

It jeopardise the
existence of others. it



It means a claim to so live that the existence of one does not jeopardise the existence of others. It also means the right to defend oneself against attack. If anyone makes an attack upon my life, it is my right to defend myself and even to use force for self-preservation. Use of force, however, is permitted only as an extreme measure.

Every State, however primitive its political organisation, must adequately provide for the personal safety of its citizens. In early societies the power to punish was private. The blood relations of the deceased avenged his death. The system of private revenge led to blood feuds. But now every State takes away from individuals their right of vengeance and substitutes in its place punishment as provided in its laws. The right to life is, thus, safeguarded by law. Punishment is held the logical consequence of the anti-social acts of those who violate law.

Criminals are adequately punished as their acts disturb the moral order of society. According to Kant and Hegel, punishment is the negative reward for crime. It is that the criminal deserves and the State simply gives him his due. The advocates of this point of view plead that punishment for a murder should be death. The modern idea of punishment is entirely different.

It is argued that punishment should be neither retributive nor deterrent in character. It should be reformatory. The reformatory theory aims at reforming the psychology of the criminal. Instead of the murderer being hanged, modern penal law tends to regard him as one who must be removed from society for some time in order that he may reform and ultimately resume his place in society to contribute towards the welfare of society like

all well-behaved citizens. Given necessary conditions, it is maintained, a Saul may become a Paul. Capital punishment, it is accordingly maintained, should be abolished and the system of jails should be substituted by reformatories. The right to life also demands punishment of those who attempt to commit suicide. The reason is obvious.

Every individual is an integral unit of society. If suicide is permitted, we deprive society of valuable lives who may contribute to its moral enrichment. Security to person cannot be claimed if the individual is allowed to murder himself. Suicide is an attempt to disintegrate society and inflict on it a social injury.

It must, therefore, be punished, as it cuts at the very root of human life. But to punish and imprison people for having attempted to commit suicide is now considered by many as barbaric and antediluvian. Societies for Right to Die with Dignity exist in most of the advanced countries. Euthanasia is the process advocated by these societies to end suffering of persons dying of incurable painful diseases.

But no country has agreed to this process so far. The right to life is not absolute. If the State guarantees to its citizens the security to life, the citizens, too, owe a duty to the State to maintain its unity and integrity. During times of war or any other national emergency, it is the duty of all citizens to protect and uphold the sovereignty of the State even if they have to sacrifice their lives. Then, the right to life depends on obedience to laws. If laws are willfully disobeyed there is neither certainty nor security.

This means conditions of chaos and disorder and both life and property cannot be assured under these conditions.