

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE OF BOMBAY
BENCH AT AURANGABAD

CIVIL APPLICATION NO. 2426 OF 2017 IN
FIRST APPEAL ST. NO. 32946 OF 2016

The Executive Engineer
L.M.I. Division, Latur
Tq. & Dist. Latur.

Applicant

Versus

1 Gunderao s/o Dattatraya Joshi
 age 90 years, occ. agril.,
 r/o Thodga, TQ. Ahmedpur
 Dist. Latur.

2 The State of Maharashtra
 through Collector, Latur.

Respondents

WITH
CIVIL APPLICATION NO. 2428 OF 2017 IN
FIRST APPEAL ST. NO. 32949 OF 2016

The Executive Engineer
L.M.I. Division, Latur
Tq. & Dist. Latur.

Applicant

Versus

1 Murlidhar s/o Chimnaji Gawale
 age 60 years, occ. agril
 r/o Thodga, Tq. Ahmedpur
 Dist. Latur.

2 The State of Maharashtra
 through Collector, Latur.

Respondents

Mr. V.R. Sonwalkar, advocate for applicant.
Mr. B.V. Virdhe, AGP for respondent no. 2.

CORAM : M.S. SONAK, J.

DATE : 25th JANUARY, 2018

ORAL ORDER :

1. In these civil applications, condonation of delay of 1447 days, in instituting appeals against order made by Reference Court, is applied for.

2. Respondent no 1 has already expired and there is delay in taking steps to bring in record his legal representatives in each of the applications. That apart, from perusal of civil applications, it is seen that there is no sufficient cause made out to condone such inordinate delay.

3. In the civil applications, it is stated that the impugned awards were made on 24.02.2012 and thereafter, the advocate intimated this fact to the appellants. The advocate applied for certified copy on 19.03.2012 and, it is stated to have been received on 27.07.2012. Certified copy was then submitted to the appellant/applicant.

4. It is stated that the matter was referred to the higher authorities for taking decision and, there was some delay on the part of the higher authorities in taking decision to file appeal. After the decision was taken, there was further delay in forwarding the case papers to the advocate alongwith Court fees and other details. Finally, it is submitted that all that are the reasons beyond the control of the applicants and, therefore, delay may be condoned. It is also stated that these matters involve public money and, in order to prevent wastage of public money, delay is

required to be condoned.

5. The aforesaid grounds do not constitute sufficient cause to explain inordinate delay of 1447 days. On the basis of such facts and by styling the same as the events beyond the control of applicants, delay cannot be condoned.

6. The averments in the applications seeking condonation, are quite casual and unverifiable. On basis of such routine averments, the acquiring body, cannot, in every case, plead that delay should be condoned, because it is an impersonal agency, which is required to act through its officers. The plight of land losers, who have been deprived of compensation for several years. cannot be ignored.

7. In Pundlik Jalam Patil (Dead) By Lrs. vs. Executive Engineer, Jalgaon, Medium Project and anr., reported in [(2008) 17 SCC 448], the Hon'ble Supreme Court has held that pursuing stale claims and multiplicity of proceedings in no manner subserves public interest. These public interest parameters ought to be kept in mind by the courts while exercising the discretion dealing with the application filed under section 5 of the Limitation Act. Dragging the land-losers to courts of law years after the termination of legal proceedings would not serve any public interest. Settled rights cannot be lightly interfered with by condoning inordinate delay without there being any proper explanation of such delay on the ground of involvement of public revenue. This serves no public interest. Though, the State or its instrumentalities seeking condonation of delay may be entitled to certain amount of latitude but the law of limitation is same for

citizens and for governmental authorities. It would be a different matter where the Government makes out a case where public interest was shown to have suffered owing to acts of fraud or collusion on the part of its officers or agents and where the officers were clearly at cross purposes with it. In a given case, if any, such facts are pleaded and proved they cannot be excluded from consideration. In cases with which we are concerned, no such facts have been either pleaded or proved.

8. In Registrar of Companies vs. Rajshree Sugar & Chemicals Ltd. and ors., reported in [2(2000) 6 SCC 133], the Hon'ble Supreme Court held that though some latitude has to be shown to the Government in deciding the question of delay, that does not give a licence to the officers of the Government to shirk their responsibility to act with reasonable expedition.

9. In Esha Bhattacharjee vs. Managing Committee of Raghunathpur Afar Academy & ors., reported in [3(2013) 12 SCC 649], the Hon'ble Supreme Court has held that an application for condonation of delay should be drafted with careful concern and not in a haphazard manner harbouring the notion that the courts are required to condone delay on the bedrock of the principle that adjudication of a lis on merits is seminal to justice dispensation system. Further, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has held that an application for condonation of delay should not be dealt with in a routine manner on the basis of individual philosophy which is basically subjective. The increasing tendency to perceive delay as a non-serious matter and, hence, lackadaisical propensity can be exhibited in a nonchalant manner requires to be curbed, of course,

within legal parameters.

10. In Postmaster General and Ors. vs. Living Media India Limited and anr., reported in [4(2012) 3 SCC 563], the Hon'ble Supreme Court declined to condone the delay of 427 days in filing the special leave petition by observing that department cannot take advantage of various earlier decisions where a very liberal approach was adopted when it came to condone delay on the part of Government agencies. The Hon'ble Supreme Court observed that the claim on account of impersonal machinery and inherited bureaucratic methodology of making several notes cannot be accepted in view of the modern technologies being used and available. The law of limitation undoubtedly binds everybody including the Government. It is the right time to inform all the government bodies, their agencies and instrumentalities that unless they have reasonable and acceptable explanation for the delay and there was bonafide effort, there is no need to accept the usual explanation that the file was kept pending for several months/years due to considerable degree of procedural red-tape in the process. The government departments are under a special obligation to ensure that they perform their duties with diligence and commitment. Condonation of delay is an exception and should not be used as an anticipated benefit for government department. The law shelters everyone under the same light and should not be swirled for the benefit of a few. Considering the fact that there was no proper explanation offered by the Department for the delay except mentioning of various dates, the Hon'ble Supreme Court held that, the Department has miserably failed to give any acceptable and cogent reasons sufficient to condone such a huge

delay.

11. In Basawaraj and anr. vs. Special Land Acquisition Officer, reported in [(2013) 14 SCC 81] the Hon'ble Supreme Court went on to observe that the law on the issue can be summarised to the effect that where a case has been presented in the court beyond limitation, the applicant has to explain the court as to what was the "sufficient cause" which means an adequate and enough reason which prevented him to approach the court within limitation. In case a party is found to be negligent, or for want of bona fide on his part in the facts and circumstances of the case, or found to have not acted diligently or remained inactive, there cannot be a justified ground to condone the delay. No court could be justified in condoning such an inordinate delay by imposing any condition whatsoever. The application is to be decided only within the parameters laid down by this Court in regard to the condonation of delay. In case there was no sufficient cause to prevent a litigant to approach the court on time condoning the delay without any justification, putting any condition whatsoever, amounts to passing an order in violation of the statutory provisions and it tantamounts to showing utter disregard to the legislature.

12. The Division Bench of this Court in State of Maharashtra and ors. vs. Vithu Kalya Govari and ors., reported in [2008(6) Mh.L.J.239] has observed that the State is not expected to be negligent or to take no action for years and let the matters become time barred on account of its negligence and inaction. The usual reason of "official hassle" or "approval at different levels" is hardly

sufficient to justify condonation of delay of about two years. In law, advantage has accrued to the non-applicants claimants and the same cannot be withdrawn in a mechanical manner and that too without any sufficient cause being shown by the applicants. Despite, awards/judgments of the Courts, which have attained finality, the claimants are not permitted to receive compensation in respect of their lands, which came to be compulsorily acquired, is itself, sufficient prejudice to them. Therefore, before any delay can be condoned and the claimants subjected to further prolonged litigation, the onus to show sufficient cause lies upon the applicant-State.

13. Applying the aforesaid principles to the facts of the present case, there is no case made out to condone the delay. The applications for condonation of delay are therefore dismissed. As a result, the main appeal as well as the application for stay do not survive and the same are also disposed of.

(M.S. SONAK, J.)