

Should active voluntary euthanasia be legalised?

Good morning/afternoon to the members of the parliament, today I'm here to talk about Active voluntary euthanasia. Active voluntary euthanasia is a human right to be able to die with dignity and peace, not with terrible pain. Choosing when to bring one's life to an end due to intractable, incurable and severe pain is an individual's freedom of life and no one except themselves should have the right to decide. Depression, fearing loss of control or dignity, feeling a burden, or dislike of being dependent are a few factors that cause people to think of euthanasia. Therefore active voluntary euthanasia should be an option to those who are suffering from incurable or terminal illness.

A doctor's function has changed over time. In the past, the doctor was a person who besides being your friend treated the diseases. Now a doctor is a stranger who combats with diseases, but he/she is not always your friend. What will never change is their constant struggle against death. However, their role is not only to increase an individual's life span but also to improve their quality of life. Many times there is nothing a doctor can do to prevent a patient from dying if the patient has a terminal disease; all he/she can do is wait for death to arrive. This waiting time can be quite painful for both the patients and the people who surround them. Not practicing euthanasia at the request of the dying person is violating a person's rights, creating a financial burden, interfering with a doctor's profession, and increasing suffering of an individual.

There are many incurable diseases around us, there are many people who live in pain everyday, whether it be from old age or terminal illness. Active Voluntary euthanasia should be a choice that every individual should have the right to make legally. Everyone should have the right to die with dignity. It is inhumane to allow a person to die a slow painful death, when they lose the motivation and interest to continue to live life. "Dogs do not have many advantages over people, but one of them is extremely important: euthanasia is not forbidden by law in their case; animals have the right to a merciful death", said by Milan Kundera one of the most recognised writer originated from France (The unbearable lightness of being).

It had been six months since I had seen my grandfather, who once used to be an active and cheerful man, he had been diagnosed with Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis which is a rapidly progressive weakness due to muscle wasting. Which then leads to difficulty in speaking, swallowing and even breathing. Suddenly, he had been confined to a wheelchair. The doctors had told my family that he had less than 2 years left of his life but the disease would progressively get worse with time. My grandfather, who was a dignified gentleman, was requesting the doctor for euthanasia, however it was not legal. He spent those 2 years with the miserable pain, depression and the feeling of depending on others to even eat and sit up on a

chair. Shouldn't everyone have the right to a dignified death or should terminally ill patients be left to suffer?

Euthanasia can help to end the pain and suffering of those who are terminally ill. The legalisation of euthanasia can put the terminally ill individual's family in a more stable financial and emotional situation. And most importantly, the choice of euthanasia is a personal decision: No one should impose their views on the terminally ill patient's decision. We all seem to forget that this is not our life that we're talking about, but a life of someone who is unquestionably sick. Put yourself in a terminally ill individual's shoes, just for a minute, and think, would you like a choice to end the pain?

It is around three quarters of the population in Australia that are in favour of doctors giving or practicing Euthanasia if requested by a terminally ill patient who is experiencing incurable suffering. This is based on the responses to the Morgan Poll question: "If a hopelessly ill patient, experiencing incurable suffering with absolutely no chance of recovery, asks for a lethal dose, so as not to wake again, should the doctor be able to give the lethal dose. In 1962 only 47% said "yes". In 1993 78% and in 1995 74% answered with "yes". Now only 18% say "no" and another 8% are undecided. From this poll the people have stated that in some circumstances Voluntary Euthanasia should be legalised. Voluntary euthanasia is the humane, moral and civilised outcome for Australia and consistent with providing dignity for terminally ill patients who are in the need for it.

On the other hand euthanasia opponents argue that active voluntary euthanasia are unnecessary because of the extraordinary developments in palliative care and pain control. Advances in palliative care are always welcome. However in some, perhaps many cases, the need for active voluntary euthanasia will be reduced through developments in palliative care. But these developments do not obviate the need for voluntary euthanasia nor can they control all aspects of a patient's illness to the level desired by all patients. There are still numerous illnesses or conditions for which pain, extreme suffering, and loss of dignity are difficult or impossible to eliminate. Some patients will suffer the terror of breathlessness or vomit uncontrollably, others will be choking continuously or unable to swallow, others will be paralysed, and still others will be helpless, weak, incontinent and totally dependent on others. Even if pain and distress are not the major problems, there is often a strong fear of the dependency that would result if all bodily functions, mental and physical, were sufficiently impaired.

The right of an individual must prevail.

By- Pooja Sivakumar