

## **ABSTRACT**

The present study is an attempt to expound and examine the concept of “Mercy-Killing” which is also known as “Euthanasia” from its philosophical, moral and Practical standpoints. The present endeavor uses the two terms ‘Euthanasia’ and ‘Mercy Killing’ interchangeably. This is a burning issue in today’s World. With the rise of advanced medical technologies, especially life-sustaining ones, the issue of euthanasia becomes the centre of disputes. People can be kept alive against their wishes or in states of pain. It is also possible to keep people alive who are in a persistent vegetative state. In cases like this, the use of medical technologies raises questions about the moral appropriateness of sustaining life or allowing someone to die. The issues associates with this debate are complex. There is a constant search regarding certain question like, what it is to be human, what is the purpose of life and whether or not life is a gift from God. The present dissertation tries to delve deep to the above questions.

The main text of the study has been divided into four chapters besides introduction and conclusion.

The first chapter traces the origin of the concept historically and how it has been developed and used in different period of history. Besides it shows the different classifications of the practice. While analyzing the concept this chapter traces the historical heritage of the term euthanasia. The advancement in the field of medicine and technology make this issue of euthanasia relevant and important in our present day society. While tracing the heritage of the term euthanasia it has been found that in

different periods philosophers have used this concept differently. In the Greek period both Plato and Aristotle were in favor of some sort of infanticide. The city-state Athens favored some sort of state assisted suicide. The Stoics also favored some kind of mercy killing. Though the term ‘mercy killing’ is not at that time in vogue, this term has been used differently. Besides the Stoics, Judaism forbids suicide and does not even discuss mercy killing. In 17<sup>th</sup> century Francis Bacon insisted that doctors should assist the dying patient to make a fair and easy passage from life. Besides the historical analysis, classifications of different types of euthanasia have been focused in this chapter. The concept of brain death has also been discussed in this chapter.

The second chapter focuses on the ethical perspectives of the issue. In analyzing the issues, it brings out the question of autonomy and its relation to other theories. There are different views like consequentialism and nonconsequentialism which have been thoroughly discussed. Kant’s moral theory is one of the main themes of this chapter. There are different arguments for and against euthanasia which have been highlighted here also.

Indian tradition of mercy killing is the thrust of the third chapter. It discusses the different perspectives of Indian tradition like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Yoga, Islamic and others.

India is a cosmopolitan country with an amalgamation of many cultures, traditions and religions. Here religion plays a very crucial role. This chapter is divided in to two sections. First section deals with the standpoints of Hinduism and Buddhism regarding mercy-killing Ancient Indian philosophical tradition justifies the idea of man willing his own death. As per Hindu mythology, Lord Rama and his brothers took Jal Samadhi in river Saryu near Ayodhya. Besides that, this section highlights the viewpoints of Samkhya-Yoga, Jainism and The Sikh view of mercy-

killing. Judaism and Islam are two other mono theistic religions which have had a global influence in regard to issues concerning the end of life. The Christian religion is also mostly against mercy-killing. The Christian religion believes that human beings are created in the image of God and thus their life belongs to God. Birth and death are part of the life processes which God has created, so humans should respect them and therefore no human being has the authority to choose the time and manner of his or any other human's death. Here we discussed Thalaikoothal, which is the traditional practice of genocide or involuntary euthanasia, by their own family members, observed in some part of southern districts of Tamil Nadu state of India. In the second section, the current legal position on mercy-killing (euthanasia) and assisted suicide in India and the response of the Indian Judiciary are the point of discussion. Here we discussed Venkatesh case, who was dystrophic patient, wanted to be granted the right to die. He sought to enforce the right so that he could donate organs before they were affected by his illness. Lastly this section deals with the most debated case of Aruna Shanbaug which is still the center of lively debate even in 2014.

Critical observation is the main tune of the fourth chapter. By way of analysis and comments this chapter tries to unveil how complex the problem is and how it affects the medical profession. This chapter presents some very difficult and painful dilemmas associated with mercy-killing which people from different areas like doctors, patients, family members and moral philosophers face in our day to day lives. The dilemma of assisted suicide creates sometimes complex situations to our physicians and Court systems. The present chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section we are trying to bring into limelight Dr, Jack Kevorkian thinking about euthanasia. According to him when any doctor assists some patients to commit

suicide, they are doing a compassionate work. Advocates of euthanasia think that it is precisely their deep respect for human life that allows them to support suicide for the terminally ill. Here the arguments for and against voluntary euthanasia are discussed. The concept of Advanced Directive and Living Will is being the center of discussion in the second section. The complicated case of Terri Schiavo and the concept of 'persistent vegetative state' (PVS) are also part of our discussion.