PENAL TRANSPORTATION AND COLONIAL ATROCITIES ON THE ANDAMAN'S AND ROBBEN ISLAND

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Abstract

This paper aims to trace the history of two penal transportation sites: Andaman's Islands of India and Robben Island of South Africa. Those who opposed British colonial rule and expansion were sent to the Andaman and Robben Islands through penal transportation. Both islands were used as places of Banishment, exile, and penal settlement during the colonial and imperial expansion of the British empire. The objective of this paper is to understand how that Island and the people imprisoned there were used by the British and the role of those detained as political prisoners or convicts on those islands. The interconnected histories of Robben Island, the Andaman Islands, and the convicts transported between them demonstrate the global dimensions of colonial oppression and resistance. Robben Island stands as a symbol of South Africa's struggle against colonial legacy, while the Andaman Islands represent a site of resistance to British imperialism. In 1979, the jail was declared a National Memorial dedicated to the nation in the presence of the former Andaman political prisoners. Robben Island became a tourist spot, and in 1999, it was declared a World Heritage site as it had an essential role in the political history of South Africa.

Keywords: *Penal Transportation, Convicts, Colonial Power, Andaman's Island, Robben Island, Revolutionaries, World Heritage.*

Introduction

The penal transportation to the Andaman and Robben Island secured these islands as a place of penal transportation and settlement. There are similarities between the penal transportation to the Andamans and Robben Island, for both were used to curtail the anti-colonial sentiments. The penal transportation to Robben Island closely

resembled the Andamans, for both were under British rule, and thus, the history of transportation, suffering and settlement are connected. Just like the Indian convicts were deported to the Andaman, South African convicts were transported to Robben Island. Prison labour was common in both cases. With the abolition of slavery in 1834, convicts in South Africa were employed on harsh labour. The colonial government arrested a host of people in South Africa and, without trial, deported them to Robben Island.

Andamans

From the very early days of India, the Britishers believed in the idea of penal transportation of the convict to the far-flung lands. Earlier, prisoners were sent to foreign lands such as Sumatra Island, Malacca, Singapore, and Arakan. However, later on, the idea of deporting convicts to a distant place within their own country was conceived. Since then, from the 1780s, the transportation of Indian convicts to Port Corhanvalis in Andaman began, but it ceased temporarily in 1796 (Ministry of Culture, 2024).

Transportation to the Andaman Islands

In the nineteenth century, colonial administrators believed that the journey into transportation was an essential element of the punishment. This was mainly due to the caste transgressions that the journey across the black water entailed (Anderson, 2007). Kala Pani' or 'black water', was the name given to the Andamans, who were far away from the mainland and surrounded by the waters. Munir Shikohabadi alluded to the impact of 'Kala Pani' in the following verses: "When they had to leave India and came to this island. The prisoner's evil fate made the water black." (Anderson, 2007). The 1838 Prison Discipline Committee described transportation as 'a weapon of tremendous power' (Report of the Committee of Prison Discipline, 1838). An essential element of penal transportation life was the joint chaining and messing of men of all castes, classes, and religions. If convicts died on board, none of the religious ceremony was performed, and their bodies were thrown overboard. Fears about ritual pollution were already in the minds of

prisoners, as many high caste Hindus also looked at their transportation with severe cultural anxieties.

Many factors, including high seas and bad weather, made transportation the worst experience for convicts, and some of them died on board. In September 1858, Superintendent Walker reported the high rates of sickness and death in the Andaman Islands and claimed that it was mainly due to the transportation of sick convicts.

Table 1: Death rates by ship

Ship	Sailed from	Nos. embarked (arrived)	Arrived	Deaths amongst those who landed sick	Other deaths amongst those brought by each ship	Percentage of deaths post arrival per ship
Semiramis	Calcutta	200 (200)	10 March	4	23	13.5
Roman Emperor	Karachi	175 (171)	6 April	11	38	28.7
Edward	Karachi	133 (130)	13 April	4	32	27.7
Dalhousie	Calcutta	163 (140)	16 April	4	11	10.7*
Sesostris	Bombay (Via Singapore/ Pinang)	n.a. (49/83)	12 June	0	10	7.6
Italian	Bombay	80 (79)	1 July	0	5	6.3
Coromandel	Calcutta	n.a. (143)	20 August	3	7	6.8
Fire Queen	Calcutta	47 (47)	12 August	3	3	12.8
Totals		**n.a. (1047)**		**29**	**129**	**15.0**

Source: Report on sickness and mortality Port Blair, August 1858.
* 23.3 per cent, including the high number of deaths at sea.

One of the reasons for the high death rates on Dalhousie was that there were fourteen convalescents on the ship. The Civil Surgeon anticipated that a short journey to the Andamans would not be fatal to them. However, the ship was delayed for some days. The deaths on ships were primarily due to dysentery. The private merchants chartered the transportation ships, especially after the company lost its monopoly on trade in 1834. Due to this, the ships were not fitted for the transportation of convicts, and the authorities needed to make significant arrangements to improve the transportation conditions of the ships.

In September 1859, the Boanerges, arrived in the Andamans, carrying 300 convicts. Unfortunately, during the journey, out of 300 convicts, 10 died, one committed suicide, and 65 others fell ill. Upon landing, the

surviving convicts complained about the voyage to the Indian Overseer Lalla Muttra Doss. As a result, Superintendent Walker had to set up a judicial enquiry into the matter, which concluded that the convicts were treated inhumanely during their transportation journey. During his enquiry, Walker also interviewed several convicts who were on board.

One such convict was Ramnarain Singh (It is possible that perhaps some clerk translated and wrote down his words), who testified about the inconvenience on board. He said that there was no sufficient supply of drinking water on board the ship, and during his twenty-day journeys, he was allowed only four times to ease himself. Another convict named Rugooputee Raee (Raghupati Rai) also corroborated Ramnarain Singh's testimony and added that other factors were not supposed to be part of the punishment of transportation; for instance, he was denied flour ration. The doctor Sheikh Ramzan Alee (Shaikh Ramzan Ali) was on the ship and testified that the convicts were not given the ration. Ramzan Ali's colleague Deedar Alee (Deedar Ali) also claimed that the Hindus, who could not eat anything without washing their parts and their hands, were not even allowed Seawater for that purpose. Deedar Ali further claimed that one convict committed suicide because he had nothing to drink and was unable to perform his ablutions. Deedar Ali added that the convicts eased themselves where they slept or into their clothes as there were no arrangements for that purpose; if they made a mess, they were flogged.

Captain Skeene,claimed that it was not his duty to take charge of the convicts and that his duty was to prevent disturbances or excitement and punish them. After that, Walker forwarded the judicial enquiry to India, where the senior officer in the navy blamed everything on the Indian doctors (The Indian Mutiny 1857-58, 1912). Significant attention was also paid to whether the sick convicts were allowed to go on board the ships by the prison official. The superintendent and the doctor of Alipur were adamant that they had not, and both claimed that the convicts who died must have gone through fearful treatment. Indian doctor Ramzan Ali also agreed to the point and claimed that the overcrowded cabins, poor ventilation, hot weather and inferior rations triggered ill health in convicts.

Skeene claimed this matter, stating that the situation had arisen because of the bad feeling between Walker and Hurlock, as Hurlock also refused to acknowledge Walker's authority. Whatever the case, the Government of India put some blame on Hurlock (Anderson, 2007).

Table 2: Convict ships to the Andamans, 1858-60

Ship	Sailed from	Nos. embarked (arrived)	Departed/arrived
Seminaries	Calcutta	200 (n.a.)	d. 4 March 1858 a. 10 March 1858
Roman Emperor	Karachi	175 (171)	d. 27 Feb. 1858 a. 6 April 1858
Edward	Karachi	133 (130)	d. n.a. a. 13 April 1858
Dalhousie	Calcutta	163 (140)	d. 8 April. 1858 a. 16 Apr. 1858
Sesostris	Bombay(via Singapore/ Pinang)	49/83 (n.a.)	d. n.a. a. 12 June 1858
Italian	Bombay	80 (79)	d. n.a. a. 1 July 1858
Coromandel	Calcutta	n.a. (148)	d. n.a. a. 20 July 1858
Fire Queen	Calcutta	47 (47)	d. 4 Aug. 1858 a. 12 Aug. 1858
Australian	Calcutta	282 (n.a.)	d. 26 Aug. 1858 a. n.a.
Louis Henry	Bombay	138 (n.a.)	d. 23 Sept. 1858 a. n.a.
Sydney	Calcutta	318 (n.a.)	d. 14 Oct. 1858 a. n.a.
Tubal Cain	Calcutta	65 (n.a.)	d. 28 Oct. 1858 a. n.a.
Royal Bride	Madras	n.a. (24)	d. n.a. a. 8 Nov. 1858
Fire Queen	n.a.	n.a. (77)	d. n.a. a. 8 Nov. 1858
Fire Queen	n.a.	130 (129)	d. n.a. a. 15 Feb. 1859

Countess of Elgin	Karachi/Bombay	223 (220)/ 13 (13)	d. n.a. a. 7 Mar. 1859
Flying Venus	Karachi/ Bombay	112 (111)/ 14 (12)	d. n.a. a. 7 Mar. 1859
Melanie	Madras	26 (26)	d. n.a. a. 18 Mar. 1859
Fire Queen	Bengal	5 (5)	d. n.a. a. 23 Mar. 1859
Fire Queen	Bengal	n.a. (150)	d. n.a. a. 25 Apr. 1859
Tubal Cain	n.a.	214 (214)	d. n.a. a. 23 June 1859
Perikop	Karachi/ Bombay	n.a. (50/18)	d. n.a. a. 16 July 1859
Fire Queen	Bengal	150 (146)	d. n.a. a. 29 July 1859
Fire Queen	Bengal	n.a. (58)	d. n.a. a. 28 Aug. 1859
Boanerges	Bengal	300 (289)	d. n.a. a. 1 Sept. 1859
Fire Queen	n.a.	n.a. (97)	d. n.a. a. 8 Nov. 1859
Phoenix	n.a.	94 (90)	d. n.a. a. 17 Apr. 1860
Emma Colvin	Karachi	n.a. (94, inc. 7 women)	d. n.a. a. 22 Apr. 1860.
Fire Queen	Bengal	n.a. (29)	d. n.a. a. Apr. 1860

Source: Anderson, C. (2007).*The Indian uprising of 1857-8: Prisons, prisoners, and rebellion.* London, New York; Delhi: Anthem Press.

The transportation of convicts to the Andaman restarted in 1858, right after the 1857 revolt. Several convicts were transported to the amans to participate in the 1857 revolt. Those convicts included Himanohal Singh and Kura Singh, the father and Son, Bhima Naik, Garabdas Patel, Loney Singh, Liaqat Ali, Syed Alauddin and many more. Mir Jafar Ali Thaneswari, the convict of the 1857 revolt, was alone in returning to

the mainland after serving imprisonment in the Andamans. Many of the 1857 revolt mutineers remain unknown.

The convict was compelled to clear the forests of Chatham Island, Ross Island and Pheonix Bay. On 7 May 1858, the penal settlement headquarters were established at Ross Island. By October 1867, a jail was also built at Viper Island, where convicts who violated discipline were tied in iron chains. For this reason, the jail at Viper Island earned the name of Viper Chain Gang jail. The transportation to penal settlement threw prisoners into hand labour, which was observed under strict supervision and discipline. The convicts only had a small amount of food to keep them alive. The convicts were given only one Anna and nine Paisa as allowance to cover their food, clothing and other necessities; there is no doubt that the allowance was insufficient. The convicts were made to live in an unhealthy climate, which exposed them to sickness, and they lost their lives.

Apart from this, the convicts were not given any protection, and the hostile aborigines often attacked them. The British were not at all concerned about the safety of the convicts. Even when the convicts were working under the command of the Britishers, they were attacked by the Aborigines. On 5th April 1858, around 248 helpless convicts who were engaged in clearing forests, digging wells and constructing huts were attacked by 200 Aborigines. Some of the convicts died, and others were injured. Again, on 14th April, 446 convicts were attacked by 1500 aborigines who were armed with axes, knives, bows and arrows, and by the closing of 1858, around 170 convicts were killed by aborigines (Portman, 1899).

Many times, cruelties go beyond forbearance; therefore, some convicts put an end to their lives. For instance, one mutineer named Niranjan Singh, who was accused of desertion, committed suicide. It is not that it was only in the early days of penal transportation in the Andamans that the convicts committed suicide; even later, on 28 April 1912, a young convict named Indubhusan Ray committed suicide by making a rope out of his shirt and hanging himself from the skylight. The government policy of 1906 allowed only the convicts given lifetime imprisonment to be sent there. However, the government also planned to deport the

political prisoners to the Andamans so that they could not preach revolutionary ideas to the ordinary prisoners. Thus, the revolutionaries of the Manicktoa case were the first convicts to reach the cellular jails of the Andaman.

The revolutionaries were kept in very hygienic conditions, and there was no urinal or lavatory near the Bai cells, so it was tough to answer the call of nature. The prisoners had to get down on their knees to beg Jamadar for the arrangement, and Jamadar usually ignored the prisoners' requests. Apart from this, on many occasions, political prisoners were beaten and scolded for the call at such an odd house. This was undoubtedly the most challenging part of prison life in the Andamans. No wholesome food was served to the convicts. On occasions, Kerosene oil was also mixed in their food. The prisoner could not even eat his share, for he had to part his wheat chapattis with those Pathans warders, and the prisoner had to satisfy himself with the rice gruel. Apart from this, the convicts were made to sit in a row while eating, irrespective of the weather. If any convict moved to take shelter, he was abused and punished.

In such situations, even the availability of drinking water was out of the question; while working at Kohlu, the convicts were given only two cups of water. The political prisoners were kept aside from the outer world. Meetings with families were impossible, and they were only allowed to write one letter a year while too was censored. Even the use of paper, slate, or pencil was not allowed for the convicts; apart from this, the convicts were not even allowed to talk with one another. All the communication was termed illegal and was considered a violation of the Barrie principle of administration. The convicts had the opportunity to exchange a few sentences while bathing or taking meals, but if any of them were caught talking, he was punished for seven days with standing handcuffs. The convicts were not even allowed to avail themselves of medical facilities (Aggarwal, 2006).

The educated revolutionaries were also considered 'D', which meant dangerous, and a board with the letter 'D' was always hanging on their necks. Somehow, some revolutionaries who were freshly imprisoned in

the cellular jails of the Andamans found a way to send their stories to be published in the newspapers. Thus, for instance, the Bengalese of Calcutta in its 4, 8, and 20 September 1911 issues and the tribute of atrocities inflicted on the revolutionaries in cellular jails. The newspaper articles continued to publish the details of the inhuman treatment of revolutionaries, and the British government was compelled to look into the administration of the penal settlement.

Slowly, the revolutionaries in the Andamans also began to raise their voices against their tortures. The arrival of a Punjabi prisoner named Nand Gopal, who used to write a seditious article in Swarajya, gave new energy to the revolutionaries in the Andamans as Barrie began to feel helpless around Nand Gopal. Newspaper articles became a concern for the government, and the revolutionaries imprisoned in the Andamans began feeling empowered. These revolutionaries or political prisoners demanded proper food, release from hard labour and freedom to associate with each other. When the government did not comply with their demands, they went on to work strikes and hunger strikes. The strikes observed by the convicts created a disturbance in the penal settlement.

The deportation to the Andamans continued in the wake of the Ghadar movement, and twenty-seven Ghadrites were transported for life. Again, the English authorities inflicted terror upon the revolutionaries. Ram Rakha, a Punjabi Brahmin convicted in the second Mandlay conspiracy case, reached the cellular jail in 1917. Who died within two months due to a continuous hunger strike. A letter detailing the miserable lives of the political convicts was published in the Modern Review of Calcutta in June 1918. It enraged the public, and the British government had to take remedial steps. On 23 September 1922, Sir William Vincent also introduced the Abolition of the Transportation Bill in the Legislative Assembly. He stated that the government wanted to abolish transportation and abandon the Andamans as a penal settlement (Majumdar, 1975).

Still, after the announcement of the abolition of transportation to the Andamans, the British government continued transporting the convicts to the Andamans. The Jail authorities continued to torture

revolutionaries. Flogging was the worst kind of punishment in which convicts were stripped naked and tied to the flogging frame. On 24 July 1937, 183 revolutionaries went on a hunger strike. The news of the hunger strike spread like wildfire, and in Bengal, a massive demonstration took place for the repatriation of political prisoners. Even the political prisoners in Alipore Behrampore, Deoli and other jails also went on hunger strike and demanded redressal of the grievances of the political prisoners within 24 hours. Finally, in Mahatma Gandhi's intervention, the convicts in the Andamans suspended the hunger strike. Immediately after that, the British government embarked on the repatriation scheme, and by 18th January 1938., the last batch left the Andamans. On 11 February 1979, the jail was declared a National Memorial, and it was dedicated to the nation by then Prime Minister Morarji Desai in the presence of the ex-Andaman political prisoners (Balakrishnan, 2017).

Robben island

Robben Island is an island in Table Bay, located near Cape Town, and is almost 6.9 km west of the coast of Bloubergstrand. From the 17th century onwards, the VOC used Robben Island as a place of Banishment. The Dutch were the first to use Robben Island as a prison. The very early political prisoners in Robben were from Indonesia, and the leaders of the Meermin slave mutiny in 1776 were also imprisoned there. After 1806, under British rule, the Island was again used as a prison for soldiers who were sentenced either for transportation or Banishment. Apart from them, the convicts who were considered dangerous, including political prisoners from the frontiers of the growing colony, were also imprisoned there.

The stigma around Robben Island

Robben Island was called hell, purgatory or rural Eden by various groups at different times, and due to it, Robben Island stands as a powerful element within the symbolic geography of South Africa. As Oliver Tambo commented in 1980, "The tragedy of Africa, in racial and political terms, [has been] concentrated in the southern tip of the continent in South Africa, Namibia, and, in a special sense, Robben

Island." The stigma around this Island has grown because it is isolated, and the authorities have restricted information about it for a long time. The representation of Robben Island as the 'hell-hole' of Table Bay, South Africa's Alcatraz, an impregnable place of Banishment for those who have opposed the status quo, has long been dominant. However, within South Africa's independence framework, Robben Island now symbolizes the spirit of resistance against colonialism, injustice and oppression (Jacobs, 1992). The solid political symbolism of the Island has encouraged the historical emphasis that prevails today on the role of the Island as a prison.

Robben Island represents a place where the Pretoria government banished what was unwanted. The Island was seen as a place for misfits of society; for example, those who were quarantine cases, leapers and lunatics and others were transported to Robben Island by the colonial authorities. Stallybrass and White examined Robben Island and found a symbolic hierarchy ranging from 'high' to 'low' in four interrelated and interdependent domains: psychic forms, the human body, geographical space and the social order (Stallybrass & White, 1986). They used this theory to explain how the nineteenth-century environmentalists connected slums to sewerage, sewerage to disease, and disease to moral degradation. The city's classification of dirt and cleanliness was also a division between savage and civilized. It is with the 'low' 'domains' including political opposition, insanity, criminality, dirt, disease, and the poorer classes, the very bottom of Africa that Robben Island has most frequently been associated with Banishment to the Island invokes the idea of a symbolic cleansing of the Southern African subcontinent for the dominant classes.

One important thing to remember is that the political prisoners who were transported to Robben Island to curb their activities had tried to make the most out of their miseries; for instance, in the eighteenth century, a Muslim leader who was transported to Robben Island transcribed a crucial legal text which he was later to use to encourage the development of an Islamic underclass subculture of resistance in Cape Town. Apart from this, the political and criminal prisoners in the early nineteenth century tried for a mass escape, lepers resisted to

improve the conditions under which they were detained on the Island, and political prisoners in the period after 1962 actively learned to transcend the boundaries of their various political affiliations from each other. The political prisoners even made it into a 'university'.

The two famous stigmas surrounded Robben Island; one claimed it was hell, and the second claimed Eden. Professor Malvern Van Wyk Smith traced this myth in European literature, which goes back to the time of Aristotle's Meteorologica. It maintained that there was a temperate and habitable region beyond the Sahara and Equator. An idea coupled with this belief was that somewhere on a mountain beyond the deserts of Africa, there is a Southern terrestrial paradise. This location was even depicted on some maps of the 15th century. Again, Dante invoked this tradition and claimed that the terrestrial paradise existed on the summit of the island purgatory in the far south. After the Portuguese explorers returned with the news of the Cape of Good Hope, the writers began to identify the top of Table Mountain with paradise. There could be no Paradise without Purgatory; no Cape of Good Hope without a Cape of Storms. Purgatory was Robben Island.

Robben Island was also termed a rural Eden, far from the polluting effects of human settlement. Islands were particularly recommended for health benefits (Discover the Rich History of Robben Island, 2018). A 'change of air' was often prescribed as a cure for chronic disease, and it was believed that the 'Lepers' could benefit from sea-bathing, which would improve their skin condition. Thus, the site of Robben Island was considered ideal for a hospital because it was both secure (isolating dangerous cases) and healthy (providing a suitable environment for cure).

The convicts were transported to Robben Island, famous as a place of exile and used chiefly for transporting anti-colonial convicts. In 1818, Makhanda, a tribal hero, fought against a chief, Ngqika, who used to sell out his people to the ally British for his gains. Makhanda even urged to drive the British forces out of Xhosland; when the British captured their 23,000 head of cattle, defeated by superior British weaponry, Makhanda was imprisoned on Robben Island. On 25

December 1820, Makhanda, along with 30 political convicts, escaped, but some of them, including Makhanda, were drowned in Table Bay.

In some cases, there is also evidence that the Island was also used to quarantine the victims of diseases such as measles or smallpox; for instance, in 1802, burgher Matthys Marrien's son was detained in Robben Island under suspicion of having smallpox. Again, in 1820, a Cape Town resident asked to stay on the Island as part of health care. Scarcely distinguishable from the prisoners in terms of institutional provision were the sick or insane inmates. They were not criminals but were instead considered as a threat to the public. In 1815, several "Hottentots, primarily women with venereal disease, were sentenced to Robben Island. Robben Island was used to hold Cape convicts before their transportation to Australian colonies. Transportation to Australia ended in 1837, and it was decided that the Cape convicts would be transported to Robben Island. The British government used Robben Island to strengthen their authority over its colonies by transporting black leaders and separating them from their people. Leaders from the frontier regions were transported to Robben Island to weaken their revolt.

The female convicts were also there. Pamela, a Cape-born enslaved person charged with theft, was sentenced to Robben Island in 1809. In the late 1820s and early 1830s, women comprised a maximum of 10 per cent of the Island's convict population. All women prisoners were removed to the House of Correction in Cape Town in 1835. Convict labour was also used to build roads and other projects of a public nature. The prisoners worked hard during the day, quarrying, sawing and polishing stones. Those who misbehaved were forced to carry crowbars during their rest periods, were shackled in heavy irons, subjected to corporal punishment or put in solitary confinement on a rice-and-water diet. The other prisoners were fed meat, bread and rice (Deacon, 2002).

One important thing after the 1830s was that the colonial government began to view imprisonment as a punishment. Earlier, in Europe, prisons were perceived as a place to accommodate criminals, and imprisonment was not a dominant mode of punishment. At that time, the methods of punishment included public flogging, branding,

chopping of body parts, execution, etc.; it was only after the philosophies of the Enlightenment that focus was given to more humane punishments. Apart from this, it was also believed that harsh physical punishments could damage the bodies of criminals forever, preventing them from working. In 1828, a commission of inquiry was appointed to advise the British government on various matters, and it was suggested that fines and imprisonment should be imposed for minor offences in the Cape Colony. However, flogging was still used to employ people as labour. Apart from this, the colonial authorities also believed that the Blacks responded less well to the reformative effects of imprisonment than to physical punishments.

In the 1840s, John Montagu reorganized the Cape prison system and used convict labour for public works. Montagu emphasized the importance of reforming individual criminals, who would form part of a well-controlled free workforce. Montagu believed that Robben Island should be considered a special place within the new system where only particularly hardened criminals could be sent to work until they showed signs of reform. It was also suggested that the reforms should be encouraged using minor punishments and rewards. However, in 1846, to employ more labour in the mainland construction, Robben was temporarily closed as a prison site, only to reopen in 1855. The critical feature of the hard manual labour of the convicts in the South African penal colony was that the convicts were employed outside the prison walls. Their free labour was used to construct roads and other works of commercial expansion. The prison regulations of 1844 tightened up the control of the prisoners. They were not allowed either to consume tobacco or to snuff. The convicts were only allowed to receive or send away the letter with the permission of the Commandant.

Despite the dominant emphasis on punishment, there was increasing interest in reforming the criminal through religion. The government paid for Bibles and prayerbooks to be issued to the prisoners, although they did not allow them to buy any additional books. By the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, many of the activities on Robben Island had been scaled down. Once the final phase of hostilities in Asia was over in August, the Island's future had again to be determined. There

was speculation about the prospects awaiting a well-equipped 'boom town' and its facilities. General Smuts replied on 16 April 1947 that the Island was to be the headquarters of the coastal artillery. The Island had already been launched into the next chapter of its life (Buntman, 2003).

Robben Island was also famous during the apartheid period when it was introduced by the Nationalist government in 1948. The Island was an important area where resistance against oppression and struggles against apartheid were both continued and extended. The story of Robben Island as a political prison again began in 1962. This was when the first political prisoners, overwhelmingly (if not exclusively) Poqo and PAC supporters, joined the non-political prisoners already on the Island. Neville Alexander, who was on the Island from 1964 to 1974, argues that because Robben Island acquired a 'peculiar status', state policy sought to heighten racial prejudice and abuse of prisoners (De Villiers, 1971). Apart from the deliberate racism in prison, convicts of criminal and non-political backgrounds were encouraged to terrorize the political prisoners. Moses Dlamini suggests that criminals were an essential part of the terror of the early years. They were members of vicious and notorious gangs, who were 'hand-picked by the enemy from the most notorious maximum [security] prisons of South Africa to come and demoralize and humiliate us with the assistance of the uncouth, uncivilized, raw Boer warders so that we would never again dare to challenge the system of apartheid colonialism' (Deacon,2002).

Political prisoners in Robben Island were employed on harsh labour in quarries. In Robben Island, a notorious place was the query in Barberton, where political convicts categorized as group 'D' worked in cages. An unfortunate incident was reported when, on 29 December 1982, due to heat prostration, several convicts died in a quarry. The harsh conditions triggered a mass hunger strike. Thus, brutality slowly decreased, and some provisions were given. Now, the prisoners were improved food, and they could organize cultural, academic and political activities. Even after independence, Robben Island was used by the South African government to imprison political prisoners. With the apartheid, Robben Island became a tourist spot, and in 1999, it was declared a World Heritage site as it had an essential role in the political

history of South Africa. Robben Island has played an important part in the history of South Africa at political, practical and symbolic levels. It serves as a reminder of oppression's atrocities and the liberation struggle's heroes. The Island is linked to the stories of the first sailor prisoners, Khoi leader Autshumato, Muslim exiles, Xhosa leaders Nxele and Maqoma, the General Infirmary's "lepers" and "crazies," Second World War soldiers and navy personnel, less well-known political prisoners of the post-1961 era, and prison and hospital staff who have lived on the Island at different times. Throughout South Africa's history, the Island has served as a storehouse, hospital, fishing outpost, military garrison, and prison. The history of Robben Island serves as an offshore echo of significant events on the mainland.

Conclusion

In the reconstruction of India and South Africa, Andamans and Robben Island, we played an essential part at the political, practical, and symbolic levels. These islands serve as a reminder of oppression's atrocities and the warriors who fought for freedom. We need to learn more about the Island's stories to grasp better the various roles the Island has played throughout history. The interconnected histories of Robben Island, the Andaman Islands, and the convicts transported between them demonstrate the global dimensions of colonial oppression and resistance. Robben Island stands as a symbol of South Africa's struggle against colonial legacy, while the Andaman Islands represent a site of resistance to British imperialism. The transfer of political prisoners from the Andamans to Robben Island also demonstrates the interconnectedness of colonial penal systems and the transnational nature of anti-colonial struggle. Despite the geographical and cultural differences between these locations, the experiences of convicts on both islands reflect a shared legacy of brutality and resilience in the face of injustice.

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