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GS Paper III: Economics

1. Revision of the GDP Series and Its Implications

a. Introduction

Gross Domestic Product, or GDP, is one of the most widely used indicators for assessing the size and performance of an economy. It represents the total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a country during a given period, usually one year. Governments, investors, international institutions, and researchers rely on GDP estimates to evaluate economic growth, compare economic performance, and design fiscal and development policies.

Recently, the National Statistical Office (NSO) released a revised series of national accounts with 2022–23 as the new base year, replacing the earlier 2011–12 base year series. This revision has led to notable changes in the measured size and composition of India's economy. Broadly, the revised estimates suggest a modest reduction in the size of GDP for overlapping years, along with some changes in sectoral shares and in the relative contribution of formal and informal sectors.

Although such revisions are a normal part of statistical practice, they are far from insignificant. They affect the interpretation of growth trends, the understanding of structural transformation, the assessment of fiscal ratios, and the credibility of official data. Hence, the revision of the GDP series is not merely a technical exercise; it has important implications for economic governance and policy analysis.

b. Why GDP Base Years Are Revised

In national income accounting, the base year serves as the reference year against which real economic growth is measured. The prices and production structure prevailing in the base year are used to separate changes in output from changes in prices. However, no economy remains static over time. New sectors emerge, technologies evolve, patterns of consumption shift, and the relative weight of different industries changes.

Because of these structural shifts, a base year that accurately represented the economy at one point gradually becomes outdated. Periodic revision is therefore necessary to ensure that GDP estimates reflect the current structure of production and prices more accurately.

Structural Reasons for Revising the Base Year

- The composition of output changes over time as new sectors gain importance.
- Consumption patterns and relative prices evolve with development.
- The old base year may no longer represent the current economy realistically.

Statistical Reasons for Revision

- Improved datasets become available through better surveys, digital databases, and corporate reporting.
- New estimation techniques make measurement more accurate.
- Statistical agencies can incorporate previously under-measured sectors more effectively.

Thus, a revision of the GDP series does not mean that the economy itself has suddenly changed. Rather, it means that the measurement framework has been updated to produce a more realistic statistical picture.

c. Institutional Framework and Main Features of the Revision

i. Institutional Basis

India's national accounts statistics are compiled by the National Statistical Office, functioning under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI). The NSO is responsible for measuring the size, growth, and structural composition of the economy through a range of statistical methods, surveys, and administrative databases.

The revised series adopts 2022–23 as the new base year, replacing the earlier 2011–12 base year. This revision comes after roughly eleven years, which is a reasonable interval given the pace of economic and structural change.

ii. Main Features of the Revision

The new GDP series introduces several important changes in the estimation of economic output.

Change in Base Year

- The base year has shifted from 2011–12 to 2022–23.
- This enables the national accounts to better reflect current production patterns and prices.

Reduction in Estimated GDP Size

- For overlapping years, the revised series suggests that India's GDP is around three to four percent lower than previously estimated.
- This does not imply that the economy has actually contracted; it only reflects a change in measurement.

Changes in Sectoral Composition

- The shares of agriculture and industry in gross value added have increased slightly.
- The share of the services sector has declined modestly.

Change in Institutional Composition

- The contribution of the non-financial private corporate sector has declined somewhat.
- The share of the household or informal sector has risen.

These shifts suggest that earlier estimates may have overstated the weight of the formal corporate economy while understating the continuing significance of informal and household-based production.

d. Understanding the Revision in Conceptual Terms

GDP revision can be understood through a simple analogy. Measuring the economy is like looking at an object through a lens. If the lens becomes clearer, the object may appear slightly different, even though the object itself has not changed.

In the same way, when a revised GDP series shows a lower value, it does not mean that factories, farms, or services have suddenly disappeared. What has changed is the statistical method of observation. The revised series may simply be correcting earlier overestimation or capturing certain sectors more accurately.

What the Revision Does Not Mean

- It does not mean the real economy has physically shrunk overnight.
- It does not automatically imply a crisis or sudden collapse in output.

What the Revision Does Mean

- The statistical framework has been updated.
- The revised estimates may better reflect actual production patterns.
- Some earlier assumptions or datasets may have produced distorted results.

This distinction is crucial because GDP revision influences how policymakers, economists, and the public interpret growth, sectoral change, and fiscal capacity.

Old vs Revised GDP Series

Old vs Revised GDP Series		
Feature	Earlier Series	Revised Series
Base Year	2011-12	2022-23
GDP Size	Slightly higher estimates	3-4% lower estimates
Sectoral Composition	Higher services share	Slight rise in agriculture & industry
Institutional Composition	Higher corporate sector share	Larger household/Informal sector

e. Significance of the Revised GDP Series

i. Correcting Earlier Measurement Distortions

One major purpose of revising the national accounts is to correct earlier distortions in economic measurement. The previous GDP series had attracted criticism from some economists who questioned whether sectors such as manufacturing and corporate activity were being measured in ways that overstated their contribution.

Importance of Correction

- A revised series can reduce earlier statistical bias.
- It can incorporate more reliable and recent data sources.
- It can improve the realism of national accounts.

The modest downward revision in GDP size may therefore reflect an attempt to address some of these earlier concerns.

ii. Improving Understanding of Economic Structure

The new series also refines the understanding of India's production structure. A somewhat larger share for agriculture and industry suggests that these sectors may be more important than previously assumed, while the marginally lower services share moderates the view that India's growth has been overwhelmingly service-led.

Why This Matters

- It affects debates on structural transformation.
- It influences industrial policy and employment strategy.
- It alters the narrative regarding India's long-term development path.

iii. Implications for Policy Ratios

GDP serves as the denominator for several critical macroeconomic indicators. When GDP estimates change, fiscal and financial ratios change as well.

Important Ratios Affected

- Fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP
- Public debt-to-GDP ratio
- Tax-to-GDP ratio
- Public expenditure as a share of GDP

If GDP is revised downward, these ratios may appear less favourable even when the underlying fiscal numbers remain unchanged. Hence, GDP revision can influence fiscal planning, debt assessment, and policy targets.

iv. Impact on Long-Term Economic Goals

National aspirations such as becoming a multi-trillion-dollar economy are often framed in GDP terms. If the revised series shows a smaller economic size than previously believed, such milestones may be statistically delayed, even if the real economy continues to grow.

Thus, GDP revision affects not only current analysis but also the framing of long-term national ambitions.

f. Major Findings from the Revised Series

The revised GDP series yields several important insights regarding the size and composition of India's economy.

Smaller GDP Size for Overlapping Years

- The revised estimates indicate that GDP for certain recent years is around three to four percent lower than under the earlier series.
- This does not overturn the broad growth trajectory, but it does affect macroeconomic interpretation.

Sectoral Rebalancing

- Agriculture and industry occupy a slightly larger share of gross value added.
- The services sector's share declines modestly.

Limited Improvement in Manufacturing Share

- Manufacturing has improved only slightly in the revised series.
- This suggests that industrial expansion has been gradual rather than dramatic despite policy emphasis on domestic manufacturing.

Greater Role of the Household Sector

- The household or informal sector appears larger than previously estimated.
- This highlights the continued importance of informal production, self-employment, and small enterprises in India's economy.

These findings suggest that India's economy remains more mixed and less formalised than some earlier estimates implied.

g. Key Concerns and Challenges

i. Limited Methodological Transparency

One important concern is the extent to which the revised methodology has been clearly explained. Revisions are internationally accepted and statistically necessary, but they must be accompanied by detailed documentation.

Why Transparency Matters

- Users of data need to understand the basis of the changes.
- Researchers must be able to scrutinise methods independently.
- Transparency strengthens confidence in official statistics.

Without sufficient methodological clarity, doubts may continue regarding whether the new series fully addresses earlier criticisms.

ii. Credibility of Official Statistics

Economic statistics are central to policymaking, research, and investment decisions. If doubts arise about data reliability, the credibility of the statistical system may weaken.

Consequences of Weak Credibility

- Policy decisions may become less evidence-based.
- Investor confidence may be affected.
- International reputation may suffer.
- Public debate may become more politicised.

For a major and rapidly growing economy like India, statistical credibility is a strategic public asset.

iii. Methodological Versus Substantive Change

It is essential to distinguish between actual economic change and changes caused by statistical revision. A new GDP number does not always indicate a real shift in production or welfare.

Need for Cautious Interpretation

- Differences may arise from updated datasets.
- New estimation techniques can alter results without changing the economy itself.
- Analysts should avoid treating revised numbers as direct evidence of sudden structural transformation.

iv. Implications for Economic Planning

Reliable national income data are necessary for planning employment generation, infrastructure investment, industrial policy, and welfare spending.

Planning Challenges

- If GDP estimates remain disputed, policy design becomes more difficult.
- Long-term planning requires stable and trusted statistical foundations.
- Frequent controversy can reduce the effectiveness of economic governance.

h. Stakeholders and Institutional Actors

The compilation and use of GDP data involve multiple institutions and actors within the economy.

National Statistical Office

- It compiles national accounts and produces official GDP estimates.
- It plays the central technical role in statistical measurement.

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation

- It oversees the broader statistical framework.
- It provides institutional support to the national accounting process.

Union Government

- It uses GDP estimates for budgeting, fiscal planning, and policy design.
- Development targets and programme evaluation often rely on these figures.

Reserve Bank of India

- It uses GDP data for macroeconomic analysis.
- Monetary policy and financial stability assessments depend partly on such data.

International Institutions, Investors, and Researchers

- Institutions such as the IMF rely on national accounts for comparative analysis.
- Investors use GDP data to assess economic prospects.
- Researchers and State governments depend on these estimates for planning and evaluation.

Thus, revisions in GDP statistics have implications that extend across governance, finance, academia, and global economic engagement.

i. Broader Economic Implications

i. Fiscal Policy Implications

A downward revision of GDP makes key fiscal indicators appear less favourable because the denominator becomes smaller.

Likely Effects

- Fiscal deficit as a share of GDP may rise.
- Debt-to-GDP ratios may worsen.
- Fiscal consolidation targets may appear harder to achieve.
- Borrowing strategies may need recalibration.

ii. Reassessment of the Growth Narrative

If earlier series overstated output, then interpretations of India's growth during certain periods may require some moderation.

Implication for Growth Discourse

- India's broad growth story may remain intact.
- However, the pace and composition of growth may appear more restrained than previously thought.

iii. Structural Transformation Debate

The slight increase in agriculture and industry shares suggests that India's structural transformation may not have followed exactly the pattern earlier assumed.

Broader Significance

- The services-led narrative may need some qualification.
- Agriculture and industry may still occupy a larger developmental role than believed.
- This may influence employment and industrial policy discussions.

iv. Informal Sector Debate

The larger share of the household sector reinforces the importance of the informal economy in India's production structure.

Why This Is Important

- Informal enterprises continue to support employment and output generation.
- Formalisation is still incomplete.
- Policies that ignore the informal sector may miss a substantial part of the economy.

j. Way Forward

Greater Methodological Transparency

- Detailed documentation of estimation methods should be placed in the public domain.
- This would allow researchers and analysts to understand the basis of the revisions clearly.
- Transparency would help address concerns about data credibility.

Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Autonomy

- The professional capacity of the NSO should be enhanced through better training, technology, and resources.
- Institutional autonomy should be protected so that statistical work remains credible and insulated from undue pressures.

Better Measurement of the Informal Sector

- Since a large share of India's workforce operates in informal activities, data collection on this sector must improve.
- Surveys, digital administrative data, and local-level information systems should be strengthened to capture household production more accurately.

Alignment with Global Standards

- India should continue aligning its national accounts methodology with frameworks such as the United Nations System of National Accounts.
- At the same time, these standards must be adapted to India's domestic realities, especially the scale of informality.

Promoting Academic Scrutiny and Open Data Practices

- Peer review and academic engagement should be encouraged.
- Open access to data and methods can improve resilience, credibility, and quality in the statistical system.

These reforms would help ensure that future revisions are not seen as opaque corrections, but as part of a transparent and mature statistical process.

Conclusion

The revision of India's GDP series with 2022–23 as the base year represents an important effort to update the statistical measurement of the economy. The revised estimates indicate a somewhat smaller GDP size, modest changes in sectoral composition, and a larger role for the household sector than previously recognised. These changes do not alter the broad fact that India remains a major and growing economy, but they do refine the way that growth and structural change are understood.

The deeper significance of the revision lies in what it reveals about the relationship between data, policy, and governance. A large and dynamic economy cannot rely on outdated statistical frameworks. At the same time, revisions must be accompanied by transparency, methodological clarity, and institutional credibility. In this sense, the GDP revision is not only a technical exercise in national income accounting; it is also a test of the strength, integrity, and maturity of India's statistical system.

GS Paper IV: Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude

2. Supreme Court's Passive Euthanasia Verdict and the Right to Die with Dignity

a. Introduction

The question of how society should respond to terminal illness and irreversible medical conditions lies at the intersection of law, ethics, and medicine. Modern healthcare has made it possible to prolong biological life even when recovery is no longer possible. This has generated difficult moral and legal questions: must life always be sustained through medical intervention, or can there be circumstances in which allowing a person to die naturally is consistent with human dignity?

The Supreme Court's decision permitting the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment in the case of Harish Rana, a young man who had remained in a persistent vegetative state for more than a decade, marks an important stage in India's evolving jurisprudence on end-of-life care. The ruling represents the first practical implementation of the framework earlier developed through decisions such as Aruna Shanbaug v. Union of India and Common Cause v. Union of India. Through this judgment, the Court reaffirmed that the constitutional guarantee of dignity under Article 21 can, in limited circumstances, extend to the manner in which a person is allowed to die.

b. Constitutional and Judicial Background

The legal debate surrounding euthanasia in India has largely been shaped through the judicial interpretation of Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. Over time, the Supreme Court has interpreted this provision broadly to include not merely animal existence, but a life lived with dignity. The central constitutional challenge has been to determine whether this principle of dignity can also apply at the end of life.

Gian Kaur v. State of Punjab (1996)

- The Supreme Court held that Article 21 does not include a general right to die.
- The Constitution protects life and cannot be interpreted as granting a blanket right to end it.
- This judgment rejected the claim that suicide or assisted suicide could be constitutionally justified under Article 21.

Aruna Shanbaug v. Union of India (2011)

- The Court distinguished between active euthanasia and passive euthanasia.
- Active euthanasia, involving deliberate action to cause death, remained illegal.
- Passive euthanasia, involving withdrawal or withholding of treatment, was permitted under strict safeguards and subject to judicial approval.

Common Cause v. Union of India (2018)

- A Constitution Bench held that the right to live with dignity under Article 21 also includes the right to die with dignity for terminally ill or permanently unconscious patients.
- The Court recognised the validity of Advance Medical Directives, or living wills.
- This allowed individuals to express their future treatment preferences if they lost decision-making capacity.

Procedural Simplification in 2023

- The Court recognised that the 2018 framework was too complex and difficult to implement.
- It therefore simplified the procedure for executing and verifying living wills.
- Bureaucratic barriers were reduced to make the framework more workable in practice.

Thus, India's end-of-life jurisprudence has gradually evolved from a strict rejection of any "right to die" to a more nuanced recognition of dignity in the process of dying.

c. Conceptual Distinction Between Active and Passive Euthanasia

A proper understanding of the legal position requires a clear distinction between two different concepts that are often confused in public debate.

i. Active Euthanasia

Active euthanasia refers to a situation where death is intentionally caused through a direct act.

Examples

- Administering a lethal injection
- Giving medication with the purpose of causing death

This form of euthanasia remains illegal in India because it involves a deliberate act to end life.

ii. Passive Euthanasia

Passive euthanasia involves withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment when such treatment no longer serves a therapeutic purpose and recovery is impossible.

Examples

- Discontinuing ventilator support
- Stopping artificial nutrition or hydration
- Withdrawing dialysis or other life-prolonging interventions

The ethical basis of passive euthanasia is that the doctor does not actively cause death. Instead, the underlying disease or medical condition is allowed to take its natural course. The intention is not to kill the patient, but to avoid prolonging suffering or maintaining meaningless biological existence through artificial means.

Active vs Passive Euthanasia: Core Legal Distinction		
Basis	Active Euthanasia	Passive Euthanasia
Meaning	Direct act to cause death	Withholding/withdrawing life-sustaining treatment
Method	Lethal injection, fatal drug administration	Ventilator withdrawal, stopping artificial nutrition/hydration, dialysis
Doctor's role	Actively causes death	Allows disease to take natural course
Legal status in India	Illegal	Permitted under strict safeguards
Ethical basis	Intentional termination of life	Avoidance of futile prolongation of suffering

Key constitutional point:
"Indian law does not recognise a general right to die; it recognises limited withdrawal of futile treatment in order to preserve dignity at the end of life."

d. Supreme Court's Reasoning in the Harish Rana Case

In the Harish Rana case, the Supreme Court had to determine whether clinically assisted nutrition and hydration, administered through a medical feeding tube, should be treated as ordinary feeding or as a form of life-sustaining medical treatment.

i. Nature of Medically Assisted Feeding

The Court held that clinically assisted nutrition is not the same as ordinary feeding given to a healthy person.

Why It Was Treated as Medical Intervention

- It is medically prescribed.
- It is clinically supervised.
- It requires professional monitoring and periodic assessment.

Because of these characteristics, the Court regarded medically assisted nutrition as a form of life-sustaining treatment.

ii. Significance of This Interpretation

This reasoning was especially important because the Delhi High Court had earlier rejected the request for withdrawal of treatment on the ground that the patient was not dependent on machines such as ventilators.

Broader Legal Impact

- The Supreme Court clarified that life support is not limited to visible machines such as ventilators.
- Other forms of medically sustained survival, including artificial nutrition and hydration, may also fall within the category of life-sustaining treatment.
- This broadened the practical scope of passive euthanasia jurisprudence.

After ensuring compliance with procedural safeguards, including medical evaluation and consultation with the family, the Court permitted withdrawal of treatment.

e. Evolution of the Judicial Framework

The development of India's passive euthanasia framework can be understood as a sequence of landmark judgments.

First Stage: Preservation of the Sanctity of Life

- Gian Kaur (1996) affirmed that the Constitution does not recognise a general right to die.
- This preserved the sanctity of life as a core constitutional principle.

Second Stage: Recognition of Passive Euthanasia

- Aruna Shanbaug (2011) allowed passive euthanasia under strict safeguards.
- High Court approval and medical review were required.

Third Stage: Recognition of the Right to Die with Dignity

- Common Cause (2018) expanded Article 21 by recognising that dignity extends to the end of life.
- It also validated living wills and advance medical directives.

Fourth Stage: Practical Simplification

- The 2023 procedural changes made living wills easier to execute and implement.
- Judicial magistrate approval was no longer mandatory in the earlier strict sense.
- Attestation by a notary or gazetted officer was permitted, and bureaucratic barriers were reduced.

Together, these decisions form the current legal foundation governing passive euthanasia and end-of-life care in India.

f. Present Procedure for Withdrawal of Life-Sustaining Treatment

Under the present legal framework, the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment must follow a carefully structured process designed to prevent misuse and ensure accountability.

i. Medical Assessment

- The treating physician must assess whether the patient's condition is irreversible.
- The doctor must determine whether continued treatment has any therapeutic benefit.
- If treatment is medically futile, the process for withdrawal may begin.

ii. Constitution of Medical Boards

Primary Medical Board

- A primary medical board is constituted by the hospital to examine the patient's condition.
- It evaluates prognosis, reversibility, and medical futility.

Secondary Medical Board

- If the primary board supports withdrawal, a secondary medical board independently reviews the case.
- This acts as an additional safeguard against arbitrary decisions.

iii. Role of Family and Administration

Family Consultation

- The patient's family or nominated representative must be informed.
- They must be made aware of the prognosis and available options, including palliative care.

Information to Magistrate

- The local magistrate must be informed before implementation.
- However, prior judicial approval is no longer mandatory under the simplified framework.

If both medical boards agree and the procedural conditions are fulfilled, treatment may be withdrawn while ensuring proper palliative care and minimisation of suffering.

g. Significance of the Verdict

The Supreme Court's ruling has major implications for law, healthcare policy, and constitutional ethics in India.

i. First Practical Implementation of the Framework

- The decision marks the first concrete implementation of the passive euthanasia framework developed in earlier judgments.
- Until now, the principles existed largely in theory rather than practice.

ii. Clarification of the Meaning of Life Support

- The judgment clarifies that life support is not confined to machines like ventilators.
- Medical interventions such as clinically assisted feeding may also qualify as life-sustaining treatment.

iii. Strengthening of Dignity Jurisprudence

- The ruling reinforces the principle that dignity extends to the final stage of life.
- It acknowledges that forcing a person to remain in a prolonged state of irreversible unconsciousness through artificial intervention may violate the idea of dignified existence.

iv. Guidance for Doctors and Hospitals

- The verdict offers greater legal clarity to medical professionals.
- Hospitals and doctors who previously feared criminal or legal consequences now have stronger judicial guidance.

v. Broader Policy Relevance

- The case has revived debate about the need for a comprehensive law on end-of-life care.
- It highlights the importance of institutional preparedness in hospitals and healthcare systems.

h. Challenges and Concerns

i. Absence of a Comprehensive Statutory Law

One of the most important concerns is that India still lacks a clear parliamentary law governing euthanasia and end-of-life care.

Problem

- The framework currently rests largely on judicial pronouncements.
- Hospitals and doctors may face uncertainty in the absence of a codified statute.
- Legislative backing is necessary for clarity and uniformity.

ii. Procedural Difficulties in Hospitals

- Many hospitals may not have clearly functioning medical boards.
- There may be insufficient training and lack of standard operating procedures.
- Rural and smaller healthcare institutions may find implementation especially difficult.

iii. Weak Palliative Care Infrastructure

Ethical withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment cannot be separated from the availability of compassionate care.

Need for Supportive Care

- Pain relief
- Psychological counselling
- Hospice care
- Family support mechanisms

In many parts of India, these services remain inadequate.

iv. Possibility of Misuse

- Elderly persons
- Economically dependent patients
- Socially vulnerable individuals

Because of this risk, independent medical review, documentation, and family consultation are essential safeguards.

v. Social and Cultural Sensitivities

End-of-life decisions are not purely medical or legal matters.

Influencing Factors

- Religious beliefs
- Emotional attachment within families
- Social attitudes toward death and suffering

These factors make such decisions deeply complex and sensitive.

i. Ethical Dimensions

The debate on passive euthanasia brings into focus several fundamental ethical principles relevant to both medicine and public administration.

i. Human Dignity

The most central value in this debate is human dignity.

Meaning in This Context

- A person should not be reduced to mere biological survival without consciousness or hope of recovery.
- Compassionate acceptance of natural death may sometimes better protect dignity than prolonged artificial intervention.

ii. Patient Autonomy

Autonomy refers to the ability of individuals to make decisions regarding their own lives and bodies.

Relevance

- Patients should have the right to express treatment preferences in advance.
- Living wills or advance directives strengthen autonomy when decision-making capacity is lost.

iii. Non-Maleficence and Beneficence

Medical ethics also rests on two major principles.

Non-Maleficence

- Doctors must avoid causing harm.

Beneficence

- Doctors must act in the best interests of the patient.

The challenge lies in balancing these principles. Continuing futile treatment may itself become a form of harm, while withdrawing burdensome intervention may sometimes better serve the patient's welfare.

iv. Ethical Balance in the Court's Approach

The Supreme Court attempts to reconcile these values by allowing passive euthanasia only in carefully regulated circumstances.

Core Ethical Logic

- The intention is not to end life.
- The purpose is to avoid prolonging suffering or futile biological existence.
- Safeguards ensure that dignity, autonomy, and compassion remain central.

j. Way Forward

i. Enactment of a Comprehensive Law

- Parliament should enact a clear statutory framework on end-of-life care.
- Such a law should define passive euthanasia, living wills, medical board procedures, and institutional safeguards.

ii. Standard Protocols in Hospitals

- Hospitals should establish clear protocols for forming medical boards and documenting decisions.
- Family counselling and ethical review mechanisms should be institutionalised.

iii. Strengthening Palliative Care

- Withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment must be accompanied by proper palliative care.
- India must expand access to pain management, hospice care, and psychological support.

iv. Medical Education and Ethical Training

- Medical education should include end-of-life ethics and legal procedures.
- Doctors must be trained to handle these situations with sensitivity and professionalism.

v. Public Awareness on Living Wills

- Citizens should be informed about the concept of Advance Medical Directives.
- Greater awareness would allow individuals to make autonomous and informed choices in advance.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's decision permitting the withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment in the Harish Rana case marks an important step in the development of India's constitutional jurisprudence on dignity, autonomy, and healthcare ethics. The judgment does not create an unrestricted right to die, nor does it legalise active euthanasia. Instead, it recognises that when medical intervention becomes futile and only prolongs biological existence without any realistic hope of recovery, allowing the natural process of death may be consistent with the constitutional value of dignity.

By clarifying the practical scope of passive euthanasia, the Court has advanced a humane and balanced approach to end-of-life care. At the same time, the verdict also reveals the limits of a purely judge-made framework. Lasting reform will require a comprehensive statutory law, stronger medical institutions, better palliative care infrastructure, and greater public understanding of the ethical complexities surrounding death with dignity. In that sense, the judgment is both a constitutional milestone and a reminder that compassion, legality, and institutional preparedness must move together.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

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This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

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This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

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