

Ramesh Chandra vs Randhir Singh And Ors.(Vice Versa) on 3 May, 1990

Equivalent citations: 1990 SCR (3) 1, 1990 SCC (3) 723, AIRONLINE 1990 SC 179

Author: M.M. Punchhi

Bench: M.M. Punchhi, L.M. Sharma

PETITIONER:
RAMESH CHANDRA

Vs.

RESPONDENT:
RANDHIR SINGH AND ORS. (VICE VERSA)

DATE OF JUDGMENT 03/05/1990

BENCH:
PUNCHHI, M.M.
BENCH:
PUNCHHI, M.M.
SHARMA, L.M. (J)

CITATION:
1990 SCR (3) 1 1990 SCC (3) 723
JT 1990 (2) 579 1990 SCALE (1) 53

ACT:

Motor Vehicles Act, 1939: Section 110-B--Motor Accident Claim--Award of compensation under separate head "general damages for pain, suffering and loss of enjoyment of life" in addition to compensation for impairment of capacity to earn--Whether justified.

Section 110- CC--Award of interest on amount of compensation--Whether dependent on pleading by claimant.

HEADNOTE:

In a claim for damages for the permanent disability suffered by the claimant, the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal awarded compensation under different heads, viz., (a) compensation for permanent disability (b) expenses of treatment, and (c) general damages for pain, suffering and loss of enjoyment of life, against the Insurance Company and the

truck owner.

On Separate appeals by the claimant, truck owner and the Insurance Company, the High Court, not only affirmed the award but also improved it by granting interest at 6 per cent per annum on the amount of compensation from the date the claim petition was filed upto the date of payment of compensation.

The truck owner filed an appeal, by special leave, before this Court on several grounds including that when the claimant had not claimed interest in the application, and the Tribunal had not awarded any, the High Court was in error in granting interest under Section 110-CC of the Motor Vehicles Act, where the power of the Court of the Tribunal was discretionary, and that the grant of damages on account of mental agony, pain and suffering etc. was arbitrary and ought to have been taken to be covered by the compensation granted on account of loss of earning. The claimant also filed an appeal, by special leave praying for more compensation, interest etc. on each account.

Dismissing the appeals, this Court,

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HELD: 1.1 The question of award of interest is dependent on the claim being allowed. Should the claim be not allowed. the question of grant of interest would not arise. and if awardable, it is in addition to the amount of compensation. The Court of Tribunal, in these circumstances, should determine, in the first instance, claim for compensation and in the event of its being allowed can further exercise the discretion to grant simple interest in terms thereof, but as an additive to the amount of compensation. So, the addition of interest to the compensation, by judicial discretion, is sequential in the eye of law and no claim in that regard, specifically need be laid in so many words in the claim petition. The grant of interest, is not dependent on any pleading in that regard and can even be orally asked if the contingency arises. [5B-D]

In these circumstances, there is no substance in the attack to the grant of interest. [5D]

1.2 The incapacity or disability to earn a livelihood would have to be viewed not only in presenti but in futuro on reasonable expectancies and taking into account deprivation of earnings of a conceivable period. This head being totally different cannot overlap the grant of compensation under the head of pain, suffering and loss of enjoyment of life. One head relates to the impairment of a person's capacity to earn, the other relates to the pain and suffering and loss of enjoyment of life by the person himself. [5F-G]

In the instant case, the pain and suffering and loss of enjoyment of life is a resultant and permanent fact occasioned by the nature of injuries received by the claimant and the ordeal he had to undergo. This, on the face of it is a distinct head, quite apart from the inability to earn livelihood on the basis of incapacity or disability which is

quite different. If money be any solace, the grant of Rs.20,000 to the claimant represents that solace. Money solace is the answer discovered by the Law of Torts. No substitute has yet been found to replace the element of money. [5E-F]

1.3 In the facts and circumstances of this case, there is no scope for further enhancement of compensation and further enhancement of interest. [6A]

JUDGMENT :

CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION: Civil Appeal No. 1188 of 1977.

From the Judgment and Order dated 7.12.1976 of the Allahabad High Court in F.A.O. No. 444 of 1975.

AND Special Leave Petition (C) No. 5344 of 1977. From the Judgment and Order dated 7.12.1976 of the Allahabad High Court in F.A. (F.O.) No. 458 of 1975. Praveen Swarup, Pramod Swarup, B.D. Sharma, Smt. Sushma Suri, and Jitender Sharma for the appearing parties. The Judgment of the Court was delivered by PUNCHHI, J. This appeal and special leave petition are cross cases in nature and are directed against the judgment and order dated December 7, 1976 passed by a Division Bench of the High Court of Allahabad At Allahabad in F.A.O. No. 444 of 1976.

The facts established before the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, Bulandshahr and re-oriented before the High Court were that Randhir Singh while driving a tempo on October 10, 1972 on a road leading from Bulandshahr to Sikandrabad was hit head-on by a speeded truck owned by Ramesh Chandra, as a result of which his tempo was thrown into a nearby ditch whereby he sustained injuries on both his legs and his several bones were fractured as well. This was followed by lodging of a report at Police Station, Sikandrabad and putting the injured at District Hospital, Bulandshahr where- from he was removed to Safdarjung Hospital, New Delhi for final treatment. The permanent result was that a part of the right foot of Randhir Singh had to be amputated as his toes had become gangrenous.

Randhir Singh moved the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, Bulandshahr seeking damages to the tune of Rs.1 lakh. The contestants being Ramesh Chandra the owner of the truck, its driver and the Insurance Company took various defences to negative the claim. The matter was focussed by the issues framed. The Tribunal by an elaborate and well reasoned order fixed negligence on the truck driver and held the injured entitled to compensation. In the measurement thereof the Tribunal took note of the age of the claimant to be 22 years and his expected income as a driver of a motor vehicle at a minimum rate of Rs.300 p.m., expected-to be earned for at least 22 years in the coming. The figure thus arrived was at Rs.79,200 and that being lumpsum payment determined a sum of Rs.55,000 to be adequate compensation for the permanent disability suffered by the claimant. Besides the Tribunal granted Rs.3,000 on account of expenses of treatment. Under the head of general damages for pain, suffering and loss of enjoyment of life the Tribunal awarded a sum of

Rs.20,000 as compensation. Thus a total award of Rs.78,000 was made in favour of the claimant. Rs.50,000 was ordered to be paid by the Insurance Company as its liability was found to be limited to that extent. The remaining Rs.28,000 was ordered to be paid by the owner. The claimant also got 3/4th of his costs. Three separate appeals were filed before the High Court; one by the dissatisfied claimant; the second by the aggrieved truck owner and the third by the aggrieved Insurance Company. The High Court dealt with the matter in equal elaboration. It affirmed the view of the Tribunal in granting compensation under the three heads aforementioned. However, the award was improved to the extent that the claimant also got interest at the rate of 6 per cent per annum on the amount of compensation from 11.11.1972, the date on which the claim petition was filed upto the date of the payment thereof; subject of course to suitable adjustments in the event of any payment having already been made to the claimant.

In Civil Appeal No. 1188 of 1977, preferred by the owner of the truck, leave was granted limited to grounds II & XIX of the Special Leave Petition. In Ground No. II the question raised was that when the claimant had not claimed interest in the application, and the Tribunal had not awarded any, the High Court was in error in granting interest under Section 110-CC of the Motor Vehicles Act where the power of the Court of the Tribunal was discretionary. In Ground No. XIX the question raised was that a sum of Rs.20,000 on account of mental agony, pain and suffering etc. was arbitrarily granted, and thus ought to have been taken to be covered up by the compensation granted on account of loss of earning. In Special Leave Petition No. 5344 of 1977 the claimant has asked for more compensation, interest etc on each count.

We have heard learned counsel for the parties and have perused the appeal papers, in particular regard of the limited nature of appeal of the truck owner. Section 110-CC, as it stood on the date of the accident, provided that where any Court or Claims Tribunal allows a claim for compensation made under the Act, such Court or Tribunal may direct that in addition to the amount of compensation simple interest shall also be paid at such rate and from such date not earlier than the date of making the claim as it may specify in this behalf. The caption of the provision is "Award of interest where any claim is allowed". The question of award of interest is dependent on the claim being allowed. Should the claim be not allowed, the question of grant of interest would not arise, and if awardable, it is in addition to the amount of compensation. The Court of Tribunal, in these circumstances, should determine, in the first instance, claim for compensation and in the event of its being allowed can further exercise the discretion to grant simple interest in terms thereof, but as an additive to the amount of compensation. So the addition of interest to the compensation, by judicial discretion, is sequential in the eye of law and no claim in that regard, in our view, specifically need be laid in so many words in the claim petition. The grant of interest in our view, is not dependent on any pleading in that regard and can even be orally asked if the contingency arises. Thus, in our view, there is no substance in Ground No. II of the Special Leave Petition and the attack to the grant of interest is negated. With regard to Ground No. XIX covering the question that the sum awarded for pain, suffering and loss of enjoyment of life etc. termed as general damages should be taken to be covered by damages granted for loss of earnings is concerned that too is mis-placed and without any basis. The pain and suffering and loss of enjoyment of life which is a resultant and permanent fact occasioned by the nature of injuries received by the claimant and the ordeal he had to undergo. If money be any solace, the grant of Rs.20,000 to the claimant represents that solace. Money solace

is the answer discovered by the Law of Torts. No substitute has yet been found to replace the element of money. This, on the face of it appeals to us as a distinct head, quite apart from the inability to earn livelihood on the basis of incapacity or disability which is quite different. The incapacity or disability to earn a livelihood would have to be viewed not only in presenti but in futuro on reasonable expectancies and taking into account deprivation of earnings of a conceivable period.: This head being totally different cannot in our view overlap, the grant of compensation under the head of pain, suffering and loss of enjoyment of life. One head relates to the impairment of a person's capacity to earn, the other relates to the pain and suffering and loss of enjoyment of life by the person himself. For these reasons, we are of the considered view that the contentions raised by the truck-owner appellant in that behalf must be negatived and we hereby negative them.

With regard to further enhancement of compensation and further enhancement of interest, as claimed in the special leave petition by the claimant, we find in the facts and circumstances of this case, no scope in that regard. As a result of the afore-discussion, both these matters are without merit and are accordingly dismissed. Parties to bear their own costs.

N.P.V.
missed.

Appeals dis-