

**ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL, REGIONAL BENCH, LUCKNOW
(CIRCUIT BENCH, NAINITAL)**

Original Application No 128 of 2022

Tuesday, this the 31st day of May, 2022

**Hon'ble Mr. Justice Umesh Chandra Srivastava, Member (J)
Hon'ble Vice Admiral Abhay Raghunath Karve, Member (A)**

No. 4168865Y Ex Nk Than Singh
S/o Sri Guman Singh
R/o Village – Panyali, Post – Kathgharia, Tehsil – Haldwani,
District – Nainital, Uttarakhand – 263139

..... Applicant

Ld. Counsel for the Applicant : **Shri N.K. Papnoi**, Advocate

Versus

1. The Union of India, through Secretary Ministry of Defence, New Delhi-110011.
2. Chief of Army Staff, Army Headquarters, New Delhi.
3. Director General Medical Services (Army), AG's Branch, 'L' Block, New Delhi – 110011.
4. Senior Record Officer, for OIC Records, Mech Inf Regt, PIN 900476, C/o 56 APO.
5. Commandant, 9 MECH INF, C/o 56 APO.

..... Respondents

Ld. Counsel for the Respondents : **Shri Rajesh Sharma**,
Central Govt Counsel

ORDER

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

“1.1 To quash the impugned order dated 23.04.2013 and intimation dated 06.08.2021 by which the request of applicant for disability pension was rejected holding that after due examination of your case in consultation with the competent medical authority and in accordance with relevant rules and the

existing medical provisions, it has been decided by the competent authority that you are not entitled to disability pension in terms of Para 53 of Pension Regulation for the Army, 2008.

1.2 To issue order or direction to the respondent's authority for granting the pensionary/disability pension to the applicant who was discharged from his military duties on the medical ground without giving any medical or disability pension also after calling the entire records from the respondents.

1.3 Any other relief which the Hon'ble Court may deem fit and proper in the circumstances of the case.

1.4 To award the cost of this petition to the Applicant."

2. Briefly stated facts of the case are that applicant was initially enrolled in the Army on 12.11.1976 and was discharged from service on 30.11.1993 (AN) after rendering more than 17 years of service for which he is in receipt of service pension. Thereafter, applicant was re-enrolled in DSC on 22.10.1998 and was discharged from service on 31.01.2013 in low medical category S3 (Permanent) after rendering 14 years, 03 months and 10 days of service under Rule 13 (3) III (i) of Army Rules, 1954. The Release Medical Board (RMB) assessed his disability "**GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER**" @ 40% for life and opined the disability as neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service (NANA). Disability pension claim of the applicant was rejected vide order dated 23.04.2013. The applicant submitted an application for grant of disability pension through Zila Sainik Kalyan Office, Nainital in March 2021 which was rejected by the respondents

vide order dated 16.08.2021. It is in this perspective that the applicant has preferred the present O.A.

3. Learned Counsel for the applicant 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. The disease of the applicant was contracted during the service, hence it is attributable to and aggravated by Military Service. He placed reliance on the judgment of the Hon'ble Apex Court in the case of ***Dharamvir Singh vs. Union of India & Ors***, (2013) 7 SCC 316, ***Sukhvinder Singh vs. Union of India & Ors*** (2014 STPL (WEB) 468 SC and ***Union of India vs. Rajbir Singh*** (2015) SC 124 and pleaded that applicant be granted disability pension @ 40% duly rounded off to 50% in view of Govt. of India letter dated 31.01.2001.

4. On the other hand, Ld. Counsel for the respondents contended that disability of the applicant i.e. "**GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER**" has been regarded as 40% for life by RMB as neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service and onset is in peace area and not connected with service. Hence, as per Rule 173 of Pension Regulations for the Army,1961 (Part-1) and Rule 53 (a) of Pension Regulations for the Army,2008 (Part-1), applicant is not entitled for disability pension. He pleaded for dismissal of the O.A.

5. Heard learned counsel for the parties and perused the material placed on record. We have also gone through the RMB and the rejection order of disability pension claim. The question before us is

simple and straight i.e. – is the disability of applicant attributable to or aggravated by military service?

6. The law on attributability of a disability has already been well settled by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of ***Dharamvir Singh Vs. Union of India and Ors***, (2013) 7 SCC 316. In this case the Apex Court took note of the provisions of the Pensions Regulations, Entitlement Rules and the General Rules of Guidance to Medical Officers to sum up the legal position emerging from the same in the following words:-

"29.1. Disability pension to be granted to an individual who is invalided from service on account of a disability which is attributable to or aggravated by military service in non-battle casualty and is assessed at 20% or over. The question whether a disability is attributable to or aggravated by military service to be determined under the Entitlement Rules for Casualty Pensionary Awards, 1982 of Appendix II (Regulation 173).

29.2. A member is to be presumed in sound physical and mental condition upon entering service if there is no note or record at the time of entrance. In the event of his subsequently being discharged from service on medical grounds any deterioration in his health is to be presumed due to service [Rule 5 read with Rule 14(b)].

29.3. The onus of proof is not on the claimant (employee), the corollary is that onus of proof that the condition for non-entitlement is with the employer. A claimant has a right to derive benefit of any reasonable doubt and is entitled for pensionary benefit more liberally (Rule 9).

29.4. If a disease is accepted to have been as having arisen in service, it must also be established that the conditions of military service determined or contributed to the onset of the disease and that the conditions were due to the circumstances of duty in military service [Rule 14(c)]. [pic]

29.5. If no note of any disability or disease was made at the time of individual's acceptance for military service, a disease which has led to an individual's discharge or death will be deemed to have arisen in service [Rule 14(b)].

29.6. If medical opinion holds that the disease could not have been detected on medical examination prior to the acceptance for service and that disease will not be deemed to have arisen during service, the Medical Board is required to state the reasons [Rule 14(b)]; and 29.7. It is mandatory for the Medical Board to follow the guidelines laid down in Chapter II of the Guide to Medical Officers (Military Pensions), 2002 - "Entitlement: General Principles", including Paras 7, 8 and 9 as referred to above (para 27)."

7. In view of the settled position of law on attributability/aggravation, we find that the RMB has denied attributability/aggravation to applicant for the reason by declaring the disease as NANA is that it has originated in peace area and has no close time association with Fd/HAA/CI Ops service. However, on further scrutiny, we have observed that disability was initially detected in the year 2008 after about 13 years of service. We are, therefore, of the considered opinion that the reasons given in RMB for declaring disease as NANA is very brief and cryptic in nature and do not adequately explain the denial of attributability. We don't agree with the view that there is no stress and strain of service in military stations located in peace areas. Hence, we are inclined to give benefit of doubt in favour of the applicant as per the Hon'ble Supreme Court judgment of ***Dharamvir Singh*** (supra) and his disability should be considered as aggravated by military service.

8. In view of the above, applicant is held entitled to 40% disability element for life from the date of discharge from service. The applicant will also be eligible for the benefit of rounding off of disability pension from 40% to 50% for life in terms of the decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Union of India and others v. Ram Avtar*** (Civil Appeal No 418 of 2012 dated 10.12.2014).

9. As a result of foregoing discussion, the O.A. is **allowed**. The impugned order passed by the respondents is set aside. The disability of the applicant is to be considered as aggravated by military service. The applicant is entitled to disability pension @ 40% for life

duly rounded off to 50% for life from the next date of discharge from service. The respondents are directed to grant disability pension @ 50% for life from the next date of discharge from DSC service. However, due to law of limitations settled by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of ***Shiv Dass v. Union of India and others*** (2007 (3) SLR 445), the arrears of disability pension will be restricted to three years preceding the date of filing of the instant O.A. The date of filing of this O.A is 23.02.2022. The respondents are directed to give effect to this order within a period of four months from the date of receipt of certified copy of the order. Default will invite interest @ 8% per annum till actual payment.

10. No order as to costs.

11. Pending Misc. Application(s), if any, shall stand disposed of.

(Vice Admiral Abhay Raghunath Karve) (Justice Umesh Chandra Srivastava)
Member (A) Member (J)

Dated: May, 2022

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