
Views On Euthanasia In Christianity And Hinduism

Euthanasia, or assisted dying, is one of the most debated ideas globally with many views for and against the motion. Euthanasia is the painless killing of a patient who is suffering from an incurable and painful disease or in an irreversible coma. There has been a variety of films made about euthanasia, one of these being the 2016 film, *Me Before You*. *Me Before You* is a film which looks at the decision process around Euthanasia from the view of Will Traynor, his parents and his love interest. It delves into personal opinions and values and depicts the thought process which is common through most euthanasia cases. In Australia, euthanasia is illegal in all states and territories except Victoria, who legalised it in 2017, and soon Western Australian, to legalise it in 2021. However it is only permitted under specific guidelines and if certain criteria are met. In 2018, India legalized passive euthanasia and like Victoria, it has to reach specific circumstances strict guidelines. All patients who are wanting to be euthanized must be either in a vegetative state or terminally ill and give consent through a living will. Christianity and Hinduism are two religions that have both similar yet different views on this topic of discussion.

Hinduism is the third largest religion in the world after Christianity and Islam, with around 900 million followers and is the world's oldest religion, with roots dating back to over 4,000 years. 95% of Hindu followers reside in India. Hindus believe in a single deity known as 'Brahman', meaning that they are monotheistic. They believe strongly in the principles that one's thoughts and actions will directly determine their future and current lives. There is no set text in Hinduism but a variety of sacred writings. The main texts are known as the Vedas which holds hymns and verses that contain revelations received by ancient sages and saints. In Hinduism the meaning of life is achieved in 4 ways; one must achieve Dharma, moral law and duty, righteousness, right conduct, Artha, the pursuit of wealth and prosperity in one's life, Kama, obtaining enjoyment in life, and Moksha, to obtain enlightenment. There are a number of different views on euthanasia in the Hindu religion. The majority of Hindu followers claim that doctors should refuse a patient's request to be euthanized as it will affect the body and soul, causing them to separate at an unnatural time, damaging the karma of both the doctor and patient. They also state that it breaches their teaching of Ahimsa, which is doing no harm. There are some hindu's who do believe that euthanizing someone is beneficial to their life. As they are helping to end a painful life, the person who is administering the drug is performing a good deed towards another, in turn fulfilling their moral obligations and achieving the concept of Dharma. One of the most well known figures in Hinduism, Mahatma Gandhi had voiced his own opinion on what would later be called euthanasia and assisted suicide. Gandhi, who was a lawyer, political activist and anti-colonial nationalist, understood that violence at times was unavoidable but under certain conditions, killing a human may be seen as an expression of non-violence. He stated that in rare cases, it would be better to kill an individual who is in extreme suffering at the end of their life "A calf, having been maimed, lay in agony in the ashram and despite all possible treatment and nursing, the surgeon declared the case to be past help and hope... Would I apply to human beings the principle that I have enunciated in connection with the calf?.. My reply is yes..". However he also believed that if there was care to the dying individual, their suffering could be eased.

Christianity is the largest followed religion in the world with more than 2 billion followers. Christianity is split into 3 different branches; Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox. The Catholic

branch is governed by Catholic bishops and the Pope around the world. The Orthodox branch independent subdivisions each of which is governed by the Holy Synod. The Protestant branch has a number of denominations within it, these include Lutheran, Anglican and Baptist. Although they have different views and traditions, their core faith is centered around the teachings of Jesus. Like Hindus, Christians are monotheistic as they believe in one God, who created heaven and earth. The God consists of three entities; the father, God himself, the son, Jesus, his son, and the Holy Spirit. Christianity has one main text, which is the bible. The bible consists of two parts and contains Jesus's teachings, lessons and how Christians should live their day to day lives. Majority of Christian followers are against the idea of euthanasia and assisted suicide as they believe strongly, that all life is given by God and no human has the right to take the life of any innocent individual, even if that individual wishes to die. Another popular view is that everyone's life is equally important, no matter what state they are in, so taking one's life would be viewed as considering them useless. The Roman Catholic view also agrees with the Christian view in that euthanasia is morally wrong and one should not go against the teachings of the ten commandments, one of which states that "You shall not kill". Pope John Paul II stated in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* his views on euthanasia "Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person.". He stated that humans should always prefer the prospect of life opposed to the idea of death and spoke out against what he described as "a culture of death".

Both Hinduism and Christianity view euthanasia as the unlawful killing of an innocent person, despite if it is the person's wish to be euthanized. They agree that by euthanizing someone, it will upset the balance of life and it is not a human's right to decide when one leaves this earth, but a higher entity. The breach of a teaching is also another common similarity between both religions as euthanasia goes against the Christian commandment of "You shall not kill" and the Hindu teaching of Ahimsa, doing no harm. Gandhi, who was opposed to the idea of assisted dying did say that if there was no other way to end the suffering, than euthanasia would need to take place however Pope John Paul II was strongly against the idea of euthanasia even if it was used as a last resort. The idea of helping someone suffering without the act of euthanizing them was recognised in both religions, more so in Christianity with the full support of Pope John Paul II. Religion has a crucial role in lawmaking throughout the world, as those in power have their own religious values and teachings and this influences them to mold their laws around these specific teachings. In societies that are ruled by Christianity or Hinduism, their laws will be strongly against euthanasia due to the political and religious stance their leaders have but there may be some leniency with these laws depending on the circumstances that the event is occurring in.

Christianity and Hinduism are two religions that look at the strong disapproval of euthanasia in societies. These traditions and values influence others as it is the basis for their own values and beliefs. Religion influences everyone's lives in ways that some might not even realise. In Australian society, Christianity is the most dominant religion and through its influence has provided society with many facilities arising out of Christian culture, for example churches, schools, hospitals and charities. These facilities are used day to day by people of all ethnicities and religions and are open to all. Hinduism is the fastest growing religion in Australia and through its ever growing presence and influence, there are many celebrations, rituals and events that are recognised in the Australian community. Yoga, a spiritual movement that is recognised throughout all of Australia and the world with people of all ethnicities and religions taking part in this event.