

HOMAGE TO INDIAN MARTYRS: ANDAMAN AND CELLULAR JAIL

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ABSTRACT

The Cellular Jail, also known as Kala Pani (for black waters), was a colonial prison in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India. The prison was used by the British especially to exile political prisoners to the remote archipelago. This three-storeyed prison, constructed by Britishers in 1906, is a pilgrimage destination for freedom fighters. This colossal edifice has mutely witnessed the most treacherous of inhumane atrocities borne by the convicts, who were mostly freedom fighters.

KEYWORDS: Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Cellular Jail, Prison, Torture, Hanging, Martyrs.

INTRODUCTION

The Cellular Jail was built by the British in 1906, it was designed specifically to isolate and break the spirits of Indian freedom fighters through brutal forced labor and solitary confinement.

- **The Design:** The prison was built like a gigantic wheel. Originally, seven massive wings fanned out from a central watchtower.
- **Complete Isolation:** It housed 693 cells designed strictly for solitary confinement. Because of the ingenious architectural layout, the front of each cell

faced the back of another wing, preventing inmates from seeing or communicating with each other.

- **Famous Inmates:** Many prominent independence activists, including Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Batukeshwar Dutt, and Barin Ghosh, were imprisoned and subjected to inhumane torture here.
- **National Memorial:** After India gained independence, a large portion of the jail was demolished. Following protests by former prisoners, the remaining structure was preserved and declared a National Memorial in 1979.



Figure 1: Cellular Jail & Andaman Islands archipelago.

Notable Persons: The basis for the story was existing accounts of life in Cellular Jail, particularly excerpts from biographies of political leaders of the Indian

Independence Movement. Most prisoners of the Cellular Jail were independence activists. Some inmates were, **Fazl-e-Haq Khairabadi** (Born: 1796/1797; Died: 19

August 1861) from Awadh, **Yogendra Shukla** (Born: 1896; Died: 19 November 1960) from Bihar, **Batukeshwar Dutt** (Born: 18 November 1910; Died: 20 July 1965) from West Bengal, **Babarao Savarkar** (Born: 13 June 1879; Died: 16 March 1945) from Maharashtra, **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar** (28 May 1883; 26 February 1966) from Maharashtra, **Sachindra Nath Sanyal** (Born: 3 June 1893; Died: 7 February 1942) from Varanasi, **Hare Krishna Konar** (Born: 5 August 1915; Died: 23 July 1974) from West Bengal, **Bhai Parmanand** (Born: 4 November 1876; Died: 8 December 1947) from Punjab, **Sohan Singh** (Born: 4 January 1870; Died: 20 December 1968) from Amritsar, **Subodh Roy** (Born: 1915; Died: 26 August 2006) from Bangladesh, and **Trailokyanath Chakravarty** (Born: 2 August 1889; Died: 9 August 1970) from Bangladesh, **Sardar Singh Artillery** (Born: 18 September 1818; Died: 16 May 1872) from Rajasthan, **Diwan Singh Kalepani** (Diwan Singh Dhillon) (Born: 22 May 1897; Died: 14 January 1944) from Punjab, **Vishwanath Mathur** (Born: 1930) from Patna, **Hemchandra Das Kanungo** (Born: 4 August 1871; Died: 8 April 1951)

from West Bengal, **Shiv Verma** (Born: 9 February 1904; Died: 10 January 1997) from Agra, **Sudhangshu Dasgupta** (Born: 1912; Died: 2003) from Bangladesh, **Ullaskar Dutta** (Born: 16 April 1885; Died: 17 May 1965) from East Bengal, **Barindra Kumar Ghosh** (Born: 5 January 1880; Died: 18 April 1959) from West Bengal.

Jails and prisons are distinct confinement facilities within the criminal justice system. Jails serve as short-term detention centers for individuals awaiting trial or serving minor sentences. Prisons, on the other hand, are long-term correctional facilities for individuals convicted of serious crimes. The terms "jail" and "prison" are often used interchangeably, but they have distinct meanings and functions within the criminal justice system. Understanding the difference between jail and prison is essential for comprehending the legal and administrative aspects of confinement. In this article, we will explore the difference between jail and prison, including their definitions, purposes, and operational distinctions.



Fazl-e-Haq Khairabadi, Yogendra Shukla, Batukeshwar Dutt, Babarao Savarkar, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, Hare Krishna Konar, Bhai Parmanand, Sohan Singh, Subodh Roy, Trailokyanath Chakravarty, Sardar Singh Artillery, Diwan Singh Kalepani, Shiv Verma, Sudhangshu Dasgupta, Ullaskar Dutta

Figure 2: Notable Indian Freedom Fighters.

Table 1: Jail & Prison.

Criteria	Jail	Prison
Purpose	Short-term confinement for individuals awaiting trial or serving shorter sentences	Long-term confinement for individuals serving longer sentences after conviction
Duration	Usually houses individuals for a period of one year or less	Houses individuals for longer durations, typically more than one year
Types of Offenses	Holds individuals accused of minor crimes, misdemeanors, or awaiting trial	Incarcerates individuals convicted of serious crimes or felonies
Facility Size	Generally smaller in size and capacity	Typically larger in size and capacity
Security Level	Can have varying levels of security, from low to high	Has different security levels (minimum, medium, maximum) based on the nature of the inmates and the facility
Inmate	Inmates are often not classified by security	Inmates are classified based on their risk level and

Classification	level	behavior
Facilities	May be county or city-operated facilities	State or federal facilities operate prisons
Inmate Population	Holds pre-trial detainees, individuals awaiting sentencing, or serving short sentences	Houses convicted individuals serving long sentences
Programs and Services	Offers limited programs and services, such as educational or substance abuse counseling	Provides a wider range of programs, including vocational training, educational opportunities, and rehabilitation services
Custody	May have fewer security measures and fewer correctional officers	Has stricter security measures and a higher ratio of correctional officers to inmates
Impact on Sentencing	Time spent in jail may be credited toward a subsequent prison sentence	Time spent in prison is considered as the primary sentence
Administration	Usually administered by local law enforcement agencies or county governments	Administered by state or federal correctional authorities
Rehabilitation Focus	Emphasizes short-term confinement and supervision rather than long-term rehabilitation programs	Offers more extensive rehabilitation programs to prepare inmates for reintegration into society
Transfers	Inmates may be transferred between jails more frequently	Transfers between prisons are less frequent
Population Density	Generally experiences higher inmate turnover and population fluctuation	Often has a more stable and long-term inmate population
Legal Status	Falls under local jurisdiction and laws	Falls under state or federal jurisdiction and laws
Visitation	Visitation policies may be more flexible due to shorter sentences and proximity to local communities	Visitation policies may be more restricted due to longer sentences and greater security considerations
Reentry Support	Often provides limited post-release support or reentry programs	May offer more extensive post-release support and reentry programs

Jail: Jails are usually local facilities under the jurisdiction of a city, local district, or county. Jails are short-term holding facilities for the newly arrested and those awaiting trial or sentencing. Those sentenced to serve a small amount of time (less than a year) may be housed in the local jail for the duration of their sentence.

Prison: Prisons are institutional facilities under the jurisdiction of the state or federal government where convicted offenders serve longer sentences. People who have been found guilty of breaking a state law are usually sent to a state prison. Those who have violated federal laws are typically sent to federal prison located somewhere in the U.S. Some states have jails and prisons that are privately operated—usually by a corporation. The

state basically contracts with these private facilities to house prisoners and does not have as much control over how the facilities are operated. **Naringun Singh** (guilty of desertion at Nuddea) (hanged himself in his cell, due to torture by the prison authorities) Prisoner 15557 Sher Ali, killed Lord Mayo, the Viceroy of India, who arrived at the Andaman Islands on an inspection tour on 8 February 1872; hanged on 11 March 1872. It is generally known as Black Warrant. When this warrant is issued by the court then it means that a person is hanged till death. These fighters had given the name "Kala Pani" ("Black Water") to the prison, in allusion to the sea water surrounding the prison, but also to the word Kala, associated with death, because it was considered certain that no one could leave this island alive.





Figure 3: Cellular Jail Custody.

Cellular Jail tortures: Hunger strikes by the inmates in May 1933 caught the attention of the jail authorities. Thirty-three prisoners protested their treatment and sat in a hunger strike. Among them were Mahavir Singh, an associate of Bhagat Singh (Lahore conspiracy case), Mohan Kishore Namadas (convicted in Arms Act Case) and Mohit Moitra (also convicted in Arms Act Case). These three died due to force-feeding.

Other prisoners

- Prisoner 31552 Ullaskar Dutt (made home-made bombs that exploded inside a carriage in Muzaffarpur, killing the bridge partners of Douglas Kingsford, the chief presidency magistrate, Mrs. Pringle Kennedy and her daughter, Grace). He was tortured, declared insane due to malarial infection, transferred to the island's lunatic ward at Haddo, and held there for 14 years.
- Prisoner 31549 Barin Ghose
- Prisoner 31555, Indu Bhushan Roy (hanged himself with a strand of torn kurta, "exhausted by the unrelenting oil mill")
- Prisoner 38360, Chattar Singh, who was suspended in an iron suit for three years
- Prisoner 38511, Baba Bhan Singh, who had been beaten to death by David Barry's men
- Prisoner 41054, Ram Raksha, who had starved himself in protest at the removal of sacred Brahminical threads from around his chest
- Haripada Chowdhury (caught in the attempted murder case of the editor of The Englishman (later Statesman) Watson and was sentenced for 10 years and deported to Andaman. Was eventually released in the year 1939. During his capture he was found in possession of a pistol along with numerous bullets of different caliber, which are now on display, along with his photograph, in the Kolkata Police Museum, situated in the premises of North Kolkata DC Office.
- Prisoner 147 Dharendra Chowdhury (robbery to raise funds for bombs and guns), one of the few survivors of Kalapani
- Naringun Singh (guilty of desertion at Nuddea) (hanged himself in his cell, due to torture by the prison authorities)
- Prisoner 15557 Sher Ali, killed Lord Mayo, the Viceroy of India, who arrived at the Andaman Islands on an inspection tour on 8 February 1872; hung on 11 March 1872
- Prisoner 12819, Mehtab, and Prisoner 10817, Choitun, came the closest to succeeding. According to The Guardian, "They stole away from the islands on 26 March 1872, rowing out into the Bay of Bengal on home-made rafts across a 750-mile stretch of turbulent water, dodging schools of bounty hunters who fought over 250-rupee rewards (then £25). Picked up by a British vessel, they persuaded the crew that they were shipwrecked fishermen and eventually pitched up, free, at the Strangers Home for Asiatics in London. The two were fed, clothed and given a bed. But while they slept, Colonel Hughes, the home's proprietor, took photographs that were circulated around the Empire. One morning, Mehtab and Choitun awoke to find themselves shackled and frog-marched aboard a ship bound for India."
- Prisoner 68 Mahavir Singh: "It took a while for the whisper to reach the Yard Five Wing. By then it was 8 pm." The bell rang again. Every prisoner shuffled to his locked gate. "The feeding tube had gone into Mahavir Singh's lungs. They were filled with milk. Doctors were now fighting to revive him. So we shouted 'Inquilab Zindabad' – long live the revolution. 'Inquilab Zindabad'. Twenty-one warders ran out of the Central Tower. 'Inquilab Zindabad'. Truncheons were drawn, a gun was cocked." "Midnight", Dr. Edge noted in the penal colony's hospital log. "Mahavir Singh – dead."
- Prisoner 89, Mohan Kishore, had also been killed. Drowned in milk
- Prisoner 93 Mohit Mitra, killed. Drowned in milk
- Prisoner 61, Narain (having excited sedition in the cantonment at Dinapore) was the first to try to escape. He was fished from the black water, hauled up before Dr Walker and executed.
- Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore launched a campaign to shut down the jail, and the colonial government decided to repatriate the political prisoners from the Cellular Jail from 1937 to 1938. "The Cellular Jail was forced to empty in 1939. Two years later, the Japanese seized the islands, transforming the penal settlement into a prisoner of war camp, incarcerating the British warders. In 1945 the Andamans would become the first piece of India to be declared independent."

Table 2: Freedom Fighters of India.

Sl	State	Freedom Fighters
1	Bengal	608
2	Punjab	95
3	Maharashtra	3
4	Bihar	17
5	Uttar Pradesh	18
6	Kerala	14
7	Andhra Pradesh	8
8	Odisha	5
9	Himachal/NW Frontier/Tamil Nadu/State not known	27
10	Total	795

According to an article in the Guardian newspaper, prisoners would face "torture, medical tests, forced labour and for many, death." In response to poor conditions in the Cellular Jail, including the quality of prison food, numerous prisoners went on hunger strikes. Those who did were often force-fed by the prison authorities in order to save their lives. Solitary confinement was implemented as the British government of India wanted to ensure that political prisoners and revolutionaries be isolated from one another. Most prisoners of the Cellular Jail were independence activists. Many moplabs arrested in the 1921 Malabar rebellion were also lodged in Cellular Jail. Several revolutionaries were tried in the Alipore Case (1908), such as Barindra Kumar Ghose, the surviving companion of Bagha Jatin, was transferred to Berhampore Jail in Bengal, before his mysterious death in 1924. Sher Ali Afridi, a former officer in the Punjab Mounted Police, was a life convict in the jail who had been imprisoned for murder. He was sentenced to death on 2 April 1867 and during appeal this was reduced to life imprisonment and he was deported to Andamans to serve his sentence. The 6th Earl of Mayo, Viceroy of India from 1869, was visiting the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in February 1872 when he was murdered by Afridi. Sher Ali Afridi wanted to kill the Superintendent and the Viceroy as a revenge for his sentence, which he thought was more severe than he deserved. He said that he killed on the instructions of Allah. He was subsequently hanged. In March 1868, 238 prisoners tried to escape. By April they were all caught. One committed suicide and of the remainder Superintendent Walker ordered 87 to be hanged. Among the records of the Government of India's Home Department, we found the Empire's response in its Orders to Provincial Governors and Chief Commissioners. "Very Secret: Regarding security prisoners who hunger strike, every effort should be made to prevent the incidents from being reported, no concessions to be given to the prisoners who must be kept alive. Manual methods of restraint are best, then mechanical when the patient resists." Hunger strikes by the inmates in May 1933 caught the attention of the jail authorities. Thirty-three prisoners protested their treatment and sat in a hunger strike. Among them were Mahavir Singh, an associate of Bhagat Singh (Lahore conspiracy case), Mohan Kishore Namadas (convicted in Arms Act Case) and Mohit Moitra (also convicted in

Arms Act Case). These three died due to force-feeding. The Cellular Jail (famously known as Kala Pani or 'Black Water') in the Andaman Islands was a brutal colonial prison built to silence Indian freedom fighters. Inmates endured extreme solitary confinement, grueling forced labor such as extracting 15 to 30 kg of coconut oil daily, starvation diets, severe floggings, and rampant abuse. Life inside the Cellular Jail was a harrowing ordeal designed to break the spirits of independence activists The Making of the Cellular Jail - Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav. Because the British authorities wanted to ensure political prisoners were isolated and couldn't organize Wikipedia, inmates were kept in solitary confinement cells that lacked any toilet facilities Cellular Jail, Andaman Islands - UNESCO World Heritage Centre. Prisoners were subjected to systemic physical and mental torture. The story of Tortures at Cellular Jail and Leela & Ullaskar's love story.

Key atrocities included

Inhumane Forced Labor: Inmates worked long, exhausting hours under the blazing sun Inside Cellular Jail. Tasks included breaking stones, pounding coconut husks for coir, and turning heavy manual oil mills Cellular Jail (Andaman Islands) - History, Facts & Tourist Information. If a strict daily quota was not met, guards responded with savage beatings The British built the Cellular Jail (Kala Pani) to silence India's freedom.

Brutal Restraints & Floggings: Punishments were routinely enforced using iron shackles, crossbar fetters, neck rings, and triangular flogging frames Cellular Jail, Andaman Islands - UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Torture for Defiance: Prisoners who fell ill or protested the brutal conditions faced severe consequences, including prolonged solitary confinement in dark, unventilated cells [Konstantinos Kalaitzis.- The "Cellular Jail" or "Kala Pani" in the]. Historical accounts detail severe methods, including beatings, electric shocks, and force-feeding during hunger strikes.

CONCLUSION

The Cellular Jail, also known as Kala Pani (Black Water), is a former British colonial prison in Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Built between 1896 and 1906, it was designed to isolate and break the spirits of

Indian freedom fighters through brutal solitary confinement, forced labor, and torture. Actually, the historic Cellular Jail in Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, originally featured **seven wings, not five**. The prison was famously designed in a radial pattern radiating outward from a central watchtower, much like the spokes of a wheel. Original Design: Built by the British between 1896 and 1906, the complex had seven three-story wings radiating from a central guard tower. It was named the "Cellular Jail" because it contained only solitary confinement cells (a total of 693), intentionally preventing any communication between prisoners. Due to wartime damage, earthquakes, and post-independence demolitions, only three wings and the central watchtower remain standing today.

REFERENCE

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