

**BEFORE THE ADJUDICATING OFFICER
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA
[ADJUDICATION ORDER NO. Order/JS/YK/2025-26/31787]**

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

**In respect of:
Rakesh Kumar Khetan HUF
(PAN: AALHR4375J)**

In the matter of dealing in Illiquid Stocks Options on BSE

BACKGORUND OF THE CASE

1. Securities and Exchange Board of India (hereinafter referred to as “**SEBI**”), observed large scale reversal of trades in the Illiquid Stock Options (hereinafter also referred to as “**ISO**”) at BSE Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as “**BSE**”) leading to creation of artificial volume. In view of the same, SEBI conducted an investigation into the trading activities of certain entities in ISO at BSE for the period starting from April 1, 2014 to September 30, 2015 (hereinafter referred to as “**IP**”).
2. Investigation by SEBI revealed that during the IP, a total of 2,91,744 trades comprising 81.41% of all the trades executed in stock options segment of BSE were trades involving reversal of buy and sell positions by the clients and counterparties in a contract. In these trades, entities reversed their buy or sell position in a contract with subsequent sell or buy position with the same counter party. These reversal trades were alleged to be non-genuine as they lacked basic trading rationale and allegedly lead to false or misleading appearance of trading leading to creation of artificial volume in those contracts. In view of the same, such reversal trades were alleged to be deceptive and manipulative in nature.

3. During the IP, 14,720 entities were found to have executed non-genuine trades in BSE's stock options segment. It was observed that Rakesh Kumar Khetan HUF (hereinafter referred to as the **"Noticee"**) was one of the entities who indulged in execution of reversal trades in stock options segment of BSE during the IP. The Noticee's trades were alleged to be non-genuine in nature which created false or misleading appearance of trading in terms of artificial volumes in stock options. Therefore, its trades were alleged to be manipulative and deceptive in nature. In view of the same, SEBI initiated adjudication proceedings against the Noticee for alleged violation of the provisions of regulations 3(a), (b), (c), (d), 4(1) and 4(2)(a) of SEBI (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) Regulations, 2003 (hereinafter referred to as **"PFUTP Regulations"**).

APPOINTMENT OF ADJUDICATING OFFICER

4. Pursuant to transfer to the cases from erstwhile Adjudicating Officer (hereinafter referred to as **"AO"**), the undersigned was appointed as AO in the matter vide communiqué dated April 04, 2025, under section 15-I of the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992 (hereinafter referred to as the **"SEBI Act"**) read with rule 3 of SEBI (Procedure for Holding Inquiry and Imposing Penalties) Rules, 1995 (hereinafter referred to as **"Rules"**), to inquiry into and adjudge under the provisions of section 15HA of the SEBI Act for the alleged violations by the Noticee.

SHOW CAUSE NOTICE, REPLY AND HEARING

5. A Show Cause Notice dated August 08, 2022 (hereinafter referred to as **"SCN"**) was served upon the Noticee under rule 4(1) of Rules to show cause as to why an inquiry should not be held and penalty, if any, should not be imposed upon it for the alleged violations of the provisions of regulations 3(a), (b), (c), (d), 4(1) and 4(2)(a) of the PFUTP Regulations.
6. It was alleged in the SCN that the Noticee was indulged in reversal and non-genuine trades and details of the trades including the trade dates, name of the

counterparties, time, price and volume, etc., were provided to the Noticee as Annexure to the SCN.

7. Vide Part B of above referred SCN, Noticee was informed that SEBI had introduced a Settlement Scheme, i.e., SEBI Settlement Scheme, 2022 (hereinafter referred to as "**Settlement Scheme 2022**") in terms of regulation 26 of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Settlement Proceedings) Regulations, 2018 (hereinafter referred to as "**Settlement Regulations**"). It was further informed that the Settlement Scheme, 2022 provided a one-time opportunity to the entities against whom proceedings had been initiated and appeals against the said proceedings are pending. The Settlement Scheme 2022 commenced on August 22, 2022 and closed on November 21, 2022.
8. Subsequently, a Post SCN Intimation (hereinafter referred to as "**PSI**") dated March 22, 2024 was issued to the Noticee, wherein it was informed that SEBI introduced another Settlement Scheme, i.e., SEBI Settlement Scheme, 2024 (hereinafter referred to as "**Settlement Scheme 2024**") in terms of regulation 26 of Settlement Regulations. It was informed to the Noticee that the Settlement Scheme 2024 provided an opportunity to the entities against whom proceedings were initiated and appeals against the said proceedings were pending. The applicable period of the scheme was March 11, 2024 to May 10, 2024. Later, the applicable period of the Settlement Scheme 2024 was extended to June 10, 2024 by SEBI.
9. The PSI dated March 22, 2024 was served upon Noticee through e-mail. The Authorized Representative (AR) of Noticee, Mr. Rakesh Kumar Khetan, while replying to the PSI dated March 22, 2024 submitted that he wants to understand the settlement proceedings. Accordingly, the erstwhile AO, vide e-mail dated March 22, 2024 provided the document titled "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the SEBI ISO Settlement Scheme, 2024" to the Noticee and also shared the designated e-mail ID and helpline contact number for queries relating to the Settlement Scheme.

10. Despite the receipt of PSI dated March 22, 2024 from an official SEBI e-mail address, the AR of Noticee sent another e-mail to SEBI on April 18, 2024, stating that he had received calls from someone informing him of a notice issued in the name of the Noticee (PAN: AALHR4375J). In the said e-mail, it was stated that since Noticee had no demat account under PAN: AALHR4375J, he believed that such calls were not genuine.

11. It was observed that the Noticee did not avail the SEBI Settlement Scheme, 2024, and consequently, adjudication proceedings against the Noticee were resumed. Pursuant to the appointment of the undersigned as AO, the Noticee was granted a fresh opportunity of hearing on July 23, 2025. In response, the AR of the Noticee, Mr. Rakesh Kumar Khetan, vide e-mail dated July 10, 2025, reiterated that no demat account exists in the name of Rakesh Kumar Khetan HUF. Subsequently, ARs of the Noticee, Mr. Shubham Khetan and Mr. M. B. Anirudh, appeared through video conferencing on July 23, 2025 and requested a copy of the SCN along with all annexures. The same was provided to the Noticee vide e-mail dated July 23, 2025 and an opportunity of hearing was granted on August 08, 2025. Upon request of the Noticee, the same was adjourned to September 02, 2025. On that date, AR of the Noticee, Mr. Shubham Khetan, appeared for hearing through video conferencing and sought time to file additional submissions. The request was accepted and time was granted until September 09, 2025.

12. Vide e-mail dated September 09, 2025, Noticee submitted as under:

- *On Thu, Apr 18, 2024, 5:42 PM, AR of Noticee had written an e-mail to SEBI stating his concern of getting a call from SEBI and chances of that being a scam, but he did not get any reply. As brought to its attention by SEBI that communication was already done before that date, Noticee apologized that it would have missed the mail. Right after the newspaper notice, it again came in contact with SEBI for the hearing through video conference. It was submitted that it had no intention of delaying this issue or of not being present in the hearing. It was a situation of miscommunication.*
- *In the matter of wrongful transaction: It had no recollection of this transaction. As seen from Noticees' previous e-mail wherein it had mentioned that there is no demat account under Rakesh Kumar Khetan (HUF). However, when Noticee cross-verified its bank statement, then it was realized that such a transaction was*

done on the said date. It was submitted that transaction was done 10 years ago and so, it could not recollect the same.

CONSIDERATION OF ISSUES AND EVIDENCE

13. I have perused the allegations levelled against the Noticee in the SCN, its reply, submissions made during personal hearing and the material available on record. In the instant matter, the following issues arise for consideration and determination:

- I. Whether the Noticee violated regulations 3(a), (b), (c), (d) and 4(1) and 4(2)(a) of PFUTP Regulations?
- II. Do the violations, if any, on part of the Noticee attract monetary penalty under section 15HA of SEBI Act?
- III. If so, what would be the quantum of monetary penalty that can be imposed on the Noticee after taking into consideration the factors mentioned in section 15J of the SEBI Act?

14. Before proceeding further, it is pertinent to refer to the relevant provisions of PFUTP Regulations which are alleged to have been violated by the Noticee, as under:

“3. Prohibition of certain dealings in securities

No person shall directly or indirectly –

- (a) buy, sell or otherwise deal in securities in a fraudulent manner;*
- (b) use or employ, in connection with issue, purchase or sale of any security listed or proposed to be listed in a recognised stock exchange, any manipulative or deceptive device or contrivance in contravention of the provisions of the Act or the rules or the regulations made there under;*
- (c) employ any device, scheme or artifice to defraud in connection with dealing in or issue of securities which are listed or proposed to be listed on a recognised stock exchange;*
- (d) engage in any act, practice, course of business which operates or would operate as fraud or deceit upon any person in connection with any dealing in or issue of securities which are listed or proposed to be listed on a recognised stock exchange in contravention of the provisions of the Act or the rules and the regulations made thereunder.”*

“4. Prohibition of manipulative, fraudulent and unfair trade practices

- (1) Without prejudice to the provisions of regulation 3, no person shall indulge in a fraudulent or an unfair trade practice in securities.*
- (2) Dealing in securities shall be deemed to be a fraudulent or an unfair trade practice if it involves fraud and may include all or any of the following, namely;-*
 - (a) indulging in an act which creates false or misleading appearance of trading in the securities market;”*

Issue No. 1: Whether the Noticee violated provisions of regulations 3(a), (b), (c), (d), 4(1) and 4(2)(a) of PFUTP Regulations?

15. I note that it was alleged in the SCN that the Noticee, while dealing in the stock options contracts at BSE during the IP, had executed reversal trades which were allegedly non-genuine trades and the same had resulted in generation of artificial volume in stock options contracts at BSE. The said reversal trades were alleged to be non-genuine trades as they were not executed in the normal course of trading, lack basic trading rationale, lead to false or misleading appearance of trading in terms of generation of artificial volumes and hence, were deceptive and manipulative.

16. It was alleged that the Noticee was one of the entities who had indulged in creating artificial volume of 448,000 units through four non-genuine trades in two stock options contracts during the IP. The summary of trades is given below:

Table No. 1

Contract name	Avg. buy rate (₹)	Total buy volume (no. of units)	Avg. sell rate (₹)	Total sell volume (no. of units)	% of Artificial volume generated by the Noticee in the contract to Noticee's Total volume in the contract	% of Artificial volume generated by the Noticee in the contract to Total volume in the contract
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
TATP15MAR105.00CEW1	0.05	140,000	1.85	140,000	100	50%
LNTF15MAR100.00CEW1	1.9	84,000	0.05	84,000	100	17.5%

17. To illustrate, on February 24, 2015, the Noticee, at 12:07:37 hours, entered into a sell trade in a contract, viz., 'TATP15MAR105.00CEW1' with counterparty 'Footmark Infra Venture Private Limited' for 1,40,000 units at Rs. 1.85/- per unit. On the same day, at 12:30:28 hours, Noticee entered into a buy trade with the same counterparty for 1,40,000 units at Rs. 0.05/- per unit. It is noted that the Noticee while dealing in the said contract during the IP, executed a total of 2 trades

(1 buy trade and 1 sell trade) with same counterparty, viz., Footmark Infra Venture Private Limited on the same day and with significant price difference in buy and sell rates. It is observed that the Noticee's two trades while dealing in the aforesaid contract during the IP generated artificial volume of 2,80,000 units, which made up 50% of total market volume in the said contract during this period.

18. Similarly, on February 27, 2015, the Noticee, at 14:11:31 hours, entered into a buy trade in a contract, viz., 'LNTF15MAR100.00CEW1' with counterparty 'Manish Kumar Kanodia (HUF)' for 84,000 units at Rs. 1.9/- per unit. On the same day, at 14:56:52 hours, Noticee entered into a sell trade with the same counterparty for 84,000 units at Rs. 0.05/- per unit. It is noted that the Noticee while dealing in the said contract during the IP, executed a total of 2 trades (1 buy trade and 1 sell trade) with same counterparty, viz., Manish Kumar Kanodia (HUF) on the same day and with significant price difference in buy and sell rates. It is observed that the Noticee's two trades while dealing in the aforesaid contract during the IP generated artificial volume of 1,68,000 units, which made up 17.5% of total market volume in the said contract during this period.

19. Though the Noticee initially denied possession of any demat account in its name, subsequently admitted that the alleged transactions had indeed been executed by it. With respect to its contention that the transactions happened 10 years ago and therefore could not be recollected, it is noted that all the annexures to the SCN containing complete details of the alleged trades were duly provided to the Noticee, pursuant to which Noticee acknowledged that the transactions were executed by it. The Noticee remains responsible for trades executed in its account and the alleged delay in this regard has not caused any prejudice to it.

20. Regarding the submission that the Noticee had written to SEBI on April 18, 2024 expressing concerns about possible scam calls and did not receive any reply, it is observed from the record that a similar e-mail had been sent earlier to SEBI on March 22, 2024 by Noticee, which was duly responded to by the office of the erstwhile AO on the same date. This fact was clarified to the AR of Noticee during the course of hearing and subsequently, in its reply dated September 09, 2025,

the Noticee admitted that it had missed the earlier e-mail. Accordingly, this submission of the Noticee does not merit further consideration.

21. The non-genuineness of the transactions executed by the Noticee is evident from the fact that there was no commercial basis as to why, within few minutes, the Noticee reversed the position with the same counterparty with significant price difference on the same day. The fact that the transactions in a particular contract were reversed with the same counterparty indicates a prior meeting of minds with a view to execute the reversal trades at a pre-determined price. Since these trades were done in illiquid options contracts, there was negligible trading in the said contracts and hence, there was no price discovery in the strictest terms. The wide variation in prices of the said contracts, within a short span of time, is a clear indication that there was pre-determination in the prices by the counterparties while executing the trades. Thus, it is observed that Noticee had indulged in reversal trades with its counterparty in the stock options segment of BSE and the same were non-genuine trades.

22. It cannot be mere coincidence that the Noticee could match its trades with the same counterparty with whom it had undertaken first leg of the respective trades. The fact that the transactions in a particular contract were reversed with the same counterparty for the same quantity of units, indicates a prior meeting of minds with a view to execute the reversal trades at a pre-determined price. It is further noted that direct evidence is not forthcoming in the present matter as regards meeting of minds or collusion with other entities, *inter alia*, the counterparties or agents/fronts. However, trading behaviour as noted above makes it clear that aforesaid non-genuine trades could not have been possible without meeting of minds at some level.

23. Here, I would like to rely on the following judgement of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of *SEBI v. Kishore R Ajmera* (AIR 2016 SC 1079), wherein it was held that:

“...According to us, knowledge of who the 2nd party / client or the broker is, is not relevant at all. While the screen based trading system keeps the

identity of the parties anonymous it will be too naïve to rest the final conclusions on the said basis which overlooks a meeting of minds elsewhere. Direct proof of such meeting of minds elsewhere would rarely be forthcoming...in the absence of direct proof of meeting of minds elsewhere in synchronized transactions, the test should be one of preponderance of probabilities as far as adjudication of civil liability arising out of the violation of the Act or provision of the Regulations is concerned. The conclusion has to be gathered from various circumstances like that volume of the trade effected; the period of persistence in trading in the particular scrip; the particulars of the buy and sell orders, namely, the volume thereof; the proximity of time between the two and such other relevant factors. The illustrations are not exhaustive.

It is a fundamental principle of law that proof of an allegation levelled against a person may be in the form of direct substantive evidence or, as in many cases, such proof may have to be inferred by a logical process of reasoning from the totality of the attending facts and circumstances surrounding the allegations/charges made and levelled. While direct evidence is a more certain basis to come to a conclusion, yet, in the absence thereof the Courts cannot be helpless. It is the judicial duty to take note of the immediate and proximate facts and circumstances surrounding the events on which the charges/allegations are founded and to reach what would appear to the Court to be a reasonable conclusion therefrom. The test would always be that what inferential process that a reasonable/prudent man would adopt to arrive at a conclusion.”

24. Therefore, applying the ratio of the above judgment, it is observed that the execution of trades by the Noticee in the illiquid options segment with such precision in terms of order placement, time, price, quantity, etc., and also the fact that the transactions were reversed with the same counterparty clearly indicates a prior meeting of minds with a view to execute the reversal trades at a pre-determined price. The only reason for the wide variation in price of the same contracts, within short span of time, i.e., half an hour and one hour respectively in the instant matter, points to the fact that there was pre-determination in the prices by the counterparties. Thus, the nature of trading, as brought out above, clearly indicates an element of prior meeting of minds and therefore, a collusion of the Noticee with its counterparty to carry out the trades at pre-determined prices.
25. It is also relevant to refer to order of the Hon'ble Securities Appellate Tribunal in the matter of *Ketan Parekh v. SEBI* (Appeal No. 2 of 2004 decided on July 14, 2006), wherein it was held as follows:

“In other words, if the factum of manipulation is established it will necessarily follow that the investors in the market had been induced to buy or sell and that no further proof in this regard is required. The market, as already observed, is so wide spread that it may not be humanly possible for the Board to track the persons who were actually induced to buy or sell securities as a result of manipulation and law can never impose on the Board a burden which is impossible to be discharged. This, in our view, clearly flows from the plain language of Regulation 4 (a) of the Regulations.”

26. In this regard, further reliance is placed on judgment of Hon’ble Supreme Court in the matter of *SEBI v. Rakhi Trading Private Limited* (Civil Appeal Nos. 1969, 3174-3177 and 3180 of 2011 decided on February 8, 2018) on similar factual circumstances, which, *inter alia*, stated as under:

“Considering the reversal transactions, quantity, price and time and sale, parties being persistent in number of such trade transactions with huge price variations, it will be too naive to hold that the transactions are through screen-based trading and hence anonymous. Such conclusion would be over-looking the prior meeting of minds involving synchronization of buy and sell order and not negotiated deals as per the board’s circular. The impugned transactions are manipulative/deceptive device to create a desired loss and/or profit. Such synchronized trading is violative of transparent norms of trading in securities.....”

27. Therefore, the trading behaviour of the Noticee confirms that such trades were not normal, indicating that the trades executed by the Noticee were not genuine trades and being non-genuine, created an appearance of artificial trading volumes in respective contracts. In view of the above, I find that the allegation of violation of regulations 3(a), (b), (c) and (d), 4(1), 4(2)(a) of PFUTP Regulations by the Noticee stands established.

Issue No. 2: Do the violations, if any, on part of the Noticee attract monetary penalty under section 15HA of SEBI Act?

28. In the findings made in foregoing paragraphs, it has been established that the Noticee executed non-genuine reversal trades, which created false and misleading appearance of trading, thereby generated artificial volumes in the stock options segment of BSE during the IP, therefore, Noticee violated the provisions of regulations 3(a), (b), (c) and (d), 4(1) and 4(2)(a) of the PFUTP Regulations.

29. Therefore, considering the above findings and the judgement of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of *SEBI v. Shriram Mutual Fund* [2006] 68 SCL 216 (SC) decided on May 23, 2006, wherein it was 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. A breach of civil obligation which attracts penalty in the nature of fine under the provisions of the Act and the Regulations would immediately attract the levy of penalty irrespective of the fact whether contravention must be made by the defaulter with guilty intention or not."*, I am convinced that this is a fit case for imposition of monetary penalty under the provisions of section 15HA of SEBI Act, which reads as under:

"Penalty for Fraudulent and Unfair trade practices.

15HA. If any person indulges in fraudulent and unfair trade practices relating to securities, he shall be liable to a penalty which shall not be less than five lakh rupees but which may extend to twenty-five crore rupees or three times the amount of profits made out of such practices, whichever is higher."

Issue No. 3: If so, what would be the quantum of monetary penalty that can be imposed on the Noticee after taking into consideration the factors mentioned in section 15J of the SEBI Act?

30. While determining the quantum of penalty under section 15HA of the SEBI Act, the following factors as stipulated in section 15J of the SEBI Act are taken into account-

"Factors to be taken into account while adjudging quantum of penalty.

15J. While adjudging quantum of penalty under 15-I or section 11 or section 11B, the Board or 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."*

31. As established above, the trades by the Noticee were non-genuine in nature and created a misleading appearance of trading in the aforesaid contracts. I note that when the impact of artificial volume created by the two counterparties is seen as a

whole, it is not possible, from the material on record, to quantify the amount of disproportionate gain or unfair advantage resulting from the artificial trades between the counter parties or the consequent loss caused to investors as a result of the default. Further, the material available on record does not demonstrate any repetitive default on the part of the Noticee. However, considering that the four non-genuine trades entered by the Noticee in two options contracts led to creation of artificial trading volumes which had the effect of distorting the market mechanism in the stock options segment of BSE, I find that the aforesaid violations were detrimental to the integrity of securities market and therefore, the quantum of penalty must be commensurate with the serious nature of the aforesaid violations.

ORDER

32. Taking into account the facts and circumstances of the case, material available on record, submissions of the Noticee, findings hereinabove and factors mentioned in section 15J of the SEBI Act, in exercise of the powers conferred upon me under section 15-I of the SEBI Act read with rule 5 of the Rules, I hereby impose monetary penalty of ₹ 5,00,000/- (Rupees Five Lakh only) on the Noticee (Rakesh Kumar Khetan HUF) under section 15HA of SEBI Act for the violation of regulations 3(a), (b), (c) and (d), 4(1), 4(2)(a) of PFUTP Regulations. I am of the view that the said penalty is commensurate with the violations committed by Noticee.

33. The Noticee shall remit/pay the said amount of penalty within 45 days of receipt of this order in either of the way, such as by following the path at SEBI website www.sebi.gov.in:

ENFORCEMENT >Orders >Orders of AO> PAYNOW;

34. In the event of failure to pay the said amount of penalty within 45 days of the receipt of this Order, recovery proceedings may be initiated under section 28A of the SEBI Act for realization of the said amount of penalty along with interest thereon, *inter alia*, by attachment and sale of movable and immovable properties of Noticee.

35. In terms of the provisions of rule 6 of the Rules, a copy of this order is being sent to the Noticee and to SEBI.

Place: Mumbai

Date: November 19, 2025

JAI SEBASTIAN

ADJUDICATING OFFICER