

[124] IN THE HIGH COURT OF PUNJAB AND HARYANA
AT CHANDIGARH

FAO-604-2013
Reserved on 23.08.2024

Pronounced on: 22.11.2024

Gurinderbeer Singh and another ...Appellants
versus
Union of IndiaRespondent

Coram : HON’BLE MR. JUSTICE PANKAJ JAIN

Present: Mr. Upender Prashar, Advocate
for the appellants.

Mr. Bhuwan Vats, Advocate
for the respondent-UOI.

PANKAJ JAIN, J. (ORAL)

- [1] The appeal has been preferred by the dependents of deceased-
Maninder Singh.
- [2] Pleaded case of the claimants is that on 07.06.2011 the
deceased was traveling by Jannayak Express Train from Shahjahanpur
railway station to Amritsar. When the train was about to reach Amritsar
railway station, the deceased accidentally fell down from the running train
due to sudden jerk in the train and died on the spot.
- [3] The respondent railway contested the claim by filing written
statement on the ground that the alleged incident causing death of the
deceased does not fall within the meaning of Section 123(c)(2) read with
Section 124A of the Railways Act. The deceased was not a bonafide

passenger nor did any such incident had occurred on 07.06.2011, the present application is not maintainable. On the basis of the pleadings following issues were framed: -

- “1. *Whether deceased was bona fide train passenger at the time of accident?*
2. *Whether death of deceased was covered under the ambit of untoward incident as defined under Section 123(c) (2)?*
3. *Whether the claimants are the sole dependent of the deceased?*
4. *Relief. ”*

[4] Tribunal rejected the claim, holding that the deceased did not have a valid ticket, hence he is not a bonafide passenger, and the applicant cannot maintain the claim petition.

[5] Counsel for the appellant submits that the Tribunal has totally misread the evidence on record. Claimant appeared as AW-1 and filed an affidavit stating purchase of ticket and no evidence was produced by the railways to rebut the same.

[6] I have heard counsel for the parties and carefully gone through the records of the case.

[7] Section 124A deals with liability of Railways to pay compensation to the victims on account of injuries/loss of life suffered owing to untoward incidents and accidents involving Railways. The aforesaid provision came on the statute book by way of Railways Amendment Act, 28 of 1994. The same has come up for consideration before Supreme Court in the case of **Rathi Menon vs. Union of India**

others, (2008) 9 SCC 527, Jameela and others vs. Union of India, 2010 AIR SC 3705, Union of India vs. Rina Devi, (2019) 3 SCC 572 and Doli Rani Saha vs. Union of India, Civil Appeal No.8605 of 2024 (Arising out of SLP (C) No.32962 of 2018).

[8] After considering the aforesaid precedents, this court dealt the issue elaborately in the case of **Sandeep Narula and ors versus Union of India** bearing FAO No. 2700 of 2016, wherein the court observed as under:

“15. In view of above, the following proposition can be culled:-

(i) Railway is liable to pay to an injured passenger or to the dependents of a passenger killed in an untoward incident involving railways. The passenger for the purpose of Chapter XIII of the Railways Act does not necessarily mean a passenger as contemplated under Section 2(29) of the 1989 Act. Rather explanation appended to Section 124A provides that the passenger shall include:-

- a) a railway servant on duty;*
- b) a person who has purchased a valid ticket for traveling by a train carrying passengers on any date; or*
- c) a valid platform ticket and becomes a victim of an untoward incident.*
- d) The definition is inclusive. It does not exclude any category. Definition of ‘passenger’ as appended to Section 124A by explanation is much wider than the definition of ‘passenger’ as provided under Section 2(29) of the 1989 Act.*

(ii) As per the dictum of law laid down in Rina Devi’s case (supra), once an affidavit is filed by the claimant that the victim was traveling on a valid ticket, the initial burden to prove that

the victim was a bona fide passenger stands discharged. Thereafter, it is for the Railways to rebut the same to prove otherwise.

*(iii) Untoward incident is different from accident. 'Untoward incident' is defined under Section 123(c) of the 1989 Act. Under five situations as contemplated under proviso appended to Section 124A, the Railway Administration may be absolved of its liability. Any other situation that does not fall within the ambit of proviso appended to Section 124-A, invites liability of Railway Administration to pay compensation. The compensation needs to be paid as per the mandate of statute as interpreted by the Supreme Court in **Rina Devi's case (supra)**.*

(iv) The liability of the Railway Administration is based on the 'principle of strict liability'. Plea of 'no fault of railways' or 'negligence of the victim' is not available to the Railway Administration. "

[9] In the present case, claimant filed an affidavit specifically claiming that his deceased son was travelling as a bona fide passenger on a general railway ticket which was valid from Ratan-Chhatar Railway Station to Amritsar Railway Station. Subsequently, a ticket was recovered, which was placed on record as Annexure-D. The evidence adduced by the claimant has gone un rebutted. In terms of the ratio of law laid down by Apex Court in **Rina Devi's case (supra)**, the Tribunal ought not have returned the finding that the deceased was not a bona fide passenger.

[10] In view of the above, the findings recorded by the Tribunal need to be reversed.

[11] In the D.R.M. report of railway, a clear cut stand has been taken

that the deceased to be a bonafide passenger and him falling from the train. There is no evidence on record to prove any intentional act on part of the deceased which led to loss of his life. The incident does not fall within the five exceptions as contemplated under the proviso appended to Section 124A of the 1989 Act. Thus, the respondent/ Railways cannot be absolved of its liability and is required to pay compensation.

[12] As a sequel of the discussion held hereinabove, it is held that the injured was a bona fide passenger, who suffered injuries in an untoward incident. Consequently, the present appeal is allowed.

Relief:

[13] The accident is of the year 2011. Thus, the compensation awarded to the appellants shall be as per Part I of the Schedule appended to the Railway Accident and Untoward Incidents (Compensation) Rules, 1990 prior to amendment dated 1st of January, 2017 i.e. Rs.4.00 lacs along with interest @ 9% per annum payable for the period from the date of application till the date of actual realization.

(PANKAJ JAIN)
JUDGE

22.11.2024

'R. Sharma'

<i>Whether speaking/ reasoned</i>	:	<i>Yes/No</i>
<i>Whether reportable</i>	:	<i>Yes/No</i>