

Girmitiya System-Indentured Labour

The Indian indenture system was an ongoing system of indenture, a form of debt bondage, by which 3.5 million Indians were transported to various colonies of European powers to provide labour for the plantations (mainly sugar). It started from the end of slavery in 1833 and continued until 1920. "Agreement" is the term that has been coined into "Girmit", referring to the "Agreement" of the British Government with the Indian labourers. The descendants of these labourers are now called Girmitiyas.

During the late 1820s, the French in India (Pondicherry) laid down terms for the introduction of Indian labourers to the colony. Each man was required to appear before a magistrate and declare that he was going voluntarily. The contract was for five years with pay of rs. 8 per month and rations provided labourers had been transported to distant French colonies. This attempt could not succeed, however, upon abolition of slavery by the British Empire in 1833, the need of cheap labour in the plantations across the British Empire soared and therefore, the transportation of Indian labour gained pace. By 1838, 25,000 Indian labourers had been shipped to Mauritius alone.

Colonial British Indian Government Regulations of 1837 laid down specific conditions for the dispatch of Indian labour from Calcutta and Madras. The emigrant and his emigration agent were required to appear before an officer, with a written statement of the terms of the contract. The length of service fixed was five years, renewable for further five-year terms. The emigrant was to be returned at the end of his service to the port of departure.

By 1850s, the major absorbers of the Indian girmitiya labourers were Caribbean islands. Later the labourers were also sent to South Africa in substantial numbers.

The planters pressed consistently for longer indentures. In an effort to persuade labourers to stay, following measures were taken

- Governments of Caribbean countries offered a gratuity of £2 to each labourer who decided to remain in Mauritius and renounce his claim to a free passage.
- The Government of India agreed to change the conditions whereby if a return passage (back to India after completion of term) was not claimed within six months of entitlement, it would be forfeited.
- It was also considered that if the labourers had a family life in the colonies they would be more likely to stay on. From mid 1850s, it was mandated that women must form 25% of the total, which was raised to 40% few years later.
- Few Caribbean Governments offered the labourers a stake in the colony by providing real inducements to settle when their indentures had expired. On forfeiting the return passages, labourers were provided by a land grant (generally of 5 acres).

By 1870 a total of 550,000 Indians emigrated (legally) to the British and French Colonies (400,000 to Mauritius, 76,000 to Demerara, 42,000 to Trinidad, 15,000 to Jamaica, 6,000 to Natal, 15,000 to Reunion and 16,000 to the other French colonies).

This figure does not include the labourers who went to Ceylon or Malaya and illegal recruitment to the French colonies. Thus by 1870 the indenture system, transporting Indian labour to the colonies, was an established system of providing labour for European colonial plantations.

Workers for plantations in Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Fiji, and Mauritius were mainly recruited in the present-day states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In Guyana and East Africa, labourers originated mainly from Punjab and Gujarat.

Given the proximity of Tamil Nadu to French possessions in India, the bulk of workers in most French colonies, such as Guadeloupe, Martinique, and La Reunion, as well as the majority of indentured labourers in Natal (South Africa) were Tamils.

Leaving India

Majority of the labourers left India for working in the plantations due to the push factors rather than pull factors. The devastated economy, especially rural, due to the British policies left them with very few choices. Also high levels of unemployment, chronic poverty, indebtedness and even famine were the primary causes. They had no idea of the working conditions or quality of life etc. Recruiters exploited their ignorance and simplicity as they were lured by way of glowing promises, and were assured of lucrative employment and enriched opportunities. Peasants were lured to the city by agents who promised them relief from the misery of their lives and substantial pecuniary gain and indubitably many were kidnapped or otherwise tricked. These girmityas were initially bound to serve five years, it being understood that the planters would pay for their passage, and at the end of this term the indentured labourers were to receive their freedom. The Europeans almost never adhered to these agreements.

Middle Passage

Overcrowding of the emigrant ships, inadequate food and lack of fresh water, water-borne diseases such as cholera, dysentery and diarrhoea, and the long and arduous voyage, made life unbearable. Many did not survive the long and brutal middle passage the bodies of the dead were, quite unceremoniously, thrown overboard. The slavery had indeed ended but the officers were accustomed of handling the labourers in the old way.

Life at work

Isolated from the rest of the local population, colonial rulers housed the workers in barracks and regulated their lives in almost every regard, with severe punishments for disobedience and "insufficient work". Throughout the period of Indenture ship, immigrants were faced with meagre wage rates and unrealistic task work. Weekly earnings depended on the number of tasks, the nature of the tasks, whether it was weeding, shovelling, manuring, planting or harvesting and the speed with which they were completed. In any event, it was the employer who invariably determined the wage rate and whenever there was a fall in sugar prices immigrants found their earnings minimized. Indian labourers experienced a persistent problem surrounding the "muster roll", which was held every morning. Non-attendance meant the penalty of a fine, which was arbitrarily deducted from their wages. The pressure of getting into the fields early in order to complete unrealistic tasks at the expense of missing the muster roll, was very great. On the other hand, if he attended the muster roll and failed to complete the day's task, the end result was the same arbitrary deduction of wages. In effect the labourer had little choice. One way or the other, he was penalized. The Indian immigrant often went before the courts as victims of the labour laws and the legal system in general. The planter had at his disposal several instruments of prosecution. He could prosecute for refusal to commence work, or work left unfinished, absenteeism without authority, disorderly or threatening behaviour, or even neglect. Punishment resulted in fines or imprisonment. Throughout the period of indenture ship, the immigrant suffered from a paucity of social amenities. The tenement ranges were small and unventilated, potable water was virtually non-existent, and medical facilities and sanitation were poor. As a consequence outbreaks of diseases tended to assume epidemic proportions.

Demand for rights

It was not surprising, therefore, that from the 1860s onwards, Indian indentured labourers began to openly defy the system. Violent eruptions were occasioned by many specific and localized grievances, such as overbearing behaviour of managers, wage rate disputes, disagreement over tasks, sexual exploitation of women by overseers and the arbitrary deduction of wages of labourers. Riots and disturbances continued with regularity in the 1890s and in the early years of the twentieth century. Indeed, towards the end of the indenture ship system, labour protest had assumed various forms including work stoppage, mass picketing, violent demonstrations, marching to the Immigration Department, assaults on managers and overseers, coupled with passive resistance such as feigning illness, malingering and deliberately performing poor work.

End of the System

In response to severe criticism, the British Imperial Legislative Council abolished the indenture system in 1916. By that time, more than 1.5 million Indians had been shipped to colonies in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

Legacy

They toiled unceasingly to ensure the survival of the sugar industry and the emergence of the rice industry. They contributed significantly in the areas of village development, cash crop cultivation, cattle-rearing, milk selling and other economic activities during the period of indenture ship. From the late nineteenth century Indian immigrants displayed a high occupation profile in several off-plantation economic activities including cab- drivers, bankers, tailors, carpenters, boat-builders, charcoal makers, goldsmiths, porters, small scale manufacturers and fishermen.

In recent times their descendants have made, and continue to make tremendous strides in the social, economic cultural, education, political and trade union fields. Many of them are today leading sports personalities, entrepreneurs, educationists, politicians and trade unionists in their own right.

Viceroy &Governer Generals of the British Indian Government

Lord Lytton (1876-1880)

- **The Royal Titles Act** of 1876, which officially added Indian Empress in the list of titles of Queen Victoria.
- In 1877, on the orders of Disraeli, Lord Lytton convened the first **Delhi Durbar** in which Queen Victoria was proclaimed empress of India. Queen Victoria was proclaimed with title "Kaisar-i-Hind". In her presence, all the Kings and Princes officially became feudal lords under her overlordship.
- In 1876, a famine broke out in south India, later described as **Great Famine of 1876-78** which claimed more than 10 million people (many put the numbers at 5 million). His implementation of Britain's trading policy has been blamed for increasing the severity of the famine. Critics have further attested that Lytton's belief in Social Darwinism regards the plight of the starving and dying Indians.

Famine affected south and southwestern India (Madras, Mysore, Hyderabad, and Bombay) and spread north to some regions of the Central Provinces and the North-Western Provinces in second year. British economic policies played a substantial role in exporting grain out of India and Mike Davis called the famine a colonial genocide perpetrated by Great Britain.

- By this time, a lot of Newspaper published in various cities of India in regional/vernacular languages. The number of Vernacular papers were far greater than English newspaper and catering only to Indian population, they were far more critical of Government than English newspaper. To control this local press, Lytton promulgated the

Vernacular Press Act, 1878, which empowered the Government to confiscate the press and paper of a local language newspaper publishing 'seditious material'.

Under the Act, District Magistrates were empowered, without the prior permission of the Government, to call upon a printer and publisher of any kind to enter into a Bond, undertaking not to publish anything which might "rouse" feelings of disaffection against the government. The magistrate was also authorized to deposit a security, which could be confiscated if the printer violated the Bond. If a printer repeated the violation, his press could be seized. The act resulted in public outcry in Calcutta led by the Indian Association and Surendranath Banerjee. The act was later repealed by Lord Ripon, who followed Lord Lytton.

The act was thought to be passed to gag the press, therefore was nicknamed **the gagging act**.

- **The Arms act 1878**- This act made it a criminal offence to keep, hearing traffic in arms without license. The act was mainly resented on the ground that it smacked of racial discrimination because the European, Anglo- Indians and some other categories of government officials were escaped from the operation of this act
- **Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878–1880)**- Decades since the humiliation of First Afghan War, Afghanistan provided a buffer between the Russian Empire and British India. The Amir of Afghanistan, Sher Ali Khan (son of Dost Mohammad) was inclined towards Russia above Britain which was against the principles of Treaty of Peshawar of 1855 signed between the two parties. In 1878 British Indian emissary was refused entry in Afghanistan. This issue started the Second Anglo-Afghan War. Although British emerged victorious, the human and material costs became the reason of the exit of Disraeli's Conservative government in 1880 and installing of Gladstone's Liberals.
- He lowered the maximum age for taking **Indian Civil Services Exam** to 19 in 1877.
- Writings as "**Owen Meredith**"- When Lytton was twenty-five years old, he published in London a volume of poems under the name of Owen Meredith. He went on to publish several other volumes under the same name. Although not much read today, his poetry was extremely popular in his own day. His facility with verse was extraordinary and he was a great experimenter with form, although possibly to the detriment of finding his own style.

Lord Rippon (1880-84)

- Introduction of **Ilbert Bill**, which would have granted native Indians more legal rights, including the right of Indian judges to judge Europeans in court. Though progressive in its intent, the legislation was resented by Europeans living in India who did not want to be tried by a native judge. It was withdrawn but was reintroduced and enacted in 1884 in a severely compromised state by the name Criminal Procedure Code Amendment Act 1884. The amended bill had the provisions that the Europeans would be conferred on European and Indian District Magistrates and Sessions Judges alike. However, a defendant would in all cases have the right to claim trial by a jury of which at least half

the members must be European. Thus, this enactment held that Europeans criminals would be heard only by the Indian Judges “helped by the European Judges”.

- His efforts to obtain a **Bengal land tenancy bill** (eventually the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885) that would improve the situation of the peasants.
- He supported Dietrich Brandis to reorganize the **Madras Forest Department** and expand systematic forest conservancy in India.
- The **Vernacular Press Act was repealed** in 1882. He set free the native journals from the last restraints on the free discussion of public questions, granting freedom to the Press.
- The age for entry in the Civil Services was once again raised to 21 years.
- The **First factory Act** was enacted in 1881 (after him, Factory Commission 1885, second Factories Act 1891 and Royal Commission on Labor 1892). It resulted in the limitation on the factory working hours.
- He was the founder of **local self-government** in modern India. A Resolution in 1882 set up the institution of local self-government in India. His scheme of local self-government developed the Municipal institutions which had been growing up in the country ever since India was occupied by the British Crown. He led a series of enactments in which larger powers of the Local self-government were given to the rural and urban bodies and the elective people received some wider rights.
- As an advocate of the policy of **financial decentralization**, Lord Ripon brought about the following changes in revenue distribution in 1882. The reform opens the era of financial federalism in India, that instead of grants from Central Government, Provinces were given the separate revenue base to meet their expenses.
 - Revenue sources were divided into three categories, ie. Imperial, Provincial and Divided.
 - i. Imperial Heads- Revenue from Customs, Posts and Telegraphs, Railways, Opium, Salt, Mint, Military Receipts, Land Revenue etc. were included in the imperial head to meet the expenses of central administration out of this revenue.
 - ii. Provincial Heads- Revenue from Jails, Medical services, Printing, Roads, General Administration, etc. were included in the provincial heads to maintain the expenses of Provinces.
 - iii. Divided Heads- The revenue from Excise, Stamps, Forests, Registration etc. was divided in equal proportion among the Central and Provincial Governments.
- **Hunter Commission** came in 1882 for the purpose of education reforms. It brought out the neglect to the primary and secondary education in the country. The commission recommended that
 - the responsibility for the Primary Education must be given to the Local Boards and Municipal Boards.
 - The government should take special care to extend the primary education.
 - There should be literary and vocational training in secondary education.

- The commission brought out inadequate facilities available for the female education.

Lord Curzon (1899-1905)

In Britain, one of his earliest speeches were condemnation of Irish nationalism and home rule movement. He was Under Secretary of State for India in 1891–92. For 6 years he travelled Asia which allowed him to study the problems of Asia and their implications for British India. Within India, Curzon appointed a number of commissions to inquire into education, irrigation, police and other branches of administration.

Economy

- In 1899, the British currency was declared legal tender in India and its ratio with the Indian rupees was fixed. A Bond was declared equivalent to rupees fifteen. India, thus, was put on a gold standard.
- Curzon reduced the rate of salt tax from two and a half rupees per maund to one and a third (1-1/3) rupees per maund.
- He gave relief to income-tax payers, by increasing the zero tax slab from annual income of rupees five hundred to rupees one thousand.
- He supported the policy of financial decentralization. So far, the yearly savings of the provinces were taken over by the Central Government, the provinces were allowed to keep their savings for the next year.

Agriculture

- In 1904, the cooperative credit societies Act was passed to induce the people to form such societies for the purpose of loans and to save them from moneylenders.
- In 1900, the Punjab Land Alienation Act was passed. It put restrictions on the transfer of lands of the peasants to money lenders in cases of failure of payment of their debts.
- He made the policy that the collection of the revenue could be postponed in case one-half of the produce was damaged and lost by the cultivators and if it was felt that the peasants were not in a position to pay the revenue due to some natural calamity, they could be exempted from its payment.
- He established an Imperial Agriculture Department for the improvement of agriculture and livestock and encouragement of scientific methods of cultivation. An Agriculture Research Institute was established at Pusa in Bengal for the same purpose.
- He appointed Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff Commission to suggest measures for bringing about improvement in the means of irrigation. Curzon accepted its recommendation and canals were first constructed in Punjab.

Administration

- To safeguard the frontiers, and to assimilate the tribes of the north-west frontier, created a new province called the **North West Frontier Province**, and pursued a policy of forceful control mingled with conciliation.
- He always believed that Persia should be made a buffer against Russia which led him to encourage British trade in Persia.

Attempts to Reduce the Power of Presidency Governors

- To centralise the administration, he tried to cut down the extra powers of Presidency Governors (they enjoyed little more powers as compared to the governors of other provinces)
- Curzon suggested to the Home Government to withdraw the special privileges of the presidency governors. The proposal was rejected by India Office.

Calcutta Corporation Act, 1899

- To increase centralisation, the Calcutta Corporation Act was passed in 1899, which increased the number of nominated officials on the cost of elected members.
- It defeated the purpose of local self-Government and made it a Government department.

Police

- The police department suffered from various organisational defects like no arrangements for the training of the police constables and their officers and no criminal investigation department. The police constables and the officers were low paid.
- Curzon realised the desirability to bring about improvement in the police department also because the Indians and started agitating against the Government both by violent and nonviolent means.
- He appointed Sir Andrew Frazer Commission to suggest measures for improving the police organisation.
- The commission suggested that junior police officials should not be promoted to high officials positions and the senior officials should be taken by direct recruitment.
- It suggested that training schools should be opened for the training of constables and officers, the strength of the police force should be increased in all provinces. The policemen should be allowed to visit the villages for making inquiries and their salaries should be increased.
- It also suggested that a Central Criminal Intelligence Department should be created at the centre with subordinate departments in all provinces.
- Curzon accepted all recommendations of the commission and implemented them in practice.

Railways

- Curzon decided to improve railway facilities in India and to profit for which he appointed Robertson Commission.
- The Railways department was abolished and the management of the Railways was taken away from the hands of the public works department and handed over to Railway Board.
- The department of Railway was organised on commercial basis, profit being its primary motive.
- All the demands were accepted by Lord Curzon.

Army

- Russian activities in Central Asia and completion of Taskent Railways made the defence of north-western frontier an immediate concern.
- In 1902, Lord Kitchener came to India as the Commander-in- Chief. He carried out the much needed reforms in the army.
- The Indian army was divided into two commands-the Northern Command with its headquarters at Murree and the Southern Command with its headquarters at Poona.
- An Officers Training College was opened at Quetta on the model of Camberley College in England.
- The Military cantonments were kept near the Railway stations so as to facilitate the movements of the army and its supplies. Factories were established in India to produce guns, gun powder and rifles.
- The army was equipped with the latest weapons. The salaries of the soldiers and their officers were enhanced. Besides, to increase the efficiency of the soldiers, every battalion was subjected to a severe test called 'The Kitchner Test.'
- In 1901, he founded the Imperial Cadet Corps, or ICC, designed to give Indian princes and aristocrats military training, after which a few would be given officer commissions in the Indian Army. But these commissions were "special commissions" which did not empower their holders to command any troops. This prevented the popularity of ICC and therefore it was closed in 1914. The effort to Indianise the Indian Army's officer Corps reappeared in 1917 with a new name, 'University Corps' with the primary objective to make up the shortage of the Army (which after some changes ultimately became National Cadet Corps, NCC)

Judiciary

- Indian Code of Civil Procedure was revised.
- To increase the efficiency of judiciary, the number of judges of the Calcutta High court were increased.
- The salaries of the judges of the High courts and subordinate courts were enhanced

Ancient Monument Act, 1904

- Although the Archaeological Survey of India was formed in 1861 as statutory body by Lord Canning with Alexander Cunningham (considered as Father of Indian Archaeology) as Director. The post was later abolished and ASI slipped into oblivion due to lack of funds.
- Curzon passed Ancient Monument Act for the preservation of ancient monuments on priority. He revived the post of director and gave it to young John Marshal. ASI was assigned the responsibility of repair, the restoration and protection of the historical monuments, by sanctioning the sum of £ 50,000.
- Curzon asked the native rulers to take similar measures in their respective states. He also urged the provincial Government to open museums for the safe preservation of rare objects.

The Indian Universities Act, 1904

- In 1904, Lord Curzon passed the Universities Act in order to bring the Universities under the more strict control of the Government.
- This Act reorganised the constitution of the syndicate provided for the official inspection of the Colleges and placed the final decision concerning the affiliation or disaffiliation of colleges in the hands of the Government of India.
- Steps were also taken to develop the Universities from examining to teaching bodies.
- The Universities should not remain merely examining bodies but they should also give an impetus to research work by appointing university professors and lectures.
- Training Colleges were started in the various provinces for training the students as teacher.
- Lord Curzon had officialised the Indian universities and brought them under the control of the Government. This was not considered well for the healthy growth of education in the country.
- After the implementation of the provisions of University Act, though the number of colleges declined, yet the number of students increased considerably.
- In all the provinces their respective Vernacular was to be the medium of instruction on the primary schools while English was to be the medium in the grades of higher education.

Famine (1899–1900)

- A major famine coincided with Curzon's time as viceroy in which 1 to 4.5 million people died and Curzon has been criticised for allegedly having done little to fight the famine.
- He inherited the problem of famine upon his arrival and did implemented a variety of measures, including opening up famine relief works that fed between 3 and 5 million, reducing taxes and spending vast amounts of money on irrigation works.
- All able-bodied persons were given work on payment while donation was given to others. The cultivators were exempted from the payment of revenue.

- However, he also cut back rations that he characterized as dangerously high and stiffened relief eligibility.
- He appointed a commission under the chairmanship of Sir Antony Mardonell to probe into the causes of the famine and various measures for the development of agriculture, means of irrigation, famine fund etc. Commission suggested that the Government should take all available help from private Philanthropic associations and to give assurance of help to the affected people in the very beginning of the famine with a view to boost up their morale. The Government accepted all the suggestions of the commission and kept them in view in implementing reform measures concerning agriculture, revenue, irrigation etc.

Plague

- In the beginning of the rule of Curzon a large part of south-west India was affected by plague, taking more than a lakh of lives. The Government took all possible measures to control it and for that took the help of the army.
- The Indians, however, resented certain actions of the Government particularly the entry of the soldiers in homes to search the patients was regarded as dishonour to their families.

Bang-Bhang (The Partition of Bengal, 1905)

- The partition of Bengal in 1905 was one measure which created deep discontentment among the Indians. The provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were divided into two parts.
- The original province includes western Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and the new province include Assam and eastern Bengal. According to Curzon Bengal was too large a province and it was necessary to divide it to give it an efficient administrations.
- The Congress leadership resented it. They charged that the Government, desired to divide the Hindus and the Muslims and break up the spirit of Bengali nationalism, language and traditions of Bengal.
- The Swadeshi movement, viz. the use of Indian made goods and boycott of foreign articles began as a protest against it. SurendraNath Banerjee, an eminent nationalist, toured India to gain sympathy and support for the movement against the partition the event inspired the national movement and the idea of organised popular movement began with the movement against the partition of Bengal.

Departure from India

A difference of opinion with Kitchener, regarding the status of the military member of the council in India (who controlled army supply and logistics, which Kitchener wanted under his own control), led to a controversy in which Curzon failed to obtain the support of the home government. He resigned in August 1905 and returned to England.

The Indian Councils Act 1892

The Indian Councils Act 1892 was an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom that authorized an increase in the size of the various legislative councils in British India and led to the establishment of parliamentary government at a larger stage.

However, this Act agreed almost none of the demands of early Congress leaders, therefore, this act also served as a reason behind rise of militant nationalism in coming times. The Congress policy of petition, prayer and protest was seen as a weakness by the British Government and therefore, saw the rise of Extremist faction inside Congress.

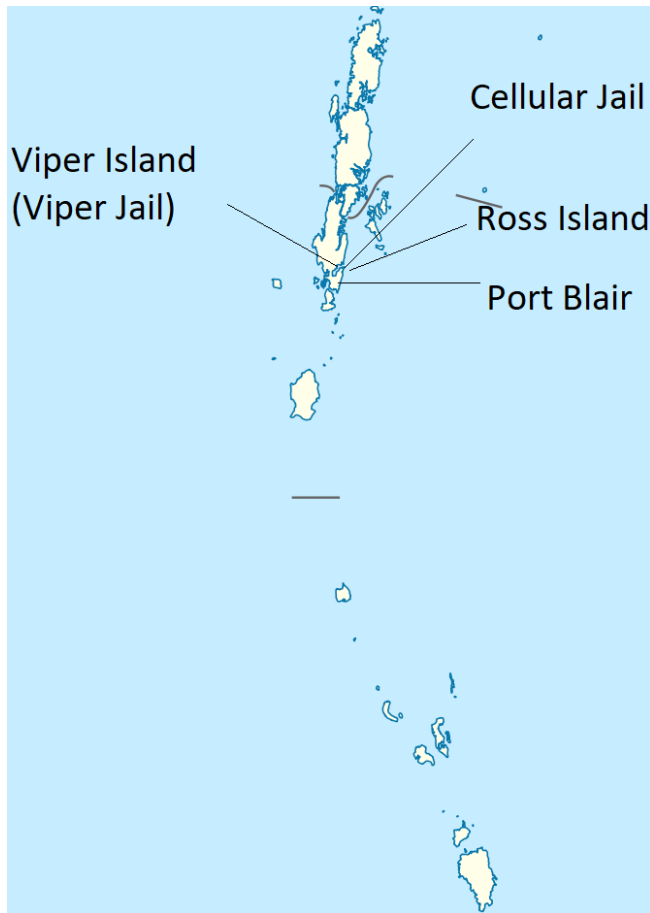
- One of the early demands of Congress was the adoption of the principle of election in place of nomination, in the councils. Act did not accepted the Principle of direct election. However, principle of **representation by way of indirect election** was accepted with some limitations. Due to the demand of the Indian National Congress to **expand legislative council**, the number of non-official members was increased both in central and provincial legislative councils. The non-official members of Indian legislative councils were henceforth to be nominated by Bengal chamber of commerce and provincial legislative council. The universities, district board, municipalities, Zamindars and chambers of commerce were empowered to recommend members to provincial councils.
- It also relaxed restrictions imposed by the Indian Councils Act 1861, thus allowing the **councils to discuss each year's annual financial statement**. The members could now discuss the budget without right to vote on it. They could also put questions within certain limits to the government on the matter of public interest after giving six days' notice, but none of them was given right to ask supplementary questions. Thus it prepared the base of Indian democracy.
- The act also increased the number of non-officials in councils to between 10 and 16, but provincial representation was abolished. The law member was made a permanent member.
- Functions of the provincial legislative councils were enlarged and they were empowered to make new laws or repeal the old ones with the prior permission of Governor General.

In 1892, the council consisted of 24 members, only five members were Indians.

Kala Pani- Cellular Jail

The Cellular Jail was a prison built by British Indian Government, to exile political prisoners, since late 1850s (after revolt of 1857). A brick mortar prison was constructed in 1890s, to take in the rising numbers of prisoners due to developing nationalism in mainland. The islands were to isolate 'independence activists' from the mainland, however, due to punitive concept of Sagarollanghana (forbidding the journey through black waters of Ocean), the

Ocean Journey to the islands also resulted in their loss of caste, therefore the jail was also called **Kala Pani**.



Early Years

- British officer Archibald Blair, tried to establish a penal colony in Andaman Nicobar Islands at the end of 18th century, however high mortality rates due to malaria prevented such enterprise and the idea was abandoned in 1796. After Revolt of 1857, British set up a penal settlement at Port Blair in 1858, with Ross Island (renamed as 'Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Island') functioning as the headquarters of the penal colony.
- The first group of 200 prisoners were transported from Calcutta, reaching Andaman Islands in March 1858. Officers soon put the convicts on the task of clearing the forest of Ross Island, building shelters and laying roads. The prisoners were chained and iron-collared around the neck with identity tags, and were in a poor state of health. When 81 of them tried to escape but returned due to attack from aboriginal people, all of them were hanged in a single day.
- Of first 8,000 prisoners in the islands, 3,500 had died due to sickness. Death rate of the prison was around 700 per year. In his investigation, Sir Robert Napier found the conditions "beyond comprehension" as there was no food, clothing and shelter provided to the convicts, who were too vulnerable to rain, malaria, pneumonia and dysentery. Untested drugs given to prisoners resulted in severe side effects like nausea, diarrhea and depression. As result, the prisoners started injuring each other so that authorities

would hang them. The prisoners also faced hardships from the indigenous tribes, some of whom were cannibals, who tortured and killed them while working in the field, and also attacked the colony.

- In 1860s, Colonel Tytler and his wife Harriet, tried to improve the conditions at the camp, where the. At that time the doctors at the camp reported that only 45 prisoners out of the 10,000 were considered medically fit.

Viper Jail

- Construction of the Viper Jail was carried out during 1864–67. Solitary cells, lock-ups, stocks and whipping stands became the feature of Jail, with facility to keep the Women prisoners. Those who had challenged the authority were chained together around their legs. In day members of the Chain Gang were put to hard labour. These conditions gave it a nickname, 'Viper Chain Gang Jail'.
- After the construction of the Cellular Jail in 1906, the Viper Jail's importance declined.

Cellular Jail

- In 1906, the new Cellular jail has replaced the barracks of Port Blair, the Ross Island and the concrete jail of Viper Island.
- The building had seven wings, at the centre of which a tower served as the intersection and was used by guards to keep watch on the inmates. The wings radiated from the tower in straight lines, much like the spokes of a bicycle wheel.
- Prison totally had 696 cells, where each cell was 14 feet by 8 feet. To ensure that revolutionaries be isolated from one another, all cells were solitary, preventing any prisoner from communicating with other prisoners. Jail was designed in such a way that the face of a cell in a spoke saw the back of cells in another spoke, making any communication between prisoners impossible. Even the cells in a wing were in a row so that inmates in the same wing also cannot communicate or see each other. They were all in solitary confinement, giving it the name, Cellular jail.
- The convicts were also required to provide labour in prison, while wearing the iron chains, to construct prisons, buildings and harbour facilities. Each block of the Cellular Jail had a courtyard in front with a workshop where the prisoners worked during the day.



- The prison was constructed to provide harsh conditions to the prisoners to ensure that it should be a 'place of exclusion and isolation within a more broadly constituted remote penal space'. It even involved extreme tortures and forced medical tests on prisoners.
- The revolutionaries were not treated as political prisoners but were called as 'seditionists' or 'anarchists' and were treated more poorly than ordinary criminals. They were given the class 'D' (dangerous) or 'PF' (permanently incarcerated).
- The mortality of the prison was very high and is estimated that of the total 80,000 sent to Kalapani, a very few survived.
- In 1930s, the stories of Andaman prisons no longer remained isolated from mainstream discussions in India. The jail drew attention when its inmates observed hunger strikes in the early 30s and after a lot of political furore by nationalists like Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, Government decided empty the prison by 1939.

Later Years

- In 1942, Japanese seized the islands, transforming the building into a prisoner of war camp, incarcerating the British warders.
- Japanese gave the control of the Islands to Indian National Army. Subhas Chandra Bose hoisted the Indian National Flag for the first time on the islands in Port Blair. He appointed INA General AD Loganathan as the governor of the Islands, and announced the Azad Hind Government was not merely a Government in Exile, and had freed the territory from the British rule.
- After the Surrender of Japan (August 1945), in October, the British resumed control of the Islands.

- The GovindBallabh Pant Hospital was set up in the premises of the Cellular Jail in 1963. It is now a 500-bed hospital for the local population.
- The jail and its museum is now open to public viewing as a National Memorial.

Notable Prisoners

1. **Dudnath Tiwari**- a political prisoner, who escaped the prison in 1858 and absorbed into the aboriginal culture, marrying two of their girls. Andamanese aboriginals launched a massive attack on the newly established Penal colony. Tiwari ran away and secretly conveyed this information to the Prison Superintendent. The fight between British and Aboriginals was called Battle of Aberdeen. The aboriginals were completely routed by the superior weapons of the British. This resulted in change of approach by the British to handle the local people and steps were initiated to seek peace with them and a British officer was appointed to look after their welfare.
2. **FazalHaqKhairabadi**- a renowned poet of Mughal court and friend of Mirza Ghalib was transported to Andamans in 1859 and stayed there till his death in 1861. Khairabadi tried to write on the details of the First War of Independence and his experience of the "Kalapani", using charcoal sticks and rags of cloth. These were later published in Arabic as Al-Surat-ulHindia and Al-Fitnat-ul-Hindia.
3. **Sher Ali Afridi**- killed Viceroy of India Lord Mayo, when he came to Andaman Islands in February, 1872. Sher Ali was hanged on 11 March, 1872.
4. **Barindra Kumar Ghose** (1880-1959)- Younger brother of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh. In 1906, he started publishing Jugantar, a Bengali weekly and a revolutionary organization named Jugantar (formed from the inner circle of AnushilanSamiti). With Jatindranath Mukherjee (BaghaJatin) he formed Maniktala group (secret place for manufacturing bombs) in Calcutta. After Alipore bomb case, 1908 (attempted killing of Kingsford by Khudiram and Prafulla) Barindra was deported to the Cellular Jail in 1909. Barindra was released during a general amnesty in 1920 and returned to Kolkata to start a career in journalism, where he published his memoirs 'The tale of my exile - twelve years in Andamans' and started an English weekly, The Dawn of India in 1933.
5. **UllaskarDutt**- member of Jugantar and AnushilanSamiti. He made bombs used by Khudiram Bose in Alipore bomb case. He was given capital punishment but was reduced to life imprisonment and was deported to the Cellular Jail. He was released in 1920 as part of general amnesty.
6. **InduBhushan Roy**- arrested at the age of 18 in Alipore Conspiracy, 1908 and was sent to Cellular Jail. He hanged himself in 1912 by strand of his torn kurta due to exhaustion by working on the unrelenting oil mill.

7. **Ganesh Damodar (Babarao) Savarkar** (1879-1945) Eldest of Savarkar brothers was founder of the Abhinav Bharat Society. He imparted training at physical and intellectual levels, created an atmosphere against the British and distributed weapons among the Indian youth, in a bid to fan an armed rebellion against the British Raj. He also collected money in order to publish the biography of the Italian revolutionary Mazzini. In Nasik Conspiracy Case, AMT Jackson, the district magistrate of Nashik, was assassinated by AnantKanhare. The probe uncovered the existence of the Abhinav Bharat Society and the role of the Savarkar brothers. In 1909, Babarao was jailed to Cellular Jail, Andamans for life, for his role in the Conspiracy. He was released in 1922 and after coming back to mainland, he set up young 'Hindu sabha'. He also wrote an essay on nationalism, named 'RashtraMimansa', where he put forth the thought of 'Hindustan is a Hindu Nation'.
8. **VinayakDamodarSavarkar**(1883-1966)- Younger brother of Ganesh Savarkar. In early life, he formed a youth group called MitraMela. In London (for studies) he founded the Free India Society and wrote the book The History of the War of Indian Independence. In 1910, Savarkar was arrested in Britain for anti-Empire activities. En route to India, he tried to escape but re arrested. In 1911, he was sent to Andaman jail, sentenced to 50 years' imprisonment. For over two years, both the brothers were unaware of each other's presence in the Jail. In 1921, VinayakSavarkar along with his brother was moved to Ratnagiri Jail and finally released in 1924, with the condition that he cannot leave Ratnagiri District.
9. **Bhai Parmanand** (1876-1947) started his political career as a member of Arya Samaj movement, visiting South Africa and Caribbean islands. Along with LalaHardayal, he was among the founders of Ghadar Party and authored a book Tarikh e Hind. He came to India to organise the Ghadar activities in Peshawar. He was arrested and sentenced to death, but later imprisoned for life in Cellular jail of Andaman Islands. He was released in 1920 by general amnesty.
10. **Sohan Singh Bhakna** (1870–1968) was an Indian revolutionary, the founding president of the Ghadar Party, and a leading member of the party involved in the Ghadar Conspiracy of 1915. Imprisoned for life in Cellular jail, he was later released in 1930. He was later associated with Kisan Sabha and the Communist Party of India.
11. **SachindraNathSanyal** (1893-1942) established a branch of AnushilanSamiti in Patna and was involved in Ghadar conspiracy, for which he was sentenced to life in Cellular Jail, Andaman. In captivity, he wrote his book 'Bandi Jeevan' and was released in 1920 but soon sent back to Cellular jail and soon re-released. In 1924, he founded Hindustan Republican Association. In 1927, he was jailed for involvement in Kakori conspiracy and released in 1937.

12. **BatukeshwarDutt** (1910-1965) Member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association. He was involved in throwing a bomb in Central Legislative Assembly, New Delhi on 8 April 1929. from Visitor's Gallery. The leaflet thrown by them claimed that the act was done to oppose the Trade Disputes and the Public Safety Bill being presented in Assembly and the death of Lalalajapat Rai. Upon trial, he was deported to the Cellular Jail, where he stayed till 1938. He later took part in Quit India Movement. After Independence he spent his rest of life in extreme poverty, without any Government recognition.
13. **Subodh Roy** (1916-2006) At the age of 14, he was involved in the Chittagong armoury raid conducted by Surya Sen in 1931. He was youngest member of the raid. In 1934, he was sent to Cellular jail in Andaman Islands. He was released in 1940, upon which he joined CPI.
14. **Yogendra Shukla** (1896-1960)- founder of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA). From 1932 to 1937, he served prison sentence in Kalapani for training Bhagat Singh and BatukeshwarDutt, therefore was involved in Delhi Assembly bombings. In 1937, he was transferred to Hazaribagh Central Jail as a result of his 46 days of hunger strike. He later joined Congress Socialist Party.
15. **Mahavir Singh** (1904-1933) an associate of Bhagat Singh in the Lahore conspiracy case and was sent to Cellular Jail, Andaman Islannds. He took part in the Hunger Strike of 1933 to protest the treatment of prisoners. He died due to force-feeding to break his strike.
16. **Mohan Kishore Namadas**- he was a member of AnushilanSamitiand was sent to Cellular Jail for his anti-government activities. He took part in hunger strike of 1933 and died due to force-feeding to break his strike
17. **Mohit Moitra**- he was a member of Jugantar Party. Convicted in the Arms Act Case in 1932 and therefore was sent to Cellular Jail. He took part in the Hunger Strike of 1933 and died due to force feeding.