

### **Death penalty should be abolished as a form of punishment**

Across the globe, death penalty or capital punishment continues to remain a method of legal retribution. And across the globe there remain intense debate about its effectiveness and efficacy. Every time a criminal is handed a capital punishment verdict, irrespective of the country of occurrence, activists raise their voices for its dilution and replacement by more effective forms of retribution. Debate reigns supreme about whether or not capital punishment systems have a place in modern, evolved societies. The subject is therefore contentious and views of supporters and critics are strong and profound.

Opponents of death penalty feel that there is inconclusive evidence regarding the belief that capital punishment acts as a deterrent. Several studies have been conducted to verify this notion, but clinching evidence is still missing. Such investigation points to the fact that capital punishment has no deterrent effect and on the contrary contributes to increasing crime rates. Experts opine that if capital punishment were effective deterrents then it implies use of death penalty should have resulted in lower crime and murder rates. But in reality studies conducted for over a century and half have returned results showing increase in crime rates even after implementation of capital punishment (Warden 2009). In the US, research has shown that states that have abolished death penalties continue to register fewer instances of crime and murder than states that use death penalty as punishment (Warden 2009). Hence it can be deduced that the deterrence clause does not hold universally true.

Critics also opine that death sentence limits the chances of reversibility. This form of punishment leads to people paying for crimes that they have not committed and once the judgement is pronounced chances of reversing it become slender. The case of Cameron Todd Willingham is appropriate. He was executed in 2004 but was later found to be innocent (Valeontis 2012). Similar was the case of Dhananjay Chatterjee who was executed in Kolkata

in 2014 on grounds of raping and murdering a school student. But apprehensions were later cast that he was probably framed and did not commit the heinous crime (Jayaram 2015). These findings are relevant for a life term convict as there remains scope of corrective action. But for a death row convict, it doesn't hold out much hope. Therefore critics question the ethicality of killing someone on basis of flawed judgement.

Supporters of death sentence however raise the point that if someone can be so immoral as to kill another human being, then why can't society do the same? In justifying their position, this group invokes the views of Immanuel Kant who had said that any society which is not keen on demanding the life of a murderer, is immoral (Pro Con 2014). Hence when the administrative and legal system identifies someone as criminal, then why cannot society ask for death penalty for the culprit, is the question often put forward by this group. They believe that by commuting punishment, society will act immorally which is not desirable.

Post evaluation of the above arguments it can be concluded that 'eye for an eye' can never become a societal norm. Motives behind crimes should be understood and steps should be taken to address them. Only then can crime rates be significantly reduced. Handing out of death penalties is probably not the right approach, as continuing crime across the globe surely indicates.

## References:

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