

IN THE HIGH COURT OF HIMACHAL PRADESH, SHIMLA

CWP No. 3374/2024/ Decided on: 30.07.2025

Dr. Daljit SinghPetitioner

Versus

State of H.P. & Ors.Respondents.

Coram

Ms. Justice Jyotsna Rewal Dua, Judge.

Whether approved for reporting? Yes.

For the petitioner: Mr. Virbahadur Verma, Advocate.

For the respondents: Mr. Y.P.S. Dhaulta, Additional

Advocate General

Jyotsna Rewal Đua , J

Whether extension in retirement age provided to persons suffering from benchmark physical disabilities, could be denied to the petitioner on the ground that he had suffered benchmark disability during service, his entry into service was not against handicapped quota, is the question involved in this petition.

Petitioner retired as District Ayurvedic Officer. He is aggrieved by the action of the respondents in retiring him from service

Whether reporters of the local papers may be allowed to see the judgment?

on 31.05.2015 at the age of 58 years without giving him benefit of enhanced retiral age up-to 60 years as was being extended to the persons with disabilities at the relevant time. Petitioner's case is that he had acquired 51% permanent locomotor disability during service and being a disabled person, was entitled to the benefit of a circular that had enhanced the retirement age to 60 years for persons with physical disability.

The respondents have justified retiring the petitioner at the age of 58 years on the ground that he was neither inducted into service as a person with physical disability nor against the post reserved for physically challenged person. Petitioner having acquired disability during service, was not entitled to the benefit of circular extending retirement age of persons with physical disabilities, who had been inducted into service as such.

2. Heard learned counsel for the parties and considered the case file.

3, The case

3(i) Petitioner was appointed as Ayurvedic Medical Officer in the respondents-Department on 06.03.1982. He was further promoted to the post of District Ayurvedic Officer. While in service, he acquired locomotor disability, which was assessed at 51% permanent physical impairment by the Medical Board at District Hospital

Dharamshala on 24.11.2001. The medical certificate to this effect has been appended with the writ petition and is not in dispute.

The respondents-State issued an Office Memorandum 3(ii) on 29.03.2013 enhancing the retirement age from 58 years to 60 years in respect of blind Government employees. This Office Memorandum was questioned in Krishan Chand Vs. State of H.P. & Ors.² before the Himachal Pradesh State Administrative Tribunal. The petitioner therein suffered from hearing impairment disability and had contended that Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 was discriminatory qua other physically disabled categories. After taking into consideration the provisions of Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, (the Act in short) (1995, the original application was allowed and respondents were directed to modify Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 to the extent that benefit of enhancement of retirement age was also to be extended to the hearing impaired i.e. category to which the petitioner therein belonged.

The respondents-State questioned the above decision in **State of H.P. & Ors. Vs. Krishan Chand**³. The Hon'ble Division Bench *inter-alia* relied upon **State of Punjab & Ors. Vs. Bhupinder Singh**⁴, wherein it was held that all persons suffering from one or the

² OA No.1004/2015 decided on 10.01.2018

 $^{^{3}}$ CWP No. 1577/2018-H decided on 05.11.2018

⁴ LPA No.1719/2011 decided on 25.09.2012

other disability as defined in the Act, were entitled to be treated at par & they could not be treated differently from the other disabled persons, falling within the definition of 2(i) of the Act, and dismissed the petition. *State of H.P. & Ors. Vs. Krishan Chand*⁵ preferred by the respondents-State against the above decisions was also dismissed.

3(iii) For completion of facts pertaining to the litigation with refence to the Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013, it needs to be noticed that the respondents-State came out with another Office Memorandum dated 04.11.2019 withdrawing the Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013. The validity of Office Memorandum dated 04.11.2019 was put to test in **Ses Ram Vs. State of H.P. & Ors.** The said petitions were dismissed by holding that fixation of retirement age of persons with disabilities is within the domain of the State Government.

Whether Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 extending retirement age for physically disabled could be withdrawn under Office Memorandum dated 04.11.2019, was one of the issues in *Kashmiri Lal Sharma Vs. H.P. State Electricity Board Ltd.* & *Anr.*⁷ Validity of Office Memorandum dated 04.11.2019 was affirmed by the Hon'ble Apex Court.

⁵ Special Leave to Appeal © D. No(s). 18076/2019 decided on 13.09.2019

⁶ CWP No.851/2020 decided a/w connected matters on 31.07.2020

3(iv) Continuing further with litigation pertaining to Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 and its consequences till it was withdrawn on 04.11.2019: -

In *Janmej Singh Vs. State of H.P. & Anr.*⁸ petitioner had retired on 30.09.2018 on attaining the age of 58 years. It was held that at the time of petitioner's retirement, Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 was still in force, he was, thus, entitled to continue in service up-to the age of 60 years. That the petitioner therein had been prevented by the act of respondents from serving up till 60 years of age or up-to 04.11.2019 (date of withdrawal of Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013) despite the fact that he was ready and willing to serve, therefore, principle of 'no work no pay' shall not be applicable as held in *Union of India and others vs. K.V. Janki Raman*⁹. Petitioner was held entitled for full wages from 30.09.2018 till 04.11.2019 with all consequential benefits having impact on his pension. Relevant paras from the judgment are as under: -

"18. It is an admitted fact that petitioner stands retired on 30.09.2018, on attaining the age of 58 years, whereas in terms of the Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2023 and pronouncements of Courts, petitioner was entitled for serving up till the age of 60 years, i.e., 30.09.2020.

19. It is apt to notice and record that Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 was withdrawn vide Office Memorandum dated 04.11.2019, and clarificatory Office Memorandum dated 22.2.2020

9 (1991) 4 SCC 109

⁸ CWPOA No. 5333/2020 decided a/w connected matter on 14.09.2023

was also issued in this regard. These Office Memorandams read as under:

Office Memorandum dated 29.3.2013:

"No.Fin(C)-A(3)-2/2013
Government of Himachal Pradesh
Finance (Regulations) Department
Dated Shimla-171002 29th March, 2013

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Regarding enhancement of retirement age from 58 years to 60 years in respect of blind government employees.

The undersigned is directed to refer to the subjected cited above and to say that the mater for enhancement in the retirement age from 58 years to 60 years in respect of blind government Employees was under consideration of the Government for some time past. After careful consideration of the matter, the Governor, Himachal Pradesh is pleased to order that the retirement age of the Blind Government Servants is enhanced from 58 years to 60 years with immediate effect.

Special Secretary (Fin) to the Government of Himachal Pradesh"

Office Memorandum dated 4.11.2019:

"No.Fin(C)-A(3)-2/2013
Government of Himachal Pradesh
Finance (Regulations) Department
Dated Shimla-171002, the 4th Nov., 2019

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Regarding retirement age in respect of blind Government employees of the State Government.

The undersigned is directed to refer to this department Office Memorandum of even number dated 29th March, 2013 on the above cited subject vide which retirement age from 58 years to 60 years in respect of blind Government employees was enhanced. Now after careful consideration of the matter the Governor, Himachal Pradesh is pleased to order that

this Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 be hereby withdrawn with immediately effect, in public interest.

Special Secretary (Fin) to the Government of Himachal Pradesh"

Office Memorandum dated 22.2.2020:

"No.Fin(C)-B(15)-14/2014
Government of Himachal Pradesh Finance
(Regulations) Department
Dated Shimla-171002, 22.02.2020

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Clarification to regulate the cases of retirement age of blind government employees after issuance of OM No. Fin(C)- A(3)-2/2013 dated 04-11-2019.

I am directed to invite a reference to this Department O.M. No. Fin(C)-A(3)-2/2013 dated 04-11-2019 vide which the retirement age of blind Government servant(s) enhanced from 58 years to 60 years vide O.M. No. Fin(C)-A(3)-2/2013 dated 29-03-2013, has been withdrawn with immediate effect.

- 2. The Finance Department is receiving various references seeking clarification with regard to retirement of blind employees who have not been retired from services till date, after attaining the age of 58 years, in pursuance to OM No. Fin(C)-A(3)-2/2013 dated 04-11-2019.
- Jen this regard, it is clarified that such incumbents shall be deemed to have retired from Government service on 04- 11-2019 i.e. from the date of issuance of O.M. dated 04-11- 2019. Those blind Government servants who are still in service even after 04-11-2019 shall be treated as reemployed w.e.f. 05-11-2019 onwards till the issuance of these instructions or till the termination of services, whichever is earlier. The pay of incumbent(s) for this period shall be regulated in terms of this Department's OM No. Fin(C)B(7)13/2009 dated 23-03-2017 and 25-03- 2017, as the case may be.
- 4. This clarification may be brought to the notice of all concerned for compliance.

Under Secretary (Finance) to the Government of Himachal Pradesh"

20. Admittedly, Office Memorandum dated 29.3.2013 was withdrawn vide Notification dated 4.11.2019 with immediate effect. Thereafter, Office Memorandum dated 22.2.2020 was issued by the Finance (Regulations) Department of the State Government, whereby it was clarified that benefit of enhanced service after the age of 58 years, extended vide Office Memorandum dated 29.3.2013, shall be available upto withdrawal of Office Memorandum dated

4.11.2019. It was further clarified vide Office Memorandum dated 22.2.2020 that the persons continuing in service even after 4.11.2019, in furtherance to Office Memorandum dated 29.3.2013, shall be considered as re-employed by the Department w.e.f. 5.11.2019 till issuance of Office Memorandum dated 22.2.2020 or till the termination of services, whichever is earlier.

- 21. Therefore, right of employees, like petitioner, for continuing in service as per Office Memorandum dated 29.3.2013, read with pronouncements of the Courts, was in existence till 4.11.2019 and it stands extinguished with issuance of Office Memorandum dated 4.11.2019. Therefore, petitioners shall be entitled for benefit of continuation in service, after age of 58 years, only till 4.11.2019.
- 22. In present case, petitioner has been prevented by the act of respondents from serving up till 60 years of age or upto 04.11.2019, despite the fact that he was ready and willing to serve, therefore, principle of 'no work no pay' shall not be applicable in the present case as held in Union of India and others vs. K.V. Janki Raman, AIR 1991 SC 2010: (1991) 4 SCC 109: (1931) 3 SCR 790.
- 23. In view of the above, petitioner shall be entitled for full wages from 30.09.2018 till 04.11.2019 with all consequential benefits having impact on his pension."

3(iv)(b) The above decision was followed in *Balbir Singh Vs.*State of H.P. & Ors. 10, to hold that the petitioner was entitled to continue to serve till the age of 60 years on the basis of notification dated 29.03.2013 till it was withdrawn on 04.11.2019. That principle of no work no pay would not apply in releasing due and admissible emoluments/pension etc. to the petitioner as he was prevented by the respondents from serving up-to 60 years of age or up-to 04.11.2019 (whichever was earlier). Paras relevant in this context are as under: -

"6. Thus, on the basis of the notification dated 29.03.2013, it can conveniently be held that the petitioner would normally have been held entitled to continue to the age of 60 years, but the above said

¹⁰ CWPOA No. 7058/2020 decided on 06.05.2024

notification now stands withdrawn on 04.11.2019, therefore, on the basis of the ratio of the judgment as cited above, the petitioner is entitled to continue only up till 04.11.2019 and not till the completion of 60 years, as has authoritatively been held by this Court in a batch of petition lead case whereof CWP No. 851 of 2020, titled as Ses Ram vs. State of H.P. & Ors., decided on 31.07.2020, as held in Janmej Singh case (supra).

7.....

- 8. Now the moot question which remains for consideration is whether the principle of no work and no pay is applicable to the present case, as it is vehemently contended by the learned Advocate General.
- 9. Even this question has been answered in Janmej case (supra), wherein it has clearly laid down that this principle of no work no pay would not apply as the petitioner had been prevented by the act of the respondents from serving up till 60 years of age or up to 04.11.2019.

10.....

- 11. In view of the aforesaid discussion, the present petition is allowed and the impugned order dated 31.08.2018 is quashed and set aside. The petitioner shall be entitled for full wages from 01.09.2018 up to 04.11.2019 with all consequential benefits having impact on his pension."
- 3(iv)(c) The aforesaid office memorandums were also considered by the Hon'ble Apex Court in *Kashmiri Lal Sharma*⁷. Two questions taken up for deliberation were framed as under: -
 - "I) Whether the benefit of extension of retirement age for the physically disabled category could be confined to persons with visual impairment as provided in the OM dated 29.03.2013 or it should be available to persons suffering from all such disabilities as are specified in the 1995 Act and the 2016 Act?

II) Whether such extension could be withdrawn as was done by the OM dated 04.11.2019? If yes, then what would be its effect on the claim of the appellant?"

- On question No.1, it was held that there was no intelligible basis to confer benefit of age extension to one disabled category and deny it to the other when both are specified in the 1995 Act as well as the 2016 Act. If benefit of extension of retirement age is available to visually impaired category, the same ought to be available to other categories of disabilities specified in the 1995 Act as reiterated in the 2016 Act. It was held that benefit of extension of retirement age as provided under the Office Memorandum dated 29:03.2013 could not have been confined to visually impaired category. Rather, it should be available to persons suffering from all such benchmark disabilities as are specified in the 1995 Act and the 2016 Act.
- On the second question as noticed earlier, the Hon'ble Apex Court held that the Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 could be withdrawn by the Office Memorandum dated 04.11.2019.

In the facts of that case, where the appellant-a physically challenged person had retired on 30.09.2018

at the age of 58 years it was held that at the time of his retirement, Office Memorandum dated 04.11.2019 had not been issued, therefore, till the time the said Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 was operative, the appellant was entitled to its benefit as, admittedly, he fell in the category of employee suffering from such disabilities as are specified in the 1995 Act and the 2016 Act. Paras relevant in this regard are as under: -

"20. In this regard, the record reveals that the OM dated 29.03.2013 by itself did not confer any extension benefit to the appellant as its benefit was confined to visually impaired category. No doubt, denial of its benefit was claimed to be discriminatory and, earlier, a similarly situated employee like the appellant laid a claim before the Himachal Pradesh Administrative Tribunal and the Tribunal, vide order dated 10.01.2018, extended its benefit to the employee who suffered from other specified disability. But this order of the Tribunal was challenged by the State of H.P. before a Division Bench of the High Court through CWP No.1577 of 2018-H, which was dismissed on 05.11.2018 by relying upon earlier decision of this Court in Bhupinder Singh (supra). Thereafter, against the order of the Division Bench (passed in CWP No.1577 of 2018-H), the State of H.P. filed an SLP before this Court which came to be dismissed on 13.09.2019. As a result, the State Government withdrew the OM dated 29.03.2013 vide OM dated 04.11.2019. By that time, there was no judicial order conferring benefit of OM dated 29.03.2013 on the appellant. Hence, in our view, on the date when the OM dated 04.11.2019 was issued, no right vested in the appellant to continue in service up to the age of 60 years. We are therefore of the considered view that the appellant is not entitled to continue in service beyond 04.11.2019 i.e., the date on which the OM dated 29.03.2013 was withdrawn.

- 21. However, as we have held, while deciding issue I, that persons suffering from other specified disabilities could not have been denied the benefit of the OM dated 29.03.2013, we are of the view that till the date the said OM was operative, the appellant was entitled to its benefit as, admittedly, he fell in the category of employee suffering from such disabilities as are specified in the 1995 Act and the 2016 Act.
- 22. Accordingly, these appeals are partly allowed. The impugned judgment and order dated 28.07.2021 of the High Court dismissing the Writ Petition of the appellant is set aside. The appellant shall be entitled to the benefit of continuance in service until 04.11.2019. In consequence, he shall be entitled to full wages from 01.10.2018 to 04.11.2019, with all consequential benefits that may impact his pension."

4. Consideration

After tracing the history of Office Memorandums dated 29.03.2013 & 04.11.2019 and the related litigations, reverting back to the instant case, admittedly, petitioner was not suffering from physical disability at the time of entry into service, he was not appointed against handicapped quota. Indisputably, he suffered 51% permanent physical impairment (locomotor disability) during service. Respondents' contention is that the petitioner having not been appointed against handicapped quota and having suffered disability during service is not entitled to the benefit of Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013. This contention is not tenable for the following reasons: -

- **4(i)** Disability is defined under Section 2(i) of the 1995 Act as under: -
 - "(i) "disability" means—
 - (i) blindness;
 - (ii) low vision;
 - (iii) leprosy-cured:
 - (vi) hearing impairment;
 - (v) locomotor disability;
 - (vi) mental retardation:
 - (vii) mental illness:"

Section 2 (t) defines person with disability as follows: -

"2(t) "person with disability" means a person suffering from not less than forty per cent of any disability as certified by a medical authority."

Almost similar provisions exist under the 2016 Act that repealed the 1995 Act. The disability as defined encompasses the locomotor disability suffered by the petitioner. Petitioner with 51% permanent locomotor disability, thus, suffers from benchmark disability. Following Section 47 of the 1995 Act stipulates that no establishment shall dispense with, or reduce in rank, an employee, who acquires a disability during his service: -

"47. Non-discrimination in Government employments.-(1) No establishment shall dispense with, or reduce in rank, an employee, who acquires a disability during his service.

Provided that, if an employee, after acquiring disability is not suitable for the post he was holding, could be shifted to some other post with the same pay scale and service benefits:

Provided further that if it is not possible to adjust the employee against any post, he may be kept on a supernumerary post until a suitable post is available or he attains the age of superannuation, whichever is earlier.

(2) No promotion shall be denied to a person merely on the ground of his disability:

Provided that the appropriate Government may, having regard to the type of work carried on in any establishment, by notification and subject to such conditions, if any, as may be specified in such notification, exempt any establishment from the provisions of this section."

Section 20 of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 avows non-discrimination in employment as mandate of legislative:

"20. Non-discrimination in employment.—(1) No Government establishment shall discriminate against any person with disability in any matter relating to employment:

Provided that the appropriate Government may, having regard to the type of work carried on in any establishment, by notification and subject to such conditions, if any, exempt any establishment from the provisions of this section.

- (2) Every Government establishment shall provide reasonable accommodation and appropriate barrier free and conducive environment to employees with disability.
- (3) No promotion shall be denied to a person merely on the ground of disability.
- (4) No Government establishment shall dispense with or reduce in rank, an employee who acquires a disability during his or her service:

Provided that, if an employee after acquiring disability is not suitable for the post he was holding, shall be shifted to some other post with the same pay scale and service benefits:

Provided further that if it is not possible to adjust the employee against any post, he may be kept on a supernumerary post until a suitable post is available or he attains the age of superannuation, whichever is earlier.

(5) The appropriate Government may frame policies for posting and transfer of employees with disabilities."

4(ii) Rule 4 of the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Rules, 1996, pertaining to issuance of disability certificate reads as under: -

"4. Issue of disability certificate. - (1) On receipt of an application under rule 3, the medical authority shall, after satisfying himself that the applicant is a person with disability as defined in subclause (t), of section 2 of the Act, issue a disability certificate in his favour in Form II, Form III or Form IV as applicable.

The certificate shall be issued as far as possible, within a week from the date of receipt of the application by the medical authority, but in any case, not later than one month from such date.

- (3) The medical authority shall, after due examination,
 - (i) give a permanent disability certificate in cases where there are no chances of variation, over time, in the degree of disability, and
 - (ii) shall indicate the period of validity in the certificate, in cases where there is any chance of variation, over time, in the degree of disability."

Rule 6 of the (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Rules, 1996, provides that a certificate issued under Rule 4 is to be treated generally valid for all purposes, which reads as under: -

"6. Certificate issued under rule 4 to be generally valid for all purposes. — A certificate issued under rule 4 shall render a person eligible to apply for facilities, concessions and benefits admissible under schemes of the Government and of Non-Governmental Organizations funded by the Government, subject to such conditions as may be specified in relevant schemes or instructions of Government, etc., as the case may be."

Chapter X of the 2016 Act pertains to certification of specified disabilities.

4(iii) Bhupinder Singh Vs. State of Punjab and Ors¹¹. was case of a person, who suffered physical disability in service. He was extended the benefit of enhanced retiral age in terms of applicable circular, which provided enhancement in the age of retirement of physically disabled category. The aforesaid decision was affirmed in State of Punjab & Ors. Vs. Bhupinder Singh¹². State of Punjab & Ors. Vs. Bhupinder Singh¹³ preferred against the aforesaid decision was dismissed by the Hon'ble Apex Court.

¹¹ CWP No.7233/2010 decided on 25.05.2011

¹² LPA NO. 1719/2011 decided on 25.09.2012

¹³ Civil Appeal No.8855/2014 decided on 16.09.2014

Similarly in *Mahender Singh Vs. State of H.P.* & *Ors*¹⁴., an employee, who suffered disability during service was extended the benefit of enhanced aged under Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013.

Joseph¹⁵, while dwelling on the question as to whether the Act mandates reservations in promotions for persons with disabilities, Hon'ble Apex Court observed that 'legislative mandate behind the Act has to be understood as providing for equal opportunity for career progression including promotion. It would be negation of the legislative mandate, if promotion is denied to PwD and such reservation is confined to the initial stage of induction in service. This would in fact result in stagnation of the disabled and consequential frustration'.

Petitioner, who acquired permanent disability during service cannot be discriminated vis-à-vis others whose disabilities existed at the time of entry into service, for the purpose of applying Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 extending the retirement age for physically disabled persons. Petitioner's retirement at the age of 58 years virtually amounts to dispensing his service, while allowing other physically challenged persons to continue to serve till 60 years

¹⁴ CWPOA No. 7009/2020 decided on 30.08.2024

^{15 (2021) 9} SCC 208

of age. Petitioner's service could not be dispensed with, he could not be retired at the age of 58 years, contrary to the Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013. The memorandum was in force at the time of his attaining the age of 58 years on 31.05.2015. As per this Office Memorandum as interpreted in several decisions referred to above, petitioner in view of his being physically disabled person, was entitled to continue to serve till the age of 60 years. In matter of extension of retiral age up-to the age of 60 years under Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013, no distinction could be made out between the persons, who suffered from disability prior to or acquired it after joining the service. This classification was neither carved out under Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 [(extracted in para-3(iv)(a) above)] nor is allowed by the Act. The disability will not cease to be disability just because person suffered it during service and not prior to the appointment. A person, who acquired disability during service is as disabled as the person who was disabled prior to joining the service. Merely because a person suffers disability in service, offers no valid ground to discriminate him vis-avis the person, who was physically disabled and had been inducted into service under handicapped quota for purposes of fixing retirement age. The factum that person is disabled and suffers from benchmark disability is the only material consideration. Respondents' contention that period of suffering the disability viz.

prior to or after induction in service is a relevant factor for extending retirement age for physically challenged persons, cannot be accepted as a reason to discriminate the petitioner for not extending his service beyond 58 years up-to the age of 60 years under Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013.

No other point was urged.

5. In view of above discussion, respondents' action in not letting the petitioner continue to serve till the age of 60 years i.e. till 31.05.2017, which was within the currency of Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013 cannot be countenanced. The petitioner, who suffered benchmark disability during service is held entitled to the benefit of aforesaid Office Memorandum. Merely because he suffered disability during service and had not been inducted into service against handicapped quota post will not have any impact upon his entitlement to the benefit, which otherwise flows to the person with benchmark disability under Office Memorandum dated 29.03.2013. Accordingly, the writ petition is allowed.

Further, following the ratio of decisions in *Janmej⁸ And Balbir Singh¹⁰* and *Kashmiri Lal Sharma⁷* it has to be held that petitioner was prevented by the respondents from discharging his duty for a period of two years i.e. 31.05.2015 till 31.05.2017. Petitioner shall be treated to have retired from service on 31.05.2017. He shall be entitled to all monetary benefits for the said

period with consequential effect upon his pension etc. This exercise be carried out within a period of five weeks.

The writ petition is disposed of in above terms. Pending miscellaneous application(s), if any, shall also stand disposed of.

Jyotsna Rewal Dua Judge