 shares of STL during May 13, 2013 to June 20, 2013, which resulted in their shareholding in STL decreasing by more than 2% (2.34%) as on June 20, 2013. Thus, the Noticees were under an obligation to make the necessary disclosures to both Company and BSE, in terms of Regulations 29(2) r/w 29(3) of SAST Regulations, within

two working days from June 20, 2013 i.e. the date when the transaction of the Noticees in STL resulted in cumulative change in their shareholding crossing the prescribed threshold limit of 2% of the total share capital of the company. It is on record that Noticees have failed to make the necessary disclosures under the SAST Regulations and the same is also evident from the disclosure details disseminated by the company, which is mentioned in the BSE website.

16. Further, the BSE, vide its email dated May 18, 2015 which was addressed to SEBI, also confirmed the fact that Noticees have not made the required disclosures in terms of the aforementioned provisions of SAST Regulations. It is noted that during the course of investigation, letters dated March 15, 2016 were sent to the Noticees seeking confirmation from them regarding the disclosures made under Regulation 29(2) of SAST Regulations. In this regard, I note that vide email dated March 21, 2016, the Authorised Representative on behalf of the Noticees also confirmed the fact that Noticees have not made the stipulated disclosures under the SAST Regulations.
17. The contention of Noticees that they did not make the disclosures as they were not aware of the transactions done in their account, the transactions were done by the Ranka group etc are baseless and without any merit. I find that the Noticees had made the relevant disclosures under Regulation 29(1) of SAST Regulations when their collective shareholding in the company had crossed the threshold limit of 5% pursuant to their acquisition of shares in the preferential allotment made by the company. Further, it is also observed that Noticees have made disclosures under Regulation 29(2) of the SAST Regulation w.r.t their sale of shares of STL during a later period i.e on September 2013. Thus, the contention of the Noticees that they were not aware of the transactions in his account, which took place during June 2013 and October 2013 clearly lacks merit and can only be seen as an excuse to escape liability from penal action for not complying with the mandatory statutory obligation. Therefore, in view of the

above observations, I am convinced that the Noticees have failed to make the necessary disclosures mandated under the provisions of Regulations 29(2) r/w 29(3) of SAST Regulations and therefore, I hold that Noticees have violated the provisions of the aforementioned Regulations.

18. In this context, the Hon'ble SAT in its Order dated September 30, 2014, in the matter of Akriti Global Traders Ltd Vs SEBI, had observed that “... *Obligation to make disclosures under the provisions contained in SAST Regulations, 2011 as also under PIT Regulations, 1992 would arise as soon as there is acquisition of shares by a person in excess of the limits prescribed under the respective regulations and it is immaterial as to how the shares are acquired. Therefore, irrespective of the fact as to whether the shares were purchased from open market or shares were received on account of amalgamation or by way of bonus shares, if, as a result of such acquisition/receipt, percentage of shares held by that person exceeds the limits prescribed under the respective regulations, then, it is mandatory to make disclosures under those regulations*”.

19. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the matter of Chairman, SEBI Vs Shriram Mutual Fund { { 2006}} 5 SCC 361) held that “ *In our considered opinion, penalty is attracted as soon as the contravention of the statutory obligation as contemplated by the Act and the Regulations is established and hence the intention of the parties committing such violation becomes wholly irrelevant*”

20. As the violation of the statutory obligation under Regulation 29(2) r/w Regulation 29(3) of SAST Regulations has been established, the Noticees are liable for monetary penalty under the provisions of section 15 A (b) of the SEBI Act, which reads as under :

Penalty for failure to furnish information, return etc

15 A -If any person, who is required under this Act or any rules or regulations made thereunder-

(a).....

(b) to file any return or furnish any information, books or other documents within the time specified thereof in the regulations, fails to file return or furnish the same within the time specified thereof in the regulations, he shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding five thousand rupees for every day during which such failure continues

(c).....

21. While determining the quantum of penalty under section 15A (b) of the SEBI Act, it is important to consider the factors stipulated in section 15J of the SEBI Act, which reads as under :

“15 J- Factors to be taken into account by the adjudicating officer

While adjudging the quantum of penalty under section 15-I, the adjudicating officer shall have due regard to the following factors, namely-

- a. the amount of disproportionate gain or unfair advantage, wherever quantifiable, made as a result of the default;*
- b. the amount of loss caused to an investor or group of investors as a result of the default;*
- c. the repetitive nature of the default”*

22. From the material available on record, the amount of disproportionate gain or unfair advantage to the Noticees or loss caused to the investors as a result of the default committed by the Noticees is not quantifiable. Although it may not be possible to ascertain the monetary loss to the investors on account of the default by the Noticees, the details of the shareholding of the Noticees and the timely disclosures thereof, were of significant importance from the point of view of the investors as that would have prompted them to buy or sell shares of the company. I find from the Investigation Report of SEBI that the Noticees, who were allotted substantial quantities of shares in the preferential allotment of STL, later on, sold the shares after the expiry of the lock in period of the shares and made illegal gains. The investigation report also mentioned that the Noticees along with other allottees in the preferential allotment, including the promoters

of STL, were involved in the manipulation of the preferential allotment of the company. In view of the seriousness of the matter, vide Final Order dated July 27, 2018, SEBI also restrained the persons/entities associated with the preferential allotment of the company, including the Noticees, from dealing/associating in the securities market, directly or indirectly, in any manner for a period of 10 years. The disclosure obligation prescribed under the SAST Regulations arose as a result of the significant quantities of shares of STL sold by the Noticees during the aforementioned period. The disclosure requirements mandated under the SAST Regulations are critical and important component of the legal regime governing substantial acquisition of shares and takeovers. In the absence of these timely disclosures, the investors will be deprived of the important information at the relevant point of time.

ORDER

23. After taking into consideration all the facts and circumstances of the case, material on record and the submissions of the Noticees, I, in exercise of the powers conferred upon me under Section 15-I of the SEBI Act read with Rule 5 of the Adjudication Rules, hereby impose total penalty of Rs 5,00,000/- (Rupees Five lakh only) on the Noticees viz. Kirtikumar Rasiklal Shah, Alkaben Kirtibhai Shah, Karan Kirtibhai Shah and Kewal Kirtikumar Shah under the provisions of section 15A(b) of the SEBI Act, 1992 for their violation of the provisions of Regulations 29(2) r/w 29(3) of the SAST Regulations. The Noticees shall be jointly and severally liable to pay the penalty.
24. The Noticees shall remit / pay the said amount of penalty within 45 days of the receipt of this order either by way of Demand Draft in favour of “SEBI - Penalties Remittable to Government of India”, payable at Mumbai, OR through e-payment facility into Bank Account , the details of which are given below-

Account No. for remittance of penalties levied by Adjudication Officer	
Bank Name	State Bank of India
Branch	Bandra-Kurla Complex
RTGS Code	SBIN0004380
Beneficiary Name	SEBI – Penalties Remittable To Government of India
Beneficiary A/c No	31465271959

25. The Noticees shall forward the said Demand Draft or the details/ confirmation of penalty so paid through e-payment (in the format given in the table below) to “The Division Chief, Enforcement Department (**EFD DRA-II**), Securities and Exchange Board of India, SEBI Bhavan, Plot No C-4A, ”G” Block, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai 400 051” .

1. Case Name:	
2. Name of the Payee:	
3. Date of payment:	
4. Amount Paid:	
5. Transaction No:	
6. Bank Details in which payment is made:	
7. Payment is made for: (like penalties /disgorgement/recovery/Settlement amount and legal charges along with order details)	

26. In terms of Rule 6 of the Adjudication Rules, copies of this order are sent to the Noticees viz. Mr. Kirtikumar Rasiklal Shah, Ms. Alakaben Kirtibhai Shah, Mr. Karan Kirtibhai Shah and Mr. Keval Kirtikumar Shah and also to the Securities and Exchange Board of India.

Place: Mumbai

Date: November 27 , 2018

SURESH B MENON

ADJUDICATING OFFICER