

# **“Chalo Dilli!” (On to Delhi!) From Manila**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Japanese victory over Singapore and their wartime slogan “Asia for the Asians” bore fruit in the establishment of the Provisional Government of Free India headed by Subhas Chandra Bose in 1943. It was strongly supported by the Indian Independence League and the Indian National Army with thousands of freedom-seeking Indians who were determined to fight against the British Army alongside the Japanese. This unprecedented event has been recorded but the role of the Indians in the Philippines has been neglected. The purpose of this essay<sup>1</sup> is to fill this void.

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## KEYWORDS

“Asia for the Asians,” Provisional Government of Free India, Subhas Chandra Bose, Indian Independence League, Indian National Army, Indians in the Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

As part of the Japanese war effort to win over the people in Southeast Asia, military intelligence missions had been sent, prior to the invasion, to connect with the local leaders like the Sultans in Malaya, the anti-British freedom fighters in Burma, Thailand, and British Malaya, and the overseas Chinese. They were successful in connecting with the Burmese and overseas Indians who had been active in the anti-British movement. One of the primary aims of the Japanese military was to incite anti-British sentiments among residents in the region in order to hamper the pro-Chiang Kai-shek activities which had been providing material support to China. Specifically, the goal was to cut off the routes to Chiang’s military points on the India-Chinese border and Indochina peninsula.

The intelligence unit responsible for working on the local Indians and the Indian soldiers in the British Army was F. Kikan, named after General Fujiwara Iwaichi.<sup>2</sup> As soon as it was formed in September 1941, it connected with the Indian freedom fighters in the area. When war was declared in early December, F. Kikan members dropped leaflets at the war front to persuade Indians in the British Army to join Japan’s war effort to establish Asia

for the Asians. Toward the end of December 1941, Indian soldiers began surrendering to the Japanese military. The initial number of surrenderees was 10,000. Two days after the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, 45,000 Indian soldiers were handed over to the Japanese, making a total of 55,000 Indian Prisoners of War (POW). Eventually, the Indian National Army (INA) was organized and declared cooperation with the Japanese military. Among the POWs, 25,000 joined the INA. The number had swelled to 42,000 by August that year. Along with the INA, local Indian freedom fighters organized the Indian Independence League (IIL), consolidating local independence leagues that existed prior to the Japanese invasion.<sup>3</sup>

It was beyond what the F. Kikan expected. This unprecedented event shocked the overseas Indians, especially in the Southeast Asian region. They actively began organizing themselves to assist the INA's effort by sending financial aid and volunteers to the Army. Their activities in British Malaya, particularly in Singapore, Thailand, and Burma appeared in numerous publications. The actions of Indians in the Philippines were hardly mentioned. Furthermore, socio-cultural and historical studies on the Indian community in the Philippines gave little attention to local Indians' wartime activities.<sup>4</sup> This essay attempts to fill this void.

## **THE INDIAN COMMUNITY IN PREWAR MANILA**

Indian emigration in modern times began when the British occupied India. Except for a handful of professionals and intellectuals, most Indians who left for abroad were

merchants, farmers, and laborers seeking economic betterment in foreign countries. Their emigration to the Philippines began after the United States (U.S.) occupied the country, around 1900. Most of them were merchants who expected to gain from the so-called “colonial boom.”<sup>5</sup> They were from the Sindh province and most of them had lived in Singapore or Hong Kong engaging in business prior to coming to the Philippines. They were followed by others from the Punjab province who were mainly farmers, masons, and unskilled laborers. The whole Indian population in the Philippines can be divided roughly into two groups according to where they originated: 60% from Punjab and the rest from Sindh and other areas. The former were mainly Sikhs and the latter, Hindus, and the rest were either Muslims or Christians.<sup>6</sup> Generally, the Sindhis, compared to the Punjabis and other Indians, occupied the upper economic strata. While the Sindhis operated export and import businesses and large-scale bazaars, the Punjabis and Muslims engaged in small-scale businesses. They were peddlers, moneylenders, watchmen, among others. In the early 1930s, around 500 Indians resided in the Philippines and in 1939 the number had doubled to around 1,000. A little less than half resided in Manila and its suburbs; the rest were scattered all over the Philippines.<sup>7</sup>

To protect their business interests and cultivate mutual friendship, the Punjabis and the Sindhis each formed an organization. In 1929, the Punjabis established Kalsa Diwan, a mutual aid organization, and in 1937, Gurudwala, a Sikh temple. In the same year, the Sindhi merchants created the Bombay Merchants Association and the Indian Club. Although they had different organizations,

the Punjabis and the Sindhis were in a close and friendly relationship evidenced by the fact that the Sindhis donated generously for the establishment of the Gurudwala temple and attended its worship services.<sup>8</sup> Filipinos generally called them "mga Bumbai," perhaps because many Indians left for the Philippines from the port of Bombay. However, since India was under British authority, they were officially called "British Indians," and they were under the protection of the British Consulate in the Philippines.

The most common problem among the Indians was friction with the Philippine Immigration Commission. For instance, in 1939 the commissioner complained that many Indian immigrants claimed to be merchants, presenting certain sums of money to prove they were who they claimed to be. As soon as they were given visas and entered the Philippines, they returned the money and looked for jobs, depriving the Filipinos of their occupations. The British Consulate tried to assist Indians whenever they faced problems with the Filipino immigration officers.<sup>9</sup>

However, the British and the Indians hardly socialized, and no Indians were allowed to enter the British Club or societies.<sup>10</sup> Besides immigration problems, the British Consulate was occupied with its Indian subjects' anti-British independence activities in the Philippines. Some Indians were indignant over the British colonization of India even before they left the country. This sentiment was heightened by their experiences of inhuman treatment by Filipino officials. They came to realize that they were not accorded respect as independent citizens because their country had been colonized. Eventually, the Indian

residents organized a political association aiming at the future independence of India.

## **ANTI-BRITISH, PRO-INDEPENDENCE ACTIVITIES**

One of the first political organizations was the Philippine chapter of the Ghadar Party. Its origin could be traced back to the Hindi Association of the Pacific Coast founded in mid-1913 in San Francisco. Later, this organization changed its name to the Ghadar (also spelled Ghadr) Party because the organization's publication was called *Hindustan Ghadar* (Rebel or Revolt). The group was originally formed to protest the discriminating and humiliating treatment that Indian immigrants received in the Pacific coast regions of the U.S. and Canada; their ultimate goal was to bring independence to their mother country India.<sup>11</sup> Through *Hindustan Ghadar*, the organization appealed to all overseas Indians in the world to awaken their dignity as Indian nationals. It encouraged them to refuse any work connected to the British government and to protest against it at any given opportunity. It further advocated the use of violence in order to attain independence.<sup>12</sup>

The date of establishment of the party's chapter in Manila is not certain, but it was already existing by 1914. When the First World War commenced in May 1914, the Ghadar Party appealed to all the Indian residents to return home and fight against the British as the party leadership expected Germany to declare war against Britain. Those residing in the U.S. who answered the call returned home via Japan (Yokohama or Kobe), Hong

Kong, China (Shanghai), the Philippines (Manila), and Malaya (Singapore). They tried to recruit the local Indians to join the party or return home with them. In 1915, some Ghadar Party members from San Francisco arrived in Manila and tried to ship arms and ammunitions to India in cooperation with members of the local Ghadar Party. However, the attempt failed because it was discovered by American custom officials who alerted the British colonial authorities.<sup>13</sup>

Since the Philippines was a U.S. colony, many Indians in the U.S., including members of the Ghadar Party and other politically radical Indians, made stops in the capital, Manila, on their way home. Eventually, Manila became the meeting place and center of activities of the Ghadar Party. From Manila, they went to Malaya, Thailand, and other Southeast regions, trying to agitate Indian soldiers in the British military or recruit Indian residents to their cause.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Manila played an important role for the Indian independence movement even before the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.

The British Consulate in Manila had been vigilant toward the anti-British activities by the Indians. However, the British Consulate did not particularly establish a network of detecting anti-British activities unlike in China, Japan and the U.S. Instead, the British Consulate requested the U.S. colonial government's cooperation.<sup>15</sup>

In 1922, the British Consulate received information that the Duke of Windsor (the Prince of Wales), who was to make an official visit to Manila, was going to be assassinated

by a member of the Ghadar Party. The information also revealed that Chanan Singh, who operated in the clothing industry as well as in money lending in Manila, had offered 300 pounds to the assassin. Although no assassination attempt occurred, the Consulate was on full alert. It was also the year Gandhi commenced the anti-British movement in India. Some Indian residents in the Philippines supported the movement by remitting money to the cause.<sup>16</sup>

Apart from the Ghadar Party, a youth club organized by the local Indians also aspired for India's independence. Naturally the British Consulate kept a tight watch until it eventually ordered the dissolution of the club. Although the organization ceased to exist, a new publication called *India* continued supporting the struggle. The editors of *India* included none other than Chanan Singh, who was earlier mentioned. The purpose of the publication was to inform the Filipinos as well as the local Indians of the oppressive colonial state of their mother country under British rule. This publication lasted until the Japanese occupation in 1942.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the British Consulate's vigilance, the independence movement persisted. In 1929, a letter written by an Indian revolutionary reached one of the local Indians. It said that the anti-British revolution was going to be staged in 1930; therefore, all the Indians abroad must be prepared for it. Around the same time, the massive Salt March organized by Gandhi started in India and overseas Indians interpreted this event as the sign of an impending revolution.

In the Philippines in April 1930, a meeting was held at the Sikh temple for the purpose of establishing a chapter of the Indian National Congress Party, also known as the Congress Party. Although it was advocated by the Sikhs, members of the Bombay Merchants Association and some Muslims were also present. A week later, the Indian National League (INL) was formally established. The INL declared that it would wholeheartedly support Gandhi's nonviolent actions and any organization which aspired for independence, provided the latter was nonviolent. While a local newspaper reported that about 300 people attended the inauguration, the secret police said it was only around 15. Two-thirds of the participants were Punjabis. The president of the INL was Mohammed Shafi; judging from his name, he must be a Muslim Indian. The INL received propaganda materials from the American branch of the Congress Party. On May 1, the League tried to participate in the Labor Day parade with the flags of the Congress Party (which was to become the national flag of Independent India) in their hands but U.S. authorities banned it because the flag was not recognized by the British Consulate. The people behind the establishment of the INL included Chanan Singh, Karam Singh Gill (the activist in the youth club banned by the British), and J. Watoomul (the president of the Bombay Merchants Association). Gill possessed a Singaporean passport and worked as a daytime telephone operator and a watchman at the *Manila Daily Bulletin* at night. His role was to invite Filipino journalists to the Sikh temple and provide them with information and activities in pursuit of Indian independence to be reported in the local newspapers. Needless to say, the anti-British activities

of Gill and the others had been monitored by the British Consulate.<sup>18</sup>

## **JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF MANILA**

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INDIAN INDEPENDENCE LEAGUE PHILIPPINES (IILP)**

On 2 January 1942, Manila was occupied by the Japanese Imperial Army. At the end of January, the Indian community heard the radio broadcast from Tokyo by Rash Behari Bose who had been working in Japan for Indian independence. He said that all the Western powers which had colonized Southeast Asia had been defeated by Japan and that they must seize this opportunity to advance their struggle for independence. Moved by his speech, local Indians gathered in the first week of February at the Sikh temple and reorganized the new INL. They contacted the Japanese military authorities to inform them of the new association and obtained confirmation that the Japanese military would assist their efforts for the independence of their mother country. On March 8, Rangoon fell to the Japanese. Shortly after that, the Andaman islands were occupied by the Japanese, and the Bay of Bengal fell under the Japanese influence. These events gave such encouragement to the Indians overseas who had been working hard for independence since the prewar era. By the end of March, the branch of the Indian Independence League in the Philippines (IILP) was organized to keep in step with other Southeast Asian and Chinese regions such as Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Shanghai.<sup>19</sup>

The president of the IILP was D. B. Sehwan; vice president, Bechittar Singh; secretary, B. Parmananda; treasurer, Chanshamdas. Parmananda, who had lived in prewar Japan and spoke some Japanese, became a mediator between the IILP and the Japanese military. In the beginning, the membership came mostly from Manila and numbered around 300. Gradually the number grew to 600 with members from various provinces on Luzon Island.

The IILP was divided into two sections: one was to handle publicity, the other to recruit volunteers to the INA. Later, a women's section was added. The main duty of the publicity section was to inform the local Indians and Filipinos about IIL activities. For the Indians, the publicity section mimeographed and distributed news every day regarding the independence-related activities of the overseas Indians; for the Filipinos, it published necessary statements in the newspapers and occasionally broadcast the progress of the independence movement. The volunteer recruiting section focused on recruiting local Indian youth and training them with the assistance of Japanese military personnel. The women's section took care of those who volunteered for the INA by providing food and shelter.

The IIL in various regions felt the need for unity among themselves so they could voice their opinions as a whole. Eventually, representatives of all the IIL branches in the Asian region held a general conference in Singapore on 15-22 June 1942. The IILP sent five representatives.<sup>20</sup> The Japanese military arranged the transportation, but the actual costs of the travel, room, and board in Singapore were shouldered by the IILP.

The conference acknowledged that the IIL was the sole political organization for all overseas Indians in Southeast Asia and East Asia. The INA was attached to the IIL with its headquarters in Singapore. The IIL established its headquarters in Bangkok (but it later moved to Singapore). Inspired by the Bangkok conference, the Philippine representatives immediately started to work for the complete formation and operation of the movement. Besides Manila, other IILP branches were established in Davao, Cebu, and Zamboanga.<sup>21</sup> These IILP branches were small in membership compared to the one in Manila, but they sent monetary and material support to the IILP in the capital. Communication between the IILP and the IIL headquarters was conducted through the Japanese military.

### ACTIVITIES OF THE IILP

From August 1942 to May 1943, the IILP effort was concentrated on publicizing its anti-British sentiments and pro-independence movement to the local Indians and to the Filipinos.

#### 1942:

**August 10:** All the shops owned by local Indians were closed for two days to protest the arrests of Gandhi, Nehru, and other fighters at home who participated in the Quit India movement organized by the National Congress Party. The local protest rally was held at the Opera House.<sup>22</sup>

**August 25:** The formal inauguration of the IILP was held. At the center of the stage was the portrait of

Gandhi adorned by tricolored Indian independence flags. According to the newspaper report, 500 Indians attended.<sup>23</sup>

**August 29:** The *Manila Tribune* published an 8-page special issue on the IIL.<sup>24</sup>

**October 2:** All the Indian-owned shops and factories were closed and people abstained from drinking alcohol and eating meat. This was to commemorate the 74<sup>th</sup> birthday anniversary of Gandhi and to show solidarity for him and his wife for their imprisonment since August because of their participation in the Quit India movement. The prayer for their release was said at the Sikh temple.<sup>25</sup>

**October 25:** The *Manila Tribune* published feature stories about Japanese involvement in the Indian independence movement. This enhanced the unity of local Indians and provided a model for "Asia for the Asians."

**October 26:** A memorial service at the Sikh temple was held for Mrs. Gandhi (who died in prison on October 25). Shops and factories were closed and Indian residents were advised to stay home.<sup>26</sup>

**End of November:** Two local Indians, who volunteered to be soldiers of the INA, were sent to Penang, Malaysia with the mission to educate other INA soldiers to infiltrate India. They returned to Manila in March 1943.

**End of December:** Concern about Japanese intentions toward the INA increased. The Japanese aimed to win the loyalty of the Indians through anti-British propaganda and

professed to liberate India from Britain under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. But the INA began to mistrust the Japanese military. Mohan Singh, who was instrumental in organizing the INA, dissolved the unit and ordered the soldiers to return to the POW camps. The leaders of the IIL resigned and the number of INA soldiers diminished.<sup>27</sup>

### **1943:**

**February 17-24:** Mahatma Gandhi Week was held to support Gandhi who had been conducting a hunger strike in prison. His condition had been deteriorating so that he was slipping in and out of consciousness. At the Sikh temple, one priest and four laypersons prayed continuously for 25½ hours. Indian Hindus and Muslims joined the prayer. During the week, people abstained from alcohol and smoking.<sup>28</sup>

**March 3:** A thanksgiving prayer meeting was held for the end of Gandhi's hunger strike.<sup>29</sup>

**March 23:** A memorial gathering for Sardar Bhagat Singh, who was executed in 1931 by the British authorities for treason, was held at the Sikh temple.<sup>30</sup>

**April 13:** A gathering was held to commemorate the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 by the British authorities.

**May 10:** A gathering was held to commemorate the first anti-British uprising, the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.<sup>31</sup>

**End of May:** A protest meeting regarding the death of a Sindhi freedom fighter was held.

These activities of the IILP further raised the fighting spirit of the local Indians. On the part of the Japanese military, it served as a good propaganda to show to the Filipinos the increasing anti-British sentiment.<sup>32</sup>

### **IILP SUPPORT TO SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE AND RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY**

When the F. Kikan unit approached the Indian POWs in Singapore at the beginning of the war, the POWs submitted certain conditions. One of them was to make Subhas Chandra Bose as their leader. Bose's leadership was also requested at the conferences in Singapore and Tokyo. Former members of the INA decided to continue after it was disbanded by Mohan Singh provided that Chandra Bose would lead them. These developments showed how popular Chandra Bose had been among the freedom fighters. But who was Subhas Chandra Bose?

Subhas Chandra Bose joined Gandhi's nonviolent movement in 1922 and the National Congress Party in 1938. Later, he became the president of the Party but he eventually separated when it took a nonviolent line. He established the All-India Forward Block supported by the radicals. When the European War started, Bose was placed under house arrest in Calcutta but he escaped and reached Germany in April 1941 via Afghanistan, Central Asia, and

Soviet Russia. When he learned of the organization of the INA in Singapore, he contacted the Japanese ambassador in Berlin. Bose went to Japan at the end of May 1943 on invitation of the Japanese government. In Tokyo, Bose sent messages in English and Hindi through relay broadcast to all the IIL and INA members in the Southern regions, including Manila. He expressed his strong desire for India's independence. To coincide with the occasion, the *Manila Tribune* published a feature article introducing Bose as a freedom fighter as well as an interview article conducted by the *Mainichi* newspaper while he was in Berlin. The article emphasized Japan as a leader of the anti-British and anti-U.S. struggles, and added that Bose's arrival in Asia meant the struggle for Indian independence had gathered unprecedented momentum.<sup>33</sup>

The Manila Indians, particularly the IILP members, were overjoyed. A celebration for Bose's arrival in Japan was held at the end of June, expressing gratitude to Premier Tojo Hideki who announced his support and aid for the Indian independence struggle. For this occasion, the general of the Japanese military administration; the chairman of the Philippine Commission; Benigno Aquino, Sr., president of the Kapisanan ng Paglilingkod sa Bagong Pilipinas (KALIBAPI); and the head of each section were invited as guests of honor. The stage was adorned with Indian and Japanese flags and the portraits of Gandhi and Chandra Bose were hung in the middle of the stage. Many slogans were placed on the stage: "Long Live the Revolution," "Asia for the Asians," "We demand immediate withdrawal of Britain from India," "Long live S. C. Bose," and "*Bande Mataram* (Long Live Mother Country)" among others.<sup>34</sup>

In July 1943, Chandra Bose assumed the INA leadership. The INA membership at that time had shrunk to 12,000. Immediately, Bose announced a total mobilization scheme and appealed to all the Indian residents in the region to cooperate and participate in the independence struggle. His words were moving: "Give me blood. I will give you freedom."<sup>35</sup> After his speech, the number of volunteers suddenly increased and donations poured in. Immediately, the IILP decided to send two representatives to the IIL headquarters in Singapore to receive advice and to observe how the INA recruits had been trained.<sup>36</sup>

## THE INA VOLUNTEERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Provisional Government of Free India, soon after it was organized in Singapore in October 1943, immediately declared war against Britain and the U.S. The celebratory gathering was held at the Metropolitan Theater with Camilo Osias, secretary of education, and Benigno Aquino, Sr., president of the KALIBAPI, as guests of honor.<sup>37</sup> The Japanese propaganda regarded the granting of Philippine independence and the establishment of the Provisional Government as strategic successes. The Japanese used the latter's declaration of war against Britain and the U.S. as a good example to be followed by the Laurel government which had been hesitant to do so. The local Indian residents were now citizens of an independent country.

Once Bose assumed the leadership, the number of local volunteers to the INA had increased everywhere, reaching over 100. Some women expressed their willingness to join

the INA but this did not materialize.<sup>38</sup> After the physical examination of volunteers, 28 were selected and were sent to Singapore on the first week of November 1943. Eight of them were appointed and trained as INA officers and the remaining 20 were assigned to the Civilian Material Supply Unit (Azad Hind Dal). The eight officers were sent to train INA soldiers. The total number of civilian volunteers was around 2,000 to 2,600, way below what Bose had hoped for.<sup>39</sup>

The IILP supplied not only manpower but also material support. It sent ₱800,000 to the IIL headquarters and ₱100,000 to the Provisional Government.<sup>40</sup> With Subhas Chandra Bose leading the IIL and INA, the volunteers felt their dream of independence was within their reach, and this prompted them to work harder than ever.

Subhas Chandra Bose's visit to Manila in November made the local Indians most proud. He visited Manila on the way back to Singapore from Tokyo after attending the Greater East Asia Conference. On his arrival, he was met by President Laurel, cabinet members, Japanese Ambassador Shozo Murata, army and navy officials, and IILP officials. He was given the welcome accorded to a leader of a nation. Members of the Indian community lined up in front of the Jai-Alai building on the way to the Malacañan Palace, waving Indian independence flags. Bose was kept busy during his four-day visit to Manila; he attended a welcome gathering at the Metropolitan Theater and a dinner at the Malacañan Palace, as well as offered flowers to Jose Rizal at the Luneta Park.<sup>41</sup>

The local Indians had been informed of the "spectacular victory" of the combined forces of the Japanese Army and the INA at the Burmese border to penetrate all the way to India. Believing the Japanese-controlled news, the IIL branch in Cebu was established around this time.<sup>42</sup>

Other news reached the Philippines and reported that the INA and the Japanese Army had set foot on Indian soil. Overjoyed, the IILP sent ₱500,000 to the Provisional Government and the recruitment of the INA soldiers restarted.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the Japanese and the Indian armies entered Manipur province on the last week of March 1944 and tried to get to Imphal, its capital. However, the actual battle was far from a success. All the routes to where the Japanese and Indian soldiers were stationed were cut off from delivery of ammunition and food. Because of this, the Japanese army headquarters ordered the operation suspended.<sup>44</sup>

The IILP had sent 29 volunteers in all. One was sent earlier and he was already there when the 28 arrived. Eleven of them reached the border of India and Burma, though seven died. Around that time, 1,500 INA soldiers were in Imphal; a little over 10,000 in Rangoon; 7,000 in Malaya and Bangkok combined, and a total of around 20,000 INA soldiers surrendered to the British. It was a crushing defeat for the Indians and the Japanese.<sup>45</sup>

## POSTWAR PERIOD

The Manila massacre by the Japanese military in February 1945 is a well-known occurrence. Indians were

not spared from this atrocity. Their dead bodies lay side by side with those of Filipinos. It is estimated that 10% of the Indian residents, or 30 to 40 individuals, were killed.<sup>46</sup>

Some Indians expressed a desire to return to India after losing their family members, houses, or shops. Accordingly, the British Consulate started the repatriation process in April. British authorities considered most Indian residents in the Philippines to be collaborators with the Japanese; therefore, they were eager to send them home for trial. On the part of the U.S., the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) planned to arrest 15–20 Indians as collaborators who should be sent home and tried there. The passage to India via Australia was to be paid initially by the British government, but it was to be repaid by the Indians eventually. In May 1945, the U.S. military started the process of sending Indians home and in mid-August, the Indians left for Sydney. The total number was 101.<sup>47</sup>

Those INA soldiers from the Philippines who survived learned about the Japanese defeat in the Malayan jungle. In September, they headed for Singapore and worked in shops owned by Indians to support themselves. However, within a few months, they were arrested by British authorities and imprisoned for two months. Upon release, they were sent to Madras where they were accommodated in the Congress Party headquarters. Eventually, they were sent back to the Philippines and interviewed by the CIC. Since they were not U.S. citizens, no charges were filed.<sup>48</sup> Those Indians who chose to stay in the Philippines were interrogated for their collaboration with the Japanese military, but again, no charges were filed since they had not sworn allegiance

to the U.S. They were temporarily accommodated at the Muntinglupa prison and released shortly.<sup>49</sup>

However, the Filipinos' antipathy toward the local Indians was strong. The Filipinos criticized them for collaborating with the Japanese so that Indian economic interests and physical safety would be guaranteed. The Filipinos alleged that when people were suffering from food shortages, especially at the end of the occupation, the Indians were accorded privileged treatment. The Filipinos had strong words against them: "Foreign leeches that suck Filipino blood."<sup>50</sup>

It took several years for the Indians to recover from the material destruction as well as the spiritual shock in the aftermath of the Japanese occupation. In the meantime, immigration from India resumed; by 1948, the registered Indian population was 677, close to the prewar figure.

## CONCLUSION

The local Indians in the Philippines—whether Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims or Christians—all desired the independence of their mother country, although their methods of achieving it were different. The geographical location of the Philippines and the fact that it was a U.S. colony provided the opportunity for a radical independence movement, such as the Ghadar Party, to take root. In fact, Manila became the meeting place for the Ghadar Party members from the U.S. and Canada. There were also followers of Gandhi's nonviolent independence movement among the

local Indians. Thus, the independence movement was quite active in Manila, even before the Japanese occupation.

The Japanese occupying force, the 14<sup>th</sup> Army, did not have any concrete policy toward the local Indians. The establishment of the IILP came from the Indians themselves, mostly the Sikhs, who were clandestinely active in the prewar period. The number of activists was around 20, as estimated by the British Consulate. Since most Indians were engaged in business activities, it can be said that some joined the IILP in order to protect their economic interests and physical safety from the Japanese military, and not necessarily for political reasons.

The IILP initially focussed on propaganda activities; they held numerous meetings to boost the fighting spirit of the local Indians and to solicit assistance from the Japanese military and the Filipino people. After mid-1943, when Subhas Chandra Bose established leadership, the non-violent faction had yielded to the violent overthrow of the British. In solidarity with the other Southeast Asian IIL, the IILP gave strong support to the IIL and INA, particularly material and human resources. In mid-1943, 100 local Indian youths answered the call for Bose's total mobilization scheme. Twenty-eight were chosen and sent to the war front. This number was minuscule compared to the number of INA volunteers from Thailand, Malaya, and Burma. Malaya's volunteers numbered 1,600 which was 0.2% of the total Indian population of 750,000. Thailand's share was 1.8 % or 1,000 volunteers out of 55,000. The highest was 4% in the Philippines considering that the total Indian population in the country was 675 as of 1942.

This reflected the strong desire for independence among the local Indians. At the same time, due to the small size of the community, Indian youths could have felt some pressure to volunteer.<sup>51</sup> Indian women were active as well, giving speeches at rallies and contributing anti-British articles to the local newspapers. Some even volunteered for the INA but never actually served.

From the Japanese military point of view, these activities served as good propaganda and a model for the Filipinos: the Indians were fighting against the British. Therefore, the Japanese fully supported their efforts, giving lavish celebrations for the establishment of the Provisional Government and a welcome party for Bose's visit to Manila.

As seen in other regions of Southeast Asia, local Indians were united by strong nationalism and pride which broke the barriers of caste, religion, language, and gender. In the postwar era, these strong bonds were maintained in Malaya including Singapore, where the Indians' political involvement had increased. This, in turn, helped raise their social standing in local societies.<sup>52</sup>

In the case of the Philippines, the leaders of the IILP and the INA soldiers were interrogated by the CIC, though not charged. The Filipinos considered them collaborators and did not look upon them favorably. In the postwar era, the local Indians quietly engaged in their trades and tried to build up their businesses from scratch in war-torn Manila. Nonetheless, for those who participated in the IILP activities and volunteered for the INA, the wartime period represented the most glorious moments in their lives: The

Indians in the Philippines dedicated their lives to achieve their heart's desire of achieving the independence of their beloved mother country.

What was the situation in India when the war ended? The INA soldiers who survived the war and surrendered to the British numbered approximately 20,000 but they were not accorded the POW status. From the British point of view, they were deserters who rebelled against the king and should be tried by court-martial for treason. The trial started in early November 1945 and lasted for one-and-a-half month. The Congress Party organized the INA Defense Committee of 17 which included Jawaharlal Nehru. The trial became a showdown between the British who tried to show control over the colonized and the Indian subjects who insisted on their right to rebel. The defense claimed that when the Indian soldiers were handed to the Japanese military at the time of the British surrender in Singapore, their loyalty to the king ceased to exist. Another point the defense made was that the Provisional Government of Free India was a proper independent government and the INA was in an equal alliance with the Japanese military, not a puppet army.

When the trial started, the support for the INA soldiers and protests against the trial spread across the country and culminated in riots in major cities. Nevertheless, the three major leaders were sentenced to lifelong exile. However, immediately after the sentencing, the judge announced that their sentence had been commuted and they were all released on the same day. It was a victory on the part of the Indian independence movement which created a favorable

atmosphere for the negotiations with the British for the soon-to-be independence.<sup>53</sup>

The Japanese military's initial victory in Southeast Asia with the slogan "Asia for the Asians" so inspired the Indians including those in the Philippines that they were ready to dedicate their lives for the independence of their mother country. The slogan could have been appropriated by the Japanese military strategists but the ideology of "Asia for the Asians" had a long and profound history throughout Asia as evidenced in East, South, and Southeast Asian regions, and even in the Middle East. Due to space constraints, this essay did not touch on this ideology but suffice it to say that many Japanese soldiers who came to these regions sincerely believed in or wanted to believe in this slogan and dedicated their lives to its cause as well.

## APPENDIX

The List of *Hindustan Ghadar* Subscribers in the Philippines on the Eve of the Japanese Occupation

| Name            | Mailing Address                         |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1. Pakhar Singh | c/o Plaza Hotel, Plaza Goiti,<br>Manila |
| 2. Chanda Singh | 172 Paz St., Paco, Manila               |
| 3. Bhajan, MBS. | c/o Royal Bazaar, Camiling,<br>Tarlac   |
| 4. Guala Singh  | Indian Merchant, Rosales,<br>Pangasinan |
| 5. Mewa Singh   | 172 Paz St., Paco, Manila               |

6. Sundar Singh c/o Bombay, Dagupan, Pampanga
7. Bhagwan Singh PO Box 420, Manila
8. Jawala Singh San Miguel, Tarlac
9. Partap Singh PO Box 1736, Manila
10. Talok Singh 2957 Herrera St., Manila
11. M. Pablo Singh 409 Tayuman St., Manila
12. Amer Nath King Ave., Ifugao, Mt. Province
13. Mewa Singh PO Box 112, Pandacan, Manila
14. Arjan Singh Saliano, Nueva Vizcaya
15. Tola Ram PO Box 1777, Manila
16. Harnam Singh 172 Paz St., Paco, Manila
17. Bagga Singh Tabacalera Cigar and Cigarette  
Factory, Paco, Manila
18. Surwan Singh 146 Sanchez B., San Miguel,  
Manila
19. Rattan Singh 72 Gastambide, Sampalok,  
Manila
20. Bartap Singh PO Box 1771, Manila
21. Bhagat Singh 1145 California, Paco, Manila
22. Dalip Singh Akali PO Box 59, Dagupan,  
Pangasinan
23. C. S. Kesar Singh PO Box 30, Bayombong, Nueva  
Vizcaya
24. Karam Singh c/o Manila Bulletin, Manila
25. Mukand Singh 409 Tayuman St., Manila
26. Kanwar Rattanchand Market No. 81, San Fernando,  
Pampanga
27. Kishan Singh Pambusco, San Fernando,  
Pampanga
28. Dalip Singh Bombay 313, Tanduay, Manila
29. Soroop Singh c/o Rizal Sawmill, 20 Soler,  
Manila

- |                               |                                           |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 30. Sowa Singh                | c/o Insular Sawmill, Paco, Manila         |
| 31. Sardara Singh             | c/o N & H Co., 614 Echague,<br>Manila     |
| 32. Ram Singh                 | c/o PO Box 25, Cabanatuan,<br>Nueva Ecija |
| 33. Indar Singh               | 172 Paz St., Paco, Manila                 |
| 34. Mukand Singh              | PO Box 8971, Manila                       |
| 35. The Indian Silk<br>Supply | Ilagan, Isabela                           |
| 36. Shiam Singh               | 1854 Ascarraga, Santa Cruz,<br>Manila     |
| 37. Rattan Singh              | PO Box 37, Olongapo, Zambales             |

Source: Home Department Political, 41/3/41, "Mailing List of the *Ghadr* in the USA, Canada, Mexico, USSR and others."  
National Archives of India, New Delhi, India.

## NOTES

- 1 This essay is based on the article published in Japanese but has been expanded and with new information added. See Motoe Terami, "Nihon senryoka Firipin no Indojin shakai: Indo dokuritu renmei wo chusin ni" (Indian Communities in the Philippines under the Japanese Occupation with special reference to Indian Independence League), *Jochi Ajia-gaku*, 19 (2001): 187–212.
- 2 "F" also symbolized "Friendship" and "Freedom." See Iwaichi Fujiwara, *F. Kikan: Indo dokuritsu ni kaketa daihon'ei sanbo no kiroku* (*F. Kikan: The Record of a Staff Officer of the Imperial Headquarters Who Gambled on India's Independence*) (Tokyo: Shingaku Shuppan, 1985), 1.
- 3 For F. Kikan and the establishment of the INA, see Ajia Keizai Kenkyujo, ed., *Minami F. Kikan Kankeisha Danwa Roku* (*Record of Talk Who Were Connected to the F. Kikan*) (Tokyo: Ajia Keizai Kenkyujo: 1979), 21–54. See also Iwaichi Fujiwara, 88–100.

K. K. Ghosh, *The Indian National Army* (Meerut: Meenakshi Prakashan, 1969), 17–36. Nobuko Nagasaki, ed., *Minami Ajia no Minzoku Undo to Nihon (National Movements in South Asia and Japan)* (Tokyo: Ajia Keizai Kenkyujo Tokyo, 1979). 1–56. On overall view on the INA activities in Southeast Asia, see Peter Ward Fay, *The Forgotten Army, India's Armed Struggle for Independence 1942–1945* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993); Shizuo Maruyama, *Indo Kokumin-gun (The Indian National Army)*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1985); Mohammad Zaman Kiani, *India's Freedom Struggle and The Great INA* (New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House: 1994); T. R. Sareen, *Selected Documents on Indian National Army* (New Delhi: Agam Prakashan, 1988).

- 4 For instance, the Indians could carry on their commercial, religious, and social activities uninterrupted during the Japanese occupation prewar days. See Ofelia Regala-Angangco, “The Indian Community in the Philippines” (MA thesis, University of the Philippines, 1956), 39. Ajit Singh Rye’s “The Indian Community in the Philippines” is a 70-page long essay that comprises one chapter of the history of the Indians in Southeast Asia. It attempts to depict the total picture of the Indian community in the Philippines from its inception to the current state and its effect on the Philippine society. However, the Indian life under the Japanese occupation was barely described in a half page. It did mention the establishment of the IIL but their concrete activities were not mentioned. See Ajit Singh Rye, “The Indian Community in the Philippines,” K. S. Sandhu, A. Mani, eds. *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Times Academic Press and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993), 747–748.
- 5 The priority destinations for most Indian merchants at that time were Canada, USA, Singapore, or Hong Kong.
- 6 Besides religion, the differences were seen in the language they spoke, the attire they wore, and the food they prepared. On the eve of the Japanese occupation in December 1941, 15 Christian Indians resided in the Philippines, majority of whom

were enrolled in the academic institutions. On the Christian Indians, see Series A 1838/1, Item 423/13/1, Australian Archives Act Regional Office, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, Australia. This document was obtained through the courtesy of Dr. Midori Kawashima of Sophia University.

- 7 In the 1910s, a couple of big bazaars, such as Wassiamull Assomull & Co. and Bombay Bazaar, were in the business center district of Escolta. By the 1930s, the number of such establishments big enough to be listed in the business directory had increased to a little over 10. Other big establishments included Pohoomull Brothers, Oriental Bazaar, and Bengal Bazaar. This information was obtained by Dr. Hayase Shinzo of Waseda University. For the population of Indian residents, see Regala-Angangco, "The Indian Community in the Philippines," 37; Ajit Singh Rye, "The Indian Community in the Philippines," 719.
- 8 "Activities of Indian Seditonists in the Philippines," F. O. 371/14286. File A5295, Public Record Office (PRO hereafter), London, United Kingdom. Also see, Rye, "Indian Community in the Philippines" 734, 745–748.
- 9 "Treatment of Indians in the Philippines," F. O. 371/228011939 PRO.
- 10 Rye, 754.
- 11 One such humiliating incident was the Komagata Maru Incident, in which some 300 Indian migrants, mostly Sikhs, were not allowed to disembark in Vancouver, Canada in May 1914 due to the exclusion act. In July, they were ordered to return to India and upon their arrival at Calcutta in September, they were fired upon by British police who suspected them as lawbreakers and political agitators. Nineteen Sikhs were killed.
- 12 T. R. Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad (1905–1921)*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publisher Pvt. Ltd., 1979), 72–93. For the list of subscribers of the *Hidustan Ghadar* in the Philippines, see Appendix.

- 13 No. 201, February 1916. Ministry Political Branch, Home Department, National Archives of India (NAI hereafter), New Delhi, India. See also, Sareen, *Indian Revolutionary Movement Abroad*, 135.
- 14 Whenever the Ghadar Party members visited Manila, the whole Indian community held welcome gatherings for them. Therefore, the local Indians were well-informed of the political issues of the time, especially in regard to the independence movement unfolding in the U.S. and Canada. See Richard J. Papplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defense: British Intelligence and the Defense of the Indian Empire 1904–1924* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 258. See also Soham Singh Josh, *Hindustan Ghadar Party: A Short History* (Punjab, India: Desh Bhagat Yadgar Committee, 2007), 22.
- 15 See Papplewell, *Intelligence*. 258.
- 16 “Activities of Indian Seditonists in the Philippines” PRO. See also Karam Singh Gill, ed., *On to Delhi!* (Manila: The Indian Independence League Philippine Chapter, 1944), 94. This publication placed the assassination attempt to be in 1921.
- 17 Karam Singh Gill, ed., *On to Delhi!*, 94.
- 18 See “Activities of Indian Seditonists in the Philippines,” PRO. See also *Philippines Herald*, 19, 21, 28–29 April 1930.
- 19 In the case of Malaya, 86,000 Indians joined the organization. The main reason why so many joined the organization in such a short period of time was that they all saw the good opportunity to realize their aspiration for independence. Moreover, the IIL announced that it would take care of Indian POWs and protect the properties and lives of Indian residents from the Japanese military. See *On to Delhi!*, 95. See also, Toshudan Hodobu, ed., *Dai 14 gun gunsenden-han senden kosaku shiro-shu* (Collection of Materials of the Army Propaganda Corps of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army), (Tokyo: Ryukei Shosha, 1996), 76.

- 20 They were Banta Singh, Dalgit Singh, Ama Singh, Mahan Singh and Inder Singh. The general conference was also attended by Mohan Sign and some 30 Indian POWs. See *Manila Tribune*, 17 June 1942. See also K. K. Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, 55.
- 21 The Davao branch was formed in July 1943 and the Cebu branch in March 1944. See "Philippine Islands: Indian Independent League," 66, Reel 9, No. 2 OSS/ST., U.S. National Archives and Records Administration in the Washington, D.C. area (NARA hereafter), USA.
- 22 *Manila Tribune*, 11 and 16 August 1942. Around the same time, anti-British demonstrations were held in many cities in Malaya, Indonesia (Medan and Sumatra), and China (Shanghai). K. K. Ghosh, *Indian National Army*, 83.
- 23 See *Manila Tribune*, 26 August 1942. The total number of the registered Indian residents in the Philippines was 675 that year but the provinces were not yet under Japanese control; therefore, 500 might be an exaggeration. Population of the Indian residents in the Philippines as of 1939 was 914, of which 366 lived in Manila. See *Hito Chosa Inkai Hito Chosa Hokoku* vol. 1 (Tokyo: Ryukei Shoten, 1993) 19.
- 24 *Manila Tribune*, 29 August 1942.
- 25 *Manila Tribune*, 3 October 1942.
- 26 *Manila Tribune*, 27 October 1942.
- 27 For details, see Nobuko Nagasaki, "Indo Kokumin-gun no keisei-bankokku ketsugi made- (The Formation of Indian National Army-As of the Bangkok Resolution-)" in *Minami ajia no minzoku undo to nihon*, 43–44. See also K. K. Ghosh, *Indian National Army*, 103–120.
- 28 *Manila Tribune*, 17, 20–21 and 28 February 1943.
- 29 *Manila Tribune*, 4 March 1943.

- 30 *Manila Tribune*, 24 March 1943.
- 31 *Manila Tribune*, 10–11 May 1943.
- 32 *Manila Tribune*, 30 May 1943.
- 33 Many books have been written about Bose. For instance, Leonardo A. Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj: A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Chandra Bose* (New Delhi: Viking, 1990); Bidyut Chakrabarty, *Subhas Chandra Bose and Middle Class Radicalism: A Study in Indian Nationalism 1928–1940* (Delhi, Oxford University Press: 1990); Hiren Mukerjee, *Bow of Burning Gold: A Story of Subhas Chandra Bose* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977). G. D. Khosla, *Last Days of Netaji* (Delhi: Thomas Press [India] Limited, 1974).
- 34 *Manila Tribune*, 29 June, 1943. The celebration gathering was also held in Davao. See “Philippine Islands Indian Independence League” OSS/ST Reel 9, No. 2, 66, NARA.
- 35 K. S. Giani, *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia-The Most Authentic of the INA and the Azad Hind Government* (Lahore: Singh Bros., 1947) 140.
- 36 *Manila Tribune*, 1 August 1943. Karam Singh Gill, ed. *On to Delhi!*, 97. The two representatives were Chana Singh and Sewani.
- 37 *Manila Tribune*, 22 and 26 October.
- 38 OSS reports said there were 18 volunteers from Manila and 14 from Davao. See “Philippine Islands Indian Independent League,” NARA, 66.
- 39 Among 2,600, 1,000 came from Thailand and 1,600 came from Malaya. The training lasted for 16 weeks. There were 15 such training centers including Rangoon, Penang, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Shanghai. See 1/2/45, Monograph 6, India Office Library, British Library, London, United Kingdom. For those from the Philippines, see *Manila Tribune*, December 11, 1943. According to the article, seven INA officers, not eight were sent. Bose hoped to have 1,000 each from Thailand, Burma and Malaya;

1,000 from Hong Kong and Shanghai; 1,000 from Sumatra and Borneo; 1,000 from Java, the Philippines and Celebes. See K. S. Giani, *Indian Independence Movement in East Asia*, 140.

40 *Manila Tribune*, 12 December 1943.

41 *Manila Tribune*, 23–26 and 28 November 1943.

42 *Manila Tribune*, 10 February 1944. See also "Philippine Islands Indian Independence League," OSS/ST, 66, NARA.

43 *Manila Tribune*, 14 April 1944.

44 The misery of the battle fronts was described in K. K. Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, 180–198. See also, Shigou Mera, *Inparu no Jujika (The Cross in Imphal)*, (Tokyo: Tanaka Haruo, 1987). Mera was the participant of the Imphal Operation. See also, 10621 Butai (military unit), ed. *Seikansha no shuki (Memoirs of the Survivors)* (Tokyo: privately published, 1977).

45 Banta Singh Kash, "The Indian Independence Movement in the Philippines" (typescript, n.d.), 2. In the meantime, the Indian Provisional Government moved to Singapore from Rangoon with cabinet members, IIL leaders, 100 women soldiers, another 100 civilians, and 300 INA soldiers. See K. S. Giani, *Indian Independence Movement in Far East*, 145.

46 One Indian woman lost her husband who was shot by Japanese soldiers and her three daughters were burned to death. Many Indians were also killed in the American bombings. *Sydney Sun*, 12 September 1945. See also Ofelia Regala-Angangco, 40.

47 They were 58 Hindus (mostly Sindhis) (58 men, 6 women, 7 children); 28 Sikhs (12 men, 4 women and 12 children); 15 Christians (5 men, 3 women, 1 child) and one Burmese woman. "Repatriation of British Indians and Burmese subjects per S. S. Janssen, Leaving Manila on August 18<sup>th</sup> for Sydney, Australia" National Archives of Australian, ACT Regional Office. See also *Sydney Sun*, 12 September 1945. *Daily Telegraph*, 30 September 1945.

- 48 Banta Singh Kash interview, 23 July 1994 at Freemont, California, USA. I thank Prof. Ajit Singh Rye for introducing me to Mr. Kash.
- 49 Banta Singh Kash interview.
- 50 *Manila Tribune*, 20 January 1945 and 6 February 1945. One of the defunct IILP published a booklet *Defense of India's "Collaborationist,"* trying to explain to the Filipinos the reason they "collaborated" with the Japanese military. The booklet was the re-print of the oral defense at the trial in India for the INA soldiers who were accused of treason by the British. See Bhulabhali J. Desai, *Defense of Indian's Collaborationists*, (Manila: Karam S. Gill, 1946).
- 51 For the number of the volunteers, see monograph 6, India Office Library, British Library.
- 52 Sinnappah Arasaratnam, "Malayan Indians: The Formation of Incipient Society," 209–210. See also K. S. Sandhu, "Indian Immigration and Settlement in Singapore," 784–85, both in K. S. Sandhu et al eds., *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*.
- 53 For the details of the trial, see K. K. Ghosh, *The Indian National Army*, 201–222. See also Nariaki Nakazato, "Indo kokumin-gun saiban o megutte" (On the Indian National Trial), in Nobuko Nagasaki ed., *Minami ajia no minzoku undo to nihon*, 115–125. Iwaichi Fujiwara, F. Kikan, 223–251.

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