CHAPTER – 01
HISTORICAL AND EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF PRISONS
1.1 Prisons in the Days of Yore;

From the beginning of early civilized communities, wrong doers were punished accordingly or kept imprisoned. History reveals the early forms of prisons that evolved for many years, imposing heavy torment and fear and repentance. The early dungeons with darkness and rusty smell, immense suffering gradually converted to the cells on the land. Then these gloomy rooms were converted into spacious cells but the priority was given to the punishment.

For about 6000 years since the first early communities, the 'mood and temper of the public' has been one of callous indifference to the treatment and sufferings of its criminals. It is a terrible reflection upon succeeding civilizations that humane methods of dealing with criminals were not attempted until the 18th and 19th centuries A.D. The complex problems involved in the treatment and imprisonment of offenders are still very far from being even fully understood, let alone solved. According to the united nations social defence research institutes publication (Prison architecture), 'prisons, as places of punishment, were uncommon in the ancient world. They were used rather, as places of detention for those awaiting trial and sentence, and for debtors and political offenders. Not until the 18th and 19th centuries A.D. did they become places for the punishment of criminals, although some counties, notably England used a form of prison for this purpose somewhat earlier.'

In 17th century B.C. Greece prisons were merely large rooms or underground chambers for the detention of prisoners awaiting trial or
punishment, but Plato was to speak of prisons two centuries earlier in De Legibus in which he anticipated the modern correctional system by many hundreds of years .......

"Let there be three prisons in the city, one for the safe keeping of persons awaiting trial and sentence: another for the amendment of disorderly persons and vagrants, those guilty of misdemeanours, to be called a sophronesterion (house of correction), ... a third to be situated in the country away from the habitations of man, and to be used for the punishment of felons."

Jerusalem in the 6th century B.C. had 3 institutions.

Beth – ha – keli (house of detention)
Beth – ha – asourin (House of those in chains)
Beth – ha – mahphecheth (House of those with chained hands and feet)

Many of the early prisons are believed to have been underground cisterns with access through gratings, covering the top. According to the book ‘Prison architecture’, it reveals the early form of a Roman prison, Mametrin, prison. “It consists of an upper rectangular room, lit by a hole in the roof, with a dome like dungeon, below. The prisoner was confined to the upper room unless condemned to death, when he would be thrown into the lower dungeon to starve or be strangled. Not all historians, however agree with this version of the Mamertin Prison”. This denotes the brutality version of the early prison environments.
In medieval prisons the usual places of detention were the castle keeps or dungeons. Europe has many such castle prisons and their numbers increased during the 15th and 16th centuries. All of them were notorious for the ghastly cells, dungeons and oubliettes in which thousands of prisoners were tortured and killed or left to die in misery. Their names carry on aura of evil. Bastille is famous for the torturing cells. Maximum security and brutal treatments were the only effective measures known. If a man (or woman, or even a child) were not thrown in to prison for some real or imaginary offence he was executed or whipped, banded and maimed, put in the stocks or pillory (a cheap form of prison) or tortured and killed in some other barbarous way.

Bridewell institutions began in England to provide employment for beggars and vagrants. Correctional treatments were made here in poor conditions. In 1557 the first institution was opened. They consisted of congregate rooms and large open dormitories and were in work houses or houses of correction rather than prisons.
This concept has developed in the rasp house of Amsterdam. It was provided with a central court yard and the prisoners can gather in that whenever they released. In this institution there were nine rooms, serving as both, bedrooms and workrooms, housing from 4 to 12 prisoners each. Most of the rooms were about 5.2 m x 3.2 m with a larger one 8.5 m x 5.0 m x 2.4 m high. Each room had timber or cement floors, boadered walls and a 'secret' or toilet bucket. The rooms were entered off the courtyard through heavy double doors; windows also opening on to the court, were unglazed and protected by iron grills. No provisions was made for heating the rooms in winter.

Then afterwards in 1650 the first cellular prison built in Rome. The prison buildings in the 17th and 18th centuries were usually two or three storey structures arranged in rather haphazard way to enclose one or more courts. Conditions in the French prisons were, if possible, worse and stories of intense suffering show with what courage prisoners withstood the terrible loneliness and despair engendered by years of solitary confinement in wet, rat infested cells and oubliettes. Hundreds of other prisoners were herded together in overcrowded rooms and suffered the mental anguish of seeing husbands, wives and children taken from them to execution or torture. Then afterwards each prisoner was poisoned in a singular cell.
1.2. The Emergence of a New Era

The year 1778 marks the beginning of the modern English prison system. From this onwards the prison system became complexed. For the first time, segregation of men and women were done. This system stressed the need for moral and religious instruction. The separation and classification of prisoners is believed essential for rehabilitation and reform.

As the next step self enclosed prisons came into being. The whole institution is planned to have a central area. The book "prison
architecture" reveals that there have been three main overlapping epochs in the history of prisons in the western world. The first one was one of 'revenge' and 'repression'; it lasted many centuries and was characterized by private dungeons and personal spite. The second was brought about by religion but society still demanded retribution. The third, and much more recent, offered 'restitution' and 'rehabilitation', in an effort to protect society and reform the offenders; with the socio-cultural changes after the world war II the prisons of western countries became filled with youths. Then the 'rehabilitation' of prisoners aroused as a good concept. This brought more humanitarian approach reducing the cruel, sophisticated nature of the prisons. This idea began to affect the spatial organization of modern prisons bringing them institutional orientation.

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number of prisoners so high in many countries that it became necessary to open makeshift institutions and the only ones that could be had at short notice were open institutions. The prison authorities soon found them more interesting than the closed institutions. Step by step interest has come to concentrate on treatment programmes for the rehabilitation of offenders.

1.3 The Antecedents Of The Modern Prison

It can be argued that little of direct value is to be learned by a close study of traditional prison design. The design of a prison, as of any other building, stems from the purposes for which it is built, and so much has changed in both penal philosophy and penal practice as to invalidate the physical pattern of the past. And yet, in spite of vast social transformations, there are many indirect lessons to be gained by examining the development of prison architecture in relation to the penal ideology of successive generations. Let us forget for the
moment that these historic buildings are still in use, painfully
circumscribing the efforts of today's penal reformers, and let us
examine in a little detail some of the monuments of past thinking about
prison design.

We may soon dismiss the design of the early prisons. In the days
when there was no systematic policy of imprisonment for convicted
offenders and no systematic theory about the function of
imprisonment, there was also no recognizable agreement on prison
design. A great variety of buildings quite unsuitable for habitation were
used; many were in the cellars under other public buildings,
presumably because this position was easy to secure against escapes
and because the space was little valued for other uses. Into such
prisons were placed all persons whom society wished to be rid of –
felons, debtors, petty offenders and sometimes the insane, with little
attempt to separate them by sex or age or by any other criterion,
except perhaps by the capacity to pay for preferential treatment. No
regard was paid to sanitary or moral welfare. There was no separation
whatsoever, and the herding of men and women together into
dayrooms made promiscuity in evitable.

The earliest corrective establishments, such as the bridewells in
England and the "rasp-houses" in the Netherlands, however notable in
the history of penal reform, contributed little to the development of
prison architecture, being either remodelled, older buildings or
orthodox institutional buildings, with minor modifications. Indeed, little
fresh thinking on design appears to have taken place until the
beginning of the eighteenth century.
The prison was becoming a specialized institution. In the case of San Michele, the intake was confined to delinquent and incorrigible youths under the age of twenty. Treatment was selected according to the type of case. Finally, the buildings themselves began to take on a functional character. The block at San Michele is recognized as the prototype of the cell block design incorporating external cell windows, which is still being used in many places today.

In terms of designing prisons, penal reform was at this period linked with the adoption of the cellular plan. Only thus could some discipline and sobriety be installed into the undifferentiated rabble that filled the prisons.

Physically, the plan adopted for the Maison de Force was a gigantic cart-wheel, with one octagonal courtyard in the centre surrounded by eight triangular courts, each of which was reserved for one group of inmates. Along the sides of each courtyard there were arcaded buildings for housing prisoners, consisting of workshops on the ground floor and three rooms above. The proportion of separate cells varied with each court according to its function; in the court for men criminals, separate cells were the rule. In contrast with the plan at San Michele, the cells were placed back to back, so that the only light into the cell came through a lattice window in the door itself. Between the wall and the courtyard was an open arcade, along which the prisoners paraded on the way to dining-rooms, chapel and workshop. The gallery above must have made the cells extremely dark.
The ground floor and above that a great hall surrounded by three tiers of cells, 120 cells in all. As this block was open on both sides, it was possible as at San Michele, for the cells to have outside windows. In fact each cell had one window 3 ft. by 2 ft. – quite large for the date – in the outside wall and a smaller window facing the great hall. Here, as at San Michele, there was an altar at one end of the great hall so that a service could be conducted more or less within view of inmates while they were in their cells.

Before passing on to the main stream of development, which after the late eighteenth century was for a long time concentrated in America, we may turn aside to look at one eccentric if ingenious prison design, proposed by the eminent English social philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. The plan was dominated by the idea that it would be efficient and economical if all cells could be visible from a single vantage point. Bentham’s Panopticon (“observe everything”) plan, which he evolved was conceived as a great circular domed building with a warders’
viewpoint at the centre. Beyond the cells were exercise yards of varying size to that the building could be contained in a square. The whole was to be covered by a glass roof. Bentham had enormous faith that he had hit upon a plan which would solve the whole problem of imprisonment. "Morals reformed, health preserved, industry invigorated, instruction diffused, public burdens lightened, economy seated, as it were.

![Bentham's Panopticon design, 1791](image)

It seems obvious that this kind of plan is hopelessly inflexible, being dominated by the desire to supervise all cells from one point. Bentham's building was relatively small, but it is extraordinary that this plan has found its advocates in many countries and has been followed in.

There came the most grandiose example of all time. This was the Stateville Prison of the State of Illinois, United States of America, built by prison labour at an immense cost between 1916 and 1925. The plan called for eight vast blocks, each consisting of cells on four floors, facing inwards towards a raised observation tower, and each block covered by a partly glazed domed roof on lattice girders.
We are now free to return to the more interesting debate on prison design and penal policy which raged in the United States for many years. The protagonists were the supporters of the so-called Pennsylvania system and the supporters of the so-called Auburn system.

The Auburn method uses the inside-cell layout, with rows of cells placed back to back to form a spine along the centre of the building, and approached by narrow corridors; a wide unbridged gap separates this corridor from the outside wall. In this plan the only light and air to reach the cell have to pass through the heavily barred windows on the external walls, across the gap and the corridor and through the front of the cell. For this reason it is clear that the front of each cell has to be
as unobstructed as possible, and this leads to the zoo-cage bars are a characteristic of the Auburn-type plan. The individual Auburn cells were extremely small, insufficient even for occupancy at night and totally inadequate for occupancy during the day, a purpose for which they had never been intended.

In plan, Cherry Hill consisted of seven wings radiating from a central rotunda with an observatory tower. Four of the wings were one floor high and the other three were two floors high. Each wing was planned with central corridors giving access to cells. Beyond each cell was a small exercise yard surrounded by a high wall. There were 400 cells in all. Steps were taken to enforce solitary confinement and prevent any possibility of prisoners conversing with each other. In the first plans
there was no door from corridor to cell, but only a peep-hole and a feeding drawer. The prisoner was to live and work in his cell, with one hour in the individual exercise yard, and adjacent prisoners were not to be allowed to use their exercise yards at the same time. Guards in the central tower were to prevent any intercommunication. There were to be no congregate activities.

After the mid-nineteenth century, and indeed until very recently, little fresh thought went into prison design. Not only was there a great slowing down of the rate of prison building – in England, for example, only one prison was built in the eighty years before 1958 - but such penal institutions as were built were until quite recently designed on the pattern of the old types. Even the adoption of new penological ideas aimed at hastening rehabilitation have not been matched by the provision of a suitable physical environment, properly equipped for the new programme. Today’s prison still incorporate the philosophies of yesterday. It is commonly held that the physical reform of prisons has lagged seriously behind the modern forms of penal treatment. In the opinion of Barnes & Teeters,

“If it is to have any prospect of success in practice, an enlightened program for treating convicted delinquents must have an appropriate and fitting physical setting ..... It is generally agreed by enlightened students of the problem that most of the rehabilitative programs worked out over the last two or three generations have failed to live up to the expectations of their sponsors. No single item has played a greater part in this failure than the fact that the physical setting of convict life has almost everywhere been in conflict with the ideals underlying the reform programs”.

Barnes & Teeters,
The present issue of the International Review of Criminal Policy reflects a widespread and rather sudden revival of interest in the design of penal institutions. It comes at a time when the development of penological thinking has rendered obsolete most of the old visual conceptions of the prison. The solid qualities of a fortress designed to hold a thousand or more inmates, surrounded by a symbolically unscalable wall, are immediately felt to be almost entirely inappropriate to modern ideas, even before analysis shows that they are also inappropriate to modern practices.

The next element which has always prohibited flexibility in prison design is the necessity of building high surrounding walls. It is therefore of direct importance if the anxieties that still provoke the building of immense high walls can be relieved by modern technology (such as the use of the television devices now being adopted) or by a more realistic appraisal of the risks attached to escapes.

We thus arrive at a "normal" long-stay institution, which is built on an open site and can therefore use a free plan, instead of a tightly packed arrangement such as is found in older prisons and is still followed in modern prisons built along traditional lines. With freedom to subdivide, there is scope for building units which are more or less self-contained, making the essential provision for small, carefully selected groupings of prisoners who will spend the greater part of their time together as a unit.

There are a number of indications of rapid development towards more appropriate design. This can be seen, for example, by comparing the plans of two new British prisons. Everthorpe Hall, completed in 1958, is certainly less grim than its nineteenth century forerunners, but the
cell-blocks are essentially traditional, with their extravagant central well extending from ground to vaulted roof and their rows of cells approachable by balcony. Only the architectural design has been adapted to modern tastes and the scale of the block has been reduced. On the other hand, Blundeston, which is due for completion at the end of 1962, shows a transformed approach to cell block design: Here there are four virtually free-standing T-shaped blocks encircling the administration and communal block. The design of the individual cell blocks is even more encouraging. Here there is no longer a light well, and the T-plan has also eliminated the long corridors. Moreover, for the first time for centuries in a newly built British secure prison, some of the accommodation is in the form of dormitories, so arranged that each dormitory, together with its sanitary accommodation, can be sealed off as required. Each block contains three upper floors of sleeping accommodation, together providing space for seventy-five inmates.
This arrangement is such a substantial advance on Everthorpe Hall that it may seem captious to criticize it. It will be appreciated, however, that there is still scope for further progress. Although the folly of the high wall has been rejected at Blundeston, the compact layout indicates an institutional rather than a domestic scale.
The communal rooms, moreover, are grouped on the ground floor of the cell blocks and in the central blocks, so that, even though there are four separate dining rooms, the individual cell-block floors have no meal or day space. Class-rooms for the whole prison are grouped, and the workshops provided are large sheds set aside from the buildings, as can be seen from the model referred to above.

Attention can also be paid to the surfacing and embellishment of the buildings. With quite a small outlay on furniture and furnishings, a bare, barn-like atmosphere can be transformed. Most people would agree that it would be better to employ this labour in splashing fresh paint onto plain walls rather than in the endless polishing of unrewarding surfaces. The new approach, still only imperfectly formulated, implies rejection of the old faith in solitary repentance and substitutes the idea of integration in a socially approved group.

In terms of prison design, the implication of this new direction of penal thought is that the unit on which design should be based is no longer
the individual prisoner in his solitary cell, but rather the small group of perhaps twelve prisoners under the tutelage of one group officer. The physical provision for this group is likely to consist partly of dormitories and partly of cells, with a simple common room and full sanitary accommodation. All measures would be aimed at increasing rather than restricting group activities. The group officer would be omnipresent, but ideally he would be there as a counsellor and friend and not as an ascribed leader.

It may be felt that the impression of informality conveyed by scattered one-storey buildings may assist the task of rehabilitation, but it may also be that this style is an aesthetic reaction against the fortress architecture of traditional prisons. Examples given in the previous section indicate some of the ways in which progressive thought is moving. Whatever the precise layout adopted, it is to be expected that the typical buildings will be smaller and less substantial than those to which we are accustomed.

During the nineteenth century, erected massive buildings symbolizes the majesty of the law. It seems right, therefore, to regard the present period as one for experimentation, in which a bold variety of designs and conceptions will be tried out, and their successes and failures painstakingly observed. It is only in this way that the new prisons can make their full contribution to the struggle against crime.

In spite of its high moral principles, the Pennsylvania system was almost unbearably onerous from the start.
Charles Dickens, felt that the psychological and sociological assumptions behind the solitary regime were fallacious and that solitude was more likely to lead to insanity than to penitence or reformation.