

**ADMINISTRATION OF JAILS IN MYANMAR
IN THE COLONIAL PERIOD**

Ph.D. (DISSERTATION)

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JANURAY 2009

ABSTRACT

In the colonial period, the British established jails primarily to incarcerate the anti-British Myanmar patriots who resisted them. They were termed 'rebels' and suppression by the authorities was ruthless. Those who were not summarily executed were thrown into jail. It was only in the aftermath of pacification that the jails became places of detention for those who disturbed the peace and perpetrated crimes against the person and property of the citizens. Since then the penal system of the British came to be an instrument for maintenance of public order and safety. From being places of torture and torment jails were considered to be detention centres for law breakers, while committed for a certain length of time, to enable them to repent for their misdeeds. With the change in the concept of regarding jails as correctional institutes instead of places for retribution, the life of prisoners improved to a large extent. Respect for human dignity was the mainstay and rules and regulations to be followed by jail officials were promulgated to treat the prisoners humanely. Medical care for the prisoners was emphasized. Prisoners were assigned work according to their physical capacity, inoculation and vaccinations as preventive measures were given regularly, body weight was taken and if any one found to be losing weight, was provided with extra diet and permitted to have midday rest. Balanced food was prepared for nourishment although prisoners found them to be unwholesome. Classification A, B and C classes was aimed at preserving the dignity of prisoners in commensurate with their social stature in the outside world. One salutary feature of the colonial penal system was to prepare the inmates for their future livelihood. Vocational training in various trades and crafts were given. Religious sermons were conducted for all denominations which helped a long way towards character and moral reform and enabled them to feel remorse

for their past misdeeds. Remission of sentences for discipline and exemplary conduct and family visits also catered for good behavior of prisoners who longed to be free and be reunited with their loved ones. Nowadays, in order to remove the stigma of olden days, jails are renamed “correctional institutes” in many countries of the world.

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