
(2011) 09 CHH CK 0054
In the Chhattisgarh High Court
Case No : Misc. Appeal No. 1122 of 2004

Smt. Janki Bai and others

APPELLANT

Vs

Ram Khilawan Rathore and others

RESPONDENT

Date of Decision : 28-09-2011

Acts Referred:

Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 — Section 166

Citation : (2012) 1 MPHT 28

Hon'ble Judges : Rajeev Gupta, C.J.; Nawal Kishore Agarwal, J

Bench : Full Bench

Final Decision : Allowed

Judgement

Rajeev Gupta, CJ.

1. This is claimants' appeal for enhancement of the compensation awarded by the Additional Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, Bilaspur (for short "the Tribunal") vide award dated 31-8-2004, passed in Claim Case No. 83/2003.

2. As against the compensation Rs. 10,34,160/- claimed by the appellants/claimants, unfortunate widow, minor children and parents of deceased Nutan Singh Gond, by filing a claim petition u/s 166 of the Motor Vehicles Act, for his death in the motor accident on 8-8-2003, the Tribunal awarded a total sum of Rs. 1,93,000/- as compensation along with interest @ 6% per annum from the date of filing of the claim petition till the date of actual payment.

3. The Tribunal on a close scrutiny of the entire evidence led before it held that deceased Nutan Singh Gond died on account of the injuries sustained by him in the motor accident on 8-8-2003; the accident occurred due to rash and negligent driving of the driver of the offending vehicle Jeep bearing registration No. C.G. 12/7017; as the above offending vehicle Jeep on the date of accident was insured with the Oriental Insurance Company Limited and the Insurance Company could not establish any breach of the policy conditions, the Insurance Company was liable to pay compensation to the claimants.

4. As the respondents have not filed any appeal against the award, the above findings recorded by the Tribunal have now attained finality.

5. The Tribunal assessed the income of the deceased at Rs. 15,000/- per annum. By deducting 1/3rd of Rs. 15,000/- towards the personal expenses of the deceased, the claimants' dependency was assessed at Rs. 10,000/- per annum. By multiplying the annual dependency of Rs. 10,000/- with the multiplier of 18, the compensation was worked out to Rs. 1,80,000/-. By awarding further sum of Rs. 13,000/- under other heads, the Tribunal awarded a total sum of Rs. 1,93,000/- as compensation to the claimants for the death of deceased Nutan Singh Gond in the motor accident. The Tribunal further directed payment of interest on the above amount of compensation of Rs. 1,93,000/- @ 6% per annum from the date of filing of the claim petition till the date of actual payment.

6. Shri Goutam Khetrapal and Shri Vijay Sahu, learned Counsel for the appellants submitted that the Tribunal has erred in not accepting the claimants' evidence about the income of the deceased and in assessing his income at Rs. 15,000/- per annum only; and in awarding low compensation of Rs. 1,93,000/- only.

7. Shri Raj Awasthi, learned Counsel for respondent No. 3, the Oriental Insurance Company Limited, the insurer of the offending vehicle Jeep, on the other hand, supported the award and contended that the compensation of Rs. 1,93,000/- awarded by the Tribunal is just and proper compensation in the facts and circumstances of the present case.

8. Shri Sanjay Patel, learned Counsel for respondent No. 1, the driver of the offending vehicle Jeep also supported the award.

9. In a motor accident claim case, what is important is that, the compensation to be awarded by the Courts/Tribunals should be just and proper compensation in the facts and circumstances of the case. It should neither be a meager amount of compensation, nor a Bonanza.

10. Now we shall examine as to whether the compensation of Rs. 1,93,000/- awarded by the Tribunal is just and proper compensation in the facts and circumstances of the present case.

11. True, the claimants pleaded that deceased Nutan Singh Gond used to earn Rs. 75-100/- per day as porter/loader and the evidence before the Tribunal was to the effect that the deceased used to earn Rs. 200/- per day. In this state of evidence, we do not find any fault in the approach of the Tribunal in discarding the claimant's evidence about the income of the deceased.

12. Nevertheless, the income of the deceased assessed by the Tribunal at Rs. 15,000/- per annum in the year 2003 is certainly on the lower side and requires reconsideration.

13. Considering that deceased Nutan Singh Gond was aged about 26 years on the date of accident, we are of the opinion that he could have easily earned Rs.

70-80/- per day even by working as an unskilled labour, in the year 2003. We, therefore, propose to recompute the compensation taking the income of the deceased at Rs. 2,500/- and Rs. 30,000/- per annum.

14. By deducting the usual 1/3rd of Rs. 30,000/- towards the personal expenses of the deceased, the claimants' dependency is assessed at Rs. 20,000/- per annum.

15. Considering the deceased Nutan Singh Gond was aged about 26 years on the date of the accident, we are of the opinion that multiplier of 17 would be appropriate in the present case, in view of the dictum of the Apex Court in the case of Smt. Sarla Verma and Others Vs. Delhi Transport Corporation and Another, , wherein multiplier of 17 has been prescribed for the age group between 26-30 years.

16. By multiplying the annual dependency of Rs. 20,000/- with the multiplier of 17, the compensation works out to Rs. 3,40,000/-. The claimants are further entitled to receive Rs. 5,000/- towards funeral expenses; Rs. 5,000/- for loss of estate; and Rs. 5,000/- for loss of consortium to the widow. The claimants, thus, become entitled to receive a total sum of Rs. 3,55,000/- as compensation for the death of deceased Nutan Singh Gond in the motor accident.

17. Learned Counsel for the parties submitted that with a view to avoid any possible dispute between the parties before the Tribunal about the period for which the claimants are entitled to receive interest on the enhanced amount of compensation, the amount of interest on the enhanced amount of compensation may be quantified in this appeal itself.

18. Considering all the relevant aspects of the matter, including the delay in disposal of the claim petition, and the present appeal on the fact that the Insurance Company alone is not to be blamed for the entire delay in the matter, we quantify the amount of interest on the enhanced amount of compensation of Rs. 1,62,000/- at Rs. 13,000/-.

19. For the foregoing reasons, the appeal filed by the appellants/claimants for enhancement of the compensation is allowed in part. The compensation of Rs. 1,93,000/- awarded by the Tribunal is enhanced to Rs. 3,55,000/- with further quantified amount of interest of Rs. 13,000/- on the enhanced amount of compensation of Rs. 1,62,000/-.

20. Respondent No. 3 the Oriental Insurance Company Limited is granted three months' time for depositing the total sum of Rs. 1,75,000/- (Rs. 1,62,000/- towards enhanced amount of compensation+ Rs. 13,000/- towards quantified amount of interest on the enhanced amount of compensation of Rs. 1,62,000/-) before the concerning Claims Tribunal.

21. No order as to costs.