

**Court No. 1****ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL, REGIONAL BENCH, LUCKNOW****ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 77 of 2022**Friday, this the 20<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2022**“Hon’ble Mr. Justice Umesh Chandra Srivastava, Member (J)  
Hon’ble Vice Admiral Abhay Raghunath Karve, Member (A)”**No. 13990127-X Ex. Nk. Chandra Mohan Singh S/o Sher Singh,  
R/o –Village-Kura, PO - Jaihari Khal, Tehsil - Lance Downe,  
District-Pauri Garhwal, (Uttarakhand) Pin-246193.

..... Applicant

Ld. Counsel for the : **Shri Sudhir Kumar Singh**, Advocate.  
Applicant **Shri Abhishek Singh**, Advocate.

Versus

1. Union of India, through Secretary, Ministry of Defence,  
South Block, New Delhi Pin-110011.
2. The Chief of Army Staff, Sena Bhawan, New Delhi Pin-  
110011.
3. Senior Record officer, Army Medical Corps Record Office,  
Pin-900450 C/o APO.
4. Principal Controller of Defence Account (Pension),  
Draupadi Ghat, Allahabad Pin-211014.

.....**Respondents**Ld. Counsel for the : **Shri Bipin Kumar Singh**, Advocate  
Respondents. Central Govt. Counsel**ORDER****“Per Hon’ble Mr. Justice Umesh Chandra Srivastava, 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) *To pass an order or direction commanding the respondent to grant the disability pension @100% from the date of discharge i.e. 03.02.2014 with interest @ 12% per annum from the date due till actual realization of the aforesaid amount after adjusting the 40% of disability amount already paid.*
- (ii) *To pass an order or direction commanding the respondent to grant the benefits of rounding of the disability pension up to the tune of 100% in terms of Govt. of India letter dated 31.01.2001 and various Judgement of Apex Court as well as this Hon'ble Tribunal.*
- (iii) *Pass any order which this Hon'ble Tribunal deem fit and proper under the facts and circumstances of the case on favour of the petitioner, in the interest of justice.*
- (iv) *Allow the Original Application with cost.*

2. Briefly stated, applicant was enrolled in the Army Medical Corps of Indian Army on 29.12.1994 and was discharged on 31.01.2014 (A/N) in Low Medical Category on compassionate ground at his own request before completion of terms of engagement under Rule 13(3) Item III (iv) of the Army Rules, 1954. At the time of discharge from service, the Release Medical Board (RMB) held at 159 General Hospital on 25.11.2013 assessed his disabilities (i) '**COMMINUTED FRACTURE DISTAL END OF RADIUS (LT) (OPT)**' @20% for life as attributable to service, (ii) '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' @40% for life as neither attributable nor aggravated by service (NANA) and (iii) '**B/L SNHL**' @20 % for life as aggravated by service, composite disabilities @70% for life and net assessment qualifying for disability pension

@40% for life. Accordingly, the applicant was granted disability element of disability pension @40% for life. But the applicant's claim for grant of disability element of disability pension for the second disability i.e. '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' was rejected by the respondents which was communicated to the applicant vide letter dated 31.05.2014. The applicant preferred application dated 10.10.2014 for grant of 100% disability pension which was rejected vide letter dated 01.03.2022. 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 second disease i.e. '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' of the applicant has been regarded as either attributable to or aggravated by service. This disease of the applicant i.e. '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' was also contracted during the service, hence it is also attributable to and aggravated by Military Service. He pleaded that various Benches of Armed Forces Tribunal have granted disability element of disability pension in similar cases, as such the applicant be granted disability element of disability pension as well as arrears thereof, as applicant is also entitled to disability element of disability pension for this disease also and composite disabilities rounding off to 75%.

4. On the other hand, Ld. Counsel for the respondents contended that the first and third diseases of the applicant have been regarded as attributable to or aggravated by service, hence, he was granted disability element @40% for life. He further contended that second disability i.e. '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' of the applicant @40% for life has been regarded as NANA by the RMB, hence applicant is not entitled to disability element of disability pension for this disability. 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 of three folds:-

- (a) Whether the second disability i.e. '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' of the applicant is also attributable to or aggravated by Military Service?
- (b) Whether the applicant is entitled to disability pension being a case of discharge on his own request?
- (c) Whether the applicant is entitled for the benefit of rounding off the disability element of pension for these disabilities also?

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 second disability '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' is neither attributable to nor aggravated (NANA), applicant is not entitled to disability element of disability pension for this disability. 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 for this disability is not convincing and doesn't reflect the complete truth on the matter. The applicant was enrolled in Indian Army on 29.12.1994 and the second disability has started after more than 10 years of Army service i.e. on 17.06.2003. 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 second disability i.e. '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' of the applicant should also be considered as aggravated by military service.

8. Government of India, Ministry of Defence letter No. 16(5)/2008/D(Pen/Policy) dated 29.09.2009 stipulates that *“In pursuance of Government decision on the recommendations of the Sixth Central Pay Commission vide Para 5.1.69 of their Report, President is pleased to decide that Armed Forces personnel who are retained in service despite disability, which is accepted as attributable to or aggravated by Military Service and have foregone lump-sum compensation in lieu of that disability, may be given disability element/war injury element at the time of their retirement/discharge whether voluntarily or otherwise in addition to Retiring/Service Pension or Retiring/Service Gratuity.”* In view of aforesaid letter, the applicant is entitled for grant of disability element of disability pension even if he has been discharged on his own request on compassionate grounds.

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 element 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. 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.”*

12. As such, in view of the decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of **Shiv Dass (supra)** as well as Government of India, Ministry of Defence letter No. 17(01)/2017(01)/D(Pen/Policy) dated 23.01.2018, we are of the considered view that benefit of rounding off of disability element of disability pension @70% for life to be rounded off to @75% for life may be extended to the applicant from three preceding years from the date of filing of the Original Application.

13. In view of the above, the **Original Application No. 77 of 2022** deserves to be allowed, hence **allowed**. The impugned orders, rejecting the applicant's claim for grant of disability element

of disability pension for the disability '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**', are set aside. Be it mentioned that the applicant's first and third disabilities have already been regarded as attributable or aggravated by military service and the applicant is getting disability element @40% for life. The second disability i.e. '**ATLANTO AXIAL SUBLUXATION**' of the applicant is also held as aggravated by Army Service. The applicant is held entitled to get disability element @70% for life for all three disabilities which would be rounded off to 75% 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 @70% for life which would stand rounded off to 75% for life w.e.f. three years preceding the date of filing of Original Application. The date of filing of Original Application is 02.02.2022. The disability element of disability pension paid @40% from the next date of applicant's discharge shall be adjusted from the arrears. 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

14. No order as to costs.

(Vice Admiral Abhay Raghunath Karve)  
Member (A)

(Justice Umesh Chandra Srivastava)  
Member (J)

Dated : 20 May, 2022

AKD/-