COURT NO. 1
ARMED FORCES TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

155.

OA 455/2019 with MA 1016/2019

Col Sanjeev Kumar Singh (Retd.) ..... Applicant
Versus
Union of India & Ors. ..... Respondents

For Applicant : Mr. Praveen Kumar, Advocate
For Respondents : Mr. Rajeev Kumar, Advocate

CORAM

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE RAJENDRA MENON, CHAIRPERSON
HON'BLE LT GEN C.P. MOHANTY, MEMBER (A)

ORDER
18.03.2024

MA 1016/2019

This is an early hearing application.

For the reasons stated in this application, the same is allowed.

MA stands disposed of.

OA 455/2019

Invoking the jurisdiction of this Tribunal under Section 14 of the Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007, the applicant filed this OA praying to direct the respondents to accept the disabilities of the applicant as attributable to/aggravated by military service and grant disability pension with benefit of broad-banding with effect from the date of retirement along with all consequential benefits.

2. The applicant was commissioned in Indian Army on 21.08.1984 and retired on 30.06.2015. after serving for 30 years

10 months and 11 days. The Release Medical Board held that the applicant was fit to be discharged from service in composite low medical category ICD NO 1 10.0 for the disabilities- (a) Primary Hypertension @ 30%, (b) Diabetes Mellitus @ 20% and (c) Lumber Spondylosis with PIVD L3-4, L4-5, L5-S1 Degenerative disc disease ICD NO-M54.1 @ 20% while the qualifying element for disability pension was recorded as NIL for life on account of disabilities (a) & (b) being treated as neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service (NANA) and disabiiity (c) being held aggravated by service as per RMB held at the time of discharge.

3. The claim of the applicant for grant of disability pension was rejected vide AG's Branch letter No. 13101/IC-43215/ENGRS/MP-6©278/2015/AG/PS-4(Imp-II) dated 21.07.2015 and the applicant's First Appeal dated 05.08.2018 was rejected vide AG's Branch letter No. 12681/IC-43215M/T-9/MP-5(B)/156/2018/1st Appeal/AG/PS-4 (Imp-II) dated 04.06.2019, stating that the aforesaid disabilities were considered as neither attributable to nor aggravated by military service. Aggrieved by the aforesaid rejection, the applicant has approached this Tribunal.

4. Placing reliance on the judgement of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***Dharamvir Singh v. UOI & Ors [2013 (7) SCC 36],*** Learned Counsel for applicant argues that no note of any disability was recorded in the service documents of the applicant

at the time of the entry into the service, and that he served in the Indian Army at various places in different environmental and service conditions in his prolonged service, thereby, any disability at the time of his service is deemed to be attributable to or aggravated by military service.

5. Per Contra, Learned Counsel for the Respondents submits that under the provisions of the Pension Regulations the primary condition for the grant of disability pension is invalidation out of service on account of a disability which is attributable to or aggravated by Indian Army service and is assessed @ 20% or more.

6. Relying on the aforesaid provision, Learned Counsel for respondents further submits that the aforesaid disabilities of the applicant were assessed as "neither attributable to nor aggravated" by Indian Army service and not connected with the Indian Army service and as such, his claim was rejected; thus, the applicant is not entitled for grant of disability pension due to policy constraints.

7. On the careful perusal of the materials available on record and also the submissions made on behalf of the parties, we are of the opinion that it is not in dispute that the extent of disability was assessed to be above 20% which is the bare minimum for grant of disability pension in terms of Regulation 81 and 37 of the Pension Regulations for the Army, 2008 (Part-I). The only question that arises in the above backdrop is whether

disability suffered by the applicant was attributable to or aggravated by military service.

8. The issue of attributability of disease is no longer res integra in view of the verdict of the Hon'ble Apex Court in ***Dharamvir Singh v. Union of India (supra),*** wherein it is clearly spelt out that any disease contracted during service is presumed to be attributable to military service, if there is no record of any ailment at the time of commission into the Military Service.

9. Furthermore, the issue regarding the attributability of Diabetes Mellitus has been settled by the ***Hon'ble Supreme Court in Commander Rakesh Pande v. Union of India (Civil Appeal No. 5970 of 2019)*** wherein the Apex Court has not only held that the Diabetes Mellitus is a disease which is of permanent nature and will entitle the applicant to disability pension, but also observed that in case where the disability is of permanent nature, the disability assessed by the Medical Board shall be treated for life and cannot be restricted for specific period.

10. Regarding broadbanding benefits, we find that the ***Hon'ble Supreme Court in its order dated 10.12.2014 in Union of India v. Ram Avtar (Civil Appeal No. 418 of 2012)*** and connected cases, has observed that individuals similarly placed as the applicant are entitled to rounding off the disability element of pension. We also find that the Government of India vide its Letter No. F.No.3(11)2010-D (Pen/Legal) Pt V, Ministry of Defence dated 18th April 2016 has issued instructions for implementation

of the Hon'ble Supreme Court order dated 10.12.2014 (supra).

11. Applying the above parameters to the case at hand, we are of the view that the applicant has been discharged from service in low medical category on account of medical disease/disability, the disability must be presumed to have arisen in the course of service which must, in the absence of any reason recorded by the Medical Board, be presumed to have been attributable to or aggravated by air force service.

12. Therefore, in view of our analysis, the OA is allowed and Respondents are directed to ***grant benefit of disability element of pension @ 60% for life rounded off to 75% in view of judgement of Hon'ble Apex Court in Union of India versus Ram Avtar (supra)*** from the date of retirement i.e. 30.06.2015. The arrears shall, however, be restricted to three years prior to the filing the OA, i.e., 19.03.2019 payable to the applicant within four months of the receipt of a copy of this order failing which it shall earn interest @ 6% p.a. till the actual date of payment.

13. Consequently, the O.A. is allowed.

14. No order as to costs.

[JUSTICE RAJENDRA MENON]
CHAIRPERSON

[LT GEN C.P. MOHANTY]
MEMBER (A)

/jyoti/