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Megha Middha, is working as an Assistant Professor of Law in Mody University of Science and Technology, Lakshmangarh, Sikar (Rajasthan). She has an experience in the teaching of almost 3 years. She has completed her graduation in BBA LL.B (H) from Amity University, Rajasthan (Gold Medalist) and did her post-graduation (LL.M in Business Laws) from NLSIU, Bengaluru. Currently, she is enrolled in a Ph.D. course in the Department of Law at Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur (Rajasthan). She wishes to excel in academics and research and contribute as much as she can to society. Through her interactions with the students, she tries to inculcate a sense of deep thinking power in her students and enlighten and guide them to the fact how they can bring a change to the society

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Assistant professor of Law

Mrs.S.Kalpana, presently Assistant professor of Law, VelTech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R & D Institute of Science and Technology, Avadi. Formerly Assistant professor of Law, Vels University in the year 2019 to 2020, Worked as Guest Faculty, Chennai Dr.Ambedkar Law College, Pudupakkam. Published one book. Published 8 Articles in various reputed Law Journals. Conducted 1 Moot court competition and participated in nearly 80 National and International seminars and webinars conducted on various subjects of Law. Did ML in Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Administration. 10 paper presentations in various National and International seminars. Attended more than 10 FDP programs. Ph.D. in Law pursuing.



Avinash Kumar



Avinash Kumar has completed his Ph.D. in International Investment Law from the Dept. of Law & Governance, Central University of South Bihar. His research work is on "International Investment Agreement and State's right to regulate Foreign Investment." He qualified UGC-NET and has been selected for the prestigious ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Formerly he has been elected as Students Union President of Law Centre-1, University of Delhi. Moreover, he completed his LL.M. from the University of Delhi (2014-16), dissertation on "Cross-border Merger & Acquisition"; LL.B. from the University of Delhi (2011-14), and B.A. (Hons.) from Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. He has also obtained P.G. Diploma in IPR from the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. He has qualified UGC - NET examination and has been awarded ICSSR - Doctoral Fellowship. He has published six-plus articles and presented 9 plus papers in national and international seminars/conferences. He participated in several workshops on research methodology and teaching and

learning.

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**“ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND THE RIGHT TO
MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR PRISONERS WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ARTICLE 21 OF
THE CONSTITUTION”**

AUTHORED BY: SATYAM KUMAR

SEMESTER: 09

PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE

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THANKING YOU,

SATYAM KUMAR {20191BAL0068}

ABSTRACT:

This research paper sheds light on the critical issue of access to health care and right to medical treatment for prisoners in India, with special focus on the constitutional framework provided by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The right to life and personal liberty is paramount it's a fundamental to all basic human rights. It is one of the most essential basic human rights in a democratic state and India being one of the biggest Democratic Nation give prisoners a right to healthcare, including access to medical treatment.

This paper examines the legal provisions and challenges associated with ensuring prisoners' right to health care, analyses the current state of health care in Indian prisons, and the overall health and human rights of prisoners. This right is guaranteed by Article 21 of the Indian Constitution,

which states that no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except in accordance with procedure established by law. This includes the right to be free from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Discusses possible implications for Through a comprehensive review of relevant laws, case studies, and international standards, this paper seeks to highlight the need for a more robust and rights-based approach to healthcare in Indian prisons.

KEYWORDS: Healthcare, Indian Constitution, Overcrowding, Services, Medical Treatment.

INTRODUCTION:

Rights to life and personal liberty are the backbone of human rights in India. Through its positive approach and activism, the Indian Judiciary has acted as an institution to provide effective remedies against human rights violations. By giving a liberal and inclusive meaning to "life and personal liberty," courts have created and established a plethora of rights. The Court gave a very narrow and concrete meaning to the fundamental rights enshrined in Article 21. It states the right to legal aid, speedy trial, right to be interviewed by friends, relatives and counsel, protection of prisoners from degrading, inhuman and cruel treatment in prison, right to travel abroad, right to human dignity. Right to live together. Livelihood, etc. though not specifically mentioned are fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution. Thus, the Supreme Court of India has considerably broadened the ambit of Article 21 and stated that its protection would be available to protect the fundamental rights of prisoners and to reform prisons. The Supreme Court of India has been very vigilant against violations of the human rights of prisoners in the recent past. Article 21 of the Constitution of India provides that "no person shall be deprived of his life and personal liberty except in accordance with procedure established by law" (Akshay n.d.)¹. The Supreme Court of India has developed human rights jurisprudence to protect and preserve prisoners' right to human dignity.

Prisoners in India often face challenges in accessing healthcare. This is due to a number of factors, including overcrowding in prisons, lack of funding for healthcare services, and staff shortages. As a result, prisoners may not be able to get the medical care they need, which can

¹ Akshay. n.d. "PRISONER'S RIGHT TO HEALTH CARE DURING PANDEMIC." JLRJS.

have serious consequences for their health. The government of India has a responsibility to ensure that prisoners have access to healthcare. This includes ensuring that there are enough healthcare services available in prisons, that the services are of good quality, and that prisoners are able to access the services when they need them.

The government can take a number of steps to improve access to healthcare for prisoners. This includes increasing funding for healthcare services, hiring more healthcare staff, and improving prison conditions. The government can also work with NGOs and other organizations to provide healthcare services to prisoners².

By ensuring that prisoners have access to healthcare, the government of India can uphold the rights of prisoners and improve the health of the prison population." (D 2020)³

RESEARCH QUESTION:

1. How effectively does the implementation of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution ensure the right to healthcare and medical treatment for incarcerated individuals?
2. What are the principal obstacles and impediments in upholding this right within the Indian penal system?
3. What are the legal, ethical, and practical aspects related to healthcare and medical treatment for prisoners under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, and how do these factors align with principles of justice, human rights, and public health?
4. How do legal, ethical, and practical dimensions in the context of healthcare for prisoners intersect with principles of justice, human rights, and public health under Article 21 of the Constitution of India?

BACKGROUND TO HEALTH PROBLEMS OF INCARCERATED PERSON:

The issue of access to health care and the right to medical treatment for prisoners in India is of great importance in the realm of human rights and constitutional law. The Indian Constitution, a guiding light for the country's legal framework, grants certain fundamental rights to all persons,

² Bhullar, N. (2018). Prison Health in India: A Review. *Indian Journal of Public Health*, 62(2), 124-131.

³ D, Ashna. 2020. "Do prisoners in India have a right to health?" *blogs.lse*.

irrespective of their status, including prisoners. Among these rights, Article 21 of the Indian Constitution is of particular importance, which states, "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty, except in accordance with the procedure established by law." The article introduces the concept of 'right to life' and has been interpreted by the Indian judiciary to include the right to health care and medical treatment⁴.

The backdrop of this issue reveals the complex interplay of constitutional principles, international human rights standards and practical challenges within the Indian prison system. Access to adequate health care for prisoners is not only a matter of upholding their basic human rights but also essential to the overall well-being and rehabilitation of prisoners. Furthermore, the international community has recognized the importance of humane treatment of prisoners through international conventions, such as the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners⁵ and the ICCPR⁶.

- **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The history of prisons and treatment of prisoners in India is marked by a complex evolution. Colonial India witnessed the establishment of prisons by the British, which often operated under harsh conditions, including inadequate health facilities. The primary focus of these institutions was punitive rather than rehabilitative. After independence, India adopted a democratic and rights-based approach, enshrined in the Indian Constitution. However, the legacy of colonial-era prisons and their inherent challenges persisted, including inadequate healthcare provision for inmates.

- **LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

- **INDIAN CONSTITUTION:**

The Indian Constitution adopted in 1950 laid the foundation of fundamental rights in the country. Article 21 of the Constitution, which enshrines the right to life and personal liberty as a fundamental right, has been instrumental in recognizing the right to health care and treatment. Judicial interpretations have broadened the scope of this article to include the right to health, particularly for marginalized and vulnerable populations, including prisoners.

⁴<https://www.hhrjournal.org/2021/04/doctors-in-india-need-human-rights-training-to-advocate-for-prison-reform/>

⁵ (The Nelson Mandela Rules)

⁶ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- **JUDICIAL INTERPRETATION:**

The Indian judiciary has played an important role in interpreting and upholding the rights of prisoners, including the right to medical treatment. Important cases like *Husinara Khatun v. Home Secretary, State of Bihar*⁷ and *Sunil Batra v. Delhi Administration*⁸ have emphasized the importance of ensuring healthcare to prisoners as part of their fundamental rights.

- **INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STANDARDS:**

India is a signatory to various international conventions and treaties that emphasize the humane treatment of prisoners. These include the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). These international obligations have reinforced the need for adequate health care in prisons.

Despite these legal developments and international commitments, challenges remain in providing health care to prisoners. Overcrowding, lack of resources and inadequate infrastructure in the prison system have hindered effective delivery of medical services to inmates. Discrimination, stigma, and the unique health care needs of prisoners compound these challenges.

• **CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION:**

The Indian Constitution, adopted on January 26, 1950, is the supreme legal document of the Republic of India. It enshrines fundamental rights and freedoms for all Indian citizens, and it is the cornerstone of the legal framework governing the right to healthcare and medical treatment, particularly for prisoners. The following sections outline the key constitutional provisions that pertain to this fundamental right⁹.

- **Article 21: Right to Life and Personal Liberty**

Article 21 of the Indian Constitution stands as the cornerstone for the right to healthcare and medical treatment, encompassing a broader interpretation of the right to life. It states:

⁷ 1979 AIR 1369, 1979 SCR (3) 532

⁸ 1978 AIR 1975

⁹ https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf

No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law."

○ **JUDICIAL INTERPRETATION:**

Over the years, the Indian judiciary has expanded the scope of Article 21 to include the right to health and medical treatment. Important cases such as *Ratlam Municipal Corporation v. Vardichan*¹⁰ and *Parmanand Katara v. Union of India*¹¹ have reinforced the right to timely medical treatment, emphasizing the responsibility of the state to protect the life and personal liberty of all persons, including prisoners.

- **Article 47: Duty Of the State to Raise the Level Of Nutrition And The Standard Of Living**

Article 47, a directive principle of state policy, emphasizes the duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living and to improve public health. Although not legally enforceable, these guidelines play an important role in guiding government policies on health care and nutrition, which indirectly affect the health care provided to prisoners.

- **Article 42: Provision for Just and Humane Conditions of Work and Maternity Relief.**

Another Directive Principle, Article 42¹², emphasizes the need for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief. While it primarily pertains to labour conditions, it is relevant to prison reform and the humane treatment of prisoners, which includes ensuring access to healthcare services in humane conditions.

- **Article 39(e) and (f): Protection of Health and Strength of Workers**

Article 39(e) and (f)¹³ under the Directive Principles call for the protection of health and strength of workers, ensuring that the state takes measures to secure the right to healthcare and medical assistance for citizens, which encompasses prisoners who may be engaged in various forms of labour within the prison system.

¹⁰1980 AIR 1622, 1981 SCR (1) 97

¹¹1989 AIR 2039, 1989 SCR (3) 997

¹² Of The Indian Constitution

¹³ Of The Indian Constitution

These constitutional provisions serve as the legal basis for recognizing and protecting the right to healthcare and medical treatment for prisoners in India. Judicial interpretations as well as the evolving landscape of human rights and constitutional law have reinforced the duty of the state to protect and uphold this fundamental right, making it an integral part of the broader framework of prisoners' rights in the country.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

➤ **Legal and Jurisprudential Analysis:**

- To systematically examine the evolving jurisprudence surrounding Article 21 of the Indian Constitution in the context of prisoners' right to healthcare and medical treatment.
- To assess the spectrum of legal interpretations, judicial decisions, and landmark cases that have contributed to the development of the constitutional framework governing this fundamental right.
- To scrutinize the interplay between the constitutional text, legislative enactments, and judicial pronouncements, and their impact on the practical realization of healthcare rights within the correctional system.

➤ **Systematic Examination of Implementation Challenges:**

- To critically analyse the impediments and challenges inherent in providing equitable access to healthcare and medical treatment for prisoners within the Indian penal system.
- To investigate the institutional and administrative constraints that affect the delivery of healthcare services to incarcerated individuals¹⁴.
- To identify the legal, logistical, and resource-related barriers that obstruct the effective exercise of this constitutional right within the prison setting.

➤ **Ethical Dimensions and Human Rights.**

- To explore the ethical dimensions of providing healthcare and medical treatment to prisoners, particularly in the context of their deprivation of liberty.

¹⁴ Mukherjee, S. (2016). A Prison's Promise: Is Healthcare the Silver Lining? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51(28), 49-54.

- To evaluate the extent to which ethical principles intersect with legal norms and how these considerations impact the ethical obligations of the state and healthcare providers (National Anti Crime Human Right Council Of India. n.d.)¹⁵.
- To investigate the implications for human rights and dignity, recognizing the unique ethical challenges and opportunities that arise in the context of incarcerated populations.

➤ **Public Health Ramifications:**

- To assess the public health consequences of the provision (or lack thereof) of healthcare and medical treatment to prisoners, examining issues such as disease transmission, epidemiological factors, and the broader societal impact.
- To examine the potential for public health strategies to be integrated into the correctional system, fostering healthier outcomes for both prisoners and the community at large.

➤ **Policy Implications and Recommendations:**

- To distil findings into evidence-based recommendations for legal reforms, policy enhancements, and institutional practices that may foster a more robust realization of prisoners' healthcare rights in consonance with Article 21.
- To provide a comprehensive framework for policy makers, legal practitioners, and civil society to consider while striving to align India's penal system with its constitutional commitment to justice, human rights, and public health.

❖ **Access to Healthcare in Indian Prisons:**

- **Legal Framework:**

- **Constitutional Provision:**

As previously discussed, Article 21 of the Indian Constitution forms the bedrock for the right to healthcare for prisoners. It has been interpreted by the judiciary as encompassing the right to timely and adequate medical treatment.

- **Prison Laws:**

India has several laws and regulations governing prisons and the treatment of inmates. The

¹⁵ n.d. "National Anti Crime Human Right Council Of India." www.nachrcoi.co.in.
<https://www.nachrcoi.co.in/our-services/prisoners-right/index.php>.

Prisons Act¹⁶ and the Model Prison Manual provide guidelines on the management of prisons. However, these laws primarily focus on the maintenance of security and discipline within prisons and offer limited provisions for healthcare (Bhageria 2022)¹⁷.

- **Prison Healthcare Infrastructure.**

- **Prison Hospitals:**

Most prisons in India have their own hospital facilities, but the adequacy and quality of these facilities varies widely. Larger prisons may have better health care infrastructure, while smaller or rural prisons may struggle to provide comprehensive medical services.

- **Health Care Units:**

In addition to hospital facilities, many prisons have health care units staffed by medical officers, nurses and other health professionals. However, availability of qualified medical staff can be a challenge in some prisons.

- **Availability and Quality of Medical Facilities.**

- **Availability of Medicines:**

A major problem in Indian prisons is non-availability of essential medicines. Shortages can lead to delays in treatment and compromise the health of inmates (Panduri 2021)¹⁸.

- **Specialized care:**

Prisons often lack specialized medical services and equipment, making it difficult to provide advanced medical care when needed. This can result in inmates being transferred to outside hospitals, causing delays and security concerns¹⁹.

- **Healthcare Personnel.**

- **Staffing Issues.**

In many prisons, there is a shortage of medical staff, which can lead to overworked personnel and a reduced quality of healthcare services.

- **Training.**

Adequate training of healthcare staff in the unique challenges of providing medical care in a

¹⁶ The Prisons Act 1894

¹⁷ Bhageria, Aastha. 2022. "HEALTHCARE PROVISIONS FOR PRISONERS IN INDIA." Jus Corpus Law Journal 10. https://www.juscorpus.com/healthcare-provisions-for-prisoners-in-india/#_ftn1.

¹⁸ Panduri, Jagadiswari. 2021. "PRISONER'S RIGHT TO HEALTHCARE – THE JAIL HEALTHCARE ISSUE." Know Law

¹⁹ https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/NationalFrameworkForPrisonReformsInIndia_12062019.pdf

prison environment is often lacking.

- **Medicines And Treatment.**

- **Delays in Treatment:**

Bureaucratic procedures and security measures can slow down the process of evaluating and treating prisoners. This may affect timely access to health care services.

- **Mental Health:**

Access to mental health services and treatment for inmates with psychiatric disorders is a concern, as prisons may not have adequate facilities or trained professionals to meet these needs (Tripathi 2017)²⁰.

- **Preventive care:**

Preventive health measures, such as vaccination programs and regular check-ups, are often lacking in prison settings.

In summary, while Indian prisons have health care facilities and medical staff, the availability and quality of these services can vary significantly. In some cases, the ability to provide specialized care, access to medications and timely treatment can be difficult. Addressing these issues is critical to ensuring that prisoners have effective access to health care services consistent with their constitutional and human rights. Later sections of this research paper will explore legal interpretations of the right to medical treatment for prisoners, international human rights standards, and possible reforms to increase access to health care in Indian prisons.

HYPOTHESIS:

1. The hypothesis posits that a substantive disconnect exists between the constitutional mandate of Article 21 in India, which ensures the right to life and personal liberty, and the practical realization of this right in the context of healthcare and medical treatment for prisoners.
2. This study hypothesizes that the effective implementation of Article 21, as it pertains to the provision of healthcare and medical treatment for prisoners, is contingent upon a

²⁰ Tripathi, Dr. Rahul. 2017. "Protection of Human Rights of Prisoners under Indian ." International Journal of Management and Social Sciences Research (IJMSSR) 40.

complex interplay of legal interpretations, institutional capacity, and sociopolitical factors.

3. It is postulated that disparities in access to healthcare and medical treatment within the Indian penal system may be inextricably linked to systemic factors, including resource constraints, administrative inefficiencies, and policy ambiguities, thereby undermining the fulfilment of prisoners' constitutional rights under Article 21.
4. This research hypothesis suggests that the intersection of healthcare delivery and prisoners' rights under Article 21 engenders a multifaceted challenge that transcends legal considerations, encompassing ethical dilemmas, public health implications, and implications for the broader human rights framework in India.
5. It is hypothesized that an in-depth analysis of jurisprudential developments, case law, and institutional practices within the Indian penal system will reveal intricate patterns, precedents, and challenges that collectively shape the state of access to healthcare and medical treatment for prisoners, ultimately affecting the constitutional interpretation and realization of Article 21 in this context.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

"In pursuit of an intricate examination, the primary objective of this study is to meticulously scrutinize and expound upon the multifaceted dynamics inherent in the intersection of access to healthcare and the entitlement to medical treatment for incarcerated individuals, with an explicit focus on the constitutional underpinning of Article 21²¹ within the legal framework of India. This endeavor seeks to elucidate the intricate legal, ethical, and societal intricacies that govern the exercise of this constitutional right, with an emphasis on unravelling the complexities, challenges, and potential remedies that pertain to this domain within the specific context of the Indian penal system."

RESEARCH METHEDODOLOGY:

The present study is based on secondary data, The collection of data and information was from articles and journals. Also, some information was gathered from legal as well as non- legal sections and henceforth the information which needed for the project was completed.

²¹ Of The Indian Constitution

❖ Position of Prisoner's in India.

In our country, torture and cruelty against prisoners is normal from the beginning. Investigating the crime, torture is also assessed on all those who file petitions, file lawsuits, with prisoners who provide information in good faith that is cruel, barbaric, inhuman, human. It is equivalent to undermining the dignity of, women are also oppressed. By committing rape, molestation and sexual harassment²².

Conditions in prisons in India are appalling. About 99 percent of deaths within two days of arrest are due to torture, such as inmates being forced to drink urine, being seen on ice slabs and hanging from wires, mutilation of body parts, etc. And there are many other reasons. We can only say that violence in Indian prisons is common and radical²³.

Every day there are clashes between prisoners, staff, authorities, guards. Violence over sexual assault. Violence can pose serious health risks Violence in the dirty environment of lock-ups has many causes, lack of living space which causes many inmates to fight for their place, lack of mental occupation which It results in frustration and mental anguish. Due to overcrowding many diseases especially communicable diseases spread from one prisoner to another, lack of medical facilities for prisoners. They should be kept on regular check-ups because being human beings they also have the right to health.

❖ Prisoner's Right in India.

All human beings including prisoners have equal rights and their fundamental rights should not be violated. Everyone has basic rights for example right to life, right to health, right to food, these rights should be given to all prisoners despite violation of law, crimes. These rights are given to prisoners under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution of 1950²⁴ which states that no one shall be deprived of his personal liberty, equality before the law, right to health²⁵. In Sunil Batra v. Delhi Administration²⁶, the fundamental rights of prisoners were described. infliction of vexatious punishment), the minimum freedom of movement of a prisoner cannot be denied by

²² <https://blog.ipleaders.in/human-rights/amp/>

²³ <https://www.hhrjournal.org/2021/04/doctors-in-india-need-human-rights-training-to-advocate-for-prison-reform/>

²⁴ Article 21 of Indian Constitution, 1950

²⁵ <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/socialpolicy/2020/10/07/do-prisoners-in-india-have-a-right-to-health/>

²⁶ Sunil Batra vs. Delhi administration

handcuffing under Article 19²⁷, there may be other ways of ensuring safety, Under Article 14 and 21²⁸, prisoners can visit their relatives under the right to equality for all prisoners²⁹. Free legal aid is also available to prisoners if they wish, friends and lawyers. The basic facilities that should be provided to all prisoners are adequate food, clean drinking water, adequate sanitation facilities, medical treatment, they can engage in self-defence, protection from violence and torture.

❖ PRISONERS RIGHT TO HEALTH

As the whole world is suffering from the pandemic due to covid-19 people are dying like cats and dogs due to corona virus. Our country already lacks medical facilities and due to this epidemic, the shortage of medical facilities has doubled. Prisoners from socially and economically disadvantaged communities were more affected by this epidemic.

Some international organizations issued a joint statement on the corona virus in the lockdown, such as WHO, UNODC, UNAIDS, OHCHR, all of them to draw the urgent attention of all political leaders. said The UNHRC said that taking no action for those who are suffering from the coronavirus in prison is a violation of Article 6 (right to life) and Article 9 (right to liberty) of the ICCPR, 1996³⁰. There is a violation. India is a member of the ICCPR and has to take sufficient measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus in prisons there is a violation.

Section 3(1) of the Prisoners Act, 1893³¹ defines a prison as a place used by the Government for the temporary or permanent detention of prisoners. Medical and its staff are defined in Section 3 of the Act. Medical officers have a duty to the prisoners to take care of sanitation, as pointed out by the Jail Reforms Committee 1980-83, yet the conditions of prisoners in India are still worst, unsanitary and lack of medical facilities. Prapana Agrahara Jail is the largest jail in Karnataka, the jail has only 2 medical officers for 4400 inmates and no female medical officers for 126 female inmates.

There is only one toilet for over 120 inmates, Dr. Kafeel Khan said in his letter when he was in

²⁷ Article 19 of Indian Constitution, 1950

²⁸ of Indian Constitution, 1950

²⁹ <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/778810/#:~:text=In%20Sunil%20Batra%20v>

³⁰ International covenant on civil and Political rights, 1996

³¹ Prisoners Act, 1893

Mathura jail last year, adding that the jail is like a "living hell". In 2019, according to the National Crime Records Bureau's inmate statistics, the number of inmates in India was 1,350. The maximum number of inmates is 4,03,739, but at the time of the record there were 4,78,600 inmates, indicating that the inmates are overcrowded like cattle, of which 2/3 are undertrial³².

❖ **RIGHT TO MEDICAL TREATMENT:**

- **ARTICLE 21: A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT.**

Article 21³³ stands as a fundamental right which forms the basis of the right to health care and medical treatment in the country. It declares that "no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty, except in accordance with the procedure established by law." This article has been continuously interpreted and expanded by the Indian Judiciary to cover a wide range of rights, including the right to health and medical treatment.

- **Judicial Evolution:** The Judiciary has played an important role in developing the understanding of Article 21. Through several landmark judgments, Indian courts have recognized that the right to life is not limited to the existence of animals but also includes the right to live. Dignity, health, and well-being.
- **Broad Interpretation:** Broad interpretation of Article 21 by the judiciary has led to the recognition that the State has a constitutional obligation to protect the life and personal liberty of persons, including prisoners, by ensuring access to medical care and protect.

- **Implications for Prisoners**

Interpretations and precedents set by the judiciary have far-reaching implications for prisoners' right to treatment:

- **Mandatory Responsibility:** Prison authorities have to ensure that prisoners have access to health care services.
- **Timely medical treatment:** The state is obliged to provide timely medical treatment, and any delay or refusal may lead to legal action.
- **Preventive measures:** The state is also required to take preventive measures to protect the health of inmates, including vaccinations and regular check-ups.

³² <https://ncrb.gov.in/en/prison-statistics-india>

³³ of the Indian Constitution

- **Mental Health:** The right to mental health services is enshrined in Article 21, ensuring that prisoners suffering from psychiatric disorders receive appropriate care.

❖ **Challenges to Healthcare Access in Prisons:**

- **Overcrowding**
 - **Overpopulation:** Indian prisons often suffer from overcrowding, where facilities designed for a given capacity are many times that number. Overcrowding can strain health care resources and inhibit the ability to provide timely medical treatment to inmates (Varsha 2022)³⁴.
 - **Increased risk of disease spread:** Overcrowded conditions create a high risk of infectious disease transmission among prisoners, making it critical to ensure timely access to health care services and preventive measures.
- **Lack of resources**
 - **Inadequate Funding:** Many prison systems in India suffer from limited financial resources, resulting in poor healthcare services. This can lead to shortages of essential medical supplies and underpayment of medical personnel.
 - **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Some prisons lack adequate health care infrastructure, including medical facilities, equipment, and sanitation, which affects the quality of health care available to inmates.
- **Inadequate staffing**
 - **Shortage of medical staff:** Prisons often struggle to attract and retain qualified medical professionals, resulting in shortages of health care staff. This can lead to overworked personnel and reduced quality of health care services.
 - **Lack of training:** Health care staff in prisons may not receive adequate training to address the unique challenges of providing medical care in a correctional setting, such as managing security concerns and treating mental health issues. to do Inefficiencies in the criminal justice system

³⁴ Varsha. 2022. "Rights Of Prisoners In India:." Prisoner Rights Under Indian Laws And Judgments, 10 18: 08. <https://bnblegal.com/article/rights-of-prisoners-in-india-prisoner-rights-under-indian-laws-and-judgments/>.

- **Delayed trials:** Lengthy legal processes and delayed trials can mean that prisoners remain in detention for long periods of time without access to health care. This situation can lead to health problems.
- **Transportation and security concerns:** The need to transport inmates to outside health care facilities can be logistically challenging and pose security risks. Delays in transport can hinder access to medical care.
- **Stigma and discrimination**
 - **Stigma of prisoners:** The social stigma attached to prisoners can result in a lack of sympathy and support from the public, which can affect prisoners' preference for health care.
 - **Disparities in health care:** Some prisoners, particularly those from marginalized or vulnerable communities, may experience discrimination in accessing health care, which exacerbates existing health disparities.
 - **Lack of privacy and dignity:** Concerns about maintaining privacy and dignity can prevent prisoners from seeking medical care, particularly for sensitive health issues.

❖ CASE LAWS:

- Parmanand Katara v. Union of India, 1989³⁵

In this landmark judgment, the Supreme Court held that the right to life is of paramount importance and is guaranteed to every person whether convicted or not. In addition, under Article 21³⁶ everyone has the right to receive medical assistance and medical professionals are obliged to treat every patient, regardless of criminal nature.

- West Bengal Khet Mazdoor Samiti v. State of West Bengal, 1996³⁷

In this case, the court held that government hospitals cannot refuse treatment on the ground of insufficient beds otherwise they would be liable under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Moreover, public hospitals need to provide timely medical treatment to protect human lives.

³⁵ 1989 AIR 2039

³⁶ The Constitution Of India, Article 21

³⁷ 1996 SCC (4) 37

- Raskbhai Ramsingh Rana v. State of Gujarat, 1999³⁸

In this case, the court said that everyone should have access to medical treatment as it is a basic human right. The court also said that the jail authorities should take proper care of the mental and physical health of prisoners suffering from any disease.

- TN Mathur v. State of Uttar Pradesh, 1993³⁹

The Supreme Court said that prisoners in lock-ups should be provided with at least 40 square feet per person including basic facilities of furniture and drinking water. Each detainee should be provided with their own individual cot.

- Sheila Barse v. State of Maharashtra, 1983⁴⁰

In this case, the court looks into the issue of ill-treatment of prisoners and ensures the protection of women prisoners in India. Further, Chapter VIII deals with the health conditions of prisoners vide Section 37 to Section 39 of the Prisons Act, 1894[7]. This ensures that the jailer or officer-in-charge is informed without delay about the medical conditions of prisoners by a medical practitioner. It also ensures that every prisoner is assisted by a medical practitioner. The Supreme Court of India ensures the protection of prisoners from any cruel or inhuman treatment by banning the use of chains, irons, handcuffs, etc. to beat prisoners for any punishment. Some instruments are permissible but under certain limited circumstances.

❖ CONCLUSION:

Finally, the right to medical treatment for prisoners in India, with particular reference to Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, is a matter of deep importance and complexity. Legal frameworks, judicial interpretations, and international human rights standards collectively emphasize the need to provide health care services to prisoners.

Thus, our research has substantiated the assumptions regarding the practical realization of the right to health care and medical treatment for prisoners in India within the framework of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. We have identified a significant disconnect between the constitutional mandate and the actual delivery of this right, which is characterized by challenges

³⁸ 1999 CriLJ 1975, (1999) 1 GLr 176

³⁹ 1993 1 SCC 722

⁴⁰ 1983 AIR 378, 1983 SCR (2) 337

such as congestion, resource limitations, and stigma. Furthermore, our study emphasizes that the implementation of Article 21 in prisoner healthcare depends on a complex interplay of legal interpretations, institutional capacity and socio-political factors. Disparities in access to health care for prisoners are attributed to systemic issues, including resource constraints, administrative inefficiencies, and policy ambiguities. Importantly, the reconciliation of health care provision and prisoners' rights goes beyond legal considerations, involving ethical and public health aspects with broader implications for the human rights framework in India. Our comprehensive analysis of jurisprudential developments and institutional practices within the Indian penal system reveals the complex patterns and challenges affecting the interpretation and implementation of Article 21. Thus, our findings underscore the dire need for comprehensive reform efforts that bridge the gap between constitutional principles and practical implementation. Ensuring that prisoners have access to timely and quality healthcare services as stipulated in Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

However, the challenges in providing adequate healthcare in Indian prisons are considerable. Overcrowding, limited resources, understaffing, and inefficiencies within the criminal justice system all impede inmates' access to timely and quality medical treatment. Stigma and discrimination against prisoners exacerbate difficulties in exercising their right to health care. Comprehensive reforms are needed to meet these challenges and meet constitutional and international obligations. Expanding health care infrastructure, increasing funding, improving staff training, speeding up the legal process, and reducing overcrowding are important steps to ensure that inmates have the medical care they need. Get the care they deserve. In a broader context, the right of prisoners to medical treatment is not merely a legal matter but a reflection of a just and compassionate society. It underscores the nation's commitment to human dignity, social justice, and the well-being of all its citizens, including detainees. As India moves forward in its journey to secure access to health care for prisoners, it must remember that achieving this right is a legal obligation and a moral imperative, which is a matter of justice, humanity and law. Demonstrates the nation's dedication to upholding the principles of governance.

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