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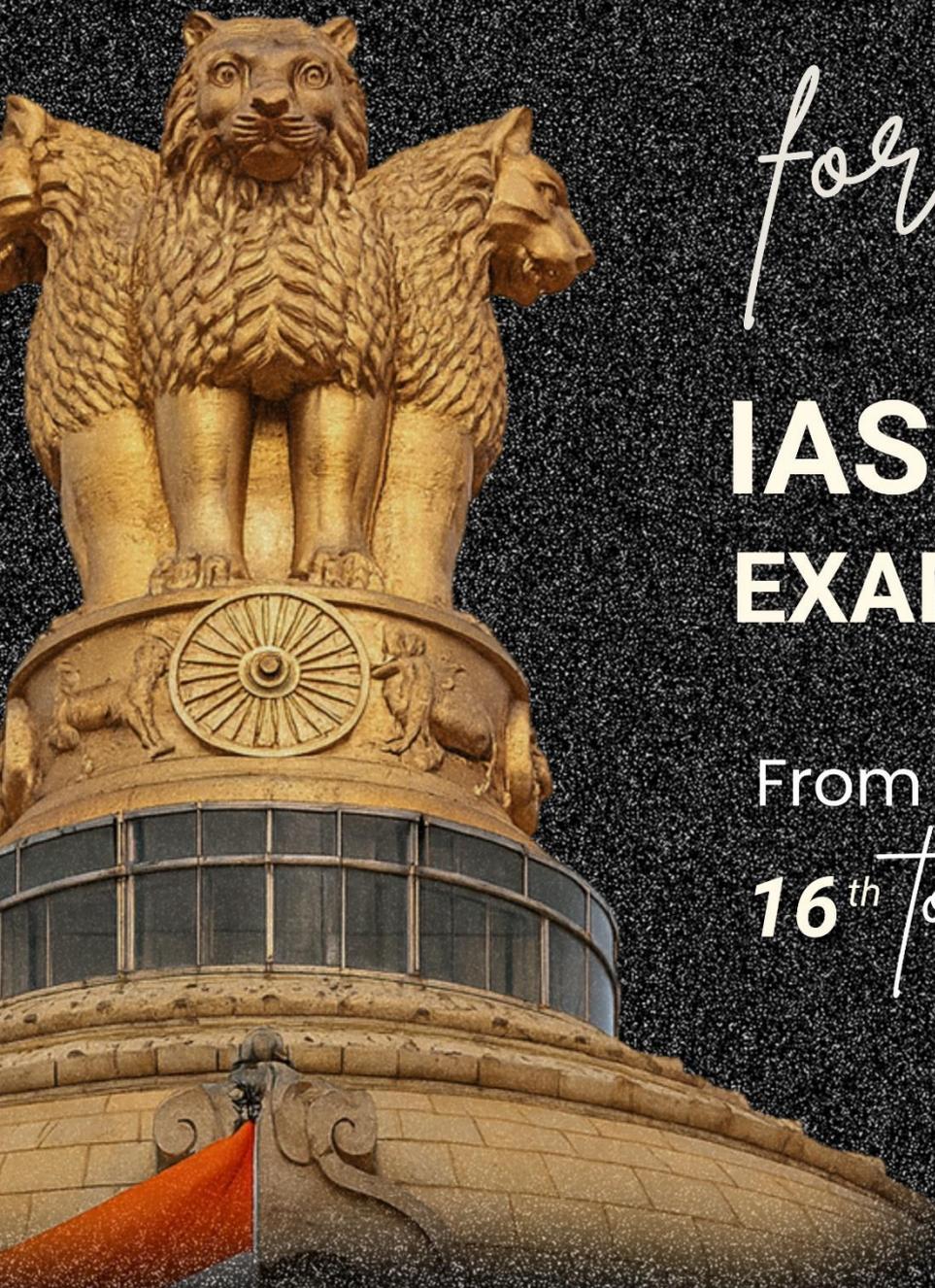
DEEP ANALYSIS

for

**IAS MAINS
EXAMINATION**

From

16th to 20th Mar 2026



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Prelims Test Series

1.1. HISTORY & CULTURE

1.1.1. INDIAN NATIONAL FLAG & SYMBOLS

Context:

Recent allegations against Hardik Pandya for alleged disrespect to the national flag have renewed focus on the Flag Code of India, 2002 and the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.

Legal Framework on National Symbols

1. Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971

- **Scope:** Prohibits desecration of or insult to the country's national symbols, including the **National Flag**, the **Constitution**, and the **National Anthem**.
- **Key Offenses:** Burning, defacing, trampling, or showing disrespect to the flag in public or within public view.
- **Punishment:** Imprisonment for up to **3 years**, or a fine, or both.

2. Flag Code of India, 2002

- **Key Provisions:**
 - **Universal Rights:** Since 2002, private citizens, educational institutions, and organizations can hoist the flag on all days (with dignity).
 - **Material:** Allows hand-spun, hand-woven, or machine-made flags (Cotton, Polyester, Wool, Silk, Khadi).
 - **Display Rules:** The flag must occupy the **position of honor** and be distinctly placed. It should never be dipped in salute to any person or thing.
 - **2022 Amendment:** Changed to allow the flag to be flown **day and night** if displayed in the open or on a house (previously only sunrise to sunset).

3. Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 51A(a):** It is a **Fundamental Duty** of every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag, and the National Anthem.
- **Article 19(1)(a):** The Supreme Court (**Union of India v. Naveen Jindal, 2004**) ruled that flying the National Flag is a **Fundamental Right** as an expression of one's allegiance and pride.

4. Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950

- **Scope:** Restricts the use of the national flag, coat-of-arms used by a government department, the official seal of the President or Governor, etc., for **commercial or professional purposes** without prior permission.



Judicial Interpretations:

- **Union of India v. Naveen Jindal (2004):** The Supreme Court declared that flying the National Flag with respect and dignity is a Fundamental Right under Article 19(1)(a).

Evolution of the Indian National Flag

- **1906/1907 (Calcutta Flag):** Early tricolour (green, yellow, red) designed by Sachindra Prasad Bose and Sukumar Mitra.
- **1907 (Bhikaji Cama):** Madame Cama became the first to hoist the Indian flag on foreign soil (Stuttgart, Germany).
- **1917 (Home Rule):** Annie Besant and Tilak used a flag with five red and four green horizontal stripes.
- **1921 (Pingali Venkayya):** Proposed a design with a charkha (spinning wheel), endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi.
- **1947 (Final Adoption):** The Constituent Assembly adopted the Saffron, White, and Green tricolour with the Ashoka Chakra (24 spokes) replacing the charkha.

Symbolism & National Identity

1. The Tricolour (Tiranga) – Core Symbolism

- **Saffron (Kesari):** Represents **strength and courage** of the country.
- **White:** Represents **peace and truth** with the Dharma Chakra.
- **Green:** Represents **fertility, growth, and auspiciousness** of the land.
- **Ashoka Chakra:** The "Wheel of the Law of Dharma."
 - **24 Spokes:** Symbolize 24 hours of the day, representing **dynamism and progress** ("Movement is life, stagnation is death").
 - **Historical Link:** Derived from the **Sarnath Lion Capital** of Maurya Emperor Ashoka.

2. Emotional & Psychological Connect

- **Unifying Force:** During the Freedom Struggle, the flag acted as a common identity transcending caste, religion, and linguistic barriers.
- **National Pride:** It represents the sovereignty of the nation. In **Union of India v. Naveen Jindal (2004)**, the SC noted that flying the flag is an expression of "allegiance and pride."
- **Sacrifice:** The flag is a silent reminder of the martyrs who fought for independence.

3. National Identity & Secularism

- **Inclusive Design:** While early versions had religious connotations (red for Hindus, green for Muslims), the final 1947 design moved toward **secular values** (courage, peace, and growth).
- **National Anthem vs. National Song: Jana Gana Mana:** Chosen as the Anthem because its lyrics reflect the geographical and cultural diversity of India, reinforcing a **secular national identity**.
 - **Vande Mataram:** Remains a "National Song" with equal status, symbolizing the **revolutionary spirit** and personification of India as a Motherland.

4. Constitutional Patriotism

- **Beyond Symbols:** Identity is not just about the flag but about the **values** it represents: Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.
- **Duty-Bound:** Respecting these symbols is a Fundamental Duty (**Art 51A**), linking individual identity with the collective national conscience.

National Anthem vs. National Song

Feature	National Anthem (Jana Gana Mana)	National Song (Vande Mataram)
Author	Rabindranath Tagore (1911)	Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1870s)
Source	Originally a Brahmo hymn in Bengali.	From the novel <i>Anandamath</i> (1882).
Adoption	Adopted by Constituent Assembly on Jan 24, 1950 .	Adopted on Jan 24, 1950 (Equal Status).
Symbolism	Represents Secularism & Diversity (Geographic/Cultural).	Symbol of Anti-Colonial Resistance & Revolutionary Zeal .
Language	Highly Sanskritised Bengali (Tatsama).	Mixture of Sanskrit and Bengali .
First Sung	1911 Calcutta Session of INC.	1896 Calcutta Session of INC (by Tagore).
Legal Status	Protected under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 .	Held to have "Equal Status" but no specific penal law for not singing.

Jana Gana Mana was chosen as the Anthem specifically because its lyrics are considered more **inclusive** and **secular**, reflecting the vast geography and various communities of India.

Key Challenges: National Symbols & Identity

- **Compulsory vs. Voluntary Patriotism:** The debate over whether patriotism should be a **spontaneous emotion** or a **state-mandated duty**, highlighted by the Bijoe Emmanuel (1986) case which allows for silent respect over forced singing.
- **Misuse & Commercialization:** Preventing the desecration of symbols through **improper disposal** (especially plastic flags) and their illegal use in **commercial branding or clothing** under the 1950 Act.
- **Inclusivity vs. Religious Imagery:** Navigating the friction between the **revolutionary symbolism** of Vande Mataram (personifying India as a deity) and the requirements of a **modern secular state**.
- **Dissent vs. National Honour:** Balancing the **Right to Protest** with strict penal provisions under the 1971 Act, ensuring that political expression does not cross the line into intentional insult or desecration.
- **Coercive vs. Constitutional Patriotism:** The challenge of shifting focus from **ritualistic nationalism** (symbols/anthems) toward **Constitutional Patriotism**—upholding core values like Justice, Liberty, and Equality for all citizens.

Way Forward

- **Promote Constitutional Patriotism:** Shift from "coercive nationalism" (enforced rituals) to a values-based identity rooted in **Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity**.
- **Awareness & Education:** Integrate the **Flag Code of India, 2002** into school curricula to ensure citizens understand the dignity of symbols through education rather than fear of legal penalties.
- **Sustainable Symbolism:** Strictly enforce the ban on **plastic flags** and promote the use of biodegradable or khadi materials to prevent the undignified littering of national symbols post-events.
- **Judicial Consistency:** Maintain the balance set in the *Bijoe Emmanuel (1986)* case—protecting the right to silent, respectful dissent while penalizing intentional desecration under the **1971 Act**.
- **Inclusivity in Celebrations:** Ensure national symbols remain **unifying tools** that represent India's diverse cultural fabric, preventing them from being used for majoritarian exclusion.

Conclusion

India must evolve from **ritualistic nationalism** to **Constitutional Patriotism**, balancing the sanctity of national symbols with **individual liberties**. Future progress lies in inclusive, voluntary respect that strengthens India's democratic fabric.

Q. Trace the evolution of the Indian national flag and examine its role as a symbol of unity during the freedom struggle.

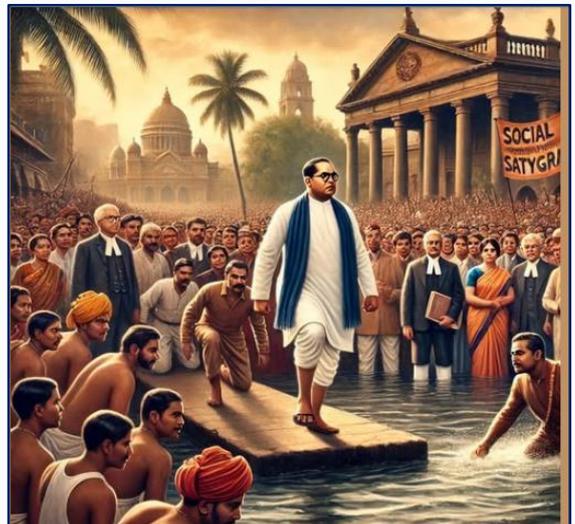
1.1.2. MAHAD SATYAGRAHA

What is Mahad Satyagraha?

It was a non-violent social movement launched on **March 20, 1927**, in Mahad (Maharashtra) led by **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**. It aimed to assert the right of the Dalit community (then "untouchables") to access water from the **Chavdar Tank**, a public resource they were traditionally barred from using.

Background of the Mahad Satyagraha

- **The S.K. Bole Resolution (1923):** The Bombay Legislative Council passed a resolution allowing "untouchables" access to all public watering places, wells, and schools maintained by the government.
- **Local Defiance:** Despite the law and a 1924 Mahad Municipal Council order, the high-caste Hindu community resisted, often through violence and social boycotts.
- **Institutional Mobilization:** Under the banner of the **Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha**, Ambedkar turned a local grievance into a national civil rights issue.



Key Features of the Mahad Satyagraha

1. Symbolic Defiance (March 20, 1927)

- **Direct Action:** Dr. Ambedkar led a procession of thousands to the **Chavdar Tank**. He was the first to drink water, followed by his supporters.
- **Breaking the Taboo:** This act shattered the "pollution by touch" myth. It wasn't about thirst; it was a demonstration of **civil equality**.

2. The "Manusmriti Dahan" (December 25, 1927)

- **Phase Two:** After orthodox groups "purified" the tank with cow urine, a second Satyagraha was organized.
- **Radical Break:** Ambedkar and his followers **burned the Manusmriti**, the ancient text seen as the source of caste-based discrimination. This symbolized the rejection of the religious basis of untouchability.

3. Inclusion of Women

- **Gender Equality:** For the first time in such a large-scale social movement, women participated actively.
- **Social Reform:** Ambedkar urged Dalit women to change their attire (e.g., wearing saris like other women) to shed the visual markers of "servitude" and reclaim their dignity.

4. Non-Violent Approach

- **Strict Discipline:** Despite being attacked by orthodox mobs after the first march, Ambedkar ensured his followers did not retaliate with violence.
- **Constitutional Method:** He maintained that the struggle was for the **legal enforcement** of a government resolution (the Bole Resolution).

5. Secular and Rights-Based

- **Not a Religious Quest:** Unlike temple-entry movements, Mahad was about **Civic Rights**. It focused on access to a public utility (water), framing it as a natural right of every human being.
- **"Manushki" (Humanity):** The core philosophy was centered on human dignity rather than seeking "purity" within the caste fold.

6. Legal Victory (1937)

- **Rule of Law:** The struggle didn't end at the tank; it moved to the courts. After a decade-long battle, the **Bombay High Court** ruled in 1937 that Dalits had the legal right to use the water, affirming that "custom" cannot override "legal rights."

Significance of the Mahad Satyagraha

1. The "First Rehearsal" of the Constitution

- **Rights over Charity:** It shifted the focus from seeking "mercy" or "reform" within the caste system to claiming **Fundamental Rights** as equal citizens.
- **Article 17 Precursor:** The demand for the abolition of untouchability at Mahad directly informed the drafting of **Article 17** (Abolition of Untouchability) and **Article 15** (Non-discrimination) in the Indian Constitution.

2. Transition to Mass Mobilization

- **Political Awakening:** It was the first time the "Depressed Classes" organized on such a massive scale (thousands of participants) to challenge the social order through **Direct Action**.
- **Institutional Strength:** It established the **Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha** as a potent force for social change, moving beyond mere petitions to active Satyagraha.

3. Intellectual & Symbolic Break

- **Rejection of Hierarchy:** The burning of the Manusmriti (Dec 1927) was a radical intellectual break from traditional social laws. It signaled that the movement would no longer accept religious justifications for inequality.
- **Secularization of Rights:** By fighting for **water** (a civic utility) rather than just temple entry, Ambedkar framed the struggle as a **Secular Human Rights** issue rather than a purely religious one.

4. Empowerment of Women

- **The "Mahad Speech":** Ambedkar's address to Dalit women during the Satyagraha is considered a milestone in **Indian Feminism**. He urged them to shed symbols of slavery and educate their children, recognizing women as the primary drivers of social reform.

Comparison: Mahad vs. Salt Satyagraha

Feature	Mahad Satyagraha (1927)	Salt Satyagraha (1930)
Primary Adversary	Internal: The "Feudal-Caste" oppression and the Brahmanical social order.	External: The "Colonial-Imperial" exploitation by the British Raj.
The "Resource"	Water: A natural, life-sustaining resource denied based on birth (Caste).	Salt: A daily essential taxed by the state to generate revenue (Colonial Law).
Core Philosophy	Manushki (Humanism): Focused on reclaiming human dignity and "social citizenship."	Swaraj (Self-Rule): Focused on political sovereignty and "national independence."
Legal Trigger	Defiance of the 1923 Bole Resolution by local orthodox groups.	Defiance of the 1882 Salt Act by the Indian National Congress.
Gender Inclusion	Radical: Women were encouraged to shed visual symbols of caste slavery (Ambedkar's 1927 speech).	Massive: Women joined the frontlines of the Civil Disobedience Movement.
Key Symbolic Act	Drinking water from Chavdar Tank and burning the Manusmriti .	Making salt at the Dandi coast.
Constitutional Legacy	Direct precursor to Articles 15, 17, and 21 .	Foundation for the Fundamental Rights of Political Participation.

Conclusion

The Mahad Satyagraha remains the foundational blueprint for **Article 17**, evolving today into a "Digital Mahad" ensuring equitable access to **Digital Public Infrastructure** and data dignity for all citizens.

Q. "While the Salt Satyagraha challenged the legitimacy of a foreign power, the Mahad Satyagraha challenged the moral authority of an unequal internal social order." In light of this statement, evaluate the significance of the Mahad Satyagraha (1927) in laying the ethical and legal foundations of the Indian Constitution.

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Prelims Test Series

2.1. POLITY & GOVERNANCE

2.1.1. PRISON OUTBREAKS IN INDIA: OVERCROWDING AS A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Context:

India's prison system faces a severe public health crisis, highlighted by the HSV outbreak in Jalpaiguri (2025–26), exposing deep structural weaknesses. Chronic overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate healthcare have turned prisons into high-risk hubs for diseases like TB, HIV, and COVID-19. Consequently, prison health now stands at the intersection of public health, governance, and human rights.



Introduction

- Prisons in a constitutional democracy are not merely punitive spaces but institutions where the State must uphold dignity and fundamental rights; under Article 21, this includes the right to health and humane treatment for prisoners.
- Whereas a clear gap exists between constitutional ideals and ground realities, as Indian prisons suffer from overcrowding, outdated infrastructure, and systemic neglect of healthcare.

Why Prison Health is a Critical Governance Concern

1. Public Health Externalities

- **High Disease Transmission within Prisons:** Overcrowding, poor ventilation, and delayed medical care turn prisons into “epidemiological amplifiers,” with diseases like TB occurring at rates nearly five times higher than in the general population.
- **Spillover to Wider Society:** Continuous interaction through staff, visitors, and released inmates enables infections to spread beyond prison walls, making it a broader public health concern.

2. Human Rights and Constitutional Morality

- **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** Denial of adequate healthcare to prisoners infringes Article 21 and undermines constitutional morality.
- **State's Positive Obligation:** Judicial pronouncements affirm that incarceration does not strip fundamental rights, placing a duty on the State to ensure humane conditions and proper medical care.

3. Indicator of Criminal Justice Efficiency

- **High Undertrial Population:** The predominance of undertrials (75–80%) indicates inefficiencies in investigation, prosecution, and judicial processes.
- **Structural Systemic Issues:** Overcrowding reflects deeper flaws in the criminal justice system, necessitating comprehensive institutional reforms.

4. Social Justice Dimension

- **Marginalized Composition:** Prison populations largely consist of individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged groups.
- **Deepening Inequality:** Neglect of prison healthcare worsens existing inequalities, perpetuating cycles of deprivation and exclusion.

Systemic Challenges in India's Prison Ecosystem

1. Structural Overcrowding

- A significant proportion of Indian prisons operate at occupancy rates exceeding 150%, with extreme instances such as Kandi Sub-Jail surpassing 400%. Major facilities like Tihar Jail and Arthur Road Jail exemplify chronic congestion.

Implication: Overcrowding severely constrains the implementation of basic hygiene, physical distancing, and disease containment measures.

2. High Undertrial Population

- The excessive reliance on pre-trial detention, coupled with judicial delays and socio-economic barriers to bail, has resulted in a disproportionately large undertrial population.

Implication: Prisons function de facto as detention centres rather than correctional institutions, undermining the principle of "innocent until proven guilty."

3. Inadequate Healthcare Infrastructure

- The prison healthcare system is characterized by a **43% vacancy rate** in medical personnel, suboptimal doctor-inmate ratios, and an acute shortage of mental health professionals.

Implication: The absence of timely diagnosis and intervention transforms manageable health conditions into severe or fatal outcomes.

4. High Disease Burden

- Recurring outbreaks of HSV, TB, HIV, and COVID-19 indicate systemic vulnerability. The confluence of overcrowding and poor sanitation exacerbates the spread of communicable diseases.

Implication: Prisons evolve into persistent reservoirs of infection, posing risks beyond institutional boundaries.

5. Governance and Policy Deficits

- The uneven implementation of the Model Prison Manual (2016), coupled with weak inter-agency coordination, reflects governance deficits.

Implication: Policy frameworks remain largely aspirational due to inadequate enforcement mechanisms.

6. Neglect of Mental Health

- The severe shortage of psychologists and counsellors, combined with stressful prison conditions, contributes to a silent mental health crisis.

Implication: This undermines the rehabilitative objective of incarceration and increases the risk of recidivism.

Situation in Other Countries

Developing Countries

- The Philippines' Quezon City Jail, operating at over 500% capacity, epitomizes extreme overcrowding.
- Brazil's prison system is marked by a nexus of overcrowding, violence, and infectious diseases.
- South Africa faces high HIV and TB prevalence within prisons, reflecting systemic healthcare inadequacies.

Developed Countries

- The United States, despite advanced infrastructure, grapples with mass incarceration and outbreaks in facilities such as Rikers Island.
- The United Kingdom has reported rising overcrowding and deteriorating prison conditions.
- European nations such as Italy and France have faced judicial censure for violating human dignity norms due to overcrowding.

Way Forward

1. Immediate Interventions

- Mandatory health screening at admission
- Periodic testing for communicable diseases
- Establishment of isolation and quarantine facilities
- Emergency outbreak preparedness protocols

2. Strengthening Healthcare Systems

- Expedited recruitment of medical and mental health professionals
- Capacity-building of prison staff in primary healthcare
- Deployment of telemedicine services
- Creation of robust disease surveillance mechanisms

3. Addressing Overcrowding

- Fast-tracking undertrial cases through judicial reforms
- Liberalization of bail provisions for minor offences
- Adoption of non-custodial alternatives such as probation and community service
- Expedited repatriation of foreign inmates

4. Structural and Institutional Reforms

a. Prison Infrastructure

- Modernization of facilities
- Improved sanitation, ventilation, and living conditions

b. Criminal Justice Reforms

- Reducing reliance on incarceration
- Ensuring time-bound trials

c. Public Health Integration

- Incorporation of prison healthcare within the National Health Mission
- Digitization of inmate health records

d. Policy Enforcement

- Uniform and strict implementation of the Model Prison Manual

Conclusion

India's prison crisis reflects deeper structural and ethical failures in reconciling punishment with dignity under Article 21. Addressing it requires a shift to a reformatory, rights-based approach. As Nelson Mandela noted, a society is judged by its treatment of the vulnerable, making humane prisons a civilizational imperative.

Q. Prison health is not merely a correctional issue but a critical governance and public health concern." Examine in the context of overcrowding and institutional deficiencies in India's prison system.

2.1.2. RIGHT TO DIE AND EUTHANASIA

Context:

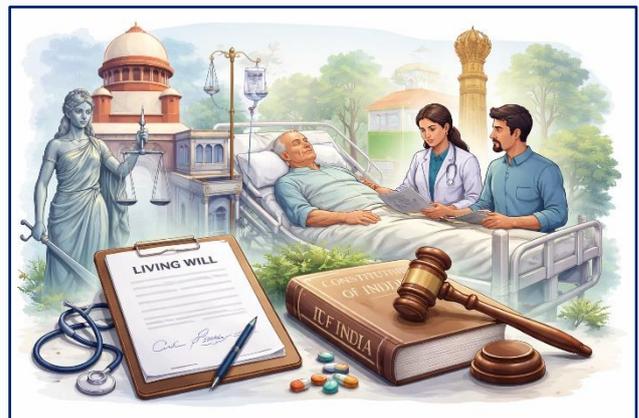
In a landmark development, the Supreme Court in **Harish Rana v. Union of India** permitted the first-ever practical application of its passive euthanasia guidelines.

About Euthanasia

Derived from Greek words Eu (Good) and Thanatos (Death), it literally means "Good Death" or "Mercy Killing." It refers to the practice of intentionally ending a life to relieve pain and suffering.

Classification based on Consent:

- **Voluntary:** With the patient's explicit consent.
- **Non-voluntary:** Patient is unable to consent (e.g., coma), and the decision is made by family/guardians.
- **Involuntary:** Against the patient's will (Equivalent to murder; globally illegal).



Active vs. Passive Euthanasia

Feature	Active Euthanasia	Passive Euthanasia
Definition	Deliberate action to cause death	Withdrawal or withholding of life support
Nature	Direct intervention	Allowing natural death
Legal status in India	Illegal	Permitted (Under strict SC guidelines).
Example	Injecting lethal drug	Removing ventilator or feeding tube
SC 2026 Clarification	The term "Euthanasia" should now strictly refer to Active Euthanasia	Now officially termed " Withdrawing or Withholding of Medical Treatment "

Legal and Constitutional Provisions on Euthanasia

- **Article 21:** The "Right to Life" is a fundamental right. The SC has interpreted this to mean a "**Right to a Dignified Life,**" which inherently includes a "**Right to a Dignified Death.**"
- **Article 226:** High Courts have the power to issue writs; often the first point of appeal for families seeking euthanasia for incompetent patients.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** Active euthanasia attracts criminal liability under **Section 100** (Culpable Homicide) or **Section 101** (Murder).

Evolution of Judicial Proceedings on Euthanasia

The legal journey has shifted from "Sanctity of Life" to "Quality of Life":

1. **Maruti Shripati Dubal (1987):** Bombay HC held that "Right to Life" includes "Right to Die" (decriminalized suicide).
2. **Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab (1996):** SC reversed the above, stating Article 21 is about protection of life, not its extinction.
3. **Aruna Shanbaug v. Union of India (2011):** First-time recognition of **Passive Euthanasia** under "exceptional circumstances" with High Court approval.
4. **Common Cause v. Union of India (2018):** SC declared the **Right to Die with Dignity** as a Fundamental Right. It legalized "**Living Wills**" (Advance Medical Directives).
5. **Harish Rana Case (2026):** Confirmed that **CANH** (Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration) qualifies as medical treatment and can be withdrawn if it offers no therapeutic benefit.

Arguments For and Against Euthanasia

The "Pro-Choice" Perspective

- **Fundamental Right to Dignity:** Under **Article 21**, the "Right to Life" is not merely animal existence; it includes the **Right to Die with Dignity** when life becomes an agonizing burden.
- **Bodily Autonomy:** An individual has the ultimate sovereignty over their own body, including the choice to refuse medical intervention (Living Wills).
- **Relief from Futile Suffering:** Modern medicine can keep a body "alive" (biologically) long after the person has "died" (mentally/socially). Euthanasia ends "meaningless" pain.

- **Economic & Resource Logic:** In a country like India with a high patient-to-bed ratio, utilizing intensive care resources for "terminally ill/brain-dead" patients limits access for those with a high chance of recovery.
- **Compassion over Cruelty:** Prolonging the life of a patient in a Persistent Vegetative State (PVS) via invasive tubes is increasingly viewed by the SC as "cruelty" rather than "care."

The "Pro-Life" Perspective

- **The "Slippery Slope" Risk:** There is a grave danger of misuse by relatives to inherit property early or by the state to "clear" the burden of elderly/disabled populations.
- **Sanctity of Life:** Many religious and ethical frameworks believe life is a gift/sacred; its end should be natural, and humans should not "play God."
- **Medical Ethics:** It contradicts the **Hippocratic Oath** ("First, do no harm"). It may damage the trust between a doctor and a patient.
- **Palliative Care Gap:** Critics argue the "demand" for euthanasia arises from a lack of quality pain management. If **Palliative Care** is robust, the desire to die often disappears.
- **Potential for Recovery:** Medical science is constantly evolving. A "terminal" condition today might have a cure tomorrow, and euthanasia is irreversible.

Way Forward

To move toward a more humane and efficient end-of-life framework, the following steps are essential:

- **Enact a Comprehensive "End-of-Life Care Act":** The Supreme Court has specifically urged the Union Government to create a legislative bridge. This would provide permanent clarity, replacing the current "interim" judicial guidelines with a robust parliamentary law.
- **Universalize Palliative Care:** The "Right to Die with Dignity" is inseparable from the **Right to Quality Palliative Care**. Palliative care must be integrated into the **Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY)** scheme and medical curricula to ensure that the transition to natural death is painless and managed with medical expertise.
- **Digitization via ABHA:** Living Wills should be seamlessly linked to the **Ayushman Bharat Digital Health Account (ABHA)**. This ensures that in emergencies, doctors can instantly access a patient's "Advance Medical Directive" without the family needing to produce physical documents.
- **Standardize Medical Protocols:** As established in the *Harish Rana* case, there is a need for standardized protocols for withdrawing **Clinically Assisted Nutrition and Hydration (CANH)**. This prevents doctors from being accused of "starvation" or "active killing" while performing their duty of care.
- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** The concept of "Living Wills" remains largely urban and niche. A national awareness campaign is needed to normalize advance care planning, ensuring citizens exercise their autonomy while they are mentally competent.

Conclusion

India's legal shift from "sanctity of life" to "quality of life" ensures constitutional empathy. Future legislation must now bridge the gap between judicial guidelines and clinical practice to institutionalize dignity.

Q. "The recognition of the Right to Die with Dignity reflects the evolving interpretation of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution." Discuss in the light of recent Supreme Court judgments on euthanasia.

2.2. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

2.2.1. INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

Concept and Core Philosophy

The Neighbourhood First Policy (NFP) is the cornerstone of India's foreign policy, viewing India's prosperity as intrinsically linked to the stability and growth of its neighbors.

- **Principles (The 5S Framework):** Samman (Respect), Samvad (Dialogue), Shanti (Peace), Samridhi (Prosperity), and Sanskriti (Culture).
- **Approach:** Shift from "Big Brother" dominance to a **non-reciprocal, consultative, and outcome-oriented** partnership (inspired by the Gujral Doctrine).
- **Institutional Frameworks:** Focus on sub-regional groupings like **BBIN** (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) and **BIMSTEC**, often as a functional alternative to the stalled SAARC



Scope of Neighborhood

1. Immediate Neighborhood

- **Land Neighbors:** Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.
- **Maritime Neighbors:** Sri Lanka and Maldives.

2. Extended Neighborhood

- **Act East Link:** Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines (via **BIMSTEC** and **ASEAN**).
- **Connect Central Asia:** Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
- **West Asia/Middle East:** UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Iran (crucial for energy security and the **IMEC** corridor).

3. Strategic Space (IOR & SAGAR)

Focuses on the island nations and littoral states of the **Indian Ocean Region** where India acts as a "Net Security Provider."

- **Island Nations:** Mauritius, Seychelles, Comoros, Madagascar, and Reunion Island (French territory).
- **Littoral States:** Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa (Western IOR).

Objectives of India's Neighbourhood First Policy

- **Regional Stability:** Preventing the spillover of cross-border terrorism and radicalization from **Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Myanmar** to ensure domestic security.

- **Strategic Autonomy:** Countering China's "String of Pearls" and BRI footprint in **Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nepal** to maintain regional leadership.
- **Economic Integration:** Boosting physical and digital connectivity via BBIN and energy grids in **Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal** for shared prosperity.
- **Net Security Provider:** Leading maritime security and HADR (Disaster Relief) missions in **Mauritius, Seychelles, and Maldives** under the **SAGAR** vision.
- **Civilizational Soft Power:** Utilizing shared religious and linguistic heritage to bridge trust deficits with **Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka**.

Key Pillars of India's Neighbourhood First Policy

1. Connectivity: Physical & Digital

- **Infrastructure:** Focus on "Multimodal Transit" such as the **Kaladan Project** (Myanmar) and **Agartala-Akhaura Rail** (Bangladesh) to integrate the North-East.
- **Digital:** Exporting the "**India Stack**" (UPI, RuPay) to countries like **Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka** to create a regional digital economy.

2. Economic Integration & Energy Security

- **Trade Concessions:** Non-reciprocal trade benefits (under the **Gujral Doctrine**) for smaller neighbors to facilitate duty-free access to Indian markets.
- **Energy Grids:** Landmark projects like the **India-Nepal-Bangladesh** tripartite power trade (2024–2026) allowing for a regional electricity market.

3. Strategic & Maritime Security

- **Net Security Provider:** Leading maritime patrolling and anti-piracy efforts under the **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision.
- **Strategic Balancing:** Proactively countering external influences (specifically China's **BRI**) through faster project execution and currency swap agreements with **Maldives and Sri Lanka**.

4. Humanitarian & First Responder Role

- **Disaster Relief:** India's role as the first to arrive during crises, such as the **Nepal Earthquake** or the **Sri Lankan Economic Crisis** (\$4 billion assistance).
- **Health Diplomacy:** Leveraging initiatives like **Vaccine Maitri** to provide critical medical aid during pandemics/outbreaks.

5. Civilizational & Cultural Connect (Soft Power)

- **Shared Heritage:** Promoting the **Buddhist Circuit** (Nepal/Bhutan) and **Ramayana Circuit** (Sri Lanka) to bridge the trust deficit through "Sanskriti."
- **People-to-People:** Expanding scholarships and ITEC programs for students and professionals across the subcontinent.

Recent Developments

Several critical shifts are redefining regional diplomacy:

- **Political Transitions:** Following the recent elections in **Bangladesh and Nepal**, India is pivoting from "Palace Diplomacy" (focusing on specific leaders) to "People Diplomacy," engaging with new youth-led movements and diverse political stakeholders.

- **West Asia Spillover:** Today's editorials highlight how escalating tensions in West Asia are forcing India to secure its maritime neighborhood to protect energy corridors and the **IMEC** (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor).
- **Climate & Health Diplomacy:** A move toward "Low-Intensity Security" through Joint Disaster Relief (HADR) and sharing digital governance tools (Open-source platforms) to build long-term institutional dependency.

Key Challenges to India's Neighbourhood First

- **Energy Insecurity:** Heightened volatility in the **Strait of Hormuz** (mostly shut as of today) has caused oil prices to surge over **\$100/barrel**, straining the economies of India and its neighbors (Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), who now look to India for energy bailouts.
- **Diaspora Vulnerability:** The conflict directly threatens nearly **25 million South Asians** (including 10 million Indians) living in the Gulf. Recent missile shrapnel deaths in **Abu Dhabi** and evacuations highlight the massive humanitarian risk.
- **Maritime "Net Security" Test:** Increased attacks on commercial tankers in the **Indian Ocean** (e.g., near UAE's Fujairah) challenge India's image as a "Net Security Provider." The Indian Navy is currently forced to divert resources for warship escorts (**OP Sankalp**).
- **Diplomatic Balancing (Trust Deficit):** Neighbors like **Bangladesh, Maldives, and Sri Lanka** have taken more vocal stances on the conflict. India's initial perceived alignment with Western/Israeli positions creates a "credibility gap" within its own neighborhood.
- **Connectivity Disruptions:** The conflict has halted progress on the **IMEC (India-Middle East-Europe Corridor)**, forcing India to double down on the **INSTC (via Iran/Chabahar)**, which is itself complicated by ongoing strikes.
- **The China Squeeze:** While India is distracted by West Asian maritime security, China continues to offer faster, non-political infrastructure funding, appealing to neighbors facing fuel-driven economic crises.
- **Af-Pak Radicalization:** Today's news of **Pakistan's airstrikes on Afghanistan** (hospital in Kabul) highlights the persistent threat of regional radicalization and cross-border "open war" that destabilizes India's western flank.

Way Forward

- **Pivot to "People Diplomacy":** Moving away from "Palace Diplomacy" (reliance on specific leaders) to engage with youth-led movements and civil society, as seen in the recent **Bangladesh and Nepal** transitions.
- **Out-Implement, Don't Out-Argue:** Prioritizing the rapid completion of existing **Lines of Credit (LoC)** projects (e.g., Kaladan, Agartala-Akhaura) to match the execution speed of China's BRI.
- **Exporting India Stack (DPI):** Scaling the integration of **Digital Public Infrastructure** (UPI, RuPay, ONDC) across the neighborhood to create a shared, India-centric regional digital economy.
- **"First Responder" Institutionalization:** Creating a permanent **Regional Disaster & Health Task Force** to provide predictable aid during climate crises or energy shocks caused by the West Asia war..

- **Decoupling Domestic Rhetoric:** Ensuring that internal political narratives (e.g., migration or CAA) do not "poison the well" of bilateral trust with key partners like **Bangladesh**.
- **Maritime Collective Security:** Strengthening the **Columbo Security Conclave** and **SAGAR** to address the new maritime threats in the Arabian Sea arising from the West Asia conflict.

Conclusion

India must evolve into a "**Strategic Anchor**," leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure and asymmetric concessions to foster a resilient, integrated subcontinent that withstands external shocks while securing its status as a **Net Security Provider**.

Q. "India's Neighbourhood First Policy is increasingly being tested by evolving regional and global challenges." Examine in the context of recent geopolitical developments.

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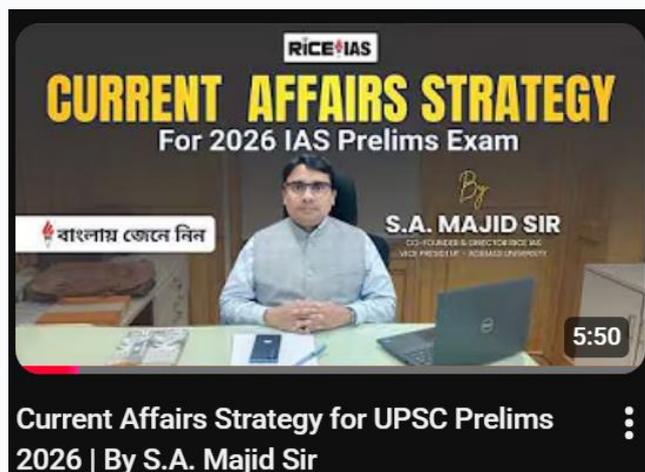
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