

AFR**HIGH COURT OF CHHATTISGARH, BILASPUR****Reserved on 7-1-2020****Pronounced on 9-1-2020****MCC No. 653 of 2019**

- Radheshyam Sonjhara S/o Devcharan Sonjhara Aged About 55 Years Agriculturist, R/o Village Madai, Post Khamhariya, P.S. Seepat, Tahsil Masturi, District- Baspur, Chhattisgarh(Defendant)

---- Petitioner**Versus**

1. Sanat Kumar Sahu S/o Tiharu Ram Sahu Aged About 35 Years Agriculturist, R/o Village Madai, Post Khamhariya, P.S. Seepat, Tahsil Masturi, District- Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh(Plaintiff)
2. State Of Chhattisgarh Through The Collector , Bilaspur District Bilaspur CG

---- Respondent

For applicant	: Mr. Pradeep Kumar Jogi, Adv.
For Respondent	: Mr. Basant Devangan, Adv.

Hon'ble Mr. Sharad Kumar Gupta, Judge**C.A.V. ORDER**

1. By this order I.A. No. 1/2019 application for condonation of delay in filing the FA is being disposed of.
2. Respondent had filed a civil suit against the appellant for recovery of Rs. 1,84,000/-.
3. The Civil Suit No. 8-B/2014 filed by the respondent was decreed by 3rd Addl District Judge, Bilaspur vide judgment and decree dated 9-2-2017. The appellant was ordered to pay Rs. 1,84,000/- to respondent within a period of 2 months along with 6% per annum interest.
4. Being aggrieved, the appellant preferred the First Civil Appeal before this Court along with an application under order 44 Rule 1 of the CPC.
5. In brief, the appellant's case regarding I.A. No. 1 is that on account of ailment and on account of loss of memory he had forgotten everything, after a big gap of time when he recovered he could remember that decree has been passed against him. He had not taken the treatment from any doctor.

Therefore, the delay may be condoned.

6. In brief case of respondent No. 1 regarding I.A. No. 1 is that appeal is barred by 798 days. No medical documents have been produced by the appellant. Delay is not explained sufficiently. Thus, I.A. No. 1 may be rejected.

7. In the decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of **Shakuntala Devi Jain v. Kuntal Kumari**, (AIR 1969 SC 575), it has been observed in para 7 as under:-

“7. The next question is whether the delay in filing the certified copy or, to put it differently, the delay in refiling the appeal with the certified copy should be condoned under Section 5 of the Limitation Act. If the appellant makes out sufficient cause for the delay, the Court may in its discretion condone the delay. As laid down in *Krishna v. Chathappan* [ILR 13 Madras 269, 271] “Section 5 gives the courts a discretion which in respect of jurisdiction is to be exercised in the way in which judicial power and discretion ought to be exercised upon principles which are well understood; the words “sufficient cause” receiving a liberal construction so as to advance substantial justice when no negligence nor inaction nor want of bona fides is imputable to the appellant.”

8. In the decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of **N. Balakrishnan v. M. Krishnamurthy**, [(1998) 7 SCC 123] it has been observed in para 9 to 13 that :-

“9. It is axiomatic that condonation of delay is a matter of discretion of the court. Section 5 of the Limitation Act does not say that such discretion can be exercised only if the delay is within a certain limit. Length of delay is no matter, acceptability of the explanation is the only criterion. Sometimes delay of the shortest range may be uncondonable due to a want of acceptable explanation whereas in certain other cases, delay of a very long range can be condoned as the explanation thereof is satisfactory. Once the court accepts the explanation as sufficient, it is the result of positive exercise of discretion and normally the superior court should not disturb such finding, much less in revisional jurisdiction, unless the exercise of

discretion was on wholly untenable grounds or arbitrary or perverse. But it is a different matter when the first court refuses to condone the delay. In such cases, the superior court would be free to consider the cause shown for the delay afresh and it is open to such superior court to come to its own finding even untrammelled by the conclusion of the lower court.

10. The reason for such a different stance is thus:

The primary function of a court is to adjudicate the dispute between the parties and to advance substantial justice. The time-limit fixed for approaching the court in different situations is not because on the expiry of such time a bad cause would transform into a good cause.

11. Rules of limitation are not meant to destroy the rights of parties. They are meant to see that parties do not resort to dilatory tactics, but seek their remedy promptly. The object of providing a legal remedy is to repair the damage caused by reason of legal injury. The law of limitation fixes a lifespan for such legal remedy for the redress of the legal injury so suffered. Time is precious and wasted time would never revisit. During the efflux of time, newer causes would sprout up necessitating newer persons to seek legal remedy by approaching the courts. So a lifespan must be fixed for each remedy. Unending period for launching the remedy may lead to unending uncertainty and consequential anarchy. The law of limitation is thus founded on public policy. It is enshrined in the maxim *interest reipublicae ut sit finis litium* (it is for the general welfare that a period be put to litigation). Rules of limitation are not meant to destroy the rights of the parties. They are meant to see that parties do not resort to dilatory tactics but seek their remedy promptly. The idea is that every legal remedy must be kept alive for a legislatively fixed period of time.

12. A court knows that refusal to condone delay would result in foreclosing a suitor from putting forth his cause. There is no presumption that delay in approaching the court is always deliberate. This Court has held that the words “sufficient cause” under Section 5 of the Limitation Act should receive a liberal construction so as to advance substantial justice vide *Shakuntala Devi Jain v. Kuntal Kumari* [AIR 1969 SC 575 : (1969) 1 SCR 1006] and *State of W.B. v.*

Administrator, Howrah Municipality [(1972) 1 SCC 366 : AIR 1972 SC 749] .

13. It must be remembered that in every case of delay, there can be some lapse on the part of the litigant concerned. That alone is not enough to turn down his plea and to shut the door against him. If the explanation does not smack of mala fides or it is not put forth as part of a dilatory strategy, the court must show utmost consideration to the suitor. But when there is reasonable ground to think that the delay was occasioned by the party deliberately to gain time, then the court should lean against acceptance of the explanation. While condoning the delay, the court should not forget the opposite party altogether. It must be borne in mind that he is a loser and he too would have incurred quite large litigation expenses. It would be a salutary guideline that when courts condone the delay due to laches on the part of the applicant, the court shall compensate the opposite party for his loss.”

9. In the decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of **Esha Bhattacharjee v. Raghunathpur Nafar Academy**, [(2013) 12 SCC 649] it has been held that :-

(i) There should be a liberal, pragmatic, justice-oriented, non-pedantic approach while dealing with an application for condonation of delay, for the courts are not supposed to legalise injustice but are obliged to remove injustice.

(ii) The terms “sufficient cause” should be understood in their proper spirit, philosophy and purpose regard being had to the fact that these terms are basically elastic and are to be applied in proper perspective to the obtaining fact-situation.

(iii) Substantial justice being paramount and pivotal the technical considerations should not be given undue and uncalled for emphasis.

(iv) No presumption can be attached to deliberate causation of delay but, gross negligence on the part of the counsel or litigant is to be taken note of.

(v) Lack of bona fides imputable to a party seeking condonation of delay is a significant and relevant fact.

(vi) It is to be kept in mind that adherence to strict proof should not affect public justice and cause public mischief because the courts are required to be vigilant so that in the ultimate eventuate there is no real failure of justice.

(vii) The concept of liberal approach has to encapsulate the conception of reasonableness and it cannot be allowed a totally unfettered free play.

(viii) There is a distinction between inordinate delay and a delay of short duration or few days, for to the former doctrine of prejudice is attracted whereas to the latter it may not be attracted. That apart, the first one warrants strict approach whereas the second calls for a liberal delineation.

(ix) The conduct, behaviour and attitude of a party relating to its inaction or negligence are relevant factors to be taken into consideration. It is so as the fundamental principle is that the courts are required to weigh the scale of balance of justice in respect of both parties and the said principle cannot be given a total go by in the name of liberal approach.

(x) If the explanation offered is concocted or the grounds urged in the application are fanciful, the courts should be vigilant not to expose the other side unnecessarily to face such a litigation.

(xi) It is to be borne in mind that no one gets away with fraud, misrepresentation or interpolation by taking recourse to the technicalities of law of limitation.

(xii) The entire gamut of facts are to be carefully scrutinised and the approach should be based on the paradigm of judicial discretion which is founded on objective reasoning and not on individual perception.

(xiii) The State or a public body or an entity representing a collective cause should be given some acceptable latitude.

(xiv) 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.

(xv) An application for condonation of delay should not be dealt with in a routine manner on the base of individual philosophy which is basically subjective.

(xvi) Though no precise formula can be laid down regard being had to the concept of judicial discretion, yet a conscious effort for achieving consistency and collegiality of the adjudicatory system should be made as that is the ultimate institutional motto.

(xvii) 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 the case in hand, the impugned judgment and decree was passed on 9-2-2017. Appellant applied for copy on 3-5-2019 and it was delivered to him on 4-6-2019. The first appeal could be filed within 60 days from 9-2-2017. Period of 33 days for delivery of copy would be excluded. Appellant has preferred this appeal on 19-7-2019 which is barred by 789 days.

11. This is not the natural and normal conduct of a person not to get the treatment from doctor specially when he is suffering from loss of memory for a long period. More over appellant has not shown that from which date to which date he was suffering from illness and loss of memory and on what date he recovered. More over he has not filed any document regarding alleged ailment and loss of memory.

12. Looking to the above mentioned facts and circumstances of the case, this court finds that in the case in hand, the appellant has raised aforesaid reasons in routine and haphazard manner. Negligence, inaction, want of *bonafide* is imputable to him. The explanation does smack of *malafide* or it is put forth as part of dilatory strategy, he has filed said application deliberately to gain time.

13. Looking to the above mentioned facts and circumstances of the case, this Court finds that aforesaid judicial precedents laid down by Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter **Shakuntala Devi Jain** (supra), **N. Balkrishanan** (supra) and **Esha Bhattacharjee** (supra), are applicable against the appellant.

14. Consequently, this Court finds that appellant failed to satisfy this Court that he had sufficient cause for not preferring the first appeal within prescribed period. Consequently, I.A. No. 1 is rejected.

15. Consequently, instant first appeal is also dismissed.

Sd/-
(Sharad Kumar Gupta)
Judge