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**IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH**

CWP-9255-2026

Date of decision: 27.03.2026

Pitamber Lal

....Petitioner

Versus

State of Punjab and others

...Respondents

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE HARPREET SINGH BRAR**Present:** Mr. Raghuvinder Singh, Advocate
for the petitioner.

Mr. Vikas Sonak, AAG, Punjab.

Mr. T.S. Sidhu, Advocate
for respondents No. 3 & 4.**HARPREET SINGH BRAR, J. (ORAL)**

1. The present civil writ petition has been filed under Articles 226/227 of the Constitution of India for issuance of a writ in the nature of *mandamus* directing the respondents, especially, respondents No.2 to 4 to re-fix his last drawn salary after grant and release the benefits of Assured Career Progression Scheme dated 03.11.2006 (Annexure P-1) to the petitioner after completion of 04 and 09 years of service as Sanitary Inspector in the years 2014 and 2020, respectively, which benefits have not been granted to the petitioner till date despite his many representations/reminder in this regard and calculate, grant and release revised pension and consequent revised retiral benefits i.e. gratuity, leave encashment and arrears thereof along with interest @ 18% per annum. Further, to direct respondents No.2 to 4 to decide the representation dated 16.12.2025 (Annexure P-9) of the petitioner which are pending decision before them.



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2. Learned counsel for the petitioner *inter alia* contends that the petitioner joined the Department of Local Government, Punjab on 12.04.1984 and retired as Sanitary Inspector on 31.01.2021. The Government of Punjab introduced an ACP Scheme on 03.11.2006 (Annexure P-1) which grants financial upgradation upon completion of 04, 09 & 14 years of service in a cadre. The petitioner was entitled to the proficiency set up after 04 years of service as Sanitary Inspector in the year 2014 and after 09 years in the year 2020 but was not granted the same. The petitioner submitted several representations to the concerned authorities stating that he had not been granted the financial upgradation benefits after completing 4 and 9 years of service, despite being eligible. He approached both Municipal Council, Nangal and Municipal Council, Shri Anandpur Sahib. Later, an official communication indicated that since he retired from Shri Anandpur Sahib, that office should process his case for the benefits. The petitioner again requested the Municipal Council, Shri Anandpur Sahib, to release his pending benefits. He stated that since he retired from their office, it is their responsibility to grant him the 04 years and 09 years proficiency upgradations in accordance with the applicable rules. The petitioner is entitled to the ACP benefits for which he is fully eligible and denial of the same is arbitrary and discriminatory.

3. He further relies upon the judgment of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Union of India and others Vs. Tarsem Singh 2008 (8) SCC 648*** and submits that the delay and laches cannot be used to defeat the legitimate right of the petitioner to claim ACP benefits.

4. Per contra, learned counsel for respondents No.3 and 4 submits

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that the present petition is barred by the principle of delay and laches. It is contended that the petitioner's right, if any, accrued in the year 2014 upon completion of 4 years of service as Sanitary Inspector and thereafter in 2020 upon completion of 9 years of service. However, the petitioner remained indolent and has approached this Court only after his retirement. As such, he cannot be allowed to revive a dead claim on the pretext that his pensionary benefits are still pending. It is further submitted that the matter pertains to revision of salary, which is not permissible after retirement, and no recurring cause of action survives thereafter. Learned State counsel reiterates the arguments made by learned counsel for respondents No.3 & 4.

5. Having heard learned counsel for the parties and perused the record with their able assistance, it appears that the petitioner retired as Sanitary Inspector on 31.01.2021. He became eligible for 04 years ACP benefits in the year 2014 and for 09 years benefits in the year 2020. However, during his service, he never pressed for these benefits. Considering that the petitioner retired on 31.01.2021 and has remained indolent for more than five years, his claim cannot be entertained at this stage on account of delay and laches.

6. It is trite law that the delay in approaching this Court under Article 226 of the Constitution of India may be condoned if sufficient cause is indicated or a reasonable explanation is provided for the same. However, the facts of the matter at hand indicate otherwise. Learned counsel petitioner has failed to specify any compelling or extenuating circumstance which prevented him/her from approaching this Court for such a long time. Reference in this



regard may be made to the judgment rendered by a three-Judge Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Chairman/Managing Director, U.P. Power Corporation Limited and Others vs. Ram Gopal (2021) 13 SCC 225*, wherein, the following was held:

*“16. Whilst it is true that limitation does not strictly apply to proceedings under Articles 32 or 226 of the Constitution of India, nevertheless, such rights cannot be enforced after an unreasonable lapse of time. Consideration of unexplained delays and inordinate laches would always be relevant in writ actions, and writ courts naturally ought to be reluctant in exercising their discretionary jurisdiction to protect those who have slept over wrongs and allowed illegalities to fester. Fence-sitters cannot be allowed to barge into Courts and cry for their rights at their convenience, and vigilant citizens ought not to be treated alike with mere opportunists. On multiple occasions, it has been restated that there are implicit limitations of time within which writ remedies can be enforced. In *SS Balu v. State of Kerala*, this Court observed thus:*

“17. It is also well settled principle of law that "delay defeats equity". It is now a trite law that where the writ petitioner approaches the High Court after a long delay, reliefs prayed for may be denied to them on the ground of delay and laches irrespective of the fact that they are similarly situated to the other candidates who obtain the benefit of the judgment.”” (emphasis added)

7. Further, in *Mrinmoy Maity vs. Chhanda Koley and others 2024 AIR SC 2717*, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has categorically observed that the High Courts must factor in the delay, while exercising its discretionary powers under Article 226 of the Constitution of India. It was further opined that undue and unexplained delay may be reason enough to dismiss a petition as indolent litigants ought not to be encouraged by writ Courts.

8. In *State of Uttaranchal v. Shiv Charan Singh Bhandari, (2013) 12 SCC 179*, while considering the issue regarding delay and laches and

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referring to earlier judgments on the issue, a Two-Judge Bench of the Hon'ble Supreme Court opined that repeated representations made will not keep the issues alive. A stale or a dead issue/dispute cannot be got revived even if such a representation has either been decided by the authority or got decided by getting a direction from the court as the issue regarding delay and laches is to be decided with reference to original cause of action and not with reference to any such order passed. Delay and 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, in a situation of that nature, will not be attracted as it is well settled that law leans in favour of those who are alert and vigilant.

9. In *Union of India and others v. M. K. Sarkar, (2010) 2 SCC 59*, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has ruled that when a belated representation in regard to a 'stale' or 'dead' issue/dispute is considered and decided, in compliance with a direction by the court/tribunal to do so, the date of such decision cannot be considered as furnishing a fresh cause of action for reviving the 'dead' issue or time-barred dispute. The issue of limitation or delay and laches should be considered with reference to the original cause of action and not with reference to the date on which an order is passed in compliance with a Court's direction. Neither a court's direction to consider a representation issued without examining the merits, nor a decision given in compliance with such direction, will extend the limitation, or erase the delay and laches.

10. Moreover, with regards to issues regarding fixation of pay, the position of law has been settled by a two-Judge Bench Hon'ble Supreme Court in *M.R. Gupta v. Union of India, (1995) 5 SCC 628* and has been reaffirmed



by a full bench decision of this Court in *Saroj Kumari v. State of Punjab, 1998(3) SCT 664*. Accordingly, so long as an employee *is in service*, a petition claiming re-fixation of pay is not barred by limitation or the doctrine of laches, as the denial of benefit occurs every month when the salary is paid, thereby giving rise to a fresh cause of action, based on continuing wrong. Such a case is not a case of one time action like the case of termination or dismissal from service. However, payment of arrears can be restricted to a reasonable period. Three years and two months has been considered to be a reasonable period as that is the period for which a person can ask for the payment of arrears before a Civil Court. However, once an employee *ceases to be in service*, the wrong fixation of pay can no longer be treated as a continuing wrong. Consequently, a petition seeking such fixation, if instituted after cessation of service and with substantial delay, is liable to be dismissed on the ground of delay and laches. Reliance can be placed on the judgement of the co-ordinate bench of this Court in *Prem Nath v. State of Punjab, 2018(2) SCT 687*, wherein the petitioners approached this Court seeking correct fixation of pay much subsequent to their superannuation. While dismissing the petition on the ground of delay and laches, the Court held as follows:

“10. The reliance placed by counsel upon the judgment in Saroj Kumar's case, is wholly misplaced. The observations and aspect of delay in Saroj Kumar's case, were in the light of the judgment of the Supreme Court in M.R. Gupta v. Union of India and others, 1996(1) S.C.T 8 : 1995(4) RSJ 502. In M.R. Gupta's case (supra), it had been categorically held that so long as an employee "is in service" a fresh cause of action arises every month when he is getting his monthly salary on the basis of a wrong calculation made contrary to rules. It was further held that



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the claim to be awarded the correct salary on the basis of a proper pay fixation "is a right which subsists during the entire tenure of service"

11. In the present case, however, the petitioners choose not to agitate their claim while in service. It is much subsequent to their superannuation that they have woken up and seek to gain impetus from certain decisions that may have been rendered in the case of similarly situated employees.” (emphasis supplied)

11. In the present case, the Petitioner has approached this Court after a considerable lapse of time. Repeated representations will not keep the issues alive and no plausible explanation has been offered by learned counsel for the petitioner for the delay in filing the present petition.

12. In view of the discussion above, this Court does not find it appropriate to invoke its extraordinary writ jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India. Accordingly, the present petition stands dismissed.

(HARPREET SINGH BRAR)
JUDGE

27.03.2026

Neha

Whether speaking/reasoned	:	Yes/No
Whether reportable	:	Yes/No