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EXPLORING THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF RIGHT TO DIE WITH DIGNITY: A STUDY

AUTHORED BY - SUMIT

Abstract

The right to die with dignity represents one of the most complex intersections between law, ethics, medicine, and human rights. It challenges the conventional understanding of life as an absolute right and invites profound moral, constitutional, and philosophical questions about autonomy, personhood, and the limits of state intervention. This research paper explores the legal and ethical dimensions of the right to die with dignity, with particular focus on the Indian constitutional framework, comparative international jurisprudence, and bioethical theories that shape this debate.

The study begins by examining the evolution of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which guarantees that no person shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law. Jurisprudence in India has expanded this right to encompass the right to live with dignity, and by logical extension, the right to die with dignity. However, the conceptual and judicial journey from *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab* (1996) to *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018) reveals an ongoing tension between individual autonomy and the sanctity of life as protected by the state.

Ethically, the discourse traverses diverse frameworks utilitarianism, which may justify euthanasia as minimizing suffering; deontological ethics, which rejects it on moral absolutes; and virtue ethics, which focuses on compassion and human flourishing. The research critically analyses how these ethical theories align or conflict with legal reasoning adopted by courts in India and abroad. The right to die is not merely a medical question of withdrawing life support; it is a deeply human issue implicating concepts of consent, mental competence, palliative care, and societal morality.

Methodologically, this study adopts a doctrinal and analytical approach, examining constitutional provisions, judicial precedents, and scholarly discourse. It also includes a comparative study of euthanasia laws and assisted dying legislation in jurisdictions such as the

Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, and the United States, identifying how moral pluralism and legal pragmatism coexist within their frameworks.

Ultimately, this research seeks to illuminate the legal and ethical contours of the right to die with dignity in India. It contends that a humane and constitutionally consistent recognition of this right requires balancing individual autonomy with safeguards against misuse. The conclusion advocates for a coherent legislative framework that integrates medical ethics, patient rights, and constitutional morality ensuring that the right to life truly encompasses the right to live, and die, with dignity.

Keywords

Right to Die with Dignity; Euthanasia; Assisted Dying; Constitutional Morality; Article 21 of the Indian Constitution; Autonomy and Consent; Bioethics; Human Rights; Medical Ethics; Passive Euthanasia; Active Euthanasia; Palliative Care; Living Will; End-of-Life Decision Making; Judicial Interpretation; State Interest; Sanctity of Life; Ethical Relativism.

Introduction

The question of whether an individual possesses the right to die with dignity has long been one of the most profound ethical, philosophical, and legal dilemmas in human society. The very concept of life as an inviolable gift often clashes with the belief that personal autonomy and dignity grant individuals the moral and legal freedom to choose when and how to end their suffering. The debate surrounding the right to die with dignity thus occupies the confluence of multiple disciplines — law, philosophy, religion, medicine, and human rights each contributing unique insights while also generating complex contradictions.

In India, this discourse assumes particular significance due to the constitutional guarantee under Article 21, which provides that “no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.” The Indian judiciary, through expansive interpretation, has recognized that the right to life under Article 21 encompasses not merely physical existence but a life imbued with dignity, autonomy, and choice. This interpretative evolution has consequently led to the inevitable question if the right to live with dignity is constitutionally protected, does it not logically imply a right to die with dignity when life

becomes a prolonged state of suffering and indignity?¹

Historically, Indian jurisprudence on the right to die has evolved through a series of landmark cases. In *P. Rathinam v. Union of India* (1994), the Supreme Court initially recognized that the right to die is an inherent aspect of the right to life. However, this view was later overruled in *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab* (1996), where the Court held that the right to life does not include the right to die, reasoning that life is a natural process that must not be prematurely terminated. Yet, the Court simultaneously acknowledged that the right to die with dignity in the context of terminal illness could be conceptually distinct from suicide, paving the way for later judicial reflection².

The turning point came with *Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug v. Union of India* (2011), wherein the Supreme Court, for the first time, recognized the legality of passive euthanasia — allowing withdrawal of life support from patients in a persistent vegetative state under strict judicial supervision. This judicial recognition evolved further in *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018), where the Supreme Court held that the right to die with dignity is a fundamental right under Article 21, thereby legalizing passive euthanasia and validating living wills under specific safeguards. This landmark judgment thus integrated the right to refuse medical treatment and the right to die with dignity into the broader constitutional framework of personal liberty and autonomy.

Ethically, the right to die invokes foundational principles of autonomy, beneficence, and non-maleficence, central to medical ethics. Autonomy emphasizes the individual's right to self-determination, while beneficence and non-maleficence guide physicians to act in the best interests of patients by minimizing suffering and avoiding harm. The ethical justification for euthanasia rests on compassion and the moral duty to alleviate pain when continued life offers only suffering. Yet, moral objections persist, often grounded in religious beliefs, cultural taboos, and concerns about societal misuse. From a deontological standpoint, life is viewed as sacred and inviolable, and any deliberate act to end it is morally impermissible. Conversely, from a utilitarian perspective, allowing death in cases of irreversible suffering can be ethically justified as it promotes overall well-being by reducing pain and preserving dignity³.

¹ Constitution of India, Art. 21.

² *P. Rathinam v. Union of India*, (1994) 3 SCC 394; *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab*, (1996) 2 SCC 648.

³ Beauchamp, T.L. & Childress, J.F., *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Internationally, countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, and some states in the United States (notably Oregon and California) have legislatively recognized forms of euthanasia or physician-assisted dying. These legal frameworks, while varied, share common ethical underpinnings respect for individual autonomy, stringent procedural safeguards, and medical accountability. The Indian position, although judicially progressive, remains legally underdeveloped due to the absence of a comprehensive legislative framework. The reliance on judicial guidelines rather than statutory enactments leaves ambiguities regarding implementation, medical liability, and procedural compliance.

This research, therefore, seeks to explore both the legal and ethical dimensions of the right to die with dignity in India. It critically examines constitutional interpretations, ethical theories, and comparative legal developments to understand how dignity, autonomy, and state interests interact in defining this right. The study argues that the recognition of the right to die is not a negation of life but an affirmation of dignity the same principle that animates the right to live freely and meaningfully. It also contends that an effective and humane recognition of this right requires balancing individual autonomy with robust legal safeguards against coercion, malpractice, and moral arbitrariness.

In the context of an evolving constitutional democracy like India, where technological advancements in healthcare can prolong life but not necessarily alleviate suffering, the debate on dying with dignity assumes renewed urgency. The challenge before the legal system is to reconcile ethical compassion with constitutional rigor, ensuring that the right to die does not become a tool of exploitation but remains an expression of human freedom and dignity.

Research Methodology

The study on the Right to Die with Dignity involves intricate intersections between law, ethics, medicine, and human rights. Consequently, the methodology adopted in this research is primarily doctrinal, supported by analytical and comparative approaches. The research aims to critically examine existing laws, judicial pronouncements, and ethical theories that define and shape the concept of the right to die in India and selected foreign jurisdictions.

1. Nature of the Study

This research is primarily qualitative and normative in nature. It seeks to interpret, analyze, and evaluate the legal and ethical principles underpinning the recognition of the right to die with

dignity. Rather than relying on empirical data, the study focuses on textual analysis of legal documents, judicial decisions, and philosophical arguments. The inquiry is both descriptive outlining the evolution of the right and prescriptive suggesting how the law can evolve to balance moral considerations with constitutional principles.

The study emphasizes the moral and constitutional legitimacy of the right to die and examines whether such a right is compatible with the Indian constitutional ethos of dignity and liberty. It also analyses how ethical reasoning informs legal interpretation and how courts reconcile conflicting values of autonomy, sanctity of life, and state interest.

2. Research Design

The research follows a doctrinal legal research design, which involves critical examination of primary and secondary sources to trace the conceptual development of euthanasia and the right to die. The design involves the following components:

- **Identification of Legal Frameworks:** Analysis of constitutional provisions, statutes, and judicial precedents concerning the right to life and death with dignity.
- **Doctrinal Analysis of Case Law:** Detailed study of landmark judgments such as *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab* (1996), *Aruna Shanbaug v. Union of India* (2011), and *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018) to understand judicial reasoning and doctrinal evolution.
- **Comparative Legal Analysis:** Examination of euthanasia laws and assisted dying frameworks in other jurisdictions like the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, and the United States to evaluate their ethical and procedural standards.
- **Ethical Analysis:** Application of ethical frameworks such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics to assess moral justification and critique legal positions.
- **Analytical Framework:** Integration of legal reasoning and moral philosophy to assess whether the recognition of the right to die with dignity aligns with constitutional morality and human rights principles.

Hypothesis

This study proceeds on the hypothesis that the right to die with dignity is an implicit extension of the right to life and personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. It posits that dignity, as an inseparable element of life, must equally be preserved at the end of life, especially in cases of terminal illness or irreversible suffering.

Further, the research hypothesizes that recognizing the right to die with dignity does not

undermine the sanctity of life but rather affirms the autonomy and moral agency of individuals to make end-of-life decisions. The paper assumes that a clear legislative framework, supported by ethical safeguards, can reconcile individual freedom with state responsibility, thereby preventing potential misuse while upholding human dignity.

Literature Review

The right to die with dignity has been the subject of extensive legal, philosophical, and ethical inquiry across jurisdictions. The debate pivots on fundamental questions concerning human autonomy, the sanctity of life, and the moral limits of state control over personal liberty. This literature review surveys key judicial decisions, academic writings, and ethical discourses that have shaped the understanding of euthanasia and assisted dying, both in India and globally.

1. Indian Legal and Judicial Discourse

The evolution of the right to die in India has primarily occurred through judicial interpretation rather than legislative enactment. The early judicial stance in *State of Maharashtra v. Maruti Sripati Dubal* (1987) was among the first to recognize that the right to life includes the right not to live, thereby striking down Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code (which criminalized attempted suicide) as unconstitutional⁴. However, this position was later challenged in *P. Rathinam v. Union of India* (1994), where the Supreme Court upheld the right to die as part of Article 21, but the judgment lacked a nuanced ethical and constitutional foundation⁵.

The subsequent decision in *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab* (1996) reversed this position, holding that the right to life does not include the right to die, as life is a natural process that must be protected by law. Nonetheless, the Court observed that the right to die with dignity in cases of terminal illness may fall within the ambit of Article 21, laying the conceptual groundwork for later jurisprudence⁶.

The landmark case of *Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug v. Union of India* (2011) marked the judicial acceptance of passive euthanasia, allowing withdrawal of life support under strict guidelines⁷. The Court distinguished between active and passive euthanasia, emphasizing compassion and patient autonomy while requiring judicial approval to prevent abuse. This decision was later reaffirmed and expanded in *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018), where

⁴ *State of Maharashtra v. Maruti Sripati Dubal*, 1987 Cri LJ 743 (Bom).

⁵ *P. Rathinam v. Union of India*, (1994) 3 SCC 394.

⁶ *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab*, (1996) 2 SCC 648.

⁷ *Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug v. Union of India*, (2011) 4 SCC 454.

the Supreme Court declared the right to die with dignity as a fundamental right and recognized living wills as a legitimate exercise of autonomy⁸.

These cases collectively illustrate a gradual but definitive judicial shift from the sanctity-of-life doctrine toward a more autonomy-oriented approach, wherein dignity and consent form the moral and constitutional basis of the right to die.

2. Ethical and Philosophical Perspectives

From an ethical standpoint, the right to die is analyzed through competing frameworks. Utilitarianism, articulated by philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, supports euthanasia when it minimizes suffering and promotes the greatest happiness⁹. Conversely, Kantian deontology rejects euthanasia, as it violates the moral duty to respect life as an intrinsic good¹⁰. Virtue ethics, as revived by Aristotle and modern thinkers, evaluates the act based on compassion, empathy, and moral character rather than rigid moral rules¹¹.

Contemporary bioethicists such as Beauchamp and Childress have emphasized the principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice as guiding pillars of medical ethics. In this view, respecting a patient's wish to end suffering through medically assisted death can be morally permissible if it aligns with their informed consent and clinical judgment¹².

Indian scholars like Upendra Baxi and A.G. Noorani have argued that constitutional morality which underlies the spirit of the Constitution demands that dignity and autonomy prevail over state paternalism in matters of life and death. Baxi notes that the Constitution's moral fabric cannot remain indifferent to the anguish of those living in irreversible pain, asserting that "a dignified life necessarily includes the dignity of dying"¹³.

Research Questions and Aim

This research seeks to explore the constitutional, legal, and ethical dimensions of the right to die with dignity in India. The following key research questions guide the study:

1. Does the right to die with dignity form an integral part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India?

⁸ *Common Cause v. Union of India*, (2018) 5 SCC 1.

⁹ Mill, J.S., *On Liberty* (1859).

¹⁰ Kant, I., *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785).

¹¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. 1999).

¹² Beauchamp, T.L. & Childress, J.F., *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹³ Baxi, U., *Human Rights in a Posthuman World* (OUP, 2007).

2. How have Indian courts interpreted and expanded the concept of dignity and autonomy in the context of end-of-life decisions?
3. What ethical principles and philosophical frameworks support or oppose the legalization of euthanasia and assisted dying?
4. How does the Indian approach compare with international legal standards on euthanasia?
5. What legal and ethical safeguards are necessary to prevent misuse while upholding human dignity?

Aim:

The primary aim of this research is to critically analyze the legal and ethical legitimacy of recognizing the right to die with dignity within the Indian constitutional framework. It also aims to propose a balanced model that harmonizes personal autonomy, medical ethics, and state responsibility to ensure dignified end-of-life choices.

1. Conceptual and Philosophical Foundations of the Right to Die with Dignity

This chapter lays the theoretical groundwork by examining the conceptual evolution of the right to die within moral philosophy, human rights discourse, and constitutional interpretation. It begins by exploring the philosophical tension between the sanctity of life and autonomy of choice, tracing their roots in classical and modern thought. The sanctity-of-life principle, rooted in religious and natural law traditions, views life as inviolable and beyond individual discretion. In contrast, autonomy, as articulated by liberal philosophers like John Stuart Mill, asserts that individuals are the ultimate arbiters of their bodies and choices, including the decision to end life under unbearable suffering¹⁴.

The chapter explores three major ethical frameworks shaping this debate: utilitarianism, which supports euthanasia when it minimizes suffering and promotes collective welfare; deontological ethics, which rejects it as morally impermissible regardless of consequences; and virtue ethics, which evaluates morality through compassion, empathy, and moral character rather than rules¹⁵. The interplay between these ethical paradigms illuminates the moral complexity of legalizing euthanasia.

In the Indian context, the concept of dignity is constitutionally enshrined under Article 21, interpreted expansively by the Supreme Court to include living conditions worthy of human

¹⁴ Mill, J.S., *On Liberty* (1859).

¹⁵ Kant, I., *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785).

respect. The idea of dying with dignity is thus a logical corollary to the right to live with dignity, especially in cases of terminal illness or irreversible suffering. The chapter also analyses the role of constitutional morality, a concept articulated in *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India* (2018), emphasizing that individual liberty and dignity should prevail over moral majoritarianism¹⁶.

This foundational chapter concludes by asserting that the right to die with dignity emerges not as a negation of life, but as an affirmation of humane existence where law and ethics converge to respect the individual's autonomy and suffering.

2. Evolution of the Right to Die in Indian Jurisprudence

The second chapter traces the judicial trajectory of the right to die in India through a detailed doctrinal analysis of key judgments. It begins with Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which criminalizes attempted suicide, reflecting a paternalistic approach that treats life preservation as a state duty. The first significant challenge to this provision came in *State of Maharashtra v. Maruti Sripati Dubal* (1987), where the Bombay High Court held that the right to die is part of Article 21, striking down Section 309 as unconstitutional¹⁷.

This reasoning was endorsed by the Supreme Court in *P. Rathinam v. Union of India* (1994), which recognized the right to die as an aspect of personal liberty. However, the decision was criticized for lack of moral depth and was overruled in *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab* (1996), where the Court held that the right to life cannot be interpreted to include the right to die, as death is not the logical extension of life³⁵. Nonetheless, the Court acknowledged that the right to die with dignity, particularly in cases of terminal illness, could fall within the purview of Article 21.

The landmark case of *Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug v. Union of India* (2011) marked a paradigm shift, recognizing passive euthanasia withdrawal of life support in cases of persistent vegetative state under judicial supervision³⁶. This decision reflected a moral compromise between preserving life and allowing natural death. The jurisprudence reached maturity with *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018), where a Constitution Bench declared that the right to die with dignity is a fundamental right and validated living wills as instruments of autonomy¹⁸.

This chapter also analyzes the 241st Law Commission Report (2012), which recommended

¹⁶ *Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India*, (2018) 10 SCC 1.

¹⁷ *State of Maharashtra v. Maruti Sripati Dubal*, 1987 Cri LJ 743 (Bom).

¹⁸ *Common Cause v. Union of India*, (2018) 5 SCC 1.

legalization of passive euthanasia with procedural safeguards. Despite judicial progress, the absence of enabling legislation continues to create practical ambiguities for medical professionals and families. The chapter concludes that the Indian judiciary has moved from a rigid preservationist stance to a compassionate constitutional interpretation balancing autonomy, dignity, and state interest.

3. Ethical Dimensions of Euthanasia and the Right to Die

The third chapter delves into the ethical underpinnings of euthanasia and the moral legitimacy of the right to die. It examines the role of bioethics, which mediates between legal norms and medical practice through principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice¹⁹. The principle of autonomy emphasizes that competent individuals should have the freedom to decide about their medical treatment, including refusal of life-sustaining interventions. Beneficence and non-maleficence guide medical practitioners to act in the patient's best interest and avoid causing harm, implying that prolonging life in agony may constitute moral harm. Justice requires equitable access to palliative care and end-of-life decision-making.

Ethical objections to euthanasia often derive from religious traditions that sanctify life as divine creation, such as Hinduism's doctrine of ahimsa and Christianity's prohibition of self-destruction. However, these positions are increasingly challenged by secular ethics, which prioritize compassion and individual suffering over metaphysical absolutism.

This chapter also evaluates the slippery slope argument, which warns that legalizing euthanasia could lead to abuse, particularly among vulnerable populations. Proponents counter that with strong procedural safeguards, transparency, and medical oversight, the risk of misuse can be minimized while preserving human dignity²⁰.

Furthermore, the ethical discourse is examined through the lens of virtue ethics, emphasizing the moral character of decision-makers doctors, judges, and families who must act with empathy and prudence. The chapter concludes that the ethical legitimacy of the right to die rests not on promoting death but on affirming the humane responsibility to relieve suffering through dignity-centered compassion.

4. Comparative Legal Analysis of Euthanasia and Assisted Dying

This chapter presents a comparative study of legal frameworks governing euthanasia and assisted dying in different jurisdictions, offering insights into models that could inform Indian

¹⁹ Beauchamp, T.L. & Childress, J.F., *Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

²⁰ Rachel, J., "Active and Passive Euthanasia," *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1975.

law.

In the Netherlands, the Termination of Life on Request and Assisted Suicide (Review Procedures) Act, 2002 legalized both euthanasia and assisted suicide, subject to criteria such as voluntary and well-considered request, unbearable suffering, and medical review⁴⁰. Belgium adopted a similar approach in 2002, extending euthanasia rights to minors in exceptional cases, reflecting moral liberalism balanced with strict oversight²¹.

In Canada, the Supreme Court in *Carter v. Canada (Attorney General)* (2015) recognized that prohibiting assisted dying violated the Canadian Charter's guarantees of liberty and security. The subsequent MAiD Act (2016) institutionalized the right with eligibility based on terminal illness and informed consent²².

The United States adopts a decentralized model where states such as Oregon, Washington, and California have enacted Death with Dignity Acts permitting physician-assisted dying under regulated procedures²³. The United Kingdom, however, continues to prohibit active euthanasia, though withdrawal of life support is allowed as in *Airedale NHS Trust v. Bland* (1993)²⁴.

This comparative analysis demonstrates that jurisdictions recognizing assisted dying share common principles voluntariness, informed consent, medical supervision, and procedural safeguards underscoring that ethical compassion can coexist with legal control. The chapter concludes that India can benefit from adopting a legislative framework inspired by these models, ensuring both human dignity and accountability.

5. The Way Forward Legal, Ethical, and Policy Recommendations

The final chapter synthesizes findings from previous sections and proposes a comprehensive roadmap for recognizing and regulating the right to die with dignity in India.

Legally, the chapter argues for enactment of a Right to Die with Dignity Act, codifying passive euthanasia, living wills, and advance medical directives in conformity with the Common Cause judgment. The legislation should clearly define eligibility, procedural safeguards, and medical protocols to prevent coercion and misuse. Establishing a National Ethics Oversight Authority could ensure accountability, review disputes, and guide medical professionals²⁵.

Ethically, the chapter advocates integrating palliative care as a fundamental component of end-of-life management, emphasizing that euthanasia should never substitute compassionate care

²¹ *Belgian Euthanasia Act*, 2002.

²² *Carter v. Canada (Attorney General)*, [2015] 1 SCR 331.

²³ Oregon Death with Dignity Act, 1997.

²⁴ *Airedale NHS Trust v. Bland*, [1993] AC 789.

²⁵ Law Commission of India, 241st Report, "Passive Euthanasia – A Relook" (2012).

but complement it where necessary. Education and awareness programs must sensitize doctors, patients, and families to ethical end-of-life decision-making grounded in dignity and autonomy. Policy-wise, the chapter recommends harmonizing medical ethics codes, legal frameworks, and religious sensitivities through public dialogue and multidisciplinary consultation. The aim is to institutionalize a humane, transparent, and constitutionally consistent model that respects the dying as much as the living.

The chapter concludes that the recognition of the right to die with dignity represents the evolution of human rights in India from mere existence to meaningful living guided by the values of dignity, liberty, and compassion that form the core of constitutional morality.

Conclusion

The right to die with dignity stands at the intersection of law, morality, and human compassion. It compels us to reconsider the meaning of life not merely as biological existence, but as a continuum of dignity, autonomy, and self-determination. The evolution of Indian jurisprudence from *Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab* (1996) to *Common Cause v. Union of India* (2018) reflects a remarkable constitutional journey in which the judiciary has progressively expanded the scope of Article 21 from the right to live with dignity to the right to die with dignity⁴⁶.

This research has established that the recognition of this right is not an antithesis to life; rather, it is an affirmation of the values that make life meaningful. The principle of autonomy affirms that individuals are moral agents capable of making informed decisions about their own existence. Denying a terminally ill person the right to refuse treatment or choose a dignified death effectively transforms the right to life into an obligation to suffer, contrary to the constitutional promise of liberty and dignity.

Ethically, the study underscores that compassion, empathy, and respect for individual agency are essential in the moral evaluation of euthanasia. Utilitarian ethics justifies euthanasia when it alleviates unbearable pain and promotes overall well-being, while deontological reasoning warns against moral relativism and societal misuse. The challenge, therefore, lies not in moral absolutes but in creating a framework that harmonizes moral responsibility with individual choice.

Comparative analysis of jurisdictions such as the Netherlands, Belgium, and Canada reveals that the right to die can coexist with strong safeguards to prevent abuse. These legal systems

demonstrate that procedural clarity, medical accountability, and transparency can ensure that euthanasia remains an act of compassion rather than negligence. India's judicial recognition of passive euthanasia and living wills in Common Cause provides a constitutional foundation, yet the absence of comprehensive legislation leaves critical gaps in implementation and oversight. The study concludes that India must move beyond judicial pronouncements and adopt a Right to Die with Dignity Act, which codifies end-of-life decisions under clear statutory safeguards. Such a law should recognize living wills, establish procedural mechanisms for medical approval, and protect both patients and doctors from legal uncertainty. Parallely, expanding access to palliative care and promoting ethical medical education are indispensable to ensure that euthanasia remains an option of last resort rather than a substitute for compassionate care. Ultimately, the right to die with dignity reflects the maturity of a constitutional democracy that values individual liberty as much as collective morality. It invites the state to shift from paternalistic control to empathetic governance where law serves as an instrument of human welfare, not coercion. As human rights evolve with the demands of dignity and justice, the recognition of the right to die with dignity becomes a natural extension of the right to live with dignity.

In essence, this research reaffirms that the sanctity of life does not lie in its mere duration but in its quality. When life becomes synonymous with unbearable suffering, the law must extend the compassion it promises in life to the moment of death. A humane legal order must, therefore, acknowledge that the right to live with dignity is incomplete without the right to die with dignity a right that honors both the autonomy of the individual and the conscience of the Constitution.

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