



A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT FOR RAPE: THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA

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Abstract : This Research Paper undertakes a comparative analysis of capital punishment for rape in the United States and India, examining the constitutional, legal, and human rights dimensions that shape the application of the death penalty in both jurisdictions. The study is grounded in a doctrinal and comparative research methodology, relying on statutory provisions, constitutional principles, and judicial precedents to evaluate whether capital punishment for rape is legally sustainable and normative justified.

In the United States, the constitutional framework under the Eighth Amendment prohibits the imposition of cruel and unusual punishment, which has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to exclude the death penalty for rape where the victim does not die. Landmark decisions such as *Coker v. Georgia* and *Kennedy v. Louisiana* firmly establish that capital punishment for non-homicidal rape is disproportionate and inconsistent with evolving standards of decency. In contrast, India retains the death penalty for certain aggravated forms of rape, particularly under statutory amendments introduced after 2013 and 2018, and applies it within the framework of the “rarest of rare” doctrine as articulated in *Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab*.

The Research Paper highlights a fundamental divergence in constitutional philosophy between the two jurisdictions. While the United States adopts a rights-based approach emphasizing proportionality, human dignity, and restraint in the use of state power, India balances constitutional safeguards with considerations of deterrence, public outrage, and the collective conscience of society. This divergence raises critical questions about the role of capital punishment in addressing serious crimes such as rape.

Further, the study engages with international human rights perspectives, which increasingly advocate for the abolition or restriction of the death penalty. It also critically examines the deterrence rationale, noting the lack of conclusive empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of capital punishment in reducing sexual violence.

The Research Paper concludes that capital punishment for rape, particularly in cases not involving homicide, raises significant constitutional and ethical concerns. It recommends a shift toward reformatory justice, stronger institutional mechanisms for victim protection, and alignment with evolving global human rights standards.

INTRODUCTION

Capital punishment remains one of the most controversial and debated aspects of criminal justice systems across the world, particularly when applied to offences such as rape. The gravity of rape as a crime violating bodily integrity, dignity, and personal autonomy has led to increasing demands for harsher punishments, including the death penalty. However, the imposition of capital punishment for rape raises complex constitutional, ethical, and human rights questions, especially in cases where the victim survives.

This Research Paper undertakes a comparative analysis of the legal frameworks governing capital punishment for rape in the United States and India. These two jurisdictions present a stark contrast in their approaches. In the United States the Supreme Court through the landmark decisions such as *Coker v. Georgia* and *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, has categorically held that the death penalty for non-homicidal rape violates the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. This reflects a constitutional commitment to proportionality and evolving standards of decency.

In contrast, India retains the death penalty for certain aggravated forms of rape, particularly following legislative reforms such as the Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts of 2013 and 2018. The Indian judiciary applies the “rarest of rare” doctrine established in *Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab*, allowing capital punishment in exceptional cases where the crime shocks the collective conscience of society.

The divergence between these two systems highlights deeper philosophical differences regarding punishment, deterrence, and the role of the state. While one emphasizes constitutional restraint and human dignity, the other reflects a balance between justice, deterrence, and societal expectations. This study seeks to critically examine these approaches and assess whether capital punishment for rape is a legally and morally justified response in contemporary legal systems.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN THE UNITED STATES

The legal framework governing capital punishment in the United States is deeply rooted in constitutional principles, particularly the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits the infliction of “cruel and unusual punishments.” This provision serves as the primary basis for judicial scrutiny of death penalty statutes and has significantly shaped the limits within which capital punishment may be imposed.

The modern jurisprudence of capital punishment in the United States began with *Furman v. Georgia*, where the Supreme Court held that the arbitrary and inconsistent application of the death penalty violated the Eighth Amendment. This decision effectively invalidated existing death penalty statutes and led to a nationwide moratorium. However, the Court did not declare capital punishment per se unconstitutional; rather, it emphasized the need for procedural safeguards to prevent arbitrary sentencing.

In response, states introduced revised statutes incorporating guided discretion and bifurcated trial procedures, which were upheld in *Gregg v. Georgia*. The Court reinstated the death penalty under these reformed frameworks, recognizing that it could serve legitimate penological objectives such as retribution and deterrence, provided it was applied in a fair and consistent manner.

A crucial development in the context of rape occurred in *Coker v. Georgia*, where the Supreme Court held that the imposition of the death penalty for the rape of an adult woman was grossly disproportionate and unconstitutional. The Court reasoned that while rape is a serious and reprehensible crime, it does not involve the taking of human life, and therefore does not warrant the ultimate punishment. This decision established a constitutional boundary, limiting the application of capital punishment to crimes involving death.

This principle was further reinforced in *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, where the Court extended the prohibition to cases involving the rape of a child where the victim survives. The Court emphasized that the death penalty should be reserved for the most severe offences, particularly those resulting in the loss of life, and highlighted concerns regarding proportionality and evolving standards of decency. It also noted the risk that imposing the death penalty for rape could lead to under reporting or incentivize offenders to kill victims to avoid identification.

The doctrine of “evolving standards of decency” plays a central role in the Court’s interpretation of the Eighth Amendment. This doctrine requires that the constitutionality of punishment be assessed in light of contemporary societal values and norms. Over time, this approach has led to a narrowing of the scope of capital punishment, excluding not only non-homicidal offences but also certain categories of offenders, such as juveniles and individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Thus, the United States adopts a highly restrictive approach to capital punishment, particularly in relation to rape. The constitutional emphasis on proportionality, human dignity, and the prevention of excessive punishment ensures that the death penalty is reserved only for the most egregious crimes involving the taking of life. This framework reflects a broader trend toward limiting the use of capital punishment in modern criminal justice systems.

THE COKER CASE

Coker v. Georgia

The case begins with the prosecution of *Coker v. Georgia*, where Ehrlich Anthony Coker, an inmate already serving multiple sentences for grave offences, escaped from custody and committed the rape of an adult woman during a home invasion. He was apprehended and tried before a Georgia trial court under the provisions of the Georgia criminal statute governing rape and capital sentencing, particularly the statutory framework that permitted the imposition of the death penalty for rape in aggravated circumstances.

The jury convicted him and, applying the statutory aggravating factors, sentenced him to death. Coker then appealed to the Supreme Court of Georgia, which affirmed both the conviction and the sentence, holding that the punishment was valid under the existing statutory scheme.

Subsequently, the case was brought before the Supreme Court of the United States through certiorari, where the principal issue was whether such a sentence violated the constitutional prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment under the Eighth Amendment to the United States Constitution, made applicable to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution.

The Court examined the proportionality principle embedded within the Eighth Amendment and evaluated “evolving standards of decency” by referring to legislative enactments, jury practices, and the rarity of death sentences for rape. It noted that although rape is punishable as a serious felony, comparable in some respects to offences such as those defined under §1201 (kidnapping) or §1111 (murder) of the United States Code, it does not result in the loss of life, and therefore cannot justify the most extreme penalty. In a plurality opinion delivered by Justice Byron White, the Court held that the Georgia statute, insofar as it authorized the death penalty for the rape of an adult woman, was unconstitutional.

The Court thus reversed the decision of the Georgia Supreme Court in part, setting aside the death sentence while leaving the conviction intact. The judgment reaffirmed that under the Eighth Amendment, capital punishment must be strictly confined to offences involving the taking of human life, thereby ensuring adherence to the doctrine of proportionality and the constitutional safeguard against excessive and inhumane punishment.

DEATH PENALTY PRACTICE POST-COKER

The evolution of death penalty practice in the United States following the landmark decision in *Coker v. Georgia* reflects a significant constitutional shift toward limiting the scope of capital punishment, particularly in cases involving non-homicidal offenses such as rape. In *Coker*, the Supreme Court of the United States held that the imposition of the death penalty for the rape of an adult woman was grossly disproportionate and therefore violation of the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment.

This decision established a foundational principle that the severity of punishment must be proportionate to the gravity of the offense, thereby introducing a substantive constitutional constraint on state power in the realm of criminal sentencing. In the immediate aftermath of *Coker*, states were compelled to reassess and, in many instances, repeal or amend statutes that authorized capital punishment for rape where the victim survived, leading to a marked decline in the application of the death penalty for such offenses. However, the post-*Coker* legal landscape was not entirely uniform, as some states sought to navigate around the ruling by narrowing the category of rape eligible for capital punishment. In particular, legislative efforts emerged to reintroduce the death penalty in cases involving the rape of children, often accompanied by aggravating factors such as extreme brutality or recidivism.

These statutory developments reflected a continuing societal and political impulse to impose the harshest penalties for crimes perceived as especially heinous, even in the absence of homicide. Nevertheless, despite these legislative initiatives, actual sentencing practices demonstrated a strong reluctance to impose death sentences in non-homicidal rape cases, indicating a broader judicial and societal hesitation consistent with the proportionality principles articulated in *Coker*.

The constitutional trajectory initiated by *Coker* was further solidified three decades later in *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, where the Supreme Court extended the prohibition on capital punishment to include the rape of a child where the victim did not die. This decision effectively closed the doctrinal gap that some states had attempted to exploit in the post-*Coker* era.

The Court, relying on the “evolving standards of decency” framework, reaffirmed that the death penalty must be reserved for the most severe category of crimes primarily those involving the taking of human life. It also emphasized that a national consensus had emerged against the use of capital punishment for non-homicidal rape, as evidenced by the rarity of such statutes and the even rarer imposition of death sentences under them. Thus, *Kennedy* served not only as a continuation of the principles established in *Coker* but also as a definitive constitutional barrier to the expansion of capital punishment in rape cases.

In practical terms, death penalty practice post-*Coker* has been characterized by a near-total absence of executions for rape where the victim survives. Prosecutorial strategies have accordingly shifted, with cases involving rape that result

in death being charged under homicide statutes, such as felony murder or capital murder, thereby allowing the possibility of capital punishment within constitutionally permissible bounds. This doctrinal adjustment underscores the centrality of the victim's death as the determining factor for death penalty eligibility in the United States.

Moreover, it highlights the judiciary's insistence on maintaining a clear moral and legal distinction between homicide and non-homicide offenses, regardless of the severity or brutality involved in the latter. Another notable aspect of post-Coker practice is the increasing emphasis on procedural safeguards and appellate review in capital cases. Even where the death penalty remains constitutionally permissible, courts have imposed rigorous standards to ensure fairness, reliability, and consistency in sentencing.

This heightened scrutiny reflects a broader constitutional commitment to minimizing arbitrariness and preventing the irreversible error associated with wrongful executions. In the context of rape cases, this has translated into a cautious and restrained approach, with courts consistently rejecting attempts to expand the scope of capital punishment beyond established constitutional limits. Furthermore, the post-Coker era has witnessed a growing influence of international human rights norms and comparative legal perspectives, many of which categorically oppose the death penalty for non-homicidal crimes. While the Supreme Court has not treated such norms as binding, it has occasionally referenced them as indicative of evolving standards of decency.

This global context has reinforced the domestic trend toward restricting capital punishment and has contributed to the broader discourse on human dignity and proportionality in criminal justice. At the same time, the limitation on the death penalty for rape has prompted debates regarding the adequacy of alternative punishments, particularly in cases involving aggravated sexual violence against children. Legislatures have responded by enhancing non-capital sentencing options, including life imprisonment without the possibility of parole, mandatory minimum sentences, and civil commitment measures for repeat offenders. These developments reflect an effort to balance the need for severe punishment with constitutional constraints, ensuring that justice is served without violating fundamental rights.

In conclusion, death penalty practice in the United States post-Coker demonstrates a clear and consistent movement toward restricting the use of capital punishment to cases involving homicide. The combined effect of Coker and subsequent jurisprudence, particularly *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, has firmly established that the death penalty is an excessive and unconstitutional punishment for rape where the victim survives. This doctrinal evolution underscores the enduring relevance of proportionality, human dignity, and evolving standards of decency in shaping constitutional limits on state power. As a result, the contemporary legal framework reflects a carefully calibrated balance between the severity of punishment and the fundamental principles of justice, marking a significant development in the constitutional regulation of capital punishment the analysis.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN INDIA

The legal framework governing capital punishment in India is shaped by constitutional provisions, statutory laws, and judicial interpretations. Unlike the United States, India retains the death penalty and permits its application in certain exceptional cases, including aggravated forms of rape. The constitutional validity of capital punishment in India is derived from Article 21 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty, subject to procedure established by law. The Supreme Court has interpreted this provision to allow the death penalty, provided it is imposed in a fair, just, and reasonable manner.

A significant milestone in Indian death penalty jurisprudence is *Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab*, where the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of capital punishment while introducing the "rarest of rare" doctrine. According to this principle, the death penalty should be imposed only in exceptional cases where alternative punishment, such as life imprisonment, is unquestionably inadequate. The Court emphasized the need to balance aggravating and mitigating circumstances and to exercise judicial discretion cautiously.

This doctrine was further elaborated in *Machhi Singh v. State of Punjab*, where the Court laid down guidelines for determining when a case falls within the "rarest of rare" category. Factors such as the manner of commission of the crime, the motive, the magnitude of the offence, and its impact on society were identified as relevant considerations. These principles have been applied in various cases involving heinous crimes, including rape.

The statutory framework for rape is primarily found under Section 376 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which has undergone significant amendments in recent years. Following the widespread public outrage after the 2012 Delhi gang rape incident, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013 introduced stricter punishments, including enhanced sentences for aggravated forms of rape. Subsequently, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018 further expanded the scope of capital punishment by providing for the death penalty in cases involving the rape of minors below the age of 12.

Judicial application of the death penalty in rape cases has often been influenced by the severity of the crime and its impact on societal conscience. In *Mukesh v. State (Nirbhaya Case)*, the Supreme Court upheld the death penalty for the accused in a brutal gang rape and murder case, emphasizing that the crime had shocked the collective conscience of society. Although the case involved homicide, it reinforced the judiciary's willingness to impose the death penalty in cases of extreme brutality.

However, the application of the death penalty in rape cases remains controversial. Critics argue that the "rarest of rare" doctrine is inherently subjective and may lead to inconsistent sentencing. Concerns have also been raised regarding the effectiveness of the death penalty as a deterrent and its compatibility with evolving human rights standards.

In conclusion, India adopts a conditional and discretionary approach to capital punishment for rape, allowing its imposition in exceptional circumstances. While the legal framework seeks to balance justice, deterrence, and constitutional safeguards, it continues to face criticism for potential arbitrariness and inconsistency in its application.

THE NIRBHAYA CASE

Mukesh v. State (NCT of Delhi)

The case begins with the brutal gang rape and murder of a young physiotherapy student in Delhi on 16 December 2012, an incident that came to be widely known as the Nirbhaya case and sparked nationwide outrage and demands for stricter laws on sexual offences. The accused, including Mukesh Singh, along with five others, assaulted the victim and her male companion in a moving bus, subjecting her to extreme physical and sexual violence before abandoning them on the roadside.

The victim later succumbed to her injuries, transforming the case from one of rape to one involving murder and attracting the gravest criminal charges under the Indian Penal Code. The trial was conducted before a fast-track court, which, after evaluating extensive medical, forensic, and eyewitness evidence, convicted the accused and sentenced them to death, emphasizing the barbaric nature of the crime and its profound impact on society.

Following the trial court's decision, the matter proceeded through the appellate hierarchy, eventually reaching the Supreme Court of India in the case of *Mukesh v. State (NCT of Delhi)*. The appellants challenged both their conviction and the imposition of the death penalty, arguing procedural irregularities, insufficiency of evidence, and the improper application of the "rarest of rare" doctrine.

The Supreme Court undertook a comprehensive review of the evidence, including the dying declaration of the victim, DNA reports, and other corroborative materials, ultimately finding no merit in the arguments advanced by the defence. The Court emphasized that the crime was not only heinous and brutal but also shook the collective conscience of society, thereby justifying the imposition of the death penalty under the established legal principles.

In affirming the death sentences, the Court applied the "rarest of rare" doctrine laid down in *Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab*, concluding that the aggravating circumstances far outweighed any mitigating factors. It held that the manner in which the offence was committed marked by extreme brutality, inhumanity, and total disregard for human dignity placed it within the category of cases warranting the highest punishment.

The Court also underscored the need for the criminal justice system to respond decisively to such crimes in order to uphold public confidence and deter similar offences. Consequently, the Supreme Court dismissed the appeals and upheld both the conviction and the sentence of death imposed on the accused, thereby confirming that the case fell squarely within the "rarest of rare" category deserving of capital punishment the judgement.

"RAREST OF RARE" DOCTRINE

The "rarest of rare" doctrine is a foundational principle in Indian death penalty jurisprudence, designed to restrict the imposition of capital punishment to only the most exceptional cases. It represents a judicial attempt to balance the constitutional guarantee of the right to life under Article 21 with the State's authority to impose the death penalty in certain circumstances. The doctrine ensures that the death penalty is not applied arbitrarily and is reserved for cases where alternative punishment is clearly inadequate.

The doctrine was authoritatively established in *Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab*, where the Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of the death penalty but significantly limited its application. The Court held that capital punishment should be imposed only in the "rarest of rare" cases, where the option of life imprisonment is unquestionably

foreclosed. This marked a shift from a broad discretionary approach to a more structured and cautious framework. The judgment emphasized that sentencing must involve a careful balancing of aggravating and mitigating circumstances, thereby introducing individualized sentencing into Indian criminal law.

The scope and application of this doctrine were further clarified in *Machhi Singh v. State of Punjab*, where the Supreme Court laid down specific guidelines to determine what constitutes the “rarest of rare” case. The Court identified factors such as the manner of commission of the crime (e.g., extreme brutality), the motive (e.g., depravity or greed), the magnitude of the offence, and the impact on society. These criteria were intended to guide judicial discretion and promote consistency in sentencing.’

Despite these guidelines, the application of the doctrine has been subject to criticism. In *Santosh Kumar Satishbhusan Bariyar v. State of Maharashtra*, the Supreme Court acknowledged inconsistencies in the application of the “rarest of rare” principle and emphasized the need for a more principled and uniform approach. The Court noted that reliance on subjective factors, such as the “collective conscience” of society, could lead to arbitrariness and undermine the fairness of sentencing.

The doctrine has also been influenced by evolving judicial perspectives on human rights and proportionality. Courts have increasingly recognized that the death penalty must be imposed with extreme caution, given its irreversible nature. This has led to a greater emphasis on mitigating factors, such as the age, background, and possibility of reform of the accused.

In the context of rape cases, particularly aggravated forms, the “rarest of rare” doctrine has been invoked to justify the imposition of the death penalty in cases involving extreme brutality or where the crime shocks the conscience of society. However, this application remains controversial, as critics argue that it may be influenced by public sentiment rather than consistent legal principles.

In conclusion, the “rarest of rare” doctrine serves as a crucial safeguard in Indian capital punishment jurisprudence, aiming to limit the use of the death penalty to exceptional cases. While it reflects an effort to align sentencing with constitutional values, challenges related to subjectivity and inconsistency highlight the need for further refinement and clarity in its application.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS (UNITED STATES vs INDIA)

Below is a structured comparative analysis presented in a tabular format to clearly highlight the key differences and similarities between the United States and India regarding capital punishment for rape:

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS TABLE

Basis of Comparison	United States	India
Constitutional Provision	Governed by the Eighth Amendment prohibiting “cruel and unusual punishment.”	Governed by Article 21 of the Constitution ensuring right to life, subject to procedure established by law.
Constitutional Philosophy	Strong emphasis on human dignity, proportionality, and limitation of State power.	Balances individual rights with societal interests, deterrence, and justice.
Legality of Death Penalty for Rape	Not permitted for rape where the victim survives.	Permitted in certain aggravated cases, especially involving minors.
Landmark Case Law	<i>Coker v. Georgia</i> – death penalty for rape unconstitutional. <i>Kennedy v. Louisiana</i> – extended prohibition to child rape.	<i>Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab</i> – established “rarest of rare” doctrine. <i>Machhi Singh v. State of Punjab</i> – guidelines for application.
Approach to Proportionality	Strict proportionality: death penalty reserved for crimes involving death.	Flexible proportionality under “rarest of rare” doctrine.
Judicial Discretion	Limited by constitutional standards and precedents.	Broad judicial discretion guided by aggravating and mitigating factors.
Scope of Capital Punishment	Restricted to homicide and crimes against the State (e.g., treason).	Includes certain categories of rape, especially aggravated forms.
Doctrine Applied	“Evolving standards of decency” doctrine.	“Rarest of rare” doctrine.

Basis of Comparison	United States	India
Legislative Developments	No current statute allows death penalty for rape.	Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts, 2013 and 2018 expanded scope of death penalty for rape.
Public Policy Consideration	Focus on constitutional morality over public opinion.	Greater influence of public outrage and societal conscience.
Deterrence Perspective	Courts skeptical about deterrent effect.	Legislature often justifies death penalty as deterrent.
Human Rights Approach	Aligns more closely with international trends limiting death penalty.	Retains death penalty despite global abolition trends.
Risk of Arbitrary Application	Minimized through strict constitutional scrutiny.	Higher risk due to subjective application of “rarest of rare.”
Victim-Centric Justice	Focus on constitutional safeguards rather than punitive severity.	Increasing emphasis on victim justice and harsher punishments.
Possibility of Reform	Strong inclination toward limiting capital punishment.	Ongoing debate between abolition and retention.

ANALYTICAL OBSERVATIONS

The comparative analysis reveals a fundamental divergence in constitutional philosophy and penal policy between the United States and India. The United States adopts a restrictive approach grounded in proportionality and human dignity, effectively excluding rape from the category of offences eligible for capital punishment. In contrast, India adopts a more flexible and discretionary approach, allowing the death penalty in exceptional rape cases under the “rarest of rare” doctrine.

Another key distinction lies in the role of the judiciary. While U.S. courts strictly limit the scope of capital punishment through constitutional interpretation, Indian courts exercise broader discretion, often influenced by the gravity of the offence and societal impact. This leads to concerns regarding consistency and potential arbitrariness in sentencing. Furthermore, while the United States reflects a gradual movement toward abolition or restriction of the death penalty, India continues to retain it as a tool for addressing heinous crimes, particularly in response to public demand for stricter punishment.

Overall, the comparison highlights the tension between retributive justice and constitutional restraint, raising important questions about the future of capital punishment for rape in both jurisdictions.

CONCLUSION

This Research Paper has undertaken a comparative analysis of capital punishment for rape in the United States and India, focusing on constitutional principles, judicial approaches, and broader human rights considerations. The study reveals a fundamental divergence in how these two jurisdictions conceptualize and apply the death penalty in cases of rape, particularly where the victim survives.

In the United States, the constitutional framework under the Eighth Amendment has played a decisive role in limiting the scope of capital punishment. Through landmark decisions such as *Coker v. Georgia* and *Kennedy v. Louisiana*, the Supreme Court has clearly established that the death penalty is disproportionate for non-homicidal rape. These judgments reflect a strong commitment to the principles of proportionality, human dignity, and evolving standards of decency. The U.S. approach demonstrates a consistent effort to ensure that the most severe punishment is reserved only for crimes involving the taking of life, thereby maintaining a clear moral and legal distinction between different categories of offences.

In contrast, India retains the death penalty for certain aggravated forms of rape, particularly following legislative reforms introduced through the Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts of 2013 and 2018. The Indian judiciary applies the “rarest of rare” doctrine established in *Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab*, which allows capital punishment in exceptional circumstances. While this doctrine seeks to limit the arbitrary use of the death penalty, its application has often been criticized for inconsistency and subjectivity. Judicial reliance on concepts such as “collective conscience” further complicates the sentencing process, raising concerns about the influence of societal pressures on judicial decision-making.

The comparative analysis highlights that the divergence between the United States and India is not merely procedural but deeply rooted in differing constitutional philosophies. The United States adopts a rights-based approach that prioritizes individual dignity and limits state power, whereas India adopts a more flexible approach that seeks to balance constitutional safeguards with societal demands for justice and deterrence.

From a human rights perspective, the global trend is clearly moving toward the restriction and eventual abolition of the death penalty. International legal standards increasingly interpret the “most serious crimes” threshold as excluding non-

homicidal offences such as rape. In this context, India's retention of the death penalty for rape places it at variance with emerging global norms, while the United States, despite retaining capital punishment in certain contexts, aligns more closely with international standards in this specific area.

The study also critically examined the deterrence argument, which is often cited as a justification for capital punishment. The analysis demonstrates that there is no conclusive empirical evidence to support the claim that the death penalty effectively deters rape. On the contrary, it may produce unintended consequences, such as discouraging reporting of offences and increasing the risk of further violence. This calls into question the efficacy of capital punishment as a tool for addressing sexual violence.

Furthermore, the research underscores the importance of judicial safeguards in ensuring fairness and preventing arbitrary sentencing. While both jurisdictions have developed mechanisms to regulate the use of the death penalty, challenges remain in ensuring consistent and principled application, particularly in India.

In conclusion, The Research Paper finds that capital punishment for rape, particularly in cases not involving homicide, raises significant constitutional, ethical, and human rights concerns. The evolving legal and global landscape suggests a need to reconsider the continued use of the death penalty in such cases. A shift toward more balanced, reformatory, and victim centric approaches is essential to achieving justice in a manner consistent with contemporary constitutional values and human rights principles.

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