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## OPEN INSTITUTIONS

THE SAMPURNANAND CAMP IN UTTAR PRADESH  
(INDIA)

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Superintendent of the Juvenile and Central Jail  
at Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh



UNITED NATIONS

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In accordance with the tradition of past Congresses, it has been possible to secure the co-operation of certain national prison administrations for the printing of documentation for the First United Nations Congress on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders, which is from an historical point of view the Thirteenth International Penal and Penitentiary Congress. Thus the present report has been generously printed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons of the United States of America, in the prison printing plant at Leavenworth, Kansas.

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When independence was achieved in 1947 a series of valuable experiments were launched in Uttar Pradesh in the field of penology, particularly with respect to detention in comparative freedom. Fatehgarh Central Prison undertook such an experiment involving a group of 24 selected prisoners in order to explore the possibilities of establishing a "self-supporting jail". As this proved successful, another experiment was started in 1950 in the Model Prison, Lucknow, designed to develop a self-sufficient colony, in an environment and under conditions as similar as possible to that of the outside world, where approximately a hundred long-term prisoners have obtained the privilege of living, working and moving outside the prison gates by day and night unescorted and with no other restrictions than a moral obligation to comply with the rules governing the conduct of the community in general.

Scientific penology in Uttar Pradesh received a further impetus when Dr. Sampurnanand became the head of the Jail Department and, disregarding the age-old and deeply ingrained prejudice against criminals, conceived a scheme for the employment of prisoners in productive work of national importance, under conditions similar to the normal life of free workers in the community. The aim of the scheme was that prisoners should be given an opportunity to make a fresh start so as to become good and useful citizens by removing them entirely from the atmosphere and regulations of the prison, thus providing an incentive to lead a normal life and facilitate their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, and by employing them in works of public utility such as the construction of canals, dams, etc., which would encourage them to have pride in their work and restore their self-respect. In line with the leadership in this direction, Sampurnanand Camp has developed into the foremost pioneering institution of its kind and the most ideal open camp in the country, and in December 1953 sociologists, criminologists, police, probation

and jail administrators came from all over India to study this bold experiment under the auspices of the All India Crime Prevention Society in connexion with the Seminar on the Organization and Management of Wall-Less Jails.

### 1. Nature, size and situation

The Sampurnanand Camp is situated on the banks of the river Karam Nasa in the interior of the Vindhya Plateau amidst rocks, ravines and forests. The nearest railway station is fifty miles away and the district headquarters are at a distance of sixty miles, in the historic city of Banaras.

The camp has room for 3000 prisoners who are permitted to associate as they wish and to move in complete freedom. They are accommodated partly in tents and partly in temporary tin barracks arranged on the perimeter of a U-shaped area 500 feet wide and 600 feet deep. The center of this area is used for games, sports, social gatherings and other open-air community activities. The boundary of the camp is marked by a plain fence consisting of three strands of barbed wire stretched horizontally a foot apart on wooden poles placed at intervals of ten feet; it offers hardly any physical resistance against escapes. A centrally administered common cook-house provides three wholesome meals a day. Water is taken from the flowing river and is allowed to settle and treated with bleaching powder before use. Clean sanitary facilities are provided and well looked after under the direction of a trained sanitary inspector.

### 2. Categories of offenders

The camp receives male prisoners in good health between the ages of 21 and 50 years who are residents of the State, have shown good conduct in jail, and have a minimum term of nine months imprisonment still remaining to be served, provided that they have not been sentenced under provisions of the Indian Penal Code relating to escapes, poisoning, forgery or rape. In the case of habitual criminals it is a further requirement that such prisoners do not have more than two previous convictions.

The distribution of prisoners at the camp according to offences committed has been, for instance:

Offences against the person.....	1089
Offences against property.....	635
Offences involving dacoity <sup>1</sup> with murder.....	115
Offences against the State and public order.....	928
Offences punishable under the Opium or Excise Act .....	38
Sexual offences other than rape.....	125
Offences against preventive security.....	975
Total	3905

The distribution according to the term of sentence imposed was:

Less than one year.....	166
One to three years.....	2278
Three to five years.....	669
Five to ten years.....	331
More than ten years to life.....	461
Total	3905

### 3. Methods of selection

The State of Uttar Pradesh has been the first to establish a "Classification cum Education and Training Centre" at the Reception Centre attached to the Model Prison, Lucknow. There are six grades of one month's duration each, during which instruction and practical training is provided, according to a prescribed syllabus, in physical training, military drill, community singing, elementary school subjects, recreational activities, general knowledge, first aid, hygiene and sanitation, village administration, cooperative activities, etc. Prisoners also receive special vocational training in one trade or occupation as, for instance, farming, vegetable growing or cottage industries such as Durri (rug) making. Promotion to a higher grade is given according to results of monthly tests. At the same time a detailed sociological case history is drawn up, based on information received from police and probation officers, village Panchayats (councils) and friends. Progress reports are maintained by all the supervisors and

<sup>1</sup> Certain types of gang-robbery, usually accompanied by violence.

work masters. A Selection Board constituted for the purpose screens the individual cases and makes the final selection. Only prisoners who are finally selected and who give their consent are eligible to join the group of independently employed prisoners in the "Self-Sufficient Colony" of the Model Prison. Increasing use is being made of this selection procedure, but since the initial requirements of the camp could not all be met by this method, direct selection on the basis indicated with respect to eligibility for committal to the camp was undertaken at the various jails.

#### 4. Nature of work performed by prisoners

All the inmates of the camp, except for the 10 per cent engaged in essential services such as cooking and maintenance work are employed in the construction of a dam under the direct supervision of the Irrigation Department. In addition to the main work which consists of digging earth for use in the construction and reenforcement of the dam, other jobs such as masonry, breaking stones, deforestation and road-making are also undertaken from time to time.

The prisoners all receive full wages commensurate with the rate prevalent in free employment outside the camp. The persons employed in essential services are paid by the Jail Department at a fixed rate of 1/4/-rupees, while those working on the dam are paid by the Irrigation Department at piece-work rates. The wages are credited in full to the individual accounts of the prisoners from which the State recovers a charge for providing shelter, food and clothing, at a daily flat rate of 12 annas per person, except in cases of admission to hospital. After deduction of maintenance charges to the State, part of the earnings is deposited as compulsory savings to be available at the time of release, and the remainder is issued in the form of coupons for the purchase of amenities from the camp canteen which is run on co-operative lines by the inmates.

#### 5. Regime

The inmates get up an hour before daybreak and after a short interval gather in the open field for community prayer followed by mass physical training. After breakfast they

march to the work-place outside the camp to return at 11 A.M. for the mid-day meal and a rest; work is resumed at 1 P.M. and ends at dusk. The prisoners are permitted to work longer hours, and it is on record that on several occasions they have done so. After a wash and the evening meal the prisoners congregate in groups for story telling, night classes, talks, dramatic performances and other activities of social, educational and recreational value planned by the authorities of the camp and under the direction of officers trained in correctional methods. For each group of 150 prisoners there is one such qualified officer who keeps their individual records and attends to all their needs.

On Sundays and other holidays there are appropriate activities and special dishes are served. Prisoners selected on the basis of good conduct are allowed to visit important places and institutions in Banaras. Games and sports are regular features and cinema performances, illustrated lectures, conjuring and similar entertainments provide a much needed change in the routine of the camp. Workers from the outside and villagers from the neighbourhood are freely admitted on these occasions.

#### 6. Methods of treatment

The Sampurnanand Camp Scheme is a bold experiment in open institutions and has characteristic features that are unique in many ways.

The camp lodges 3000 prisoners which is a larger number than in open institutions elsewhere.

The entrance to the camp is a gap between two wooden poles fifty feet apart without any device to restrict exit or entry and the camp is fully open in structure with no bars, locks or walls to prevent escapes. The prison guards, of whom there is one for every thirty inmates, are not armed. There is complete freedom of movement within the camp which has no sectors, enclosures, restrictive areas or wards. Nevertheless, there have been only twelve escapes or 0.3 per cent of the camp population.

No corporal punishment or physical restraint; handcuffs, fetters, whipping, cellular confinement or restriction of diet is allowed in the camp and the maximum disciplinary penalty

is the return of the prisoner to a closed institution. There is no search made at any time; all prison regulations relating to watch and ward and the supervision every fifteen minutes at night have been abolished in the camp. The prisoners are counted every morning and evening and when going to or returning from work. These relaxations of the system have developed self-reliance and confidence in the prisoners.

The prisoners are allowed full freedom to form working groups of twenty persons. One such group came to include prisoners who were all sentenced for offences involving dacoity; in spite of the apprehensions expressed by some visitors, this group eventually showed better organization than others both at work and in other activities and their output far exceeded that of the other groups. Several prisoners who had formerly been employed as motor drivers worked satisfactorily as drivers of the camp vehicles. Released prisoners have been employed in the camp as temporary Government servants, and this experiment is proving successful.

The prisoners are permitted more freedom to see members of their families than in other penal institutions and as a result there has been a visible strengthening of family relationships. With this object in view, prisoners may also be given "home leave".

## 7. Conclusions

The Sampurnanand Camp has established beyond any doubt what had already been shown in the small scale experiment at the Model Prison, Lucknow, namely that it is possible for a sincere, well meaning and effective administration to control escapes and maintain discipline without resorting to the traditional methods of locks, bars, walls and guards, and that prisoners can be taught to express their needs and dissatisfactions through approved administrative channels so long as these are adequate and active and the prisoners feel they can be relied on. Freedom from physical restraint must necessarily coincide with greater freedom of speech and expression which promotes mental health by removing strain and tension, and it may be mentioned in this connexion that cases of indiscipline, defiance of authority and assault have been few and negligible at the camp. Experience has also shown that

the proper authorities should visit the institution at frequent intervals, giving adequate notice of their arrival. This would provide the inmates with an opportunity to present their grievances, suggestions and requests. It would be preferable for the authorities to stay for a few days in the camp in order to acquaint themselves thoroughly with the circumstances.

In a new development, especially one of a dynamic nature, it is impossible to draw up in advance rules and regulations to meet all the situations likely to arise. It is therefore essential that the authority and discretion of the person directly in charge should be exercised on a broader basis than in the case of a closed institution. Thus not only reorientation of prisoners but also orientation of the members of the staff must be insisted upon; an in-service-training programme organized at the camp for members of all grades proved very successful. The convening of regular staff meetings (preferably with recorded proceedings) at which all staff members, even the head of the institution, may freely discuss their difficulties, have also proved very beneficial. This system had worked very well at the Model Prison, Lucknow, and was consequently introduced at the camp. A new feature which has been initiated is an occasional review of past work and assessment of failures and achievements, with a special note of praise of any officer who had played a commendable part. Experience proved that this sort of appreciation introduced a healthy spirit of competition, and soon these staff members began to identify themselves with the camp. In a new project of this kind, especially if far removed from towns, the officers and men are put to unavoidable inconveniences both of a personal and professional nature, and in view of this they are given special allowances as reasonable compensation for such hardships and as an encouragement in their work.

In terms of finance, an open institution is by far less costly than a closed establishment, and the scheme has the further advantage that the Government has been able to employ in works for the benefit of the public a large jail population which would otherwise have remained unproductive. The monetary returns are positive, and once put into operation the camp pays its own way.

As a measure of correction and reform the treatment in this institution has been of great value as judged by present experience, but it would be necessary to collect further statistical data and undertake additional follow-up to prove these observations. Its value as a means of rehabilitation of prisoners and their reintegration into the family and the community has also been obvious; it is of special significance to note that a prisoner who at the time of release may leave with a substantial amount of savings can look forward to a cordial reception by relatives and friends, and that possessing money at that time is of great help in executing plans for resettlement.

## RESUME

Le Camp Sampurnanand, situé dans les montagnes à soixante milles de la ville de Bénarès, est un établissement ouvert qui reçoit environ 3,000 détenus, lesquels sont logés en partie dans des tentes et en partie dans des barraques temporaires. Le camp ne comporte ni murs ni barrières pour prévenir les évasions, et les gardes n'ont aucune arme.

Le camp reçoit des détenus en bonne santé qui ont été condamnés, pour avoir commis des infractions d'importance très diverse, à des peines allant d'une année d'emprisonnement à l'emprisonnement à vie.

Le camp vise à la réorientation et à la réadaptation sociale des délinquants. Les méthodes employées à cet effet sont basées sur les sciences sociales modernes, et l'établissement dispose d'un personnel formé en cette matière qui reçoit également une formation en cours d'emploi au camp. On donne aux détenus l'occasion de commencer une vie nouvelle en les éloignant de l'atmosphère de la prison et en les employant à des travaux d'utilité publique. Ils peuvent se grouper librement et aucune restriction n'est imposée à leurs mouvements à l'intérieur du camp, qui n'a pas de secteur réservé ou isolé. Ils sont également complètement libres pour la formation de groupes de travail de vingt personnes.

Les détenus de camp travaillent à la construction d'une digue sous la surveillance du département de l'irrigation, qui leur paye à la tâche un plein salaire comparable à celui des ouvriers libres. De leurs revenus, les détenus payent l'Etat pour leur nourriture, leur logement et leur habillement au taux de douze anas par jour. Une partie du reste du salaire est déposée comme épargne obligatoire et une autre partie est remise à l'intéressé pour des achats à la cantine du camp, qui est dirigée par les détenus sur une base coopérative. La somme accumulée par l'épargne obligatoire est remisé en totalité au détenu lors de sa libération.

On arrange pour les détenus des picnics, des excursions et des visites touristiques et on organise régulièrement des programmes éducatifs et récréatifs. On favorise les contacts avec les membres de la famille des détenus, et on peut leur accorder des congés dans les foyers. On a introduit à titre d'expérience l'emploi au camp de détenus libérés.

This archiving project is a collaborative effort between United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and American Society of Criminology, Division of International Criminology. Any comments or questions should be directed to Cindy J. Smith at [CJSmithphd@comcast.net](mailto:CJSmithphd@comcast.net) or Emil Wandzilak at [emil.wandzilak@unodc.org](mailto:emil.wandzilak@unodc.org).