

E. Court**ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL, REGIONAL BENCH, LUCKNOW
CIRCUIT BENCH AT NAINITAL
(THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCING)****ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 294 of 2024**

Wednesday, this the 05th day of March, 2025

**“Hon’ble Mr. Justice Anil Kumar, Member (J)
Hon’ble Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain, Member (A)”**

No. JC-528302L Veteran Ex. Sub/Clk Rajender Singh Kentura,
S/o Late Mahendra Singh, R/o New Daang, Aithana, Shrinagar,
District – Pauri Garhwal (Uttarakhand).

..... Applicant

Ld. Counsel for the : **Shri Anil Anthwal**, Advocate
Applicant **Shri Vivek Kumar**, Advocate

Versus

1. Union of India, through Secretary, Ministry of Defence,
Central civil Secretariat, New Delhi-110001.
2. Record Officer, The Record Office, Garhwal Rifles, PIN-
900400, C/o 56 APO.
3. Principal Controller of Defence Accounts, Government of
India, Ministry of Defence, Draupadi Ghat, Allahabad
(Prayagraj), Uttar Pradesh.

.....Respondents

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

ORDER

“Per Hon’ble Mr. Justice Anil Kumar, Member (J)”

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

- (i) *Quash/set aside the impugned office order/letter no.G-3/68/115/9-04 dated 21.07.2004 and impugned office order dated 16.10.2006 after calling for the record.*
- (ii) *Issue a direction to the respondents by directing the respondents to grant the disability pension to the applicant with effect from the date of his superannuation/discharge from the respondents Army on 31.03.2004.*
- (iii) *Issue any other relief to which the applicant is found entitled may also very kindly be granted to the applicant.*

2. Briefly stated, applicant was enrolled in The Garhwal Rifles of Indian Army on 22.03.1976 and discharged on 31.03.2004 in Low Medical Category on fulfilling the conditions of his enrolment under Rule 13 (3) Item I (i) (a) of the Army Rules, 1954. The applicant is in receipt of service pension. Before discharge from service, the Release Medical Board (RMB) was held which assessed applicant’s disability ‘**IMPAIRED GLUCOSE TOLERANCE**’ @20% for life and opined the disability to be neither attributable to nor aggravated (NANA) by service. The applicant’s claim for grant of disability element of disability pension was rejected vide letter

dated 21.07.2004 which was communicated to the applicant vide letter dated 31.08.2004. The applicant preferred First Appeal dated 20.12.2004 which too was rejected vide letter dated 16.10.2006 which was communicated to the applicant vide letter dated 04.11.2006. It is in this perspective that the applicant has preferred the present Original Application.

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 in Army. The disease of the applicant was contracted during the service, hence it is attributable to and aggravated by Military Service. He 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%.

4. On the other hand, Ld. Counsel for the respondents contended that disability of the applicant @20% for life has been regarded as NANA by the RMB, hence as per Regulation 173 of the Pension Regulations for the Army, 1961 (Part-I) which provides that *“Unless otherwise specifically provided a disability pension consisting of service element and disability element may be granted to an individual who is invalided out of service on account of a disability which is attributable to or aggravated -by military*

service in non-battle casualty and is assessed at 20 per cent or over” and Regulation 179 (1) of the Pension Regulations for the Army, 1961 (Part-I) which stipulates that “An individual retired/discharged on completion of tenure or on completion of service limits or on completion of terms of engagement or on attaining the age of 50 years (irrespective of their period of engagement), if found suffering from a disability attributable to or aggravated by military service and recorded by Service Medical Authorities, shall be deemed to have been invalided out of service and shall be granted disability pension from the date of retirement, if the accepted degree of disability is 20 percent or more, and service element if the degree of disability is less than 20 per cent. The service pension/service gratuity, if already sanctioned and paid, shall be adjusted against the disability pension/service element, as the case may be” the applicant is not entitled to disability element of disability pension. Ld. Counsel for the respondents further submitted that the applicant while posted with GRRC developed with the aforesaid disease on 22.05.2002 and was placed in low medical category S1H1A1AP2 (T-24)E1 with effect from 15.06.2002. During subsequent review held at Military Hospital, Lansdowne, the applicant was further downgraded to S1H1A1P2(P)E1 with effect from 28.11.2002 and remained in same low medical category till his discharge from service. 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 Release Medical Board proceedings as well as the records and we find that the questions which need to be answered are two folds:-

- (a) Whether the disability of the applicant is attributable to or aggravated by Military Service?
- (b) Whether the applicant is entitled for the benefit of rounding off the disability element of disability pension?

6. The law on attributability of a disability has already been settled by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of ***Dharamvir Singh Versus Union of India & Others***, reported in (2013) 7 Supreme Court Cases 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, we find that the RMB has denied attributability to the applicant only by endorsing that the disability '**IMPAIRED GLUCOSE TOLERANCE**' is neither attributable to nor aggravated (NANA) by service on the ground that it is metabolic disorder, therefore, applicant is not entitled to disability element of disability pension. However, considering the facts and circumstances of the case, we are of the

opinion that this reasoning of Release Medical Board for denying disability element of disability pension to applicant is cryptic, not convincing and doesn't reflect the complete truth on the matter. The applicant was enrolled in Indian Army on 22.03.1976 and the disability has started after more than 26 years of Army service i.e. on 22.05.2002. We also find that applicant's ideal weight was 65.5 Kg whereas the actual weight was 65 Kg, which is even less than ideal weight. As such it also cannot be said that the cause of disability is overweight. We are therefore of the considered opinion that the benefit of doubt in these circumstances should be given to the applicant in view of ***Dharamvir Singh vs Union of India & Ors*** (supra), and the disability of the applicant should be considered as aggravated by military service.

8. 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 10th 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.”

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

10. It is also observed that claim for pension is based on continuing wrong and relief can be granted if such continuing wrong creates a continuing source of injury. In the case of **Shiv Dass vs. Union of India**, reported in 2007 (3) SLR 445, Hon'ble Apex Court has observed:

“In the case of pension the cause of action actually continues from month to month. That, however, cannot be a ground to overlook delay in filing the petition. It would depend upon the fact of each case. If petition is filed beyond a reasonable period say three years normally the Court would reject the same or restrict the relief which could be granted to a reasonable period of about three years. The High Court did not examine whether on merit appellant had a case. If on merits it would have found that there was no scope for interference, it would have dismissed the writ petition on that score alone.”

11. As such, in view of the decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the cases of **Union of India and Ors vs Ram Avtar & ors (supra)** and **Shiv Dass (supra)** as well as Government of India, Ministry of Defence letter No. 17(01)/2017/D(Pen/Policy) dated 23.01.2018, we are of the considered view that benefit of rounding off of disability element of disability pension @20% for life to be rounded off to 50% for life may be extended to the applicant from three preceding years from the date of filing of the Original Application.

12. In view of the above, the **Original Application No. 294 of 2024** deserves to be partly allowed, hence **partly allowed**. The impugned orders, rejecting the applicant's claim for grant of disability element of disability pension, are set aside. The disability of the applicant is held as aggravated by Army Service. The applicant is entitled to get disability element @20% for life which would be rounded off to 50% for life w.e.f. three years preceding the date of filing of Original Application. The respondents are directed to grant disability element to the applicant @20% for life which would stand rounded off to 50% for life w.e.f. three years preceding the date of filing of Original Application. The date of filing of Original Application is 14.03.2024. The respondents are further 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 the actual payment.

13. No order as to costs.

(Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain)
Member (A)

(Justice Anil Kumar)
Member (J)

Dated : 05 March, 2025

AKD/-