

Court No. 1**ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL, REGIONAL BENCH, LUCKNOW****ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 1330 of 2023**Tuesday, this the 30th day of April, 2024**“Hon’ble Mr. Justice Anil Kumar, Member (J)
Hon’ble Vice Admiral Atul Kumar Jain, Member (A)”**

No. JC-696483P, Ex. Sub. Brijesh Chandra Dubey, Son of A.N. Dubey, Resident of 570/382, Amar Sila, Virat Nagar, P.O. – Sringer Nagar, District – Lucknow, State – Uttar Pradesh, PIN-226005.

..... Applicant

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

Versus

1. Union of India, through its Secretary, Ministry of Defence, South Block, New Delhi-110011.
2. The Chief of the Army Staff, Integrated HQs of MoD (Army), Post – DHQ, New Delhi-110011.
3. Additional Dte. Of Gen. of Personnel Services, Adjutant General’s Branch [AG/PS-4 (Imp-II), IHQ of MoD (Army), DHQ PO, New Delhi-110011.
4. Officer-In-Charge, Sena Chikitsa Corps Abhilekh Karyalaya, Army Medical Corps Record Office, Lucknow, U.P.-226002.
5. Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (PCDA) (Pension), Draupadi Ghat, Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh.

.....Respondents

Ld. Counsel for the Respondents. : **Ms. Deepti Prasad Bajpai**, Advocate
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 :-

- A. *To issue/pass an order or directions to the respondents to Grant disability element of disability pension @20% to the applicant from the date of discharge i.e. 01.08.2015 along with 12% interest on arrear in light of Hon’ble Apex court judgments.*
- B. *To issue/pass an order or direction to the respondents to Grant benefit of rounding off/broad banding off disability pension @20% to @50% to the applicant from date of discharge i.e. 01.08.2015 along with 125 interest on arrear in light of Hon’ble Apex Court judgment and Government letter dated 31.01.2001.*
- C. *To issue/pass any other order or direction as this Hon’ble Tribunal may deem just, fit and proper under the circumstances of the case in favour of the applicant.*
- D. *To allow this original application with costs.*

2. Briefly stated, applicant was enrolled in the Army Medical Corps of Indian Army on 06.07.1985 and discharged from with effect from 01.08.2015 (FN) on completion of extended service limit in the rank of Subedar in medical classification SHAPE-1 under Rule 13 (3) Item I (i) (a) of the Army Rules, 1954 after rendering 30 years and 26 days of service. The applicant while serving with 33 Filed Hospital was placed in temporary low medical category

S1H1A1P2 (T-24) for six months with effect from 23.11.2005 for the disability "IMPAIRED GLUCOSE TOLERANCE". Thereafter, in re-categorization medical board he was placed in permanent low medical category P2 (Permanent) with effect from 10.05.2006. Subsequently, in re-categorization medical board held on 19.05.2010 at Command Hospital (Southern Command), Pune the applicant was upgraded to medical category SHAPE-1 as a result of which the service limit of the applicant was extended for two years with effect from 01.08.2013 to till his discharge i.e. 01.08.2015 (FN). The applicant preferred Original Application No.686 of 2022 before this Tribunal which was disposed off with direction to the respondents to conduct Re-Survey Medical Board (RSMB) of the applicant to assess his disability for deciding entitlement of disability element of disability pension vide order dated 31.01.2023. In compliance of the aforesaid order of this Tribunal, the Re-assessment Medical Board (RAMB) held at Base Hospital, Lucknow on 27.04.2023 assessed the applicant's disability '**TYPE-2 DIABETES MELLITUS (E-11)**' @20% for life. The initial Re-Categorization Medical Board of the applicant held on 23.11.2005 has declared his disability as neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service (NANA). The respondents have not granted disability element of disability pension to the applicant. 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 element of 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 assessed by the RAMB and given any opinion with regard to attributability or aggravation, however, Re-Categorization Medical Board held on 27.11.2005 regarded the applicant's disability as NANA, hence as per Regulation 53(a) of the Pension Regulations for the Army, 2008 (Part-I) which provides that *"An individual released/retired/ discharged on completion of terms of engagement or on completion of service limits or on attaining the prescribed age (irrespective of his period of engagement), if found suffering from a disability attributable to or aggravated by military service and so recorded by Release Medical Board, may be granted disability element in addition to service pension or service gratuity from the date of retirement/discharge, if the accepted degree of disability is*

assessed at 20% or more” the applicant is not entitled to disability element of disability pension. She 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 Re-Assessment Medical Board proceedings, Re-Categorization Medical Boards 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 respondents have denied the disability element of disability pension to the applicant on the ground that the Re-Categorization

Medical Board held on 27.11.2005 has opined that the disability of the applicant is neither attributable to nor aggravated (NANA) by service. However, considering the facts and circumstances of the case, we are of the opinion that this reasoning of respondents for denying disability element of disability pension to applicant is not convincing and doesn't reflect the complete truth on the matter. Even Peace Stations have their own pressure of rigorous military training and associated stress and strain of military service. The applicant was enrolled in Indian Army on 06.07.1985 and the disability has started after more than 19 years of Army service i.e. in the year 2005. 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. We also observe that in compliance of order passed by this Tribunal on 31.01.2023 in Original Application No.686 of 2022, the disability of the applicant has been assessed by RAMB held on 27.04.2023 @20% for life but has not opined anything with regard to intervening period, as such we are of the opinion that the applicant is entitled for the grant of disability element of disability pension from the date of RAMB.

11. As such, in view of the decision of Hon'ble Supreme Court in the case of ***Union of India and Ors vs Ram Avtar & ors (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 the date of RAMB i.e. 27.04.2023.

12. In view of the above, the **Original Application No. 1330 of 2023** deserves to be partly allowed, hence **partly allowed**. The impugned order, if any, 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 Army Service. The applicant is entitled to get disability element @20% for life which would be rounded off to 50% for life from the date of RAMB i.e. 27.04.2023. The respondents are directed to grant disability element to the applicant @20% for life which would stand rounded off to 50% for life from the date of RAMB i.e. 27.04.2023. 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 : 30 April, 2024

AKD/-