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C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

BEFORE THE MADURAI BENCH OF MADRAS HIGH COURT

DATED : 23.02.2024

CORAM:

THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE D.KRISHNAKUMAR
and
THE HONOURABLE MR.JUSTICE R.VIJAYAKUMAR

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

A.Rajangam

... Petitioner in C.M.P./
Appellant in W.A.

-VS-

- 1.The Chief Area Manager,
Indane Area Office,
Indian Oil Corporation Ltd.,
2,Race Course Road,
Chockkikulam,
Madurai-625 002.
- 2.The Chief Regional Manager,
Chennai LPG Regional Office,
Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd.,
“Petro Bhavan”3rd Floor,
New No.82, Old No.47,
T.T.K.Road,
Alwarpet, Chennai-600 018.



WEB COPY

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

3.The Regional Officer,
Bharath Petroleum Corporation Ltd.,
1,Renganathan Gardens,
West Anna Nagar,
Chennai-600 040.

... Respondents in C.M.P. & W.A.

PRAYER in C.M.P.(MD)No.6632 of 2016: Civil Miscellaneous Petition filed under Section 5 of Limitation Act, to condone the delay of 832 days in filing the Writ Appeal.

PRAYER in W.A.(MD)SR. No.26403 of 2016: Writ Appeal filed under Clause 15 of the Letters Patent Act against the order dated 27.02.2014 passed in W.P.(MD) No.17207 of 2013 on the file of this Court.

For Petitioner in CMP and : Mr.P.Krishnasamy
Appellant in W.A.

For Respondents in CMP : Mr.S.P.Maharajan,K.Muraleedharan
and W.A. for R1

: Mr.M.Sridharan for R2

: Mr.S.Nateshraja for R3



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C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

ORDER

[Order of the Court was made by D.KRISHNAKUMAR, J.]

This civil miscellaneous petition is filed to condone the delay of 832 days in filing the above appeal.

2. Heard Mr.P.Krishnasamy, learned counsel appearing for the petitioner, Mr.K.Muraleedharan, learned counsel appearing for the first respondent, Mr.M.Sridharan, learned counsel appearing for the second respondent and Mr.S.Nateshraj, learned counsel appearing for the third respondent, who strongly opposed this petition.

3. The learned counsel for the petitioner would submit that the petitioner was appointed as LPG distributor for Auntipatti/Chakkampatti area, Theni District, by the Indian Oil Corporation in the year 2000 and his licence has been renewed upto 30.09.2014. The only ground raised by the petitioner is that since he is an existing LPG Distributor in that area, his business will be affected in view of the notification dated 21.09.2013 calling for new applications for



WEB COPY

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

allotment of LPG Distributorship at Aundipatti area. Hence, he filed a writ petition in W.P.(MD) No.17207 of 2013 before this Court. Since the writ petition filed by the petitioner was dismissed by the writ Court, challenging the same, he filed the above writ appeal.

4. The learned counsel for the respondents would contend that the writ Court has considered the writ petition filed by the petitioner in WP(MD)No. 17207 of 2013 elaborately and holding that the aforesaid writ petition cannot be maintainable on the ground that the petitioner, who is the existing LPG distributor/rival businessman, has no right to challenge the notification issued by the respondents 1 and 2. Hence, they prayed for dismissal of this petition.

5. An appeal has to be filed within the stipulated period, prescribed under the law. Belated appeals can only be condoned, when sufficient reason is shown before the Court for the delay. The petitioner who seeks condonation of delay therefore must explain the delay of each day. It is true that the courts should not be pedantic in their approach while condoning the delay, and explanation of



WEB COPY

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

each day's delay should not be taken literally, but the fact remains that there must be a reasonable explanation for the delay. In the present case, this delay has not been explained to the satisfaction of the court.

6. The only reasons assigned by the petitioner for the inordinate delay of 832 days in filing the appeal, as stated in paragraph No.8 of the affidavit filed in support of the petition, is after he received the certified copy during March 2014, he was suddenly attacked with Jaundice and could not move outside and also he took treatment at Kerala and hence, he was out of station for more than one year. After returned from Kerala, he was put to severe mental agony due to the said ailment and he tried to contact his counsel during May 2016 but due to summer vacations, he could not contact him and thereafter he contacted his counsel and requested to prepare the writ appeal. Thus, he filed the appeal with a delay of 832 days . The said reason is not acceptable on the ground that though the order was passed on 27.02.2014 and the petitioner received the certified copy of the order during March 2014, he did not file the appeal on time and he has filed the appeal only on 04.04.2016, ie., after 2 years 1 month. Therefore, the



WEB COPY

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

reason stated by the petitioner is not reasonable, satisfactory and not appropriate.

7. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India in the case of **Majji Sannemma @ sanyasirao Vs. Reddy Sridevi & Ors**, in **Civil Appeal No.7696 of 2021, dated 16.12.2021** has held as follows:

"7. At this stage, a few decisions of this Court on delay in filing the appeal are referred to and considered as under:

7.1 In the case of Ramlal, Motilal and Chhotelal (supra), it is observed and held as under:

In construing s. 5 it is relevant to bear in mind two important considerations. The first consideration is that the expiration of the period of limitation prescribed for making an appeal gives rise to a right in favour of the decreeholder to treat the decree as binding between the parties. In other words, when the period of limitation prescribed has expired the decreeholder has obtained a benefit under the law of limitation to treat the decree as beyond challenge, and this legal right which has accrued to the decreeholder by lapse of time should not be lightly disturbed. The other consideration which cannot be ignored is that if sufficient cause for excusing delay is shown discretion is given to the Court to condone delay and admit the appeal. This discretion has been deliberately conferred on the Court in order that judicial power and discretion in that behalf should be exercised to advance substantial justice. As has been observed by the Madras High Court in Krishna v. Chattappan, (1890) J.L.R. 13 Mad. 269, "s. 5 gives the Court a discretion which in respect of jurisdiction is to be exercised in the way in which judicial



WEB COPY

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

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 fide is imputable to the appellant."

*7.2. In the case of **P.K. Ramachandran** (supra), while refusing to condone the delay of 565 days, it is observed that in the absence of reasonable, satisfactory or even appropriate explanation for seeking condonation of delay, the same is not to be condoned lightly. It is further observed that the law of limitation may harshly affect a particular party but it has to be applied with all its rigour when the statute so prescribes and the courts have no power to extend the period of limitation on equitable grounds. It is further observed that while exercising discretion for condoning the delay, the court has to exercise discretion judiciously.*

*7.3. In the case of **Pundlik Jalam Patil** (supra), it is observed as under:*

"The laws of limitation are founded on public policy. Statutes of limitation are sometimes described as "statutes of peace". An unlimited and perpetual threat of limitation creates insecurity and uncertainty; some kind of limitation is essential for public order. The principle is based on the maxim "interest reipublicae ut sit finis litium", that is, the interest of the State requires that there should be end to litigation but at the same time laws of limitation are a means to ensure private justice suppressing fraud and perjury, quickening diligence and preventing oppression. The object for fixing timelimit for litigation is based on public policy fixing a lifespan for legal remedy for the purpose of general welfare. They are meant to see that the



WEB COPY



C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

parties do not resort to dilatory tactics but avail their legal remedies promptly. Salmond in his Jurisprudence states that the laws come to the assistance of the vigilant and not of the sleepy.”

*7.4 In the case of **Basawaraj** (supra), it is observed and held by this Court that the discretion to condone the delay has to be exercised judiciously based on facts and circumstances of each case. It is further observed that the expression “sufficient cause” cannot be liberally interpreted if negligence, inaction or lack of bona fides is attributed to the party. It is further observed that even though limitation may harshly affect rights of a party but it has to be applied with all its rigour when prescribed by statute. It is further observed that in case a party has acted with negligence, lack of bona fides or there is inaction then there cannot be any justified ground for condoning the delay even by imposing conditions. It is observed that each application for condonation of delay has to be decided within the framework laid down by this Court. It is further observed that if courts start condoning delay where no sufficient cause is made out by imposing conditions then that would amount to violation of statutory principles and showing utter disregard to legislature.*

*7.5 In the case of **Pundlik Jalam Patil** (supra), it is observed by this Court that the court cannot enquire into belated and stale claims on the ground of equity. Delay defeats equity. The Courts help those who are vigilant and “do not slumber over their rights”.*

8. Applying the law laid down by this Court in the aforesaid



WEB COPY

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

decisions to the facts of the case on hand and considering the averments in the application for condonation of delay, we are of the opinion that as such no explanation much less a sufficient or a satisfactory explanation had been offered by respondent Nos.1 and 2 herein – appellants before the High Court for condonation of huge delay of 1011 days in preferring the Second Appeal. The High Court is not at all justified in exercising its discretion to condone such a huge delay. The High Court has not exercised the discretion judiciously. The reasoning given by the High Court while condoning huge delay of 1011 days is not germane. Therefore, the High Court has erred in condoning the huge delay of 1011 days in preferring the appeal by respondent Nos.1 and 2 herein – original defendants. Impugned order passed by the High Court is unsustainable both, on law as well as on facts.

9. In view of the above and for the reasons stated above, the present Appeal is Allowed. The impugned order dated 16.09.2021 passed by the High Court condoning the delay of 1011 days in preferring the Second Appeal by respondent Nos.1 and 2 herein is hereby quashed and set aside. Consequently, Second Appeal No.331 of 2021 preferred by respondent Nos.1 and 2 herein stands dismissed on the ground of delay. The present Appeal is accordingly Allowed. However, there shall be no order as to costs.”



WEB COPY



C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

8. In *Esha Bhattacharjee v. Raghunathpur Nafar Academy* [2013

(12) SCC 649], the Hon'ble Supreme Court has culled out the principles applicable to an application for condonation of delay and the same are reproduced hereunder:

“i).....

.....

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.*

.....

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

..

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*



WEB COPY

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

of liberal approach.

.....”

9. In the light of the aforesaid decisions, we are of the view that in the absence of reasonable, satisfactory or even appropriate explanation, such inordinate delay of 832 days cannot be condoned and therefore, this application is liable to be dismissed.

10. Accordingly, the Civil Miscellaneous Petition stands dismissed. Consequently, connected W.A.(MD)SR.No.26403 of 2016 is rejected at the SR stage itself.

[D.K.K., J.] [R.V., J.]
23.02.2024

Index : Yes / No
Internet : Yes / No
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C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR. No.26403 of 2016

D.KRISHNAKUMAR, J.
and
R.VIJAYAKUMAR, J.

PJL

C.M.P.(MD) No.6632 of 2016
in W.A.(MD) SR.No.26403 of 2016

23.02.2024