

NAFR

HIGH COURT OF CHHATTISGARH, BILASPUR**Writ Petition (C) No. 496 of 2020**

Deepak Yadav S/o Late Santosh Yadav, Aged About 29 Years, Resident
Of Main Road, Torwa, Bilaspur, Tahsil And District Bilaspur
Chhattisgarh

---- Petitioner**Versus**

1. State Of Chhattisgarh Through The Secretary, Department Of Urban
Administration And Development, Mantralaya, Mahanadi Bhawan, Atal
Nagar, Raipur, Chhattisgarh
2. Commissioner, Bilaspur Division, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh
3. Director, Town And Country Planning, Raipur Chhattisgarh
4. Joint Director, Town And Country Planning, Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh
5. Collector Bilaspur, District Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh
6. Additional Collector Bilaspur, District Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh
7. Naresh Kumar Likhmaniya S/o Late Brijmohan Lal Likhmaniya,
Resident Of Maa Shailputri Pans, Main Road, Torwa, Bilaspur, Tahsil
And District Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

---- Respondents

For Petitioner	:	Mr. Anuroop Panda, Advocate
For State	:	Ms. Sunita Jain, Govt. Advocate

Hon'ble Shri Justice P. Sam Koshy**Order On Board****04.02.2020**

1. The challenge in the present writ petition is to the order passed by the

Additional Collector Bilaspur dated 10.12.2008 whereby the Additional Collector exercising the power under Section 237 (2) of the Chhattisgarh Land Revenue Code had granted permission for change of land use in respect of a pond that was situated in that area.

2. At the outset, this Court finds that the writ petition suffers from delay and laches as the writ petition has been filed only on 24th of January, 2020 before this Court i.e. after more than a period of 11 years. 11 years period is a pretty long time to approach the Court for anybody. It has been repeatedly held by the Hon'ble Supreme Court that against an impugned order, if a person wishes to approach the Court invoking writ jurisdiction, he/she should approach the Court within a reasonable period. The reasonable period cannot be stretch to the extent of more than a decade.
3. So far as the delay and laches is concerned, the law in this regard is by now well settled by a series of decisions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The question of delay and laches came to be considered recently by the Supreme Court in the 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, 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

¹ 2013 (12) SCC 179

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 the case of **Uttaranchal Forest Development Corpn. and another v. 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. In the case of **P. S. Sadasivaswamy v. State of Tamil Nadu**³, 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.”

6. In the case of **Bhoop Singh v. Union of India**⁴, it was held as under:-

“8. There is another aspect of the matter. Inordinate and unexplained delay or laches is by itself a ground to refuse relief to the petitioner, irrespective of the merit of his claim. If a person entitled to a relief chooses to remain silent for long, he thereby gives rise to a reasonable belief in the mind of others that he is not interested in claiming that relief. Others are then justified in acting on that belief. This is more so in service matters where vacancies are required to be filled promptly. A person cannot be permitted to challenge the termination of his service after a period of twenty-two years, without any cogent

²(2007) 2 SCC 112

³(1975) 1 SCC 152

⁴(1992) 3 SCC 136

explanation for the inordinate delay, merely because others similarly dismissed had been reinstated as a result of their earlier petitions being allowed.”

7. Very recently in the matter of **Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board and Others v. T.T. Murali Babu**⁵, the Supreme Court has clearly held that the 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.

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 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

⁵ 2014 (4) SCC 108

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. Perusal of the record would show that in the year 2019, the petitioner has already approached the Divisional Commissioner against the order of the Additional Collector and there is no final order passed by the Divisional Commissioner on the said appeal.
9. Given the said fact and in view of the aforementioned authoritative decisions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court, this Court is reluctant to entertain the writ petition and the same stands dismissed on the ground of delay and laches.
10. However, the petitioner would not be precluded from approaching the Divisional Commissioner for getting his appeal decided on its own merits. It is made clear that this Court has not expressed any opinion on the merits of the case and the Divisional Commissioner would be free to decide the appeal of the petitioner in accordance with law.

Sd/-
P. Sam Koshy
Judge