

HIGH COURT OF CHHATTISGARH, BILASPUR**Writ Petition No. 373 of 2002**

- Shankeraiya Chintal son of late PN Chintal, aged about 53 years, R/o Kutumb Vihar Babu Jagjeevan Ram Ward, Raipur (CG).

---- Petitioner**Versus**

1. Chhattisgarh Electricity Board through its Secretary, DKS Bhawan, Raipur.
2. Divisional Engineer (O&M) Chhattisgarh Electricity Board, Durg.
3. Superintending Engineer, Raipur Circle, Chhattisgarh Electricity Board, Raipur.

---- Respondents

For Petitioner
For Respondents

Shri PP Sahu and Shri Aditya Kumar, Advocates.
Shri Raj Kumar Gupta, Advocate.

Hon'ble Shri Justice P. Sam Koshy**Order On Board****10/03/2016**

1. The present petition filed in the year, 2002 is directed against the order dated 30.08.1979 whereby the services of the petitioner was treated as deemed to have resigned.
2. After hearing the counsel for the parties, it appears that this petition suffers from inordinate delay and laches as the cause of action arose on 30.08.1979 whereas, this petition has been filed with inordinate delay of about 23 years on 15.02.2002. Counsel for the petitioner has not been able to explain the delay in approaching the court for invoking the writ jurisdiction.

3. The question of delay and laches came to be considered by the Supreme Court in case of **State of Uttaranchal and Another v. Shiv Charan Singh Bhandari and Others**¹ in which the court has declined to exercise extraordinary jurisdiction in case the petitioner invokes jurisdiction of court with inordinate delay, and held as under :

"[In State of T.N. v. Seshachalam](#)[8], this Court, testing the equality clause on the bedrock of delay and laches pertaining to grant of service benefit, has ruled thus: -

".....filing of representations alone would not save the period of limitation. Delay or laches is a relevant factor for a court of law to determine the question as to whether the claim made by an applicant deserves consideration. Delay and/or laches on the part of a government servant may deprive him of the benefit which had been given to others. Article 14 of the Constitution of India would not, in a situation of that nature, be attracted as it is well known that law leans in favour of those who are alert and vigilant."

4. Likewise, in case of **Uttaranchal Forest Development Corpn. And another vs. Jabar Singh and others**², it was observed as under:

"43. The termination order was made in the year 1995 and the writ petitions were admittedly filed in the year 2005 after a delay of 10 years. The High Court, in our opinion, was not justified in entertaining the writ petition on the ground that the petition has been filed after a delay of 10 years and that the writ petitions should have been dismissed by the High Court on the ground of laches."

5. Further, in the case of **New Delhi Municipal Council v. Pan Singh and others**³, the Supreme Court reiterating the principles relating to interference in cases where petitioner approached the Court with unexplained delay as below:

"16. There is another aspect of the matter which cannot be lost sight of. The respondents herein filed a writ petition after 17 years. They did not agitate their grievances for a long time. They, as noticed herein, did not claim parity with the 17 workmen at the earliest possible opportunity. They did not implead themselves as parties even in the reference made by the State before the Industrial Tribunal. It is not their case that after 1982, those employees who were employed or who were recruited after the cut-off date have been granted the said scale of pay. After such a long time, therefore, the writ petitions could not have been entertained even if they are similarly situated. It is trite that the discretionary jurisdiction may not be exercised in favour of those who approach the court after a long time. Delay and laches are relevant factors for exercise of equitable jurisdiction. (See *Govt. of*

¹12013 (12) SCC 179

²2(2007) 2 SCC 112

³3(2007) 9 SCC 278

W.B. v. Tarun K. Roy, U.P. Jal Nigam v. Jaswant Singh and Karnataka Power Corpn. Ltd. v. K. Thangappan.)”

6. In the case of **P. S. Sadasivaswamy vs. State of Tamil Nadu**⁴, it has been held as under:-

“It is not that there is any period of limitation for the Courts to exercise their powers under Article 226 nor is it that there can never be a case where the Courts cannot interfere in a matter after the passage of a certain length of time. But it would be a sound and wise exercise of discretion for the Courts to refuse to exercise their extraordinary powers under Article 226 in the case of persons who do not approach it expeditiously for relief and who stand by and allow things to happen and then approach the Court to put forward stale claims and try to unsettle settled matters. The petitioner’s petition should, therefore, have been dismissed in limine. Entertaining such petitions is a waste of time of the Court. It clogs the work of the Court and impedes the work of the Court in considering legitimate grievances as also its normal work. We consider that the High Court was right in dismissing the appellant’s petition as well as the appeal.”

7. Recently in case of **Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board and Others v. T.T. Murali Babu**⁵, the Supreme Court has clearly held that delay may have impact on others’ ripened rights and may unnecessarily drag others into litigation, and expressed their opinion as under-

“16. Thus, the doctrine of delay and laches should not be lightly brushed aside. A writ court is required to weigh the explanation offered and the acceptability of the same. The court should bear in mind that it is exercising an extraordinary and equitable jurisdiction. As a constitutional court it has a duty to protect the rights of the citizens but simultaneously it is to keep itself alive to the primary principle that when an aggrieved person, without adequate reason, approaches the court at his own leisure or pleasure, the Court would be under legal obligation to scrutinize whether the lis at a belated stage should be entertained or not. Be it noted, delay comes in the way of equity. In certain circumstances delay and laches may not be fatal but in most circumstances inordinate delay would only invite disaster for the litigant who knocks at the doors of the Court. Delay reflects inactivity and inaction on the part of a litigant—a litigant who has forgotten the basic norms, namely, “procrastination is the greatest thief of time” and second, law does not permit one to sleep and rise like a phoenix. Delay does bring in hazard and causes injury to the lis.”

1. In the case at hand, though there has been four years’ delay in approaching the court, yet the writ court chose not to address the same. It is the duty of the court to scrutinize whether such enormous delay is to be ignored without any justification. That

⁴(1975) 1 SCC 152

⁵ 2014 (4) SCC 108

apart, in the present case, such belated approach gains more significance as the respondent-employee being absolutely careless to his duty and nurturing a lackadaisical attitude to the responsibility had remained unauthorisedly absent on the pretext of some kind of ill health. We repeat at the cost of repetition that remaining innocuously oblivious to such delay does not foster the cause of justice. On the contrary, it brings in injustice, for it is likely to affect others. Such delay may have impact on others' ripened rights and may unnecessarily drag others into litigation which in acceptable realm of probability, may have been treated to have attained finality. A court is not expected to give indulgence to such indolent persons – who compete with 'Kumbhakarna' or for that matter 'Rip Van Winkle'. In our considered opinion, such delay does not deserve any indulgence and on the said ground alone the writ court should have thrown the petition overboard at the very threshold."

8. Bearing in mind the principles of law laid down by the Supreme Court in the above referred cases with regard to entertainment of petition filed with inordinate delay if the facts of present case are examined, it would appear that the petitioner has filed this petition with an inordinate delay of about 23 years. The petitioner has neither explained such inordinate delay nor has filed any document.
9. As a fall out and the consequence of the aforesaid discussion, without entering into the merits, the petition is dismissed on the ground of delay and laches. No order as to costs.

Sd/-

(P.Sam Koshy)

JUDGE