

**Court No. 1**

**ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL, REGIONAL BENCH, LUCKNOW**

**ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 651 of 2023**

Friday, this the 24<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2023

**“Hon’ble Mr. Justice Ravindra Nath Kakkar, Member (J)  
Hon’ble Lt Gen Anil Puri, Member (A)”**

No. 13952522-F, Ex. Hav (PA) Chandran PE  
S/o Late V. Kunhi Kannan Nambair  
R/o House No. 120, Sector 1B Vrindavan Yojna,  
Raebareli Road, Lucknow (UP) - 226029

**..... Applicant**

Ld. Counsel for the : **Shri Manoj Kumar Awasthi, Advocate**  
Applicant

Versus

1. Union of India, through Secretary Ministry of Defence (Army), South Block, New Delhi – 110011.
2. Chief of the Army Staff, IHQ of MoD (Army), Army HQ, South Block, New Delhi – 110010.
3. The Officer-in-Charge, Sena Seva Corps Abhilekh (Purti), ASC Records (South), Bangalore -560007 (UP).
4. The Chief CDA (Pensions), Allahabad (Prayagraj).

**.....Respondents**

Ld. Counsel for the : **Dr. Shailendra Sharma Atal,**  
Respondents **Central Govt. Standing Counsel**

**ORDER**

**“Per Hon’ble Mr. Justice Ravindra Nath Kakkar, Member (J)”**

1. The instant Original Application has been filed under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007 for the following reliefs:-

*(a) To issue pass an order or directions to quash/set-aside the letter No. G-3/80/51/9-98 office of The Chief CDA (P) Allahabad dated 29.10.1998 passed by Respondents No. 4 annexed as Annexure No. 1 to this original application.*

*(b) To issue pass an order or directions to the respondents to grant Disability Element of Disability Pension @ 30% with effect from date of discharge, i.e. 30.04.1998.*

*(c) To issue pass an order or directions to respondents to grant benefit of rounding off disability element of disability pension @ 30% to @ 50% for life to the applicant and pay due arrears including consequential benefits with interest @ 12% p.a. till final payment is made in light of Hon’ble Apex Court judgments and letter dated 31.01.2001.*

*(d) Any other relief which the Hon’ble Tribunal may deem fit and proper in the fact and circumstances of the case is also granted along with cost of the original application.*

*(e) To allow this original application with costs.”*

2. Briefly stated, applicant was initially enrolled in the Indian Army on 14.03.1981 and was discharged on 30.04.1998 (AN) in Low Medical Category under Rule 13 (3) Item III (v) of the Army Rules, 1954. At the time of discharge from service, the Release Medical Board (RMB) held at Military Hospital, Babina on 11.03.1998 assessed his disability ‘**PRIMARY HYPERTENSION**’ @ 30% for two

years and opined the disability to be **Aggravated by** military service. The disability claim of the applicant was however rejected by the Principal Controller of Defence Account (Pensions), Allahabad vide letter dated 29.10.1998 on the ground that the disability of the applicant was neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service and constitutional in nature which was communicated to the applicant vide Records letter dated 19.11.1998. It is in this perspective that the applicant has preferred the present Original Application.

3. Ld. Counsel for the applicant submitted that the applicant's disability (PRIMARY HYPERTENSION) was found to be aggravated by military service vide RMB which had also assessed the disability @30% for two years. He further pleaded that at the time of enrolment, the applicant was found mentally and physically fit for service in the Army and there is no note in the service documents that he was suffering from any disease at the time of enrolment in Army. He further submitted that Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pension), Allahabad has no authority to overrule the opinion of RMB. He placed reliance on the judgment of the Hon'ble Apex Court in **Spr Mohinder Singh vs. Union of India and Others**, Civil Appeal No. 164 of 1993, decided on 14.01.1993 and **Sukhwinder Singh vs. Union of India** (Civil Appeal No. 5605 of 2010), decided on 25.06.2014 and pleaded that various Benches of

Armed Forces Tribunal have granted disability pension in similar cases, as such the applicant be granted disability pension and its rounding off to 50% for life in terms of para 8 of this Tribunal's order dated 15.03.2023 passed in TA No. 4 of 2019, **Virendra Singh vs. Union of India & Others.**

4. On the other hand, Id. Counsel for the respondents conceded that disability of the applicant @ 30% for two years has been regarded as **aggravated by** the RMB, but the appropriate medical authorities, i.e. PCDA MA (P) have considered the disability of applicant's as neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service, hence, disability element is not entitled to the applicant in terms of Entitlement Rules for Casualty Pensionary Awards, 1982. He pleaded for dismissal of the Original Application.

5. We have heard Ld. Counsel for the applicant as also Ld. Counsel for the respondents. We have also gone through the records and we find that the questions which need to be answered are of two folds:-

- (a) Whether the Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad has authority to overrule the opinion of RMB?
- (b) Whether the applicant is entitled for the benefit of rounding off the disability element of pension?

6. This is a case where the disability of the applicant has been held as aggravated by military service by the RMB. The RMB assessed the disability @ 30% for two years. However, the opinion of the RMB has been overruled by Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad and the disability has been regarded as neither attributable to or aggravated by military service.

7. The issue of sanctity of the opinion of a Release Medical Board and its overruling by a higher formation is no more Res Integra. The Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Ex. Sapper Mohinder Singh vs. Union of India & Others**, in Civil Appeal No.164 of 1993, decided on 14.01.1993, has made it clear that without physical medical examination of a patient, a higher formation cannot overrule the opinion of a Medical Board. Thus, in light of the observations made by the Hon'ble Apex Court in the case of **Ex Sapper Mohinder Singh vs. Union of India & Others**, we are of the considered opinion that the decision of competent authority i.e. Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad over ruling the opinion of RMB is void in law. The relevant part of the aforesaid judgment is quoted below:-

*“From the above narrated facts and the stand taken by the parties before us, the controversy that falls for determination by us is in a very narrow compass viz. whether the Chief Controller of Defence Accounts (Pension) has any jurisdiction to sit over the opinion of the experts (Medical Board) while dealing with the case of grant of disability pension, in regard to the percentage of the disability pension,*

*or not. In the present case, it is nowhere stated that the Applicant was subjected to any higher medical Board before the Chief Controller of Defence Accounts (Pension) decided to decline the disability pension to the Applicant. We are unable to see as to how the accounts branch dealing with the pension can sit over the judgment of the experts in the medical line without making any reference to a detailed or higher Medical Board which can be constituted under the relevant instructions and rules by the Director General of Army Medical Core.”*

8. Thus in light of the aforesaid judgment (supra) as well as IHQ of MoD (Army) letter dated 25.04.2011 it is clear that the disability assessed by RMB cannot be reduced/overruled by Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pension), Allahabad, hence the decision of Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad is void. Hence, we are of the opinion that the disability of the applicant should be considered as aggravated by military service as has been opined by the RMB.

9. The law on the point of rounding off of disability pension is no more RES INTEGRA in view of Hon'ble Supreme Court judgment in the case of ***Union of India and Ors vs Ram Avtar & ors*** (Civil Appeal No 418 of 2012 decided on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014). In this Judgment the Hon'ble Apex Court nodded in disapproval of the policy of the Government of India in granting the benefit of rounding off of disability pension only to the personnel who have been invalided out of service and denying the same to the personnel who

have retired on attaining the age of superannuation or on completion of their tenure of engagement. The relevant portion of the decision is excerpted below:-

*“4. By the present set of appeals, the appellant (s) raise the question, whether or not, an individual, who has retired on attaining the age of superannuation or on completion of his tenure of engagement, if found to be suffering from some disability which is attributable to or aggravated by the military service, is entitled to be granted the benefit of rounding off of disability pension. The appellant(s) herein would contend that, on the basis of Circular No 1(2)/97/D (Pen-C) issued by the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, dated 31.01.2001, the aforesaid benefit is made available only to an Armed Forces Personnel who is invalidated out of service, and not to any other category of Armed Forces Personnel mentioned hereinabove.*

*5. We have heard Learned Counsel for the parties to the lis.*

*6. We do not see any error in the impugned judgment (s) and order(s) and therefore, all the appeals which pertain to the concept of rounding off of the disability pension are dismissed, with no order as to costs.*

*7. The dismissal of these matters will be taken note of by the High Courts as well as by the Tribunals in granting appropriate relief to the pensioners before them, if any, who are getting or are entitled to the disability pension.*

*8. This Court grants six weeks' time from today to the appellant(s) to comply with the orders and directions passed by us.”*

10. Additionally, consequent upon the issue of Government of India, Ministry of Defence letter No. 17(01)/2017(01)/D(Pen/Policy)

dated 23.01.2018, Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Prayagraj has issued Circular No. 596 dated 09.02.2018 wherein it is provided that the cases where Armed Forces Pensioners who were retired/discharged voluntary or otherwise with disability and they were in receipt of Disability/War Injury Element as on 31.12.2015, their extent of disability/War Injury Element shall be re-computed in the manner given in the said Circular which is applicable with effect from 01.01.2016.

11. Since the applicant's RMB was valid for two years w.e.f. 01.05.1998, hence, the respondents will now have to conduct a fresh Re-Survey Medical Board for him to decide his future eligibility to disability element of disability pension.

12. Applicant has placed reliance and requested for grant of disability element for life in terms of judgment passed by this Tribunal in the case of T.A. No 4 of 2019, Virendra Singh vs. Union of India and Others, decided on 15.03.2023. The said judgment is not applicable in the present case as the facts and circumstances of the case are different from the instant case as in case of Virendra Singh (supra), this Tribunal observed that after the lapse of more than 44 years this Tribunal do not feel it proper to refer the applicant's case for holding Re-Survey Medical Board, rather the Tribunal opined that the disability should be treated for life and in



the instant case, the applicant was discharged from service before 25 years i.e. on 30.04.1998.

13. In view of the above, the **Original Application No. 651 of 2023** deserves to be partly allowed, hence **partly allowed**. The impugned order, rejecting the applicant's claim for grant of disability element of disability pension is set aside. The disability of the applicant is held as aggravated by Military Service as has been opined by RMB. The applicant is entitled to get disability element @30% for two years which would be rounded off to 50% for two years from the next date of his discharge. The respondents are directed to grant disability element to the applicant @30% for two years which would stand rounded off to 50% for two years from the next date of his discharge. The respondents are further directed to conduct a Re-Survey Medical Board for the applicant to assess his further entitlement of disability element of disability pension. The respondents are directed to give effect to this order within a period of four months from the date of receipt of a certified copy of this order. Default will invite interest @ 8% per annum till actual payment.

14. No order as to costs.

**(Lt Gen Anil Puri)**  
**Member (A)**

**(Justice Ravindra Nath Kakkar)**  
**Member (J)**

Dated : 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2023  
UKT/-