

as by interest of the same, the claimant will be able to meet out the said expenses in future.

44. In view of above and considering over all facts and circumstances of the case, the appeal filed by the Insurance Company is misconceived and the grounds taken therein are not tenable in the eyes of law and liable to be dismissed and the appeal filed by the claimant is liable to be partly allowed and compensation is liable to be enhanced as indicated above and accordingly the claimant is entitled for a total sum of Rs.9,52,600+Rs.1,00,000+Rs.50,000+Rs.2,00,000 i.e. Rs.13,02,600/- as compensation alongwith interest awarded by the tribunal.

45. With the aforesaid, the F.A.F.O. No.137 of 2017 filed by the Insurance Company is hereby **dismissed** and the F.A.F.O. No.217 of 2017 filed by the claimant for enhancement is **partly allowed**. The judgment and award dated 23.11.2016 is, accordingly, modified. The enhanced amount alongwith remaining, if any, alongwith interest till the date of deposit shall be deposited by the Insurance Company within a period of four weeks from today before the concerned tribunal. No order as to costs.

46. The amount of statutory deposit made before this Court for adjustment in compensation and the tribunal's records shall be remitted to the concerned tribunal forthwith and in any case within a period of three weeks from today.

(2025) 3 ILRA 23
APPELLATE JURISDICTION
CIVIL SIDE
DATED: LUCKNOW 17.03.2025

BEFORE

THE HON'BLE ABDUL MOIN, J.

First Appeal From Order Defective No. 178 of 2024

Dig UP Police Headquarters Allahabad & Anr. ...Appellants
Versus
Smt. Mithlesh & Ors. ...Respondents

Counsel for the Appellants:
 C.S.C.

Counsel for the Respondents:

Civil Law — Limitation Act, 1963 - Section 5 — Delay Condonation — Departmental appeal filed with delay of 700 days — St. failed to furnish sufficient cause — Casual and negligent conduct — Delay attributed to administrative lethargy and bureaucratic red tape — Court held that such conduct cannot justify condonation — Exercise of discretion in condoning delay must be judicious — Delay not explained satisfactorily Government not entitled to special treatment under limitation law — Appeal dismissed. (Paras 7, 8, 14, and 15)

HELD:

From a perusal of the averments made in the application for condonation of delay duly supported by an affidavit and the supplementary affidavit, it emerges that it took the government almost ten months to take a decision for filing of the appeal and despite the appeal having been allegedly drafted in December 2023, it took the pairkar almost 11 months in order to find out as to whether the appeal has in fact been filed or not. This itself indicates the cavalier and casual attitude on the part of the officials in filing the appeal before this Court which has resulted in a delay of 700 days. (Para 7)

In the aforesaid judgments, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has been of the view that where a case has been presented in the Court beyond limitation, the person 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. Though limitation may harshly affect the rights of a party, it has to be applied with all rigour when prescribed by statute. (Para 14)

In the instant case, as already indicated above, there has been a casual, cavalier and lackadaisical approach on the part of the appellants all along inasmuch as, it has taken the St. almost ten months to take a decision for filing of the appeal and despite the appeal having been allegedly prepared, it took the pairokar eleven months to realize that the appeal has not been filed. This is sheer negligence on the part of the appellants and thus, the grounds, as taken in the applications for condonation of delay, do not inspire confidence and consequently, the applications for condonation of delay merit to be rejected and are accordingly, rejected. (Para 15)

Application dismissed. (E-14)

List of Cases cited:

1. Chief Post Master General & ors. Vs Living Media India Ltd. & anr. reported in (2012) 3 SCC 563
2. Union of India Vs Central Tibetan Schools Admin & ors. reported in (2021) SCC OnLine 119
3. Commissioner of Customs, Chennai & ors. Volex Interconnect (India) Pvt. Ltd. reported in (2022) 3 SCC 159
4. Pathupati Subba Reddy (Died) by L.Rs. & ors. Vs The Special Deputy Collector (LA) [2024] 4 S.C.R. 241
5. St. of M.P. Vs Ramkumar Choudhary reported in 2024 INSC 932

(Delivered by Hon'ble Abdul Moin, J.)

(Order on I.A. Nos.1/2024 and 3/2025)

1. Heard learned Standing counsel for the appellant.

2. These are the applications for condonation of delay in filing the appeal and the supplementary affidavit in support of the said application.

3. Delay is of 700 days.

4. Notice has been issued to the respondents by this Court on 15.01.2025.

5. As per the office report dated 07.03.2025, notice has been served on respondents No.1 & 3 personally and on respondents No.2 & 4 through mother and thus, as per the office report dated 07.03.2025, service of notice upon the respondents is sufficient. However, nobody responds on behalf of the respondents, as such, the Court proceeds to hear and decide the applications for condonation of delay.

6. Learned Standing counsel has placed reliance on the applications for condonation of delay as well as the supplementary affidavit justifying the delay in filing the appeal in order to explain the delay of 700 days which has occurred in filing of the appeal. He contends that the judgment was pronounced by the learned Tribunal on 30.09.2022. The learned Advocate conducting the said matter informed about the said judgment through his letter dated 03.12.2022. In turn, the Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Rampur has informed through his letter dated 16.12.2022 about the letter of the learned Advocate and about the said judgment having been passed by the Tribunal. Thereafter, a letter was sent to the Home (Police) Section- 02, Uttar Pradesh Government, Lucknow regarding filing of the appeal. Almost ten months later, the government has granted permission for filing of an appeal through its letter dated 06.10.2023. Thereafter, the

pairokar had contacted the office of the learned Chief Standing counsel and the appeal was prepared in December 2023. Sanguine in the belief that the appeal has been filed, the pairokar went away and only came back in November 2024 to inquire about the status of the appeal from which it transpired that an application for condonation of delay is to be filed and thereafter, the application of condonation along with the appeal itself has been filed before this Court on 02.12.2024.

7. From a perusal of the averments made in the application for condonation of delay duly supported by an affidavit and the supplementary affidavit, it emerges that it took the government almost ten months to take a decision for filing of the appeal and despite the appeal having been allegedly drafted in December 2023, it took the pairokar almost 11 months in order to find out as to whether the appeal has in fact been filed or not. This itself indicates the cavalier and casual attitude on the part of the officials in filing the appeal before this Court which has resulted in a delay of 700 days.

8. The delay which often occurs on the part of the department in filing the appeals/revisions has been considered threadbare by the Apex Court in the case of **Chief Post Master General & Ors. vs. Living Media India Ltd. & Anr. reported in (2012) 3 SCC 563** wherein the Apex Court after placing reliance on various earlier judgments of the Apex Court, including a few over which the learned Standing counsel has also placed reliance, held as under:-

"27. It is not in dispute that the person(s) concerned were well aware or conversant with the issues involved

including the prescribed period of limitation for taking up the matter by way of filing a special leave petition in this Court. They cannot claim that they have a separate period of limitation when the Department was possessed with competent persons familiar with court proceedings. In the absence of plausible and acceptable explanation, we are posing a question why the delay is to be condoned mechanically merely because the Government or a wing of the Government is a party before us.

28. Though we are conscious of the fact that in a matter of condonation of delay when there was no gross negligence or deliberate inaction or lack of bona fides, a liberal concession has to be adopted to advance substantial justice, we are of the view that in the facts and circumstances, the Department cannot take advantage of various earlier decisions. 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.

29. In our view, 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 bona fide 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 the government departments. The law shelters everyone under the same light and

should not be swirled for the benefit of a few."

9. Likewise, the Apex Court in the case of **Union of India vs. Central Tibetan Schools Admin and Ors.** reported in (2021) SCC OnLine 119 has held as under:-

"4. We have heard the learned Additional Solicitor General for some time and must note that the only error which seems to have occurred in the impugned order [Union of India v. Central Tibetan Schools Admin., 2018 SCC OnLine Del 13371] is of noticing that it is not an illiterate litigant because the manner in which the Government is prosecuting its appeal reflects nothing better! The mighty Government of India is manned with a large Legal Department having numerous officers and advocates. The excuse given for the delay is, to say the least, preposterous.

5. We have repeatedly been counselling through our orders various Government Departments, State Governments and other public authorities that they must learn to file appeals in time and set their house in order so far as the Legal Department is concerned, more so as technology assists them. This appears to be falling on deaf ears despite costs having been imposed in a number of matters with the direction to recover it from the officers responsible for the delay as we are of the view that these officers must be made accountable. It has not had any salutary effect and that the present matter should have been brought up, really takes the cake!

6. The aforesaid itself shows the casual manner in which the petitioner has approached this Court without any cogent or plausible ground for condonation of

delay. In fact, other than the lethargy and incompetence of the petitioner, there is nothing which has been put on record. We have repeatedly discouraged State Governments and public authorities in adopting an approach that they can walk in to the Supreme Court as and when they please ignoring the period of limitation prescribed by the statutes, as if the Limitation statute does not apply to them. In this behalf, suffice to refer to our judgment in State of M.P.v.Bherulal [State of M.P.v.Bherulal, (2020) 10 SCC 654 : (2021) 1 SCC (Civ) 101 : (2021) 1 SCC (Cri) 117 : (2021) 1 SCC (L&S) 84] and State of Odisha v. Sunanda Mahakuda [State of Odisha v. Sunanda Mahakuda, (2021) 11 SCC 560]. The leeway which was given to the Government/public authorities on account of innate inefficiencies was the result of certain orders of this Court which came at a time when technology had not advanced and thus, greater indulgence was shown. This position is no more prevalent and the current legal position has been elucidated by the judgment of this Court in Postmaster General v. Living Media (India) Ltd. [Postmaster General v. Living Media (India) Ltd., (2012) 3 SCC 563 : (2012) 2 SCC (Civ) 327 : (2012) 2 SCC (Cri) 580 : (2012) 1 SCC (L&S) 649]. Despite this, there seems to be a little change in the approach of the Government and public authorities.

7. We have also categorised such kind of cases as "certificate cases" filed with the only object to obtain a quietus from the Supreme Court on the ground that nothing could be done because the highest Court has dismissed the appeal. The objective is to complete a mere formality and save the skin of the officers who may be in default in following the due process or may have done it deliberately. We have

deprecated such practice and process and we do so again. We refuse to grant such certificates and if the Government/public authorities suffer losses, it is time when officers concerned responsible for the same, bear the consequences. The irony, emphasised by us repeatedly, is that no action is ever taken against the officers and if the Court pushes it, some mild warning is all that happens.

8. *Looking to the gross negligence and the impunity with which the Union of India had approached this Court in a matter like this, we consider it appropriate to impose special costs of Rs 1 lakh in this case to be recovered from the officer(s) concerned, to be deposited with the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Welfare Fund within four weeks.*

9. *The special leave petitions are dismissed as time-barred in terms aforesaid. Pending application stands disposed of."*

10. Incidentally, the judgment of the Apex Court in the case of **Central Tibetan Schools (supra)** is a judgment by three Hon'ble Judges.

11. The Apex Court in the case of **Commissioner of Customs, Chennai vs. Volex Interconnect (India) Pvt. Ltd.** reported in (2022) 3 SCC 159 has held as under:-

"2. This is one more case of what we have already categorised as "certificate cases" and we do not delve further, as the purpose seems just to bring the matter to the Courts to put a closure to the same without giving any cogent explanation for condonation of delay in terms of Postmaster Generalv. Living Media (India) Ltd. [Postmaster Generalv. Living Media (India) Ltd., (2012) 3 SCC 563 : (2012) 2

SCC (Civ) 327 : (2012) 2 SCC (Cri) 580 : (2012) 1 SCC (L&S) 649].

3. *We have also examined the case on merits despite the aforesaid and find that a correct view has been taken by the Tribunal as the Department itself is treating the assessee in the same manner for subsequent years so far as classification is concerned.*

4. *We are thus of the view that for both the aforesaid reasons, the appeal is not liable to be entertained. The appeal is dismissed accordingly."*

12. Recently, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Pathupati Subba Reddy (Died) by L.Rs. & Ors. vs. The Special Deputy Collector (LA) [2024] 4 S.C.R. 241** has held as under:-

"16. Generally, the courts have adopted a very liberal approach in construing the phrase 'sufficient cause' used in Section 5 of the Limitation Act in order to condone the delay to enable the courts to do substantial justice and to apply law in a meaningful manner which subserves the ends of justice. In Collector, Land Acquisition, Anantnag and Ors. vs. Katiji and Ors.2, this Court in advocating the liberal approach in condoning the delay for 'sufficient cause' held that ordinarily a litigant does not stand to benefit by lodging an appeal late; it is not necessary to explain every day's delay in filing the appeal; and since sometimes refusal to condone delay may result in throwing out a meritorious matter, it is necessary in the interest of justice that cause of substantial justice should be allowed to prevail upon technical considerations and if the delay is not deliberate, it ought to be condoned. Notwithstanding the above, howsoever, liberal approach is adopted in condoning

the delay, existence of 'sufficient cause' for not filing the appeal in time, is a condition precedent for exercising the discretionary power to condone the delay. The phrases liberal approach, justice-oriented approach and cause for the advancement of 'substantial justice cannot be employed to defeat the law of limitation so as to allow stale matters or as a matter of fact dead matters to be revived and re-opened by taking aid of Section 5 of the Limitation. Act.

17. It must always be borne in mind that while construing 'sufficient cause' in deciding application under Section 5 of the Act, that on the expiry of the period of limitation prescribed for filing an appeal, substantive right in favour of a decree-holder accrues and this right ought not to be lightly disturbed. The decree-holder treats the decree to be binding with the lapse of time and may proceed on such assumption creating new rights.

18. This Court as far back in 1962 in the case of *Ramlal, Motilal And Chhotelal vs. Rewa Coalfields Ltd* has emphasized that even after sufficient cause has been shown by a party for not filing an appeal within time, the said party is not entitled to the condonation of delay as excusing the delay is the discretionary jurisdiction vested with the court. The court, despite establishment of a 'sufficient cause' for various reasons, may refuse to condone the delay depending upon the bona fides of the party."

13. Again, the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **State of Madhya Pradesh vs. Ramkumar Choudhary** reported in 2024 INSC 932 has held as under:-

"5. The legal position is that where a case has been presented in the Court beyond limitation, the petitioner 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 *Majji Sannemma v. Reddy Sridevi*, it was held by this Court that even though limitation may harshly affect the rights of a party, it has to be applied with all its rigour when prescribed by statute. A reference was also made to the decision of this Court in *Ajay Dabra v. Pyare Ram* wherein, it was held as follows:

"13. This Court in the case of *Basawaraj v. Special Land Acquisition Officer* ((2013) 14 SCC 81] while rejecting an application for condonation of delay for lack of sufficient cause has concluded in Paragraph 15 as follows:

"15. 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."

14. Therefore, we are of the considered opinion that the High Court did not commit any mistake in dismissing the delay condonation application of the present appellant."

Thus, it is crystal clear that the discretion to condone the delay has to be exercised judiciously based on facts and circumstances of each case and that, the expression 'sufficient cause' cannot be liberally interpreted, if negligence, inaction or lack of *bona fides* is attributed to the party.

5.1. In *Union of India v. Jahangir Byramji Jeejeebhoy (D) through his legal heir (2024) SCC OnLine SC 489* wherein, one of us (J.B.Pardiwala, J) was a member, after referring to various decisions on the issue, it was in unequivocal terms observed by this Court that delay should not be excused as a matter of generosity and rendering substantial justice is not to cause prejudice to the opposite party. The relevant passage of the same is profitably extracted below:

"24. In the aforesaid circumstances, we made it very clear that we are not going to look into the merits of the matter as long as we are not convinced that sufficient cause has been made out for condonation of such a long and inordinate delay.

25. It hardly matters whether a litigant is a private party or a State or Union of India when it comes to condoning the gross delay of more than 12 years. If the litigant chooses to approach the court long after the lapse of the time prescribed under the relevant provisions of the law, then he cannot turn around and say that no prejudice would be caused to either side by the delay being condoned. This litigation between the parties started sometime in 1981. We are in 2024. Almost 43 years have elapsed. However, till date the

respondent has not been able to reap the fruits of his decree. It would be a mockery of justice if we condone the delay of 12 years and 158 days and once again ask the respondent to undergo the rigmarole of the legal proceedings.

26. The length of the delay is a relevant matter which the court must take into consideration while considering whether the delay should be condoned or not. From the tenor of the approach of the appellants, it appears that they want to fix their own period of limitation for instituting the proceedings for which law has prescribed a period of limitation. Once it is held that a party has lost his right to have the matter considered on merits because of his own inaction for a long, it cannot be presumed to be non-deliberate delay and in such circumstances of the case, he cannot be heard to plead that the substantial justice deserves to be preferred as against the technical considerations. While considering the plea for condonation of delay, the court must not start with the merits of the main matter. The court owes a duty to first ascertain the *bona fides* of the explanation offered by the party seeking condonation. It is only if the sufficient cause assigned by the litigant and the opposition of the other side is equally balanced that the court may bring into aid the merits of the matter for the purpose of condoning the delay.

27. We are of the view that the question of limitation is not merely a technical consideration. The rules of limitation are based on the principles of sound public policy and principles of equity. We should not keep the 'Sword of Damocles' hanging over the head of the respondent for indefinite period of time to be determined at the whims and fancies of the appellants.

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xxx

xxx

34. In view of the aforesaid, we have reached to the conclusion that the High Court committed no error much less any error of law in passing the impugned order. Even otherwise, the High Court was exercising its supervisory jurisdiction under Article 227 of the Constitution of India.

35. In a plethora of decisions of this Court, it has been said that delay should not be excused as a matter of generosity. Rendering substantial justice is not to cause prejudice to the opposite party. The appellants have failed to prove that they were reasonably diligent in prosecuting the matter and this vital test for condoning the delay is not satisfied in this case.

36. For all the foregoing reasons, this appeal fails and is hereby dismissed. There shall be no order as to costs."

Applying the above legal proposition to the facts of the present case, we are of the opinion that the High Court correctly refused to condone the delay and dismissed the appeal by observing that such inordinate delay was not explained satisfactorily, no sufficient cause was shown for the same, and no plausible reason was put forth by the State. Therefore, we are inclined to reject this petition at the threshold."

14. In the aforesaid judgments, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has been of the view that where a case has been presented in the Court beyond limitation, the person 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. Though limitation may harshly affect the

rights of a party, it has to be applied with all rigour when prescribed by statute.

15. In the instant case, as already indicated above, there has been a casual, cavalier and lackadaisical approach on the part of the appellants all along inasmuch as, it has taken the State almost ten months to take a decision for filing of the appeal and despite the appeal having been allegedly prepared, it took the pairokar eleven months to realize that the appeal has not been filed. This is sheer negligence on the part of the appellants and thus, the grounds, as taken in the applications for condonation of delay, do not inspire confidence and consequently, the applications for condonation of delay merit to be rejected and are accordingly, rejected.

(Order on the Memo of Revision)

16. Since the applications for condonation of delay have been rejected, the revision also stands **dismissed**.

(2025) 3 ILRA 30

APPELLATE JURISDICTION

CIVIL SIDE

DATED: LUCKNOW 05.03.2025

BEFORE

THE HON'BLE RAJNISH KUMAR, J.

First Appeal From Order No. 182 of 2023

TATA AIG General Insurance Company Ltd. ...Appellant

VERSUS

Aman Kumar & Ors. ...Respondents

Counsel for the Appellant:

Deepak Kumar Agarwal

Counsel for the Respondents:

Arunendra Nath Mishra, Praveen Chandra