

Form No. 4
{See rule 11(1)}
ORDER SHEET
ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL, REGIONAL BENCH, LUCKNOW
Court No.1 (E. Court)

O.A. No. 237 of 2020

Ex Sep Joseph John Menezes
By Legal Practitioner for the Applicant

Applicant

Versus

Union of India & Others
By Legal Practitioner for Respondents

Respondents

Notes of the Registry	Orders of the Tribunal
	<p><u>01.02.2021</u> <u>Hon'ble Mr. Justice Umesh Chandra Srivastava, Member (J)</u> <u>Hon'ble Vice Admiral Abhay Raghunath Karve, Member (A)</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Heard Shri R Chandra, learned counsel for the applicant and Shri Arun Kumar Sahu, learned counsel for the respondents.</p> <p>1. This Original Application has been filed on behalf of the applicant under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007, whereby the applicant has sought following reliefs:-</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(i) <i>The Hon'ble Tribunal may be pleased to set aside the order dated 25.11.2016 (Annexure No A-1).</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(ii) <i>The Hon'ble Tribunal may be pleased to direct the respondent No 3 to condone the shortfall period of 05 months and 27 days in service to grant service pension.</i></p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">(iii) <i>Any other appropriate order or direction which this Hon'ble Tribunal may deem just and proper in the nature and circumstances of the case including cost of the litigation.</i></p> <p>2. Brief facts of the case are that the applicant was enrolled in the army on 09.12.1992 and was discharged from service on 14.12.2008 being undesirable soldier in terms of Rule 13 (3) III (v) of Army Rules, 1954. The applicant has put in 14 years, 05 months and 02 days qualifying service besides 01 year, 07 months and 02 days as non qualifying service. The applicant has approached various agencies for grant of service pension but was denied on the ground that applicant</p>

has not rendered pensionable service since he was dismissed from service as undesirable soldier. Being aggrieved, applicant had filed M.A. No. 181 of 2018 inre O.A. (Nil) of 2018 in this Tribunal which was heard on 15.05.2019 and was dismissed as withdrawn with liberty to file afresh. The applicant has again filed the present O.A. for condoning shortfall period in service and grant of service pension.

3. Learned counsel for the applicant submitted that as per Office Manual Part IV (Volume-IV), revised Edition 2014 applicant is entitled for condonation of shortfall in service to enable him to earn service pension. Relying upon Hon'ble Apex Court judgment in Civil Appeal No 9389 of 2014, decided on 20.01.2015, ***Union of India & Ors vs Surender Singh Parmar***, learned counsel for the applicant submitted that keeping in view judgment delivered in this case, applicant's shortfall be condoned to make him eligible for earning service pension.

4. On the other hand, learned counsel for the respondents has vehemently opposed submission of learned counsel for the applicant and contended that personal record of applicant, while serving in the army is not tenable as he has committed various offences from time to time and counselling/advice given by his superiors became futile, and after six red ink entries and two black entries, he was discharged from service being undesirable soldier. Learned counsel for the respondents further submitted that applicant is not entitled to service pension in accordance with para 21 (ii) of Pension Regulations for the Army Part-I (2008) which stipulates that '*any period of unauthorized absence unless pay and allowances are admitted for the period of absence shall not qualify for pension or gratuity*'.

5. His further submission is that applicant is not entitled to service pension in terms of para 132 of Pension Regulations for the Army, 1961 (Part-I) and para 47 of Pension Regulations for the Army, 2008 (Part-I). Relying upon judgment rendered on 22.02.2018 by AFT, Circuit Bench, Jabalpur in T.A. No. 269 of 2010, **Sep/AA Narayan Prasad Chamar vs Union of India & Ors**, learned counsel for the respondents submitted that the Hon'ble Tribunal in symmetrical case has held as under:-

“the case of the applicant stands on very weak foundation both on grounds of law as well as equity. An individual who fails to correct himself even after 5-6 chances is giving all indications of not having the requisite orientation or attitude to be a member of disciplined force like the Army.”

6. Learned counsel for the respondents has further relied upon the Hon'ble Apex Court judgment in the case of **Sep Satgur Singh vs Union of India & Ors** (Civil Appeal No 1857 of 2018 decided on 02.09.2019) which has held as under:-

“the appellant has not given any explanation of his absence from duty on seven occasions and he was imposed punishment of imprisonment for the same, therefore, the order of discharge cannot be said to be unjustified”.

7. Learned counsel for the respondents conceded that though the applicant's shortfall can be condoned in accordance with Govt of India, Ministry of Defence letter dated 14.08.2001, but since the applicant was locally discharged from service being undesirable soldier in accordance with Ministry of Defence Policy Letter dated 28.12.1988 and provisions contained therein have been followed, i.e. conducting a preliminary inquiry and show cause notice before discharge, applicant is not eligible for condonation of shortfall in service. He pleaded the O.A. to be

dismissed.

8. We have perused the records and find that applicant was awarded six red ink entries and two black ink entries and inflicted following punishments for negligence on his part prior to discharge from service:-

<u>Offence under Army Act, 1950</u>	<u>Date of punishment</u>	<u>Punishment Awarded</u>	<u>Period of absence (days)</u>
39 (b)	30 Mar 2000	14 days imprisonment in military custody.	18
39 (a)	28 Mar 2002	Two months RI in military custody.	59
39 (a)	17 Jun 2004	28 days imprisonment in military custody and 14 days pay fine.	160
39 (a)	12 Mar 2005	28 days imprisonment in military custody and 14 days pay fine	153
39 (a)	14 Feb 2006	28 days imprisonment in military custody and 14 days pay fine.	90
39 (a)	24 Jul 2008	21 days imprisonment in military custody.	56

Besides the above, two black ink entries were also awarded as under:-

39 (b)	14 Oct 2003	14 days pay fine	30
39 (b)	08 Mar 2007	14 days pay fine	11

9. From the above, we may observe that during the period of about eight years, the applicant had earned eight bad entries on account of absent without leave and intoxication, red as well as black. It also clearly appears that even after earning requisite number of red ink entries, the applicant was given good number of opportunities to improve and instead taking action to discharge him immediately, good amount of leniency was shown by the respondents. Further, it appears from the above, that apart from the entries, his conduct had consistently become indisciplined. Therefore, in these circumstances he was served with a show cause notice prior to discharge in accordance with policy

letter dated 28.12.1988, and thereafter administrative action was taken against applicant to discharge him from service.

10. We further notice that while issuing show cause notice dated 17.10.2008 by Commandant, Command Hospital, Chandimandir (Western Command), it was communicated as under:-

“After each violation and trial by the competent authority, you were advised by the CO and the Company Commander not to repeat the offence in future. The number of subsequent violation of the provisions of the Army Act, 1950 in spite of the assurance at the time of summary trial shows that you have become a habitual offender. On a number of other occasions you have been found to have gone out of the unit line without proper out pass, consumed alcohol while detailed on duty in patient area or even found in intoxicated state. Despite having been given enough advice and punishment you continue violate the disciplinary code of the Army Act, 1950 with impunity. It is setting a bad example for other soldiers. In view of the above, please show cause as to why you should not be discharged from service as undesirable soldier under the provisions of Army Rule 13 (3) (iii) (v) and Army HQ letter No A/1321/150/AG/PS-2 (c) dated 28 Dec 1988. Your reply should reach the undersigned by 03 Nov 2008”.

11. After receipt of reply to show cause notice, he was discharged from service being undesirable soldier in terms of policy letter dated 28.12.1988 and no injustice seems to have been done to applicant. Further, para 21 (ii) of Pension Regulations for the Army Part-I (2008) stipulates that *‘any period of unauthorized absence, unless pay and allowances are admitted for the period of absence, shall not qualify for pension or gratuity’*. Nothing has been brought on record to show that pay and allowances for the absence period have been admitted to applicant.

12. We find that the applicant, who has six ‘red ink entries’ and two ‘black ink entries’ for his misconduct i.e. unauthorised absence of leave and intoxication, falling under the category of ‘habitual offender’, was discharged from service by resorting to the provisions contained in Rule

13 (3) (iii) (v) of Army Rules, 1954. In our opinion, considering the totality of circumstances, his discharge from service is fully justified and since no pay and allowances for the absence period were admitted, we see no reason to grant condonation of shortfall in service for earning service pension.

13. Generally the Courts are liberal for providing relief to service personnel with regard to pensionary matters but in the instant case applicant being a habitual offender and drunkard deserve no sympathy as he was frequently punished on account of absent without leave and intoxication, though counselled by his Commanding Officer time and again.

14. The O.A. lacks merit and is accordingly **dismissed**.

15. No order as to costs.

16. Pending applications, if any, are disposed of.

(Vice Admiral Abhay Raghunath Karve)
Member (A)

(Justice Umesh Chandra Srivastava)
Member (J)

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