

# LIVING V/S BRAIN DEAD ORGAN DONATION IN INDIA

-Rtn Lal Goel



## INTRODUCTION

Organ donation is vital in saving and improving the lives of individuals suffering from organ failure, particularly in India, where the demand for organs far exceeds the available supply. In India, organ transplantation has gained momentum in recent years, with the government and non-governmental organisations working hard to create awareness. The two primary methods of organ donation are living organ donation and organ donation from brain-dead individuals. Both methods have distinct considerations, ethical challenges, and impacts on donor and recipients, particularly within the unique socio-cultural and healthcare landscape of India.

### **Living Organ Donation**

Living organ donation in India involves the voluntary donation of an organ, typically a kidney or a portion of the liver, by a healthy individual. In Indian society, where family bonds are strong, living donation is often motivated by a deep sense of duty and altruism towards relatives. Family members are frequently the ones donating to their loved ones. Living organ donation is crucial in India due to the lower rate of deceased donations and it allows for planned transplants with generally better outcomes for the recipient.

However, the process presents several challenges. The donor undergoes a major surgical procedure, which involves risks such as infection, recovery time, and psychological stress. Moreover, in

India, there are financial and logistical concerns especially when donors are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The need for stronger legal and ethical frameworks is important to ensure donors are protected from exploitation, as the pressure to donate may sometimes stem from family obligation, rather than free will.

### **Organ Donation from Brain-Dead Individuals**

Organ donation from brain-dead individuals has been slower to gain acceptance in India due to several factors, including religious and cultural beliefs about death, a lack of awareness about brain death, and the complex process of obtaining consent from grieving families. In this method, organs such as the heart, liver, kidneys, pancreas, intestines and lungs can be harvested from individuals declared brain dead, with



*their organs still functioning, and then transplanted into those in need. This method allows multiple recipients to benefit from a single donor, providing a significant opportunity to reduce the organ deficit in India.*

*However, there are important ethical considerations. While the law in India supports organ donation from brain-dead individuals under the Transplantation of Human Organs Act (THOA), the process of declaring brain death and obtaining family consent can be emotionally challenging. There are also ongoing concerns about adequate infrastructure in hospitals to facilitate timely and ethical organ retrieval. Awareness campaigns are crucial to educate the public about brain death and how organ donation can offer life-saving benefits, even in moments of profound loss.*

### **Comparison and Considerations**

*In comparing living organ donation and organ donation from brain-dead individuals in India, cultural, ethical, and medical factors must be taken into account. Living organ donation is often more accepted in India due to familiarity with the process and the strong family structure that supports such altruism. However, it can place a significant burden on the donor, both physically and emotionally.*

*In contrast, organ donation from brain-dead individuals has the potential to save multiple*

*lives, but its acceptance is hindered by limited awareness and the challenges of navigating religious or cultural sensitivities. Additionally, brain death is a relatively newer concept in many parts of India, and its acceptance by the general population remains slow.*

*From a healthcare perspective, both methods require robust legal, ethical, and medical frameworks to ensure donor and recipient safety. Medical professionals and policymakers must focus on increasing awareness, improving hospital infrastructure, and providing psychological support to both donors and their families.*

### **Conclusion**

*Both living organ donation and organ donation from brain-dead individuals are indispensable in addressing India's critical shortage of organs for transplantation.*

*Living donation reflects the deep cultural values of familial duty and selflessness, while organ donation from brain-dead individuals offers a way to save multiple lives through a single act of generosity. As India continues to evolve in its approach to organ donation, there is a growing need to address ethical concerns, raise public awareness, and create a supportive environment that encourages both forms of donation. By fostering a culture of empathy, respect, and understanding, India can move towards bridging the organ donation gap and giving the gift of life to thousands in need.*



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### **About the Author**

*Rtn Lal Goel is a visionary leader and a driving force in Organ Donation advocacy. As Charter President of the Rotary Club of Organ Donation International and Chairman of the Organ Donation India Foundation & GYAN, he has been pivotal in raising awareness about Organ Donation across India. He serves on the National Committee for the National Campaign for Body-Organ Donation (NCBOD) and has been recognised globally for his efforts. His accolades include the Rajiv Gandhi Businessman of the Year Award, Tyag Murti Mata Ramai Ambedkar Samman, Icons of India Award, World Parliament International Award and the White Coat Ceremony honour by Donate Life, USA. In recognition of his outstanding contributions, Mangalore University awarded him the distinguished title of One in Millions.*