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BEFORE THE SOLE ARBITRATOR UNDER THE .IN DOMAIN NAME DISPUTE RESOLUTION POLICY
 (Appointed by the National Internet Exchange of India)

ARBITRATION AWARD

Disputed Domain Name: <hafelenagold.in>

IN THE MATTER OF

Häfele SE & Co KG
 Adolf-Häfele-Str. 1,
 72202 Nagold, Germany

..... Complainant

-----versus-----

Srinivas MJ (as per WHOIS records)
 S/O Jaganath, #02, 1st Main, 4th Cross,
 Near Government Primary School, Herohalli,
 Viswacedam Post, Bangalore, Karnataka 560091, India
 Email: shrinivas.mj@gmail.com

..... Respondent

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1. The Parties

The **Complainant** in this arbitration proceeding is **Häfele SE & Co KG**, with its principal place of business at Adolf-Häfele-Str. 1, 72202 Nagold, Germany.

The **Respondent** in this arbitration proceeding is **Srinivas MJ**, of the address: S/O Jaganath, #02, 1st Main, 4th Cross, Near Government Primary School, Herohalli, Viswaneedam Post, Bangalore, Karnataka 560091, India as per the WHOIS records.

2. The Domain Name, Registrar and Registrant

The present arbitration proceeding pertains to a dispute concerning the registration of the domain name <**HAFELENAGOLD.IN**> with the .IN Registry. The Registrar of the disputed domain is **Namecheap**.

3. Procedural History

The arbitration proceeding is in accordance with the .IN Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (INDRP), adopted by the National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI). The procedural history of the matter is tabulated below:

Date	Event
August 5, 2026	NIXI sought consent of Ms. Lucy Rana to act as the Sole Arbitrator in the matter. The Arbitrator, vide email on the same date, confirmed her availability and gave her consent, along with the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence in compliance with the INDRP Rules of Procedure.
August 7, 2026	NIXI handed over the Domain Complaint and Annexures thereto to the Arbitrator.
August 10, 2026	The Arbitrator directed the Complainant's Counsel to provide the requisite Board Resolution/ Authority letter in respect of the signatory - Gregor Riekana (signatory of the power of attorney), within seven (07) days.
August 14, 2026	Complainant's Counsel provided documents, evidencing the authority of Mr. Gregor Riekana, who signed the Power of Attorney on behalf of the Complainant. The Arbitrator, vide email on the same date, directed the Complainant's Counsel to serve a full set of the domain complaint as filed, along with annexures, upon the Respondent by email as well as physical mode (in case Complaint had already not done so) and provide proof of service within seven (07) days.

Lucy Rana

August 18, 2026	Complainant's Counsel sent a full set of the domain complaint and annexures via email to the Respondent. Further, the Complainant's Counsel, vide email on the same date, confirmed that the domain complaint has been delivered through email to the Respondent and provided a copy of the delivery report as an evidence.
August 19, 2026	The Arbitrator accordingly commenced arbitration proceedings in respect of the matter. Respondent was granted time of fourteen (14) days, to submit a response, i.e. by September 02, 2026.
September 03, 2026	As no response was received from the Respondent within the stipulated time period, in the interests of justice, the Arbitrator granted a final extension of three (03) days to respond to the complaint.
September 07, 2026	As no response was received from the Respondent, the Arbitrator concluded proceedings and reserved the present award.

4. Factual Background – Complainant

Counsel for the Complainant, on behalf of the Complainant in the present matter, has, inter alia, submitted as follows:

- i. That the Complainant is a multinational enterprise headquartered in Nagold, Germany, with roots dating back to its founding in 1923. That the Complainant is one of the world's leading specialists in furniture fittings, architectural hardware, kitchen solutions, electronic access control systems, and lighting solutions. Over more than 100 years, the Complainant has developed into a global full-service provider for the furniture, construction, architectural, and kitchen sectors. In this regard, the Complainant has annexed extracts from its official websites <hafele.com> and <hafeleindia.com>, as well as a Wikipedia article containing background information concerning the Complainant as Annexure 5.
- ii. That, the Complainant employs more than 8,000 people worldwide and operates through a network of subsidiaries, sales offices and partners in more than 150 countries. That its products include, inter alia, furniture fittings, sliding door systems, hinges, pull-outs and drawer systems, LED lighting, electronic access systems, kitchen fittings, and related installation and service solutions, as further shown in Annexure 5.
- iii. That the Complainant owns numerous registrations for the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** mark and variants thereof in multiple jurisdictions, including the European Union, India and the United States, covering, among other goods and services, furniture fittings, architectural hardware, building fittings, locks, furniture components, kitchen equipment, lighting apparatus, and related goods and services. In this regard, the

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Complainant has annexed copies of its trademark registration in India, Germany, the European Union and other jurisdictions as Annexure 6.

- iv. That the Complainant also uses HÄFELE, HAFELE and HAEFELE as its corporate name, commercial identifier and online brand, and has a strong commercial and online presence in India, including through its dedicated Indian website at <hafeleindia.com>, as shown in Annexure 5.
- v. That because the German character "ä" is not available or conveniently used in many international online contexts, the Complainant commonly uses and protects spelling variants of its name and mark, and that the variant **HAFELE** is the natural and commonly used non-umlaut form of **HÄFELE**, which is particularly relevant for international internet users.
- vi. That the Complainant maintains an extensive online presence under domain names incorporating its mark, including <hafele.com>, which it uses to provide product information, catalogues, technical documentation, and information about its international distribution and service network, and that the Complainant's headquarters and place of origin are in Nagold, Germany. In this regard, the Complainant has annexed a representative list of its domain names incorporating **HÄFELE / HAFELE / HAEFELE** as Annexure 7.

5. Contentions And Legal Grounds Submitted By The Complainant

In support of the requirements under the captioned provisions of the INDRP (combined with the relevant Rules of Procedure) the Complainant has submitted that:

A. The Respondent's domain name "hafelenagold.in" is identical to a name, trademark/ trade name in which the Complainant has rights

- i. That the Complainant has established its rights in the trade mark **HÄFELE / HAFELE** by virtue of its trademark registrations and longstanding international use.
- ii. That the disputed domain name incorporates the Complainant's registered trademark **HÄFELE / HAFELE** in its entirety and is therefore confusingly similar to the Complainant's mark.
- iii. That the disputed domain name comprises the Complainant's **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trade mark with the addition of the term "nagold".
- iv. That the addition of the term "nagold" does not avoid confusing similarity. On the contrary, Nagold is the Complainant's place of origin and headquarters, and the combination "hafele nagold" therefore directly reinforces the impression that the

disputed domain name is associated with the Complainant itself, its headquarters, or an official service offering connected with the Complainant.

- v. That the country-code Top-Level Domain ".in" is normally disregarded for the purpose of comparing the mark and the disputed domain name. In any event, the ".in" extension reinforces the geographic context of the Respondent's website, which targets consumers in India, particularly in Bangalore.
- vi. That the Respondent's website use confirms targeting Complainant's consumers, as the website repeatedly refers to "Hafele", displays a "HAFELE SERVICE CENTER" logo-like sign, and expressly presents the business as a "Hafele Service Center in Bangalore", demonstrating that the disputed domain name has an association with the Complainant's mark and business.

B. The Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the domain name

- i. That the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name, as it has no connection or affiliation with the Complainant, has never been authorized to use the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trade mark or to incorporate the same in the disputed domain name in any form, or to operate any service centre under the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** name.
- ii. That the Respondent is not commonly known by HÄFELE, HAFELE, Hafele Nagold, Hafele Service Center, or any similar designation. That the unredacted WHOIS information identifies the Respondent as Srinivas MJ and the organisation field as 'NA', and therefore provides no basis for any legitimate connection between the Respondent and the disputed domain name.
- iii. That the Respondent's use is not a bona fide offering of goods or services. That the website uses the Complainant's mark to create the false impression of an official or authorised service centre, offering services closely related to the Complainant's business and products, including kitchen appliance repair, chimney service, hob installation, stove repair, and cooking range services, and encourages customers to book services, request quotes, submit enquiries, and contact the operator by phone or WhatsApp under the "Hafele Service Center" name.
- iv. That the website's footer disclaimer does not create legitimacy. That it appears only after the website has already attracted users through the confusing domain name and prominent "Hafele Service Center" presentation, and that the wording "we are nowhere related to Hafele Service Center" is ambiguous and internally contradictory, does not clearly identify the Complainant or explain the absence of any relationship with the Complainant, and in any event cannot cure the initial interest confusion created by the disputed domain name, the logo-like presentation, and the commercial booking and contact facilities.

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- v. That the Respondent is not making any legitimate non-commercial or fair use of the disputed domain name, but is using it for commercial purposes to offer repair, maintenance, cleaning and installation services and solicit customer enquiries, thereby misleadingly diverting consumers seeking the Complainant or authorised HÄFELE services for commercial gain.

C. The disputed domain name has been registered in bad faith

- i. That the Complainant's **HÄFELE / HAFELE** mark is distinctive and internationally recognised in the fields of furniture fittings, architectural hardware, kitchen solutions, lighting, access control systems, and related products and services.
- ii. That the Respondent's knowledge of the Complainant is apparent from the composition of the disputed domain name itself, as the Respondent combined Complainant's registered trademark **HAFELE** with "nagold", the Complainant's headquarters and place of origin, which cannot reasonably be regarded as coincidental and points directly to the Complainant and its corporate origin.
- iii. That the Respondent's knowledge is further confirmed by their past use of the disputed domain name, as the website expressly referred to "Hafele appliances", presented itself as a "Hafele Service Center in Bangalore", displayed a logo-like "HAFELE SERVICE CENTER" sign, and offered services for appliances and kitchen-related products, demonstrating that the Respondent deliberately targeted the Complainant and its mark when registering and using the disputed domain name.
- iv. That the Respondent's conduct falls squarely within Clause 7(c) of the INDRP Policy, as by using the disputed domain name, the Respondent has intentionally attempted to attract Internet users to its website for commercial gain by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's name and mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the website and the services offered on it.
- v. That the Respondent's use also disrupts the Complainant's business and official service network, as consumers seeking the Complainant or authorised HÄFELE services in India may be diverted to the Respondent's unauthorised website, may disclose personal contact details, and may purchase services under the mistaken belief that they are dealing with an official or authorised HÄFELE service centre.
- vi. That the website's past misleading content and commercial structure also support a finding that the disputed domain name is being used for an unlawful or improper purpose, namely to misrepresent affiliation with the Complainant and to trade on the goodwill of the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** mark.

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6. Reliefs claimed by the Complainant (Paragraphs 10 of the .IN Policy and 3(b)(vii) of the .IN Rules)

The Complainant has requested that the domain name <HAFELENAGOLD.IN> be transferred to them.

7. Respondent's Contentions

As already mentioned in the procedural history of the matter, despite having been duly served with a copy of the Domain Complaint as filed, and thereafter granted adequate time to respond to the same, the Respondent had not submitted any response thereto, or in fact any communication of any kind to the Arbitrator during pendency of arbitral proceedings in the matter.

8. Discussion and Findings

As mentioned in Paragraph 4 of the .IN Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy, the Complainant is required to satisfy the below three conditions in a domain complaint:

- i. The Registrant's domain name is identical and confusingly similar to a name, trade mark or service mark in which the Complainant has rights; and
 - ii. The Registrant has no rights and legitimate interest in respect of the domain name; and
 - iii. The Registrant's domain name has been registered or is being used either in bad faith or for illegal/ unlawful purpose.
- i. **The Registrant's domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a name, trade mark or service mark in which the Complainant has rights**
(Paragraph 4(a) of the .IN Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy)
- In the present domain dispute, the Complainant has furnished information about their trade mark rights over the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trademark in several countries of the world, including in India.
 - The Complainant has also submitted that the disputed domain name incorporates the Complainant's trademark **HÄFELE / HAFELE** in its entirety and hence is confusingly similar to the Complainant's trademark.
 - The Complainant has also made submissions and provided evidence in respect of its prior adoption and use, as well as reputation in its **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trademark.
 - The Complainant has further submitted that the Respondent has registered the disputed domain name without any meaning or significance independent of the Complainant's registered trademark **HÄFELE / HAFELE**.

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- The Complainant has submitted that mere addition of the term "nagold" does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity with the Complainant's **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trade mark. On the contrary, Nagold is the Complainant's place of origin and headquarters, further reinforcing the impression that the disputed domain name is associated with the Complainant or its official services.
- The Complainant has further submitted that extensions such as ".in" may be disregarded when assessing whether a disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to a Complainant's trademark.

Thus, in light of the trademark rights presented by the Complainant's and the documents placed on record, the Arbitrator finds that the Complainant has been successful in establishing their rights in **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trademark. It is well established that trademark registration is recognized as prima facie evidence of rights in a mark. The Complainant, by filing documents showing its ownership over registered **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trademark, has established its prior rights in the same worldwide.

Further, it has been held by prior panels deciding under the INDRP that there exists confusing similarity where the disputed name incorporates the Complainant's trade mark, such as *Kenneth Cole Productions v. Viswas Infomedia INDRP/093*, *Indian Hotel Companies Limited v. Mr. Sanjay Jha, INDRP/148 <Gingerhotels.co.in>*, *Carrier Corporation, USA v. Prakash K.R. INDRP/238 <Carrier.net.in>*, *M/s Merck KGaA v. Zeng Wei INDRP/323 <Merckchemicals.in>*, *Colgate-Palmolive Company & Anr. v. Zhaxia INDRP/887 <Colgate.in>* and *The Singer Company Limited v. Novation In Limited INDRP/905 <singer.co.in>*. More recently, as held by the INDRP Panel in the matter of *Tata Communications Limited v. Chandan [INDRP/1880]* on August 29, 2024 – “It is well established that the full incorporation of a complainant's trademark in a disputed domain name is sufficient for a finding of identical or confusing similarity”.

Accordingly, it may be stated that the disputed domain name **<HAFELENAGOLD.IN>** is confusingly similar to the Complainant's **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trademark, incorporates the same in entirety, and also incorporate the place of origin of the Complainant.

In view of the aforesaid, the Arbitrator accepts that the Complainant's rights in its trademarks, under Paragraph 4(a) of the INDRP has been established.

ii. **The Registrant has no rights and legitimate interest in respect of the domain name (Paragraph 4(b) and Paragraph 6 of the .IN Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy)**

As per paragraph 6 of the Policy, a Registrant may show legitimate rights and interests in a domain name, by demonstrating any of the following circumstances:

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- (a) before any notice to the Registrant of the dispute, the Registrant's use of, or demonstrable preparations to use the domain name or a name corresponding to the domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services;*
- (b) the Registrant (as an individual, business, or other organization) has been commonly known by the domain name, even if the Registrant has acquired no Trademark or Service Mark rights; or*
- (c) the Registrant is making a legitimate non-commercial or fair use of the domain name, without the intention of commercial gain by misleadingly or diverting consumers or to tarnish the Trademark or Service Mark at issue.*

In this regard, in the absence of any rebuttal from the Respondent, and in light of the below assertions of the Complainant, the Arbitrator accepts the Complainant's assertion, that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name in accordance with Paragraph 4(b) of the INDRP.

- The Respondent is not commonly known by the disputed domain name.
- Further, the Complainant has not authorized, licensed or otherwise allowed the Respondent to make any use of its **HÄFELE / HAFELE** trademark, in a domain name or otherwise.
- The disputed domain name incorporates the Complainant's trademark **HÄFELE / HAFELE** together with the geographic term "nagold", being the Complainant's headquarters and place of origin, which clearly evidences that the Respondent is attempting to mislead consumers into believing that it is affiliated with or authorized by the Complainant, thereby creating initial internet confusion.
- The Respondent is not making any legitimate non-commercial or legitimate fair use of the disputed domain name. Rather, the Respondent's past use of the disputed domain name, wherein they operated a commercial website presenting itself as a "Hafele Service Center in Bangalore" and offered appliance repair, maintenance, installation and related services. Therefore, the Respondent was not using the disputed domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services.
- The footer disclaimer on the Respondent's website, stating "We are Third party service center we are nowhere related to Hafele Service Center", is ambiguous, internally contradictory, and appears only after users have been attracted through the confusing domain name and the prominent "Hafele Service Center" presentation, and is therefore insufficient to cure the misleading use of the Complainant's mark.
- The disputed domain name is currently non-operational.

As such, Respondent, by choosing not to respond to the Complaint, has failed to satisfy the conditions enshrined in paragraph 6 of the INDR Policy. As held in the prior panel in *Amundi v. GaoGou (INDRP/776)*, the Complainant is required to make out a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, and once such case is established, then it is the Respondent upon whom there is the burden of proof, to demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. In this regard,

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if the Respondent fails to do so, the Complainant is deemed to have satisfied paragraph 4(b) of the Policy.

In the present domain dispute, the Respondent has not joined the arbitral proceedings, despite being duly served with the domain complaint, and consequently, not come forward with any assertion or evidence to show any bonafides.

Thus, as mentioned above, in view of the lack of assertions on part of the Respondent, coupled with the other contentions put forth by the Complainant, the Arbitrator accepts the Complainant's assertion, that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name in accordance with Paragraph 4(b) of the INDRP.

iii. **The Registrant's domain name has been registered or is being used in bad faith**
(Paragraph 4(c) and Paragraph 7 of the .IN Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy)

In this regard, Complainant has *inter alia* contended the below points regarding Respondent's bad faith:

- The Respondent has no prior rights and no authorization to use the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** mark.
- The Respondent's awareness that the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** mark is distinctive and internationally recognised, including in India. As the Complainant has been using the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** mark extensively and continuously, and the mark has been registered long before the registration of the disputed domain name, the Respondent had constructive notice of the Complainant and its rights in the **HÄFELE / HAFELE** mark. Further, the composition of the disputed domain name, combining **HAFELE** with "nagold" (the Complainant's headquarters and place of origin), confirms the Respondent's knowledge of the Complainant.
- The use of the disputed domain name by the Respondent is solely with mala fide intentions in order to deceive people browsing on the Internet into believing that the disputed domain name, and the "Hafele Service Center" operated thereunder, is associated with, or authorised by, the Complainant.
- The Respondent's use of the disputed domain name is likely to disrupt the Complainant's business and official service network by diverting Internet users seeking the Complainant or authorised **HÄFELE** services to the Respondent's unauthorised website for commercial gain, which clearly satisfies an act of bad faith.
- The Respondent's website, which prominently displays a "HAFELE SERVICE CENTER" logo-like sign and repeatedly identifies the service provider as "Hafele Service Center", together with promotional claims as to the scale and reputation of the business, is misleading, or is bound to mislead, users into thinking that the disputed domain name has a direct association with the Complainant, and the footer disclaimer is insufficient to cure such confusion.

In this regard, it is pertinent to reiterate that the Respondent has not submitted any reply or rebuttal to the Complainant's contentions, or any evidence in support of its bona fide registration or use of the disputed domain name.

In view of the submissions of the Complainant, specifically regarding the relevance of paragraph 7 (c) of the .IN Policy in the present domain dispute, the Arbitrator finds that the Respondent's registration and use of the disputed domain name prima facie appears to constitute conduct as mentioned in paragraph 7 (c) of the Policy, namely:

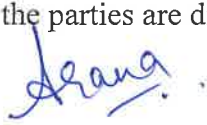
“(c) by using the domain name, the Registrant has intentionally attempted to attract Internet users to the Registrant's website or other on-line location, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's name or mark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the Registrant's website or location or of a product or service on the Registrant's website or location”.

In view of the aforesaid, the Arbitrator concludes that the Complainant has satisfactorily proved the requirements of Paragraph 4(c) and Paragraph 7 of the INDRP.

9. Decision

Based upon the facts and circumstances, the Arbitrator allows the prayer of the Complainant and directs the .IN Registry to transfer the domain <HAFELENAGOLD.IN> to the Complainant.

The Award is accordingly passed and the parties are directed to bear their own costs.



Lucy Rana, Sole Arbitrator

Date: September 15, 2026.

Place: New Delhi, India.