IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

In the matter of the Marriage of

PADMAJA KRISHNA VENI CHILUVURI,	)	No. 66157-4-I
Respondent,	)	DIVISION ONE
and	)	UNPUBLISHED OPINION
MURALIDHARA VARMA CHILUVURI,	)	
Appellant.	)	FILED: March 5, 2012

Appelwick, J. — Varma appeals a final parenting plan and order of child support. Because his brief on appeal does not comply with the rules of appellate procedure and fails, in any event, to state a basis for relief, we affirm.

FACTS

Varma and Padmaja Chiluvuri[1] married in 1998 and divorced in 2006. The dissolution decree incorporated an agreed parenting plan concerning the parties' son, H.C. In May and December, 2008, the parties entered agreed parenting plans under which H.C. resides with Varma the majority of the time.

In 2010, Varma filed a notice of intent to relocate to India with H.C. Padmaja initially objected to relocation and to a proposed revised parenting plan. By the time of trial, Varma and H.C. had relocated to India under the terms of a temporary order. Padmaja then withdrew her objection to relocation and the parties proceeded to litigate other aspects of the parenting plan.

The trial court entered a new parenting plan and child support order.

[1] Consistent with the briefing and the record, this opinion will refer to appellant as "Varma" and respondent as "Padmaja."

Changes included a 50% reduction in Padmaja's child support obligation due to Varma's lower cost of living in India. Varma appeals.

DISCUSSION

Our review is controlled by well-settled principles and procedural rules that apply equally to litigants represented by counsel and litigants proceeding pro se.[2] We view the evidence in the light most favorable to the prevailing party and defer to the trial court regarding witness credibility and conflicting testimony. Hegwine v. Longview Fibre Co., 132 Wn. App. 546, 556, 132 P.3d 789 (2006), aff'd, 162 Wn.2d 340, 132 P.3d 789 (2006). We only review findings to which error is assigned, and our review is limited to determining whether the findings are supported by substantial evidence. Id. at 555-56. We consider only the evidence that was before the trial court. See RAP 9.1 through 9.11. Arguments that are not supported by pertinent authority, references to the record, or meaningful analysis need not be considered.[3] Finally, rulings concerning parenting plans and child support are reviewed for abuse of discretion. In re Marriage of Christel, 101 Wn. App. 13, 20-21, 1 P.3d 600 (2000) (parenting plan); In re Marriage of Fiorito, 112 Wn. App. 657, 663, 50 P.3d 298 (2002) (child support). Such rulings will seldom be changed upon appeal because the

[2] In re Marriage of Olson, 69 Wn. App. 621, 626, 850 P.2d 527 (1993).

[3] Cowiche Canyon Conservancy v. Bosley, 118 Wn.2d 801, 809, 828 P.2d 549 (1992) (arguments not supported by authority); State v. Elliott, 114 Wn.2d 6, 15, 785 P.2d 440 (1990) (insufficient argument); Saunders v. Lloyd's of London, 113 Wn.2d 330, 345, 779 P.2d 249 (1989) (issues unsupported by adequate argument and authority); State v. Camarillo, 54 Wn. App. 821, 829, 776 P.2d 176 (1989) (no references to the record), aff'd, 115 Wn.2d 60, 794 P.2d 850 (1990); RAP 10.3(a).

emotional and financial interests affected by such decisions are best served by finality. See In re Marriage of Booth, 114 Wn.2d 772, 776, 791 P.2d 519 (1990); In re Parentage of Jannot, 149 Wn.2d 123, 127-28, 65 P.3d 664 (2003).

Varma's brief fails to comply with a number of citation requirements. Despite this court's notice that his brief lacked references to the record, and despite being given both an opportunity to correct the brief and a clear warning that noncompliance could preclude review,[4] Varma's brief contains no references to the record.[5] It also contains no citations to authority and no meaningful legal analysis. With few exceptions, the nature of the alleged errors, the arguments, and the relief requested are unclear. Taken together, these deficiencies in Varma's brief preclude review. Nevertheless, to the extent possible, we have reviewed the identifiable claims raised in the brief and conclude they lack merit.[6]

Varma asserts that his "signatures were not even present to illustrate acceptance" of the final orders and that his counsel's signature was only "to illustrate the receiving of papers that was not authorized as acceptance." To the

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[4] This court returned Varma's opening brief "for failure to comply with the Rules of Appellate Procedure." We specifically noted that the brief contained no references to the record as required by RAP 10.3(a). Varma declined to amend his brief and requested that we accept it. We granted his request but warned that "[t]he panel that considers the appeal on the merits will determine whether to consider appellant's arguments despite appellant's failure to cite to the record."

[5] The record includes over 300 pages of trial proceedings and nearly 400 pages of clerk's papers.

[6] Varma's motion to accept his tardy reply brief is denied, as this court previously denied his motion for an extension of time to file that brief. His motions to supplement the record are granted, but only as to documents that were in the record before the trial court.

extent Varma believes his signature was necessary for a valid final order, he is mistaken. Once a party designates an attorney to represent him, the court and the parties are entitled to rely upon the attorney's authority until it is terminated. In re Marriage of Maxfield, 47 Wn. App. 699, 707 n.2, 737 P.2d 671 (1987). To the extent Varma contends his counsel was not authorized to accept or agree to the orders, he misunderstands the nature of the orders and the effect of counsel's signatures. The orders at issue were not agreed orders. Rather, they were orders of the court entered following trial. Counsel's signatures on the orders did not signify any agreement or acceptance. They merely acknowledged receipt of the orders and approved them only "as to form."

Varma next contends he never received a final order formally permitting him to relocate with H.C. to India. But, as noted above, relocation has occurred and was not contested at trial. The court memorialized that fact in its September 10, 2010, order from pretrial conference stating, "relocation not contested." Nothing more is necessary. See RCW 26.09.500(1) (if there is no objection following proper notice, "the relocation of the child shall be permitted); Final Parenting Plan, section 3.14 ("If no objection is filed . . . , the relocation will be permitted and the proposed revised residential schedule may be confirmed.").

Varma appears to claim the court erred in failing to enter written findings of fact. While a trial court must make findings sufficient to support child support orders and parenting plans, oral findings may be sufficient for review. In re Marriage of Lawrence, 105 Wn. App. 683, 686, 20 P.3d 972 (2001); In re

Marriage of Crosetto, 82 Wn. App. 545, 560, 918 P.2d 954 (1996) (child support). Here, the findings in the court's oral opinion are sufficient to review the issues on appeal.

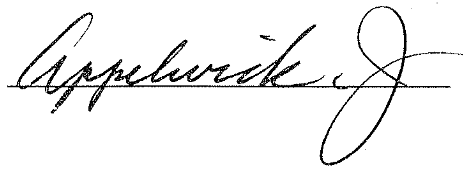
Varma contends the proceedings below demonstrate "prejudice and discrimination" against him. A trial court is presumed to perform its functions regularly and properly without bias or prejudice. In re Marriage of Meredith, 148 Wn. App. 887, 903, 201 P.3d 1056 (2009). A party seeking to overcome this presumption must provide specific facts establishing bias. In re Pers. Restraint of Davis, 152 Wn.2d 647, 692, 101 P.3d 1 (2004). Judicial rulings alone almost never constitute a valid showing of bias. Id. Varma points to no facts in the record demonstrating that the court was prejudiced against him.

Varma also argues that the court erred in awarding Padmaja a federal income tax credit for their son. Under RCW 26.19.100, the trial court may award the exemption and order a party to sign a federal income tax dependency exemption waiver. The authority to allocate a tax exemption and modify an earlier allocation is based on the premise that a child's best interests are served when the parents' financial situations are maximized. In re Marriage of Peterson, 80 Wn. App. 148, 156, 906 P.2d 1009 (1995). A trial court should allocate an exemption to the party who will benefit the most from it. Id. Here, the court awarded Padmaja the exemption "because she's paying 82 percent of the . . . child's expenses." In addition, Padmaja lives and works in the United States, while Varma now lives and works in India. The court's ruling was within

its discretion.

Finally, Varma appears to challenge the court's basis for a downward deviation as to Padmaja's child support obligation. The court based the deviation on Varma's admission in his declaration that "the cost of living [in India] is very low for food, entertainment, and other costs," including rent. Varma fails to demonstrate that the deviation was an abuse of discretion.

Affirmed.



WE CONCUR: