

Brief on Euthanasia

**Euthanasia**: The word 'Euthanasia' is a derivative from the Greek words 'eu' and 'thanotos' which literally mean "good death". It is otherwise described as mercy killing. The death of a terminally ill patient is accelerated through active or passive means in order to relieve such patient of pain or suffering. Euthanasia can be divided into **Passive** and **Active Euthanasia**.

2. The core point of distinction between **Active** and **Passive Euthanasia** as noted by Supreme Court is that in active euthanasia, something is done to end the patient's life while in passive euthanasia, something is not done that would have preserved the patient's life.
3. **Active euthanasia** involves taking specific steps such as injecting the patient with a lethal substance eg. Sodium Pentothal which causes the person to go in deep sleep in a few seconds and the person dies painlessly in sleep, thus it amounts to killing a person by a positive act in order to end suffering of a person in a state of terminal illness.
4. **Passive euthanasia**, otherwise known as 'negative euthanasia', however, stands on a different footing. It involves withholding of medical treatment or withholding life support system for continuance of life e.g., withholding of antibiotic where without doing it, the patient is likely to die or removing the heart-lung machine from a patient in coma. Passive euthanasia is legal even without legislation provided certain conditions and safeguards are maintained (vide para 39 of the judgement of Hon'ble Supreme Court in WP No. 115 of 2009- Aruna Ramchandra Shanbaug vs UoI and Others).



5. Passive euthanasia is further classified as voluntary and non-voluntary. Voluntary euthanasia is where the consent is taken from the patient. In non-voluntary euthanasia, the consent is unavailable on account of the condition of the patient for example, when he is in coma.

