



# The Dilemma of Rights of Mentally Ill Persons in the Indian Criminal Justice System

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## Abstract

*Interaction with police or criminal justice system for any person can be burdensome and lead to acute stress and agony. Police while conducting investigation often resort to violence, or techniques that are emotionally and psychologically overwhelming, in order to extract information, such practices can be particularly more dangerous towards people with mental disability. Mental illness under the Right of Persons with disabilities Act, 2016 has given a wide definition including people with vulnerability, at this backdrop, it has become essential to understand the relation between police interaction and persons with mental illness as the information which they provide may lead to self-incrimination. This paper will analyse the vulnerable class, who come in contact with the Criminal justice system and its implication.*

## Introduction

The cognitive aspect reliant on distinctions doesn't captivate the general population. Mental disorders possess their unique characteristics, and an individual grappling with such conditions experiences a flaw in their mental framework, disconnecting their perception from actuality. Consequently, this detachment from reality frequently leads to an inability to navigate the surrounding world, often rendering them incapable of functioning altogether. Black Law's Dictionary defines mental illness in legal counterpart as incompetence and defines as a "legal status of a person who is unable or unfitted to manage his own affairs and for whom therefore a committee may be appointed. It is the function of the court to appoint a legal guardian for the incompetent". In principle, the mental patient is considered competent (until proven incompetent). The term Mental illness is also alternatively used for the term mental disorder and the meaning of it is

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*“ascribed to deviation from normal thoughts, reasoning, feelings, attitude and action that are by their subjects, or by others, considered socially or personally dysfunctional and apt for treatment”*.<sup>2</sup> The definition seems to signify deviation of mental faculty mostly to constitute to the ill mental condition of a person. The American Psychiatric Association also defines Mental Illness as *“are health conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses can be associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities”*.<sup>3</sup> Globally, there exists a considerable proportion of individuals affected by mental health issues. As outlined in the data disclosed by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) located in Maryland, USA, for the year 2021, approximately 57.8 million adults aged 18 and above in the United States were estimated to have experienced Any Mental Illness (AMI). This figure constitutes around 22.8% of the total U.S. adult population. The NIMH characterizes mental illness as disorders related to mental, behavioral, or emotional facets.<sup>4</sup> In India, an estimated 60 to 70 million individuals grapple with both common and severe mental conditions. The country registers an alarming rate of over 2.6 lakh cases of suicide annually, earning it the title of the world's leading hub for suicides. As per data from the World Health Organization (WHO), India's average suicide rate stands at 10.9 per one lakh people. Despite advancements, mental health concerns continue to face stigmatization within Indian society.<sup>5</sup>

### **Challenges of Mentally ill persons under Criminal justice system.**

As we look into the variants of definition both in context of medical jurisprudence and legality there is a tussle between the two. Mental illness for criminal justice system has always been a challenge. An individual experiencing mental illness often lacks control over their own actions. As a result, they cannot generally be liable for criminal acts as it goes contrary to the notion of moral blameworthiness<sup>6</sup> nor can they be put at equal footing with other witnesses or suspects.

Facing the bitter truth most of the developing countries lacks a good healthcare system. Population and lack of inadequate health facilities are major causes of deterioration of health of the insane persons. This issue is notably severe in rural regions, where mental health disorders fall under conditions that only psychologists or psychiatrists can effectively address. Unfortunately, accessing these specialists poses significant challenges in most rural areas due to multiple factors like inadequate infrastructure, absence of mental health insurance, scarcity of trained psychiatrists, and lacking rehabilitation facilities. Consequently, individuals grappling with mental illness often fail to receive timely assistance, leading to advanced stages of their conditions. In countries like India,

<sup>2</sup> J.Radden 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mental-disorder/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>

<sup>5</sup> <https://pharomeasy.in/blog/mental-health-illnesses-in-india/#:~:text=Close%20to%2060%20to%2070,still%20a%20stigma%20in%20India>

<sup>6</sup> George P. Fletcher, “The Grammar of Criminal Law”, PG. 9, Oxford University Press, 2007

renowned for strong family systems, the burden of mentally ill individuals arises due to a lack of self-care, despite the support networks. Developed nations, equipped with knowledge and support systems for such conditions, face difficulties in handling this issue, but in developing nations where awareness is lacking, managing mental health problems becomes nearly impossible. As a result, those with mental illnesses are often ostracized or subjected to traditional remedies, which may or may not prove effective.

An incredibly tragic instance exemplifying the impact of mental illness involves an incident where law enforcement apprehended two individuals. One of them, having just completed agricultural work, carried a cutting tool. Tragically, he assaulted and beheaded the other person in full view of a police officer. Subsequent investigations revealed that this individual experienced recurring psychotic delusions, wherein he believed he was being pursued by a tiger. This poignant event underscores the devastating consequences of untreated mental health conditions.<sup>7</sup> If this individual had received prompt psychological intervention, it might have prevented a tragic outcome such as homicide. Instead, his untreated psychosis led to this unfortunate incident. A report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights in United Kingdom (2008) found that suspects, detainees, defendants and prisoners especially people with mental disability are generally vulnerable to discrimination and violation of human rights at all stages of Criminal Justice System.

In absence of a Police department Crisis Intervention Team unlike in the other countries, it is questionable as to how the law enforcement personnel deal with mentally unstable suspects, accused or witnesses in India. Very little facts and figures are available on record. Policing as traditionally understood means the authoritative mandate of use of force,<sup>8</sup> on justification of addressing exigencies. Various other researches on police or cop culture has also been instrumental in identifying the nature of policing. For instance, Reiner in his concept of cop culture<sup>9</sup> holds a view that police personnel inherently are pessimistic of the world and communities that they serve. However, the modern concept of policing based on welfare police and community policing attempts to showcase a humanitarian side of the police. Despite such evolution of policing, there is a potential for mental health persons to be seen as being threatened and underserved segments of society.

### **Experiences of psychological vulnerable (PV) people with criminal justice system**

It seems till date no comprehensive studies or surveys have been conducted in India to assess police response with mentally disabled. Investigation by police requires to be fair and just and in order to ensure admissibility of evidence, the procedures adopted by the police must be legal and just. As held in *Babu Bhai v State of Gujrat*<sup>10</sup>, investigating agency must not conduct investigation

<sup>7</sup>*Tukappa Tamanna Lingardi V. State of Maharashtra*

<sup>8</sup> Bittner, Egon. "The functions of the police in modern society: A review of background factors, current practices, and possible role models." (1970).

<sup>9</sup> Reiner, Robert. *The politics of the police*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Cr Appeal No.1599 of 2010 (Arising out of SLP(Cr.) No. 2077 of 2010)

in a tainted and biased manner. Beyond ensuring a fair trial, the constitutional rights enshrined in Articles 20 and 21 of the Indian Constitution also encompass the right to a fair investigation. Consequently, it's imperative that investigations adhere to principles of fairness, transparency, and sound judgment as they form the fundamental prerequisites of upholding the rule of law. An investigation is said to be fair if it is in accordance with the procedures which are established by law.

As long as the police are complying with the provisions their actions may be deemed as fair. The court also observed that the non-interference of the court would ultimately result in failure of justice and therefore the courts must interfere. As per Code of Criminal Procedure under section 161 and 162<sup>11</sup> the procedures for examination of witnesses and accused are laid down. Investigation officer is prohibited from using coercion, torture and inducement while examining the accused or witnesses. In the landmark judgment of *Nandini Satpathy v P. L. Dani*<sup>12</sup>, the court provided an interpretation in regards to the right of an accused person to remain silent while in police interrogation with a reference to article 20(3) of the constitution of India and Section 161(1) of Criminal Procedure Code. The court laid down that no person can be compelled to answer questions merely because the answers are not implicative when viewed in isolation enlarging the scope of right against self-incrimination. However, when viewed from a narrow lens, these procedures are generally to be applied by police. The provisions discussed above does not provide for the modes to be adopted by police in examining a vulnerable witness or a person with Psychological vulnerability. Regarding the issue of the accused being deemed mentally unfit, Section 328 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates that if a magistrate suspects the incapacity of the individual to defend themselves or identifies signs of mental illness during the investigation, it becomes mandatory for the magistrate to ensure a medical assessment of the individual by a qualified professional.

Persons suffering from delusions or hearing voices often remains distracted and they are not in a position to understand that they have been arrested or the consequences of their behaviour. The Supreme Court in *Accused X v State of Maharashtra*<sup>13</sup> recognised that,

*“people in prison tend to have increased affinity to mental illness. Moreover, due to legal constraints on the recognition of broad-spectrum mental illness within the Criminal Justice System, prisons inevitably become home for a greater number of mentally ill prisoners of various degrees and the realities within the prisons walls may well compound and complicate these problems.”<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Criminal Procedure Code 1973.

<sup>12</sup> 1978 AIR 1025/1978 SCC (2) 424

<sup>13</sup> (2019) 7 SCC 1: (2019) 3 SCC (CRI) 10

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*

Vulnerability is described as the state of being prone to psychological development and being susceptible to unfavourable consequences.<sup>15</sup> Gudjonsson proposes that it's more fitting to view psychological vulnerabilities (PV) as potential 'risk factors' rather than distinct signs of unreliability. He further asserts that understanding these vulnerabilities are relevant as they place suspects or witnesses at a disadvantage in terms of coping with the police techniques and tactics of questioning during interrogation or examination.<sup>16</sup> Sinclair and Wallston<sup>17</sup> proposed that psychological vulnerabilities (PV) encompass cognitive structures that render individuals more susceptible to stress. They describe it as a "pattern of cognitive beliefs reflecting reliance on achievement or external validation for one's self-worth." Degrees of vulnerability varies in each human being and when experiencing a stressful situation, psychological issues may be triggered depending upon person to person. Psychological vulnerability is per se not recognised by laws relating to mental health in India. The nearest concept that addresses issue of PV in the criminal justice system is concept of Vulnerable witnesses. Persons with mental illness or disability are considered as vulnerable witness. A vulnerable witness is an individual who may face challenges while giving testimony due to various valid reasons such as age, illness, trauma, emotional state, or similar factors contributing to vulnerability.

Many researches and experimental studies have been conducted in UK and US on PV and police investigation. In one of research projects, it was concluded that people with psychological vulnerable suspects are particularly more likely to confess.<sup>18</sup> The issue that needs to be addressed is the possibility of a PV suspect of incriminating himself due to the technicalities of law and procedures. Psychological Vulnerability is a term tended to describe the various psychological characteristics or mental states that are risk factors for problem behaviour across a range of circumstances.<sup>19</sup> And the problem behaviour in the context of police detention and interviewing are particularly the provisions of inaccurate or unreliable information by an individual suffering from vulnerability and in case of suspects may lead to self-incrimination.<sup>20</sup> For individuals with mental disorder, they are considered vulnerable as they are unable to follow the tactics and techniques of police questionings, which may lead to providing of information which is unreliable or misleading.<sup>21</sup> For instance a person with PV may experience intimidation when they are being questioned by a person in authority, they may also answer all questions in affirmative regardless of what they are asked or may disagree with the questions to avoid conflict, which may also lead the

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<sup>15</sup> Seydi Ahment Satıcı quoting Wright, et al. 2013 in Psychological Vulnerability, resilience and subject wellbeing: the mediating role of hope.

<sup>16</sup> Gisli Hannes Gudjonsson, Psychological vulnerabilities during police interviews: why are they important? 2010

<sup>17</sup> Sinclair, Vaughn G., and Kenneth A. Wallston. "The development and validation of the Psychological Vulnerability Scale." *Cognitive Therapy and Research* 23.2 (1999): 119-129.

<sup>18</sup> Police interviewing and psychological vulnerabilities: predicting the likelihood of a confession, J. Pearse Detective Inspector, G.H. Gudjonsson, I.C.H. Clare, S. Rutter, *Community and Applied social psychology*. 1998

<sup>19</sup> Gudjonsson 2006, 2010

<sup>20</sup> Roberts, Karl, and Victoria Herrington. "Detention and investigation of vulnerable suspects." *Policing vulnerability* (2012): 198-213.

<sup>21</sup> Gudjonsson, 2010

police to suspect other innocent individuals.<sup>22</sup> Additionally the external pressure on police to solve the crime also is a contributing factor to extort information without giving thought to the reliability and credibility of such information.

The concept of conversation management which is often adopted and applied by police while conducting interrogation. Conversation management comprises of three steps, first, suspect generally presents an account of events, which is then followed by police questioning and at final stage the police counter questions and challenges the statements provided by the person also known as the challenge phase. For mentally ill persons these systems pose threat as they are vulnerable to make incriminatory statements.

Professor Kal classifies mental disorders into four distinct categories. The first category comprises mental illness, learning disabilities, and personality disorders. The second category involves abnormal mental states like anxiety, phobias, bereavement, intoxication, and mood disturbances. In the third category, he situates intellectual disabilities. Lastly, personalities are grouped, encompassing traits such as suggestibility, compliance, and acquiescence. Therefore, he states that mental health affected by circumstances or negative experiences affects may have impact upon whether a person is vulnerable when undergoing criminal investigation.

#### **Laws relating to rights of mentally disabled persons with reference to criminal procedures.**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities establishes essential principles, including equal legal protection and benefits, protection against discrimination, accommodation provisions, and measures aimed at achieving real equality for individuals with disabilities to prevent discrimination. In alignment with these principles, India amended its prior legislation and introduced the 2016 Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act and the Mental Health Care Act in 2017.

Mental illness has been included as a disability under the 2016 Act and defines person with disability as, “*a person with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others.*” Further Section 2 (s) of Mental Health Care Act defines mental illness as,

*“a substantial disorder of thinking, mood perception, orientation or memory that grossly impairs judgment, behaviour, capacity to recognise reality or ability to meet the ordinary demands of life, mental conditions associated with the abuse of alcohol and drugs but does not include mental retardation which is a condition of arrested or complete development of mind of a person especially characterised by subnormality of intelligence.”*

<sup>22</sup> Kal A. Roberts citing Gudjonsson

Both the definitions are inclusive and gives a holistic view of the elements that comprises disability like the social, environmental and relations causes to causing disability.<sup>23</sup> As per this definition people with substantial impairment meaning person with severe impairment of mind only falls under the category of mentally ill person. The definition is progressive and redefines the definition provided in the old Act. However as per critiques this definition excludes disorders like conversion disorder, phobia, panic disorders and personality disorders.<sup>24</sup> Similarly the act fails to define and recognise psychological vulnerability and associated protection that is accorded by law.

Further, a mentally ill person is also recognised as a vulnerable witness and certain guidelines have been formulated to record their evidence. The Supreme Court Guideline in *Smruti Tukaram Badade v State of Maharashtra*<sup>25</sup> laid down comprehensive Model guidelines for recording evidence of vulnerable witnesses in Vulnerable Witnesses Deposition Centres (VWDC). The objective of the guidelines is to enable vulnerable witnesses to depose freely before any court in a safe and secure environment. Under guideline number 3, a (v) person with mental illness as defined under section 2(s) of the Mental Health Care Act 2017, has been recognised as a vulnerable witness. The Ten Basic principles of Mental Health Care law under principle six accords right to be assistance in exercise of self-determination to person with mental disability. A patient experiencing problems in understanding the implications of a decision must be assisted by a third party of his or her choice. He must be informed about his right to assistance and a potential assistance shall be provided.<sup>26</sup>

When examining the foundational legal theories underpinning the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.PC), a compelling rationale emerges for the preservation of the rights of individuals with mental illnesses. Fundamental principles of criminal law emphasize the necessity of both mens rea (guilty mind) and actus reus (guilty act) for convicting someone of an offense. Mens rea denotes the mental state of the perpetrator, requiring both knowledge and intention during the commission of a crime for a guilty verdict. An individual lacking adequate mental faculty would not be held accountable, as they lack mens rea. In India, an individual retains the right to plead insanity at any phase of the judicial process, a right affirmed by the Supreme Court, even after a trial has concluded. This extends to the ability to do so subsequent to a guilty verdict.

The Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.P.C) delineates explicit measures for handling individuals deemed mentally unsound during trial within its dedicated section found in Chapter XXV spanning

<sup>23</sup> Balakrishnan, Abhilash, et al. "The rights of persons with disabilities Act 2016: Mental health implications." *Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine* 41.2 (2019): 119-125

<sup>24</sup> Rao, Sireesha Srinivas. "The mental health care act 2017: A critical review." *Telangana Journal of Psychiatry* 4.2 (2018): 55.

<sup>25</sup> Spl (Cri.) No. 4480, 2019

<sup>26</sup> WHO, Mental Health care law: ten basic principles: with annotations suggesting selected actions to promote their implementation. Available at <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/63624>

Sections 328 to 338. These provisions intricately outline the precise actions mandated for a judge when confronted with a defendant deemed mentally incapacitated during the trial proceedings.<sup>27</sup> Section 328 of the Criminal Procedure Code grants the judge the authority to halt a trial if they perceive the defendant as mentally unsound. This provision operates independently from the insanity plea specified in the IPC. Should the judge decide to suspend the trial based on this consideration, it must be duly recorded in the trial records. Section 329 further clarifies that the judge may exercise this power if they believe the individual is incapable of presenting a strong defence. If a person is determined to be mentally unsound, as per Cr.P.C Section 330, the law allows for their placement in an asylum, where they can receive treatment with the hope of eventual recovery. Sections 331 and 332 outline the procedure for reintegrating an individual back into the trial proceedings if they are deemed sane following successful treatment. However, if the judge continues to perceive them as mentally unsound, they may be returned to a treatment facility.

The standard procedure adopted for recording generally consist of certification by a psychiatrist who assess the fitness of the person with mental disability. He has the duty to educate the court as an expert witness based on factual data and sound reasoning. However, law requires that the expert will assess the state of mind of a person he had at the time of committing offence. Generally open-ended questions are placed before the accused and step by step account of his behaviour is observed and recorded. Inquiry must be done based on cognition, behaviour, emotions and perception to extract whether he is in a position to appreciate right from wrong.<sup>28</sup>

The Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.P.C) offers avenues for individuals with mental disturbances to receive leniency in sentencing by the courts. Section 333 specifies that if an individual is found to be sane, they must return to trial. However, Section 334 provides an option for the judge to grant leniency if it's established that the accused was mentally unsound at the time of the crime. Notably, if someone is acquitted due to insanity, they are not released immediately. In such cases, the judge has two choices for further action. Additionally, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) includes an opportunity for an insanity defence under Section 84, asserting that a person cannot be deemed guilty if they are of unsound mind. This provision can be juxtaposed with Article 333 of the Cr.P.C. Presently, there exists no explicit definition of insanity or unsoundness of mind in Indian criminal law. Despite specific sections in both the IPC and Cr.P.C dealing with insanity and unsoundness of mind, neither statute provides a precise definition of these terms.

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<sup>27</sup> Words like lunatic are generally not used by the medical profession but are used here to reflect the language of the Cr.P.C.

<sup>28</sup> Math, Suresh Bada, Channaveerachari Naveen Kumar, and Sydney Moirangthem. "Insanity defense: Past, present, and future." *Indian journal of psychological medicine* 37.4 (2015): 381-387., Malathesh, Barikar C., et al. "Fitness to stand trial in a person with Intellectual Developmental Disorder-A case report." *Asian Journal of Psychiatry* 50 (2020): 101964-101964.

With regard to investigation, in *Dahyabhai Chhaganbhai Thakker vs. State of Gujarat*<sup>29</sup> the court emphasized that interviewing the accused at the time of the crime could have provided valuable insights into their state of mind. Thus, in cases where doubts arise regarding the accused's sanity, a prompt and unbiased interview becomes imperative. Additionally, the court pointed out the lack of rigorous questioning of the medical officers involved in the investigation by both the defence and prosecution. The judges recommended comprehensive cross-examination of all witnesses in such instances to prevent any miscarriage of justice. Specifically, in cases where an individual is accused of mental disturbance, a thorough inquiry becomes essential. Examination of pertinent witnesses plays a vital role in uncovering the truth and ensuring a fair trial. Lawyers from both sides must interrogate medical health professionals diligently. Adherence to meticulous investigative procedures remains crucial for a successful insanity plea.

The Indian Legal system does not address the issue of mental illness thoroughly. It can be also seen through the case laws that judiciary are unable to deliver proper justice to genuinely mentally ill person, as they confined themselves to the procedures as provided under the Code of Criminal Procedure. Judges have seemingly not been closely associated with the ongoing advancements in psychiatric science and psychology. It's notable that insanity plea cases often don't refer to the Mental Health Act, which precisely outlines care for individuals with mental disturbances. For instance, under Section 100, a police officer is mandated to intervene if they suspect abuse against a mentally ill person in their area. However, there appears to be a disconnect between this provision and the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.P.C.), highlighting a lack of synergy between criminal law and medical law.

## Conclusion

It is imperative to study the consequences of criminal justice system has an impact upon the mentally ill person specially people with psychological vulnerability as they are more prone to criminalization. It can be seen that Indian law specially referring to criminal procedural laws does not address or provide measure to deal with mentally ill suspect or witnesses adequately. There are laws that protects the rights of people with mental disability, however, there is a need to protect direct and indirect discrimination that occurs in the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system's interaction with individuals, especially those with mental illness, raises significant concerns about fairness and rights protection. Mentally ill individuals face unique challenges within this system due to their cognitive differences and vulnerabilities. The Right of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, underlines a broad definition of mental illness, encompassing various forms of vulnerability, necessitating a deeper understanding of the relationship between law enforcement interactions and individuals with mental health issues. Their statements during police investigations

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<sup>29</sup> 1964 SCR (7) 361

may inadvertently lead to self-incrimination, demanding a closer examination of their place within the criminal justice system.

Understanding mental illness in the legal context involves navigating the nuances between medical definitions and legal interpretations. Mentally ill individuals often lack control over their actions, challenging conventional concepts of culpability and moral responsibility. Moreover, deficiencies in healthcare infrastructure, especially in rural areas, exacerbate the plight of the mentally ill, hindering timely interventions and impairing their conditions.

Instances where mentally ill individuals encounter law enforcement highlight potential shortcomings within the system. The absence of dedicated Crisis Intervention Teams and limited data on police interactions with the mentally unstable raise questions about how law enforcement handles such cases. Despite evolving concepts of policing emphasizing community welfare, the vulnerable position of mentally ill individuals within this framework remains a concern.

Research on the experiences of psychologically vulnerable individuals within the criminal justice system is limited in India. The procedures for investigation and interrogation outlined in legal frameworks often lack specific provisions for handling vulnerable witnesses or individuals with psychological vulnerabilities. The absence of recognized protection for psychological vulnerability creates challenges in ensuring fair treatment during interrogations, potentially leading to unreliable or coerced information.

Existing laws, such as the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Mental Health Care Act of 2017, recognize mental illness as a disability and offer certain protections and guidelines for vulnerable witnesses. However, these laws fall short in addressing psychological vulnerability explicitly, leaving a gap in legal safeguards for such individuals within the criminal justice system.

The Indian legal system's approach to mental illness revolves around the principles of mens rea and actus rea, demanding a criminal state of mind and a physical act for culpability. The Code of Criminal Procedure and Indian Penal Code have provisions for dealing with mentally disturbed individuals during trials, addressing issues of insanity and unsoundness of mind. However, the absence of precise definitions and the reliance on general legal frameworks present challenges in effectively addressing the needs of the mentally ill.

The lack of a comprehensive approach within the Indian legal system to address mental illness becomes evident through judicial proceedings and the absence of connections between criminal law and medical law. Cases involving insanity pleas often adhere strictly to legal procedures without integrating provisions from the Mental Health Act, creating a disconnect between criminal law and mental health care. In conclusion, the intersection of mental illness and the criminal justice system requires a more comprehensive and nuanced approach. While existing

laws recognize mental illness as a disability and provide certain protections, there remains a critical need to address psychological vulnerability explicitly within legal frameworks. Bridging the gap between criminal law and mental health care, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and ensuring fair treatment and protection for psychologically vulnerable individuals are essential for a more inclusive and just criminal justice system.

