

THE MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY ACT, 1971

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THE MEDICAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY ACT, 1971¹

[No. 34 of 1971]

[10th August, 1971]

An Act to provide for the termination of certain pregnancies by registered medical practitioners and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto

Be it enacted by Parliament in the Twenty-second Year of the Republic of India as follows: '-

1. Received the assent of the President on August 10, 1971, and published in Gazette of India, Extra., Part II, Section 1, dated 10th August, 1971, pp. 237-240.

1. Short title, extent and commencement. –

(1) This Act may be called the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.

(2) It extends to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint.

2. Definitions. -In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires, -

(a) “Guardian” means a person having the care of the person of a minor or a lunatic;

(b) “Lunatic” has the meaning assigned to it in Section 3 of the Indian Lunacy Act, 1912 (4 of 1912);

(c) “Minor” means a person who, under the provisions of the Indian Majority Act, 1875 (9 of 1875), is to be deemed not to have attained his majority;

(d) “Registered medical practitioner” means a medical practitioner who possesses any recognised medical qualification as defined in clause (h) of Section 2 of the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 (102 of 1956), whose name has been entered in a State Medical Register and who has such experience or training in gynecology and obstetrics as may be prescribed by rules made under this Act.

3. When pregnancies may be terminated by registered medical practitioners. -

(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860), a registered medical practitioner shall not be guilty of any offence under that Code or under any other law for the time being in force, if he terminates any pregnancy in accordance with the provisions of this Act.

(2) Subject to the provisions of sub-section (4), a pregnancy may be terminated by a registered medical practitioner, -

(a) Where the length of the pregnancy does not exceed twelve weeks, if such medical practitioner is, or

(b) Where the length of the pregnancy exceeds twelve weeks but does not exceed twenty weeks, if not less than two registered medical practitioners are, of opinion, formed in good faith, that-

(i) The continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or of grave injury to her physical or mental health; or

(ii) There is a substantial risk that if the child were born, it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.

Explanation I-Where any pregnancy is alleged by the pregnant woman to have been Caused by rape, the anguish caused by such pregnancy shall be presumed to constitute a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman.

Explanation II. -Where any pregnancy, occurs; as a result of failure of any device or method used by any married woman or her husband for the purpose of limiting the number of children, the anguish caused by such unwanted pregnancy may be presumed to constitute a grave injury to the mental health of the pregnant woman.

(3) In determining whether the continuance of a pregnancy would involve such risk of injury to the health as is mentioned in sub-section (2), account may be taken of the pregnant woman's actual or reasonably' foreseeable environment.

(4) (a) No pregnancy of a 'woman, who has not attained the age of eighteen years, or, who, having

attained the age of eighteen years, is a lunatic, shall be terminated except with the consent in writing of her guardian.

(b) Save as otherwise provided in clause (a), no pregnancy shall be terminated except with the consent of the pregnant woman.

4. Place where pregnancy may be terminated. -No termination of pregnancy shall be made in accordance with this Act at any place other than-

(a) A hospital established or maintained by Government, or

(b) A place for the time being approved for the purpose of this Act by Government.

5. Sections 3 and 4 when not to apply. -

(1) The provisions of Section 4, and so much of the provisions of sub-section (2) of Section 3 as relate to the length of the pregnancy and the opinion of not less than two registered medical practitioners, shall not apply to the termination of a pregnancy by a registered medical practitioner in a case where he is of opinion, formed in good faith, that the termination of such pregnancy is immediately necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860), the termination of a pregnancy by a person who is not a registered medical practitioner shall, be an offence punishable under that Code, and that Code shall, to this extent, stand modified.

Explanation. - For the purposes of this section so much of the provisions of clause (d) of Section 2 as relate to the possession, by a registered medical practitioner, of experience or training in gynaecology and obstetrics shall not apply.

6. Power to make rules. -

(1) The Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make rules to carry out the provisions of this Act.

(2) In particular, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely-

(a) The experience or training, or both, which a registered medical practitioner shall have if he intends to terminate any pregnancy under this Act; and

(b) Such other matters as are required to be or may be, provided by rules made under this Act.

(3) Every rule made by the Central Government under this Act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before each House of Parliament while it is in session for a total period of thirty days which may be comprised in one session or in two successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session in which it is so laid or the session immediately following, both Houses agree in making any modification in the rule or both Houses agree that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so, however, that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule.

7. Power -to make regulations. -

(1) The State Government may, by regulations, -

(a) Require any such opinion as is referred to in sub-section (2) of Section 3 to be certified by a registered medical practitioner or practitioners concerned, in such form and at such time as may be specified in such regulations, and the preservation or disposal of such certificates; require any registered medical practitioner, who terminates a pregnancy, to give intimation of such termination and such other information relating to the termination as may be specified in such regulations;

(c) Prohibit the disclosure, except to such persons and for such purposes as may be specified in such regulations, of intimations given or information furnished in pursuance of such regulations.

(2) The intimation given and the information furnished in pursuance of regulations made by virtue of clause (b) of sub-section (1) shall be given or furnished, as the case may be, to the Chief Medical Officer of the State.

(3) Any person who wilfully contravenes or wilfully fails to comply with the requirements of any regulation made under sub-section (1) shall be liable to be punished with the fine which may extend to one thousand rupees.

8. Protection of action taken in good faith. -No suit or other legal proceeding shall be against any registered medical practitioner for any damage caused or likely to be caused by anything, which is in good faith done or intended to be done under this Act.