

## **A Study on the Historical Monuments of Andaman & Nicobar Islands**

by **Dulal Ch. Mazumder**, *Resource Person,*

*Department of History,*

*JNR Mahavidyalaya, Port Blair - 744104*

**&**

**C. Hamza**, *Guest Lecturer,*

*Department of Historical Studies,*

*JNR Mahavidyalaya, Port Blair - 744104*

### **Introduction :**

Monuments of Andaman and Nicobar have a great historical value and play as a major tourist attraction from all over the world. All the major monuments of Andaman and Nicobar Island stand as historical wonders, revealing Indian freedom fighting history. The sight of history can still be heard, the warmth of history can still be felt in each corner of the monuments of Andaman and Nicobar Island. Apart from their historical relevance the monument of the colonial era in the Andaman and Nicobar Island also embody their rich culture. Andaman and Nicobar Islands have several monuments that reflect the struggle, art, brutality, and existence of the British invasion. The chief monuments of Andaman and Nicobar are Cellular Jail, Viper Chain Gang Jail and Chatham Saw Mill.

### **Cellular Jail :**

The Cellular Jail , especially recognized as the ‘Kala Pani’, was started in 1896 and the construction was completed in 1906. It has seven wings and in the

centre there is a tower. This tower was used by the guards to maintain a watch on the prisoners. There is also a bell on the tower which worked as an alarm. The Cellular Jail, also known as 'Kala Pani' is an old colonial prison situated in Port Blair, the capital of Andaman and Nicobar islands. Constructed by the Britishers during their colonial rule in India, Cellular Jail was used particularly to exile political prisoners where they were subjected to many atrocities at the hands of the British. The construction of the jail began in the year 1896 and was completed in 1906, after which it was used to house many notable freedom fighters such as Batukeshwar Dutt, Yogendra Shukla and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. The jail complex is now owned by the Government of India and it is recognised as the national memorial monument showing the life of prisoners during the British period.

#### **Viper Island (Viper Jail) :**

The Viper Chain Gang Jail is situated in the small Viper Island in the district of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Viper Chain Gang Jail at Andaman and Nicobar Islands bears evidence of the suffering of the freedom fighters during the Indian war for independence. The Viper Chain Gang Jail in Andaman and Nicobar Islands was founded by the British. Viper Island derives its name from the vessel *H.M.S. Viper* in which Lt. Archibald Blair came to Andaman and Nicobar Islands in 1789. The jail was abandoned when the Cellular Jail was constructed in 1906. In any talk about Andaman and its role in the freedom struggle, it is the Cellular Jail that finds frequent mention. But, many years before the Cellular Jail was constructed, it was the jail at Viper Island that was used by the British to inflict the worst form of torture and hardship on those who strove to free the country from the British rule.

#### **Chatham Saw Mill :**

The Chatham Saw Mill is situated in Chatham Island of Andaman and Nicobar Islands in India. It was set up in 1883 with the primary objective to meet the local requirements of saw and timber for the constructional works. It is Asia's largest and oldest saw mill, owned by the state government. It is one of the oldest and the largest saw mills in Asia. It was established in 1883 to meet the local requirements of sawn timber for construction works. The mill has witnessed a rich history and was damaged by a Japanese bomb that fell here when they were trying to invade the area. Today, the mill is managed by the State Government.

As one nears the mill, one can see large wooden logs piled across the region. The mill also has a museum that exhibits wooden crafts made by skilful artisans. There are displays of some flora and fauna inside the museum as well.

#### **Balidan Bedi (Humfrey Gunj) :**

During the World War II, a major number of Britons left the Andaman and Nicobar islands, and that's when Japanese took over. And with this many unarmed Indian Penal Settlers / Islanders came under their control. When Andaman was under the control of the Japan, British tried to take back the island by landing their spies who even caused so much damage to the Japanese. Due to which, Japanese started torturing the locals, and many islanders were even shot dead. On 30th January, Japan military took away 44 IIL members from the Cellular Jail to a hillock in Humfrey Gunj. Shot them dead, and buried in an "L" shaped mass grave. To commemorate the sacrifice of these martyrs, Balidan Vedi was erected. Currently, the place has a long memorial with the names of all the 44 IIL members who were killed by the Japanese.

#### **Aberdeen Clock Tower :**

Aberdeen Clock tower is located in the centre of a busy marketplace in Port Blair. It was built in the memory of Indian and British soldiers, who defended the islands during World War I. It is a very simple, bright yellow, obelisk shaped clock tower. People normally use this as a good meeting point. All the 4 clocks on the tower show different times.

#### **Ross Island :**

Ross Island Penal Colony was a convict settlement that was established in 1858 in the remote Andaman Islands by the British colonial government in India. British colonial government in India, primarily to jail a large number of prisoners from the Indian Rebellion of 1857, also known as the Indian Mutiny. With the establishment of the penal colony at Ross Island, the British administration made it the administrative headquarters for the entire group of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and built bungalows and other facilities on the site. This colony was meant as "manageable models of colonial governance and rehabilitation". The Chief Commissioner's residence was located at the highest point on the island. Over time, several other islands including Chatham and Viper were used for the penal

colony. The administrative buildings were destroyed but the penal colony remained. After the Allied forces reoccupied the island the penal colony was disbanded on 7 October 1945.

**Conclusion :**

A monument is a type of structure that was explicitly created to commemorate a person or event, or which has become relevant to a social group as a part of their remembrance of historic times or cultural heritage, due to its artistic, historical, political, technical or architectural importance. The Andaman Islands have been inhabited for several thousand years, at the very least. Now a days in Andaman the only best tourist destination are the monuments, thousands of Mainland India people are visiting on day basis it has its own importance.

**References :**

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/>
- Judith Dupre : *Monuments: America's History in Art and Memory* (2007), Random House, ISBN 978-1-4000-6582-0
- [https://www.indianetzone.com/38/monuments\\_andaman\\_nicobar\\_island.htm](https://www.indianetzone.com/38/monuments_andaman_nicobar_island.htm)