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The Indian National Army and the Making of Indian Nationalism in Japanese-Occupied Malaya

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Abstract

From 1942 to 1945, the Indian National Army (INA) and its civilian wing, the Indian Independence League (IIL), operated in Japanese-occupied Asia to prepare for wars against Britain. Led by first Rash Behari Bose and then Subhas Chandra Bose, the INA recruited members from diverse Indian communities in Asia. This article examines the spiritual training that the INA launched in Malaya in 1943 to unite Indians outside the subcontinent. Through twenty-three lectures, the spiritual training taught a strand of Indian nationalism by creating a historical narrative, which helped reproduce the Indian National Congress's vision for India. Contrasting with existing literature that attributes the lectures solely to Chandra Bose, this article traces the lectures to the works of Behari Bose, Mohandas Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru. It further argues that Behari Bose's leadership of the IIL and the INA and the spread of Nehru's political ideas in Malaya shaped the lectures. Accordingly, the article restores the importance of the lesser-known Behari Bose in the INA and the Indian independence struggle. More broadly, it demonstrates the relationship between violent and non-violent movements, and questions the historical memory about the anti-colonialists who worked with the Axis powers.

Born in rural Bengal in 1886, Rash Behari Bose resolved to end British rule in India through violence. In 1912, he and Basant Kumar Biswas attempted to assassinate the viceroy, Charles Hardinge, in Delhi. Three years later, during the First World War, Behari Bose joined the *ghadar* party members in attempting to spark a revolution. However, the Indian police pre-empted the revolution by arresting many activists. Behari Bose reflected in his autobiography that the *ghadar* movement failed because civilians in India could not possess arms and ammunition.¹ Thus, he fled the Indian subcontinent not only to

¹ Rashbehari Bose, *Collected works: autobiography, writing and speeches*, ed. Asitabha Das (Calcutta, 2006), p. 29.

avoid jail but also to seek weapons and financial resources for the Indian independence struggle. In 1915, he arrived in Japan, which had become the beacon for Asian anti-colonialists after winning the Russo-Japanese War in 1905. While in Japan, Behari Bose published extensively in English and Japanese about the difficulties that Indians were facing, to gain sympathy from the Japanese public and government officials.² He also intermingled with ultranationalists, such as members of *genyōsha* (Dark Ocean Society) and *kokuryūkai* (Black Dragon Society).³ After decades of cultivating relationships with Japan's civilians and politicians, Behari Bose's efforts finally bore fruit in 1942. As Japan invaded and occupied Southeast Asia in the name of pan-Asianism in late 1941 and 1942, Behari Bose ventured into the region. Supported by the Japanese government, he took command of the Indian Independence League (IIL) and its military wing, the Indian National Army (INA).

To prepare the Indian communities in Southeast Asia to fight against the British forces, Behari Bose composed 'Discourses on culture and national subjects', a blueprint for the INA spiritual training. Behari Bose explained the objective of the 'Discourses' to the INA senior members: 'We must fight hard for our freedom. But we fight better when we can fight with a conviction for a particular cause or principle.' He added, 'It is, therefore, essential for us all to imbibe the spirit of our struggle.'⁴ In early 1943, the INA developed spiritual training, largely based on the eighteen articles in the 'Discourses', in Malaya to strengthen Indian nationalist sentiment among its members. Spiritual training remained important for the INA even after Behari Bose stepped down in July 1943. As his successor, Subhas Chandra Bose, publicly acknowledged in the same month, the training could allow every INA member to cultivate a 'strong anti-British spirit and the spirit of independence' and prepare them for 'the sacred task' of liberating India.⁵ The focus of this article is how the INA, under Behari Bose's direct leadership, promoted Indian nationalism through spiritual training, and I argue that the INA did so by blending the political thought of Behari Bose and two towering figures of the Indian National Congress (INC), namely, Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Understanding how the INA spiritual training developed can help recover the importance of Behari Bose, an oft-overlooked anti-colonialist, in the Indian independence struggle. The training consisted of twenty-three platoon lectures published by the IIL's Indian press in Singapore. The first two lectures were undated, but the third indicated that it was printed on 14 May 1943.⁶ At that time, Behari Bose was the leader of both the IIL and the INA, and he had

² Asitabha Das, 'Preface', in Bose, *Collected works*.

³ Joseph McQuade, *Fugitive of empire: Rash Behari Bose, Japan and the Indian independence struggle* (London, 2023), pp. 111, 114.

⁴ Bose, *Collected works*, p. 110.

⁵ 'Communique by I.I.L. headquarters announcing the aims and objects of the I.N.A. under the leadership of S.C. Bose, 5 July 1943', in Tilak Raj Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army: a documentary study* (5 vols., New Delhi, 2004), II, p. 146.

⁶ Department of Enlightenment and Culture of the Indian Independence League (DEC), 'Platoon lecture no. 3: Indian national evolution from 1857 to 1919', 14 May 1943, London, British Library (BL), MSS Eur A73.

launched comprehensive reforms of the two organizations in February 1943. The introduction of the spiritual training was part of the reforms to strengthen the INA. As the historian Rajesh Rai argues, the reforms initiated by Behari Bose laid a strong foundation for Chandra Bose to expand the Indian independence movement from July 1943 onwards.⁷ Yet, many scholarly works on the INA have neglected Behari Bose's influential reforms. Although the INA lectures began in May 1943, the few studies that discuss the spiritual training attribute it to Chandra Bose rather than to the then leader, Behari Bose.⁸ This represents one of the many instances where Behari Bose is overshadowed by the younger Bose and downplayed in the historiography of the INA.

In the same vein, scholarly works centring on IIL and INA operations often depict Behari Bose as a collaborator of Japan. They tend to dwell on the conflicts in 1942 between Behari Bose and Mohan Singh, commander of the first INA, on the one hand, and between Behari Bose and other members of the IIL executive body, its council of action, on the other. The studies explain how Mohan Singh and the council of action members opposed Japan's involvement in the Indian independence movement and detail how their clashes with Behari Bose led to the collapse of the first INA and the council of action in December 1942.⁹ As such, Behari Bose is portrayed as a servant of the Japanese government.

This article cautions against the ready acceptance of the notion of collaborator. Historical memory is always conditioned by structural factors. Before Japan's invasion, most parts of Southeast Asia were colonies instead of independent nation-states. There is a more common understanding that, during the Second World War, local politicians had to work with the Japanese regime out of necessity to avoid heavy casualties.¹⁰ In contrast, the Second Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945 threatened the survival of the Chinese nation-state. Thus, since 1949 the government and writers in the People's Republic of China have condemned Wang Jing-wei and his fellows in the Reorganized National Government of the Republic of China (RNG), who worked

⁷ Rajesh Rai, *Indians in Singapore, 1819–1945: diaspora in the colonial port-city* (New Delhi, 2014), p. 226.

⁸ Sugata Bose, *His majesty's opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India's struggle against empire* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2011), p. 257; Kevin Noles, "'Waging war against the king": recruitment and motivation of the Indian National Army, 1942–1945', *The British Empire at War Research Group*, research papers, no. 6 (London, 2014), pp. 1–48, at pp. 25–6.

⁹ For example, see Hugh Toye, 'The first Indian National Army, 1941–42', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 15 (1984), pp. 365–81; Peter Ward Fay, *The forgotten army: India's armed struggle for independence, 1942–1945* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1993); Chandar S. Sundaram, 'A paper tiger: the Indian National Army in battle, 1944–1945', *War and Society*, 13 (1995), pp. 317–41; A. C. Bose, 'South-east Asia as a theatre of India's struggle for freedom', *Jebat*, 26 (1999), pp. 85–99; E. Bruce Reynolds, 'The Indian community and the Indian independence movement in Thailand during World War II', in Paul H. Kratoska, ed., *Southeast Asian minorities in the wartime Japanese empire* (London, 2003), pp. 170–91; Robin Havers, 'Jai hind! The Indian National Army, 1942–45', in Matthew Bennett and Paul Latawski, eds., *Exile armies* (New York, NY, 2005), pp. 55–68; Joyce Chapman Lebra, *The Indian National Army and Japan* (1st reprint, Singapore, 2008).

¹⁰ Ken'ichi Goto, *Tensions of empire: Japan and Southeast Asia in the colonial and postcolonial world*, ed. Paul H. Kratoska (Athens, OH, 2003), p. 79.

with Japan from 1940 to 1945, as ‘traitors’.¹¹ In India, the INC came into power after the declaration of national independence in August 1947. Armed struggle was apparently at odds with the non-violence advocated by Gandhi of the INC. Consequently, as the historians Kama Maclean and Durba Ghosh point out, non-violence has eclipsed violence to dominate the history of anti-colonialism in India.¹² Under these circumstances, a negative image of Behari Bose, an anti-colonialist committed to violence, is more likely to emerge.

Analysing the content of the INA spiritual training can help overcome the negative connotations of collaborators and illustrate how nationalism was created in Japanese-occupied Asia. The INA lectures provided a sophisticated narrative of Indian history to evoke nationalist sentiment among members and to encourage them to fight for Indian independence. In this sense, Behari Bose and his INA fellows were the same as what the historian Jeremy Yellen calls the ‘patriotic collaborators’ in Burma and the Philippines during the Second World War. These people were not mere puppets of Japan. Rather, they worked with Japan for anti-colonial ends, striving for freedom and national independence.¹³ Moreover, recent studies about Wang Jing-wei and his RNG challenge the dichotomy of the occupier and the occupied implied in the notion of collaboration.¹⁴ Scholars have shown that RNG high officials occasionally pushed back against Japan’s policies.¹⁵ As the historian Liu Jie argues, the relationship between the RNG and Japan was ‘between collaboration and resistance’.¹⁶ Similarly, the INA contained Japan’s pan-Asianist rhetoric and avoided praising Japan excessively in its spiritual training. Therefore, while scholarly works that examine Behari Bose’s political thought put him in conversation mainly with Japan’s pan-Asianists, this article emphasizes an overlooked aspect of his activism: under his leadership, the INA attempted to decentre Japan and focused on promoting Indian nationalism.¹⁷

¹¹ Liu Jie, ‘Wang Jingwei and the “Nanjing nationalist government”’: between collaboration and resistance’, in Daqing Yang, Jie Liu, Hiroshi Mitani, and Andrew Gordon, eds., *Towards a history beyond borders: contentious issues in Sino-Japanese relations* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2012), pp. 205–39, at pp. 208, 215.

¹² Kama Maclean, *A revolutionary history of interwar India: violence, image, voice and text* (London, 2015), p. 1; Durba Ghosh, *Gentlemanly terrorists: political violence and the colonial state in India, 1919–1947* (Cambridge and New York, NY, 2017), p. 24.

¹³ Jeremy A. Yellen, *The greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere: when total empire met total war* (Ithaca, NY, 2019), pp. 20–1, 137.

¹⁴ David Serfass, ‘Collaboration and state making in China: defining the occupation state, 1937–1945’, *Twentieth-Century China*, 47 (2022), pp. 71–80, at p. 75; Dongyoun Hwang, ‘Wartime collaboration through a collaborator’s eyes: Zhou Fohai (1897–1947) and his diary’, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 24 (2023), pp. 52–71, at pp. 53–4.

¹⁵ Zhiyi Yang, *Poetry, history, memory: Wang Jingwei and China in dark times* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2023), p. 115; Liu Jie, ‘Wang Jingwei and the “Nanjing nationalist government”’, p. 222.

¹⁶ Liu Jie, ‘Wang Jingwei and the “Nanjing nationalist government”’, p. 205.

¹⁷ For example, see Eri Hotta, ‘Rash Behari Bose and his Japanese supporters: an insight into anti-colonial nationalism and pan-Asianism’, *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 8 (2006), pp. 116–32; Cemil Aydin, *The politics of anti-Westernism in Asia: visions of world order in pan-Islamic and pan-Asian thought* (New York, NY, 2007), pp. 115, 156–7, 175, 184. An exception is McQuade, *Fugitive of empire*.

The INA spiritual training also elucidates how violent and non-violent movements were intertwined. In the first half of the twentieth century, anti-colonialists in the subcontinent embraced varying political visions and tactics.¹⁸ Aside from Gandhi's non-violent campaigns, many individuals and organizations adopted violence, including the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) co-founded by Bhagat Singh. Maclean's study shows that the HSRA members interacted with and influenced the INC leaders.¹⁹ Likewise, Ghosh's research suggests that the revolutionary terrorists in Bengal used the cover of non-violent campaigns to recruit members.²⁰ Building on these recent scholarly works on interwar India that challenge the rigid dichotomy of violence and non-violence in the historiography of Indian nationalism, this article demonstrates how the INA based in Malaya reinterpreted Gandhi's speech to advocate for violent struggle against the British empire. It argues that, in the Second World War, violent and non-violent movements for Indian independence were entangled outside the subcontinent.

That the blending of the political ideas of Gandhi, Nehru, and Behari Bose took place in Malaya reflects the importance of the socio-political context in political messaging. The INC, to which Gandhi and Nehru belonged, had already extended its influence over Malaya through individuals and organizations prior to the Second World War. Some Indians, including K. P. Kesava Menon of the IIL's council of action, had participated in the INC's non-violent campaigns in the subcontinent before migrating to Malaya.²¹ The Central Indian Association of Malaya, established in 1936, consulted Nehru in 1937 about how they could support the INC's Indian independence movement.²² Given the INC's reach in Malaya, the Indian communities there were likely aware that Behari Bose disagreed with Gandhi over the use of violence and with Nehru over Japan's role in Asian independence movements. Thus, it would have been unconvincing to the audiences if the INA lectures had simply reproduced the ideas of either Behari Bose or the two INC leaders. Subsequently, in spiritual training, the INA mixed the speeches and writings of the three activists to create a collage of Indian nationalism.

Overall, this article adds to the studies of anti-colonial nationalism in India and beyond. It recovers the roles of an often neglected activist, Behari Bose, in the Indian independence struggle. Accordingly, it rejects his image as a puppet

¹⁸ For example, see Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (London and New York, NY, 2004); Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Indian nationalism and the "world forces": transnational and diasporic dimensions of the Indian freedom movement on the eve of the First World War', *Journal of Global History*, 2 (2007), pp. 325–44; Carolien Stolte and Harald Fischer-Tiné, 'Imagining Asia in India: nationalism and internationalism (ca. 1905–1940)', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 54 (2012), pp. 65–92; Shruti Kapila, 'A history of violence', *Modern Intellectual History*, 7 (2010), pp. 437–57; Janaki Bakhle, *Savarkar and the making of Hindutva* (Princeton, NJ, 2024).

¹⁹ Maclean, *A revolutionary history of interwar India*, pp. 3, 8.

²⁰ Ghosh, *Gentlemanly terrorists*, p. 11.

²¹ K. P. Kesava Menon, *Bygone days: autobiography*, trans. K. Kerala Varma (Kerala, 2013), p. 84.

²² K. A. Neelakandha Aiyer to Jawaharlal Nehru, 26 May 1937, New Delhi, Prime Ministers Museum and Library (PMML), AICC papers, 15/1937. PMML was formerly known as the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library before August 2023.

of the Japanese regime and, by extension, challenges the usefulness of understanding anti-colonialists through the notion of collaborator. Moreover, this study shows how a particular strand of Indian nationalism, based on the fusion of three political leaders' ideas, developed outside the subcontinent in Malaya. Thus, it illustrates the importance of Malaya's context in the making of Indian nationalism and the interconnection between violent and non-violent movements. Drawing from a wide range of sources, including newspapers, oral history records, and understudied publications by IIL members, the article makes three arguments about how the INA in Japanese-occupied Malaya developed spiritual training to foster Indian nationalism. First, Behari Bose's leadership of the IIL and the INA and the spread of Nehru's political ideas in Malaya were the main conditions that shaped the content of the INA spiritual training. Second, the INA lectures were derived from Behari Bose's 'Discourses', Nehru's *Glimpses of world history*, and Gandhi's *Hind swaraj (Indian home rule)*. Third, the spiritual training promoted Indian nationalism by blending the three activists' works. Specifically, it created a narrative of Indian history that proceeded from the golden age of the Indo-Aryan civilization, punctuated by humiliation at the hands of the British empire, to the redemption of India's glory by the INC in the contemporary period. Several ideas were prominent throughout the INA lectures, including Hindustan being an inclusive place for all communities, Hindus and Muslims being historically united, and the INC representing the whole nation of India. By highlighting these ideas and calling for the complete independence of India, the INA replicated the INC's vision for India, which the INC advanced in the years preceding national independence.²³

I

The INA and the IIL operated within Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere from 1942 to 1945. Since July 1941, the Japanese government had determined the establishment of the co-prosperity sphere as its central wartime policy. According to Japan's foreign minister Matsuoka Yōsuke, the pan-Asian union, which covered the present areas of Northeast and Southeast Asia, aimed at liberating 'the peoples of the Orient from the shackles of Western Europe' and eliminating 'the white race bloc' from the region. To achieve these goals, the Japanese government facilitated the co-operation of anti-colonial nationalists across the co-prosperity sphere.²⁴ It also provided financial and military support for anti-colonial movements, such as the violent struggle staged by the IIL and the INA for Indian independence from the British empire.

The IIL and the INA originally had two centres of power: one was in Southeast Asia; the other was in Japan. Two months before Japan invaded Thailand and British Malaya in December 1941, the Japanese intelligence officer Fujiwara Iwaichi approached a former *ghadar* party member, Pritam Singh,

²³ For the INC's vision for India before 1947, see Benjamin Zachariah, 'The Indian state, Nehruvian (anti) nationalism, and the question of belonging', *Contemporary Perspectives*, 3 (2009), pp. 181–204, at p. 189; Zachariah, *Nehru*, pp. 64, 141–2.

²⁴ Yellen, *The greater East Asia co-prosperity sphere*, pp. 4–5.

in Bangkok.²⁵ After the *ghadar* global revolution failed to overthrow the British empire in 1915, some former *ghadarites* had maintained their anti-colonial activities. Pritam Singh, for example, organized the former *ghadar* party members and their supporters in Bangkok under the Indian independence league. In late 1941, noting that they saw Britain as a common enemy, Fujiwara convinced Pritam Singh that the Japanese government would assist his league in liberating India from British rule.²⁶ Hence, the first branch of the IIL in Southeast Asia was formally established on the basis of Pritam Singh's organization. When Japan launched the attack against Malaya in December 1941, Pritam Singh followed Fujiwara and his intelligence unit, *Fujiwara kikan*, to northern Kedah. There, they persuaded Captain Mohan Singh of the British Indian army's 1/14th Punjab battalion to defect to the newly formed IIL. Mohan Singh also accepted Fujiwara's invitation to raise an Indian army to fight alongside the Japanese troops against Britain.²⁷ While the *Fujiwara kikan* was helping to organize the IIL in Thailand and Malaya, the Japanese high command appointed Behari Bose and his colleague, A. M. Nair, to coordinate the efforts of Indian anti-colonialists in Asia.²⁸ In February 1942, after two short months of battles, Japan brought the British forces in the Malay peninsula and Singapore to their knees. Subsequently, the Japanese media announced that the IIL had been formally set up under the leadership of Behari Bose, with its headquarters in Tokyo.²⁹ Meanwhile, Japan's victory over Britain in Southeast Asia had repercussions in India. It encouraged Gandhi and his supporters in the INC to demand that Britain quit India. The INC passed the Quit India Resolution in August 1942, urging the people in India to join in civil disobedience actions. Without hesitation, the Indian police arrested all the top leaders of the INC, including Gandhi and Nehru.³⁰

In the first half of 1942, the IIL held two conferences in Tokyo and Bangkok so that the representatives of various IIL branches across the co-prosperity sphere could collaborate with each other. At the Tokyo conference in March, the delegates agreed that the aim of the IIL movement was to fight for the complete independence of India from any kind of foreign domination. To reach that goal, the attendees at the Bangkok conference in June decided to officially establish the INA as the IIL's military wing.³¹ They also elected the executive body of the IIL, namely the council of action, which comprised Behari Bose as president and four members from Malaya: G. Q. Gilani, Kesava Menon, N. Raghavan, and Mohan Singh.³²

²⁵ Lebra, *The Indian National Army and Japan*, p. 4.

²⁶ Tilak Raj Sareen, *Japan and the Indian National Army* (Delhi, 1986), p. 14; Lebra, *The Indian National Army and Japan*, p. 4.

²⁷ Fay, *The forgotten army*, pp. 74–5.

²⁸ McQuade, *Fugitive of empire*, p. 201.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

³⁰ Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia* (5th edn, London, 2022), p. 148.

³¹ Kesava Menon, *Bygone days*, p. 254; 'Resolutions passed by the Bangkok conference confirming the collaboration of Indians in East Asia with the Japanese for overthrow of the Western powers, spells out the demand for expansion of Indian National Army, 20 June 1942', in Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army*, 1, p. 150.

³² 'Resolutions passed by the Bangkok conference', pp. 152–3.

Tensions within the IIL and the INA had been simmering early on. On the one hand, Mohan Singh's pursuit of authority was concerning. At the Tokyo conference, Behari Bose and Nair were surprised to find that Mohan Singh did not consult them before drafting the Indian prisoners of war in Singapore into the INA.³³ Three months later, Mohan Singh ignited opposition from Behari Bose and other delegates at the Bangkok conference when he proposed that the INA soldiers should take an oath of loyalty to him personally.³⁴ On the other hand, most council of action members distrusted Behari Bose and the Japanese government. Kesava Menon believed that Behari Bose lacked 'either the capability to think independently or the willpower to act according to his own conviction'.³⁵ For him, Behari Bose was merely a servant of the Japanese government. He was not alone in holding this view. All the members of the council of action, except Behari Bose, resigned in early December 1942 because they maintained that the Japanese government threatened the autonomy of the IIL.³⁶ Mohan Singh even accused Behari Bose of collaborating with the Japanese regime and betraying 400 million people in India. Afterwards, Mohan Singh attempted to dissolve the INA, leading Behari Bose to sack him as the commander and place him under house arrest on 29 December 1942. The INA activities then came to a standstill, and thousands of soldiers withdrew from the army.³⁷

Facing the crisis of the Indian independence movement, Behari Bose initiated reforms of the IIL and the INA in February 1943. Due to the collapse of the council of action, he could directly control both the IIL and the INA for the first time, until he was succeeded in July 1943. Under Behari Bose's leadership, the IIL moved the headquarters to Singapore, and the INA persuaded about 13,000 soldiers to rejoin the army. Moreover, the INA expanded by recruiting civilians. It established the *Bharat* youth training centre in Kuala Lumpur, where qualified youngsters could attend a four-month course and then join the INA upon graduation. As a result, around a thousand civilians from Malaya, including Singapore, had been trained to become INA soldiers by late April 1943.³⁸ The number of INA members in Asia grew to 45,000 after Chandra Bose took over the leadership from Behari Bose. Coming from Indian communities of diverse backgrounds, many INA soldiers were former British Indian army members, among them Punjabi Muslims, Sikhs, and Pathans; the rest included plantation workers from Malaya, traders from Burma, and shopkeepers from Thailand.³⁹

II

Spiritual training was part of the reforms, and it was developed by the Department of Enlightenment and Culture of the IIL. After Mohan Singh

³³ McQuade, *Fugitive of empire*, pp. 202–3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

³⁵ Kesava Menon, *Bygone days*, p. 252.

³⁶ Lebra, *The Indian National Army and Japan*, pp. 94–5; Kesava Menon, *Bygone days*, pp. 259–60.

³⁷ Rai, *Indians in Singapore*, p. 224.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 226–7, 230.

³⁹ Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, p. 150.

attempted to dissolve the INA and most council of action members resigned in December 1942, Behari Bose was worried that Indian communities would lose faith in the Indian independence movement.⁴⁰ To restore public confidence, he reorganized both the IIL and the INA.⁴¹ He established the military bureau within the IIL in February 1943.⁴² Under the military bureau was a new department known as the Department of Enlightenment and Culture, which was tasked with producing a series of platoon lectures to promote patriotism and broaden the outlook of INA members.⁴³ Whether they were trained to become soldiers or officers, the INA members had to attend the lectures, which were given by senior officers every Sunday and on public holidays. They also had to consolidate their learning after physical training each day.⁴⁴ Besides listening to the lectures, soldiers and officers held group discussions on related topics. As the INA officer Girishchandra Kothari recalled, during his training in Singapore in 1944, he often discussed warfare and Indian independence with his peers.⁴⁵

One important factor that shaped the content of the INA lectures was Behari Bose's leadership of the IIL and the INA since February 1942. Behari Bose reasoned that modern warfare was a psychological competition more than a physical one. He therefore wrote eighteen short articles in 1942 and compiled them under the title 'Discourses' so that the INA senior officers could deliver his writing verbally to the members to cultivate their spirit of struggle.⁴⁶ As discussed below, many platoon lectures echoed Behari Bose's 'Discourses'. Moreover, when he co-founded the IIL with Nair in Tokyo in February 1942, they had already decided that the IIL would act in support of the INC and avoid any activities that might undermine the INC.⁴⁷ During the reforms of February 1943, Behari Bose reiterated the IIL's supportive role of the INC.⁴⁸ Thus, in its spiritual training, the INA highlighted the contribution of the INC towards Indian independence.

Another factor that conditioned the INA's spiritual training was the spread of Nehru's political ideas in Malaya, where most INA members originated. The

⁴⁰ 'Statement by Rash Behari Bose; informs about the revised plan for the role of the I.L.L. and I.N.A. in the light of the resignation of the members of the council of action, 5 Apr. 1943', in Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army*, II, p. 63.

⁴¹ 'Rash Behari Bose to Iwakuro requesting permission for re-organizing the Indian National Army (INA) after the dismissal of General Mohan Singh, 6 Feb. 1943', in Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army*, II, p. 17.

⁴² 'A Yellape to N. Raghavan informs about the developments in Singapore regarding the re-organization of the I.N.A. and I.L.L. under the leadership of Rash Behari Bose; refers to questionnaire handed over to the officers for their consent to join the I.N.A., 12 Feb. 1943', in Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army*, II, p. 24.

⁴³ 'Appendix IV: unity of India, past and present', in Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army*, II, p. 327.

⁴⁴ 'Re-organization of the I.L.L. by S.C. Bose in the light of the new wave of interest shown by the Indians in East Asia after his arrival, 13 July 1943', in Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army*, II, p. 156.

⁴⁵ Girishchandra Kothari, interview by Dr Daniel Chew, 30 Apr. 1985, Singapore, The National Archives of Singapore, Oral History Center (OHC), interview 10, transcript.

⁴⁶ Bose, *Collected works*, pp. 110–11.

⁴⁷ McQuade, *Fugitive of empire*, p. 202.

⁴⁸ 'Rash Behari Bose to Iwakuro', in Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army*, II, p. 18.

writings of the INC leader, including *Glimpses of world history*, published in 1934, could be found in libraries and bookstores in Malaya in the late 1930s.⁴⁹ Moreover, in September 1940, two theatres in Singapore featured an interview between Nehru and Chiang Kai Shek of the Chinese Nationalist Party, once again bringing to light the cordial relationship between India and the opponent of Japan.⁵⁰ Nehru's political messages were also spread through his visit to Malaya in May 1937. Throughout his tour, he urged the Indian communities in Malaya to support India's struggle for complete independence, as the fate of India would affect their welfare.⁵¹ He also warned that, if Japan attacked India, the East Asian power would face an unprecedented 'ring of hostility'.⁵² With Nehru's visit, publications, and documentary films, people in Malaya likely understood that, while the prominent leaders of the INC and the INA shared the goal of achieving Indian independence, they held opposing views towards issues such as Japan's ambition and revolutionary tactics.

Behari Bose disagreed with Nehru and Gandhi over Japan's roles in the political development of Asia. Since the early 1920s, he had increasingly believed that India could only become an independent nation-state by seeking assistance from Japan.⁵³ During the reforms of the IIL and the INA in March 1943, he stressed the same idea when speaking to Indians in Southeast Asia, and he attempted to convince the audience that Japan was sincere in helping India attain national independence.⁵⁴ In contrast to Behari Bose, Nehru heavily criticized Japan's aggression. In *Glimpses of world history*, for example, he condemned Japan for harassing China through the twenty-one demands in the First World War and the invasion of Manchuria in 1931.⁵⁵ He further denounced Japanese soldiers for committing 'one of the most ghastly massacres of modern times' during the incursion of Shanghai in 1932.⁵⁶ To oppose Japan's full-scale attack against China in 1937, Nehru called for the public in India to boycott Japanese goods.⁵⁷ He also declared 9 January 1938 as China day to encourage people in India to collect and send medical supplies to China.⁵⁸ Likewise, Gandhi was critical of Japan's violence against its neighbours. In his interview with the Chinese delegates at a missionary conference in Tamil Nadu on 31

⁴⁹ *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser*, 12 Sept. 1936 and 22 Sept. 1939; *Straits Times*, 30 July 1939; *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*, 18 Aug. 1939.

⁵⁰ *Malaya Tribune*, 5 Sept. 1940.

⁵¹ Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Address to the Indians in Malaya, 2 June 1937', in S. Gopal, ed., *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru, series 1* (15 vols., New Delhi, 1972–82), viii, pp. 666–7.

⁵² *Straits Times*, 24 May 1937.

⁵³ McQuade, *Fugitive of empire*, p. 133.

⁵⁴ 'Statement of Rash Behari Bose assuring the Indians in South-east Asia about Japanese sincerity, 9 Mar. 1943', in Sareen, ed., *Indian National Army*, ii, pp. 35–6.

⁵⁵ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of world history* (2 vols., Allahabad, 1935), ii, p. 1306.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1311.

⁵⁷ Nehru, 'Boycott of Japanese goods, 1 Oct. 1937', in *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, viii, p. 725.

⁵⁸ Nehru, 'Observance of China Day, 1938, 24 Dec. 1937', in *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, viii, p. 733.

December 1938, Gandhi asserted that Japan 'must be blamed for what it has done and is doing'.⁵⁹

Numerous IIL members shared the views of Nehru and Gandhi towards Japan. Kesava Menon of the council of action maintained that the Japanese government was not helping the IIL, but rather using it for Japan's wars against the Allied powers.⁶⁰ His distrust towards Japan grew when he served as the minister of the publication division of the IIL from June to December 1942. Although Japanese officials had promised Kesava Menon that he could fully control the IIL's broadcasts, he soon found that the officials intervened in the IIL's operation without discussing it with him.⁶¹ Moreover, many oral interview records preserved at the National Archives of Singapore reveal that IIL members had little trust of the Japanese government after learning about the brutality of Japanese soldiers. For example, one Samya Velasamy Ratnaveloo witnessed an event in Kuala Lumpur where Japanese soldiers 'cut the Chinese heads [and] put the heads at all the junctions'.⁶² In fact, even before Japan invaded Malaya, Indian communities there had heard of the soldiers' atrocities in Nanjing in 1937.⁶³ Indians in Malaya therefore 'did not have much faith in the Japanese', according to Kanichat Raghava Menon, a journalist of the IIL's Indian press.⁶⁴

In short, Behari Bose, Gandhi, and Nehru intended to liberate India from the British empire. However, their political ideas, especially in relation to Japan, did not completely overlap. Therefore, the INA mixed the works of the three political leaders in the platoon lectures so that it could present itself as the INC's military wing more persuasively. In the process, the INA created a unique strand of Indian nationalism to stimulate the anti-colonial spirit of its members.

III

The spiritual training consisted of twenty-three lectures. Dated from May to August 1943, the lectures were written in English and Hindustani, and they were printed as pocket-size booklets.⁶⁵ The first five lectures constituted the backbone of the whole training programme: they denounced Britain for exploiting the people and economic resources in India and traced the rise of the nationalist movement spearheaded by the INC. Although the rest of the

⁵⁹ Mohandas Gandhi, 'Interview to Timothy Tingfang Lew, December 31, 1938', in The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, ed., *The collected works of Mahatma Gandhi* (100 vols., New Delhi, 1956–94), LXXVIII, p. 263.

⁶⁰ Kesava Menon, *Bygone days*, p. 252.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 255–6.

⁶² Samya Velasamy Ratnaveloo, interview by Dr Daniel Chew, 7 May 1994, OHC, interview 1, transcript.

⁶³ Kanichat Raghava Menon, interview by Chua Ser Koon, 1 Mar. 1982, OHC, interview 3, transcript; Mehervan Singh, interview by Pitt Kuan Wah, 24 May 1985, OHC, interview 17, transcript.

⁶⁴ Raghava Menon, OHC, interview 3, transcript.

⁶⁵ 'Army signaling scribbling book', n.d., Washington D.C., Library of Congress, Asian Division collections, WWII Burmese records, I.1-(1) IIL youth movement/volunteer.

lectures included some new information, much of their content repeated the first five lessons.

The influence of Behari Bose left its mark on the structure and presentation of the platoon lectures. In his 'Discourses', he warned that INA members had received little education and had limited time before fighting the British armies, so that, when the commanders delivered the 'Discourses' to their juniors, they should repeat the subject matters in various ways to allow the audiences to grasp the content.⁶⁶ His instructions could explain why the content of the first five platoon lectures was reiterated in the latter lessons. Take the third lecture, 'Indian national evolution from 1857 to 1919', as an example. It censured the colonial government of India for racially discriminating against local people. For instance, the viceroy George Curzon barred Indians from holding office: 'He made race and not merit, the test of qualification.'⁶⁷ Later, this criticism against the government, and, indeed, the same line about Curzon, reappeared in the eighth lecture, 'British foreign policy against India'.⁶⁸ Likewise, the nineteenth lecture, 'Indian industries, past and present', condemned the colonial regime for destroying indigenous industries and displacing Indian workers and artists, a critique that had already been introduced in the second lecture, about British aggression in India.⁶⁹

The platoon lectures interpreted the recent history of India as a humiliation inflicted by the British empire. Apart from the aforementioned examples of racial discrimination and economic exploitation, the lectures followed Behari Bose's 'Discourses' and Gandhi's thoughts to criticize colonial education policies in India. According to Behari Bose, under British rule, education in indigenous languages was nearly lost, and the literacy rates of Indians had remained stagnant in the previous fifty years.⁷⁰ Gandhi critiqued colonial schooling more extensively in *Hind swaraj*, which was first published in 1909. He argued that English education in India failed to teach students what they would have learned in ancient Indian education, namely managing their minds and senses and building their character. As such, English education 'does not make us men' and 'It does not enable us to do our duty.' Moreover, by forcing Indians to study in a foreign language, education enslaved the whole nation of India.⁷¹ The INA lecture 'Education in India' replicated many of Gandhi's ideas. Even its subtitle underlined that 'British education in India promotes slave mentality'. In the main text, the lecture attacked the colonial government for eliminating ancient Indian education, which could strengthen people's character, the purity of bodies and minds, and the Indian race as a whole. Replacing this ancient Indian education, the

⁶⁶ Bose, *Collected works*, p. 111.

⁶⁷ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 3', p. 2.

⁶⁸ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 8: British foreign policy towards India', n.d., BL, MSS Eur A73.

⁶⁹ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 19: Indian industries, past, and present', 14 July 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 5; DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 2: British aggression in India', n.d., BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Bose, *Collected works*, pp. 131–4.

⁷¹ M. K. Gandhi, *Hind swaraj*, in Anthony J. Parel, ed., *Hind swaraj and other writings* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 102–4.

government promoted education in the English language. It was, the INA lecture argued, 'decadent, demasculated [emasculated], unworthy'.⁷²

Furthermore, one INA lecture denounced the colonial government for intentionally dividing the people of India. For instance, Curzon partitioned Bengal in 1905 to separate Hindus from Muslims on the one hand, and nationalists from loyalists on the other hand. In addition, despite Indians' support for the British military in the First World War, the colonial government had refused to keep its promise to grant self-government to Indians. Instead, the government controlled India further by introducing the Rowlatt Act in 1919, which allowed the police to arrest and punish anti-colonialists without trial.⁷³

To redeem India from humiliation, the INA evoked the term 'Hindustan' in its spiritual training. As the historian Manan Ahmed Asif notes, the idea of Hindustan emerged long before the British colonization of the subcontinent. Different people deployed the term for different purposes. Hindustan was associated with anti-colonialism, as shown in the cases of the *ghadar* party and the HSRA. In his poem *Hamara desh* ('Our homeland'), published in 1904, Muhammad Iqbal indicated that Hindustan was an inclusive place for all communities. For Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who published *Hindutva: who is a Hindu?* in 1923, Hindustan (as he spelled it) was a homeland for the Hindu race, but not for Muslims and Christians. In *Glimpses of world history*, Nehru defined Hindustan through a geographical feature, namely the river of Indus or Sindus, and he considered India and Hindustan synonymous.⁷⁴

The INA lectures conjured up Hindustan as an inclusive place. The opening of the first lecture remarked that 'our country, BHARAT MATA or HINDUSTAN', was subject to British colonial rule.⁷⁵ From there, the lectures aligned with Nehru's work and employed the terms India and Hindustan interchangeably. They went on to suggest that Hindustan was a homeland for people practising any religious traditions, including Hindus and Muslims: 'The Muslims do not differ from the Hindus in their blood' and 'Both Hindus and Muslims belong to the same race or same mixture of race.'⁷⁶ The notion that Hindus and Muslims share the same blood and, therefore, belong to India echoed Gandhi's thoughts. As he expressed in *Hind swaraj*, Hindus and Muslims 'own the same ancestors' and 'the same blood runs through their veins'.⁷⁷

The INA lectures stressed the unity of India, especially Hindu-Muslim unity, by projecting the Mughal period as the golden age. In this sense, the lectures reproduced the narrative provided by Nehru. As Nehru wrote in *Glimpses of world history*, Muslims invaded India in the tenth century, damaging many buildings, sculptures, and monuments.⁷⁸ However, during the Mughal period, Muslim rulers were no longer outsiders to India. According to Nehru, the

⁷² DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 16: education in India', 25 June 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 5.

⁷³ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 3', pp. 2, 5–6.

⁷⁴ Manan Ahmed Asif, *The loss of Hindustan: the invention of India* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2020), pp. 2, 7, 9, 32.

⁷⁵ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 1: unity of India, past and present', n.d., BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁷ Gandhi, *Hind swaraj*, p. 53.

⁷⁸ Nehru, *Glimpses of world history*, 1, pp. 199–200.

Mughal emperors had no connections beyond India and were ‘as much Indian as the Hindus’.⁷⁹ His account of Muslims – an invader being assimilated in India – was retold in the INA spiritual training. One lecture asserted that the Mughal rulers always saw Delhi as their capital and their motherland. It further attributed the Mughal kings’ sense of belonging to the ‘noble’ and ‘tolerant’ Indian culture that could assimilate the ‘foreign Islamic culture’ easily.⁸⁰

The INA lectures followed Behari Bose’s ‘Discourses’ and Nehru’s work to highlight the contribution of Akbar, among all Mughal emperors, towards Indian unity.⁸¹ In his ‘Discourses’, Behari Bose praised ‘the Great Moghul Emperor’ Akbar for allowing people of different religious traditions to live peacefully.⁸² For the same reason, Nehru held Akbar in high regard. According to Nehru, Akbar built *ibādat khāna* (the house of worship) to encourage debates among scholars representing different religious faiths. Moreover, he abolished taxation on Hindu pilgrims and on non-Muslim subjects. For Nehru, Akbar’s policies demonstrated the belief in the synthesis of Islam and Hinduism as the foundation of national unity. Akbar placed ‘the ideal of a common Indian nationhood above the claims of separatist religion’ and thus, argued Nehru, he was the father of Indian nationalism.⁸³

The INA lectures’ emphasis that Hindus and Muslims belonged to the same race and that they were historically united refuted official British narratives about the two communities in India. The Indian Statutory Committee, consisting of seven British parliamentary members, visited India in 1928 to examine constitutional reforms. Two years later, the committee published their findings in a two-volume report (commonly known as the Simon report). Racializing Hindus and Muslims, the report claimed that Muslims ‘were not originally or exclusively Indian’ and were essentially different from Hindus because they belonged to different races. Moreover, the report asserted that the conflicting religious practices of Hindus and Muslims caused the ‘communal disorder’. The Hindu–Muslim rivalry was so prevalent that the viceroy Lord Irwin considered it ‘the dominant issue in Indian life’, and the Simon report argued that it was a major roadblock to constitutional reforms in India.⁸⁴ In short, the British imperial government portrayed Hindus and Muslims as inherently different in race and religious practices, and argued that such differences led to violent conflicts. This story arc allowed the British government to claim that India was not ready for self-government. Thus, through the platoon lectures arguing that Hindus and Muslims were both Indian and were united, the INA disrupted the mythical foundation of colonial rule in India.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Behari Bose’s attitude towards Hindu–Muslim unity was more ambiguous outside his ‘Discourses’ and the INA lectures. In the late 1930s, he maintained correspondence with Savarkar.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1, p. 390.

⁸⁰ DEC, ‘Platoon lecture no. 1’, pp. 3–4.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Bose, *Collected works*, p. 136.

⁸³ Nehru, *Glimpses of world history*, 1, p. 482.

⁸⁴ Indian Statutory Commission, *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission* (17 vols., London, 1930), 1, pp. 24, 26–7.

In *Hindutva*, Savarkar argued that Hindu was a race rather than a religion and that Hindus were people who saw Hindusthan as their sole homeland. He continued that, because Muslims and Christians considered Arabia as their holy land, their love towards Hindusthan was inevitably divided. As such, Muslims and Christians could never be Hindu and would always be outsiders in Hindusthan.⁸⁵ Writing to Savarkar in July 1938, Behari Bose accused Muslims in India of practising communalism and proposed that 'Instead of mis-using our energy for the so-called Hindu-Muslim entents [sic], let us strengthen our Hindu community first'. He predicted that, when Hindus became powerful and united, Muslims would work with them to fight for Indian independence.⁸⁶ Put differently, Behari Bose might support Hindu-Muslim unity, but the precondition for it was the strengthening of the Hindu race. He likely understood that not all INA members, many of whom were Muslims, would share his political views. Thus, to cater to the readers and align more closely with the stance of Gandhi and Nehru, the INA lectures underscored Hindustan as an inclusive territory where Hindus and Muslims were united.

The glorious history of India in the INA lectures did not start with Hindu-Muslim unity in the Mughal empire; rather it stretched all the way back to the Indo-Aryan civilization. One achievement of India that the lectures dwelled on was panchayat, or the village council system. According to the lectures, during the Indo-Aryan civilization, the rest of the world was primitive. However, thanks to panchayats that had already been installed, people in India co-owned and cultivated land together, which allowed them to live comfortably with adequate material resources and develop close interpersonal relationships.⁸⁷ Panchayats survived the aggression of capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by encouraging mutual help among Indians and resistance against oppression.⁸⁸ Projecting the present to the distant past, the INA lectures reminded the readers that the mission of reviving panchayats and the challenges against British imperialism in the Second World War went hand in hand.⁸⁹ Such a focus on panchayats corresponded to Nehru's interpretation of Indian history. Nehru suggested that, as panchayats spread across the subcontinent ages ago, they culturally unified India.⁹⁰ Around the ninth and tenth centuries, panchayats could already exercise self-government by collecting taxes and adjudicating disputes among villagers. And it was not only men who participated in village management: women could also serve on the panchayats and their committees. In the eyes of Nehru, panchayats made India a cultural unit and an advanced political entity.⁹¹ For him and the INA,

⁸⁵ Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Hindutva: who is a Hindu?* (5th edn, Bombay, 1969), p. 113.

⁸⁶ Rash Behari Bose to V. D. Savarkar, 11 July 1938, New Delhi, PMML, Savarkar private papers, R6450/23.

⁸⁷ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 18: agriculture in India, past and present', 2 July 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 1.

⁸⁸ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 19', p. 3.

⁸⁹ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 15: our mission in life, as Indians, first and last', 21 June 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 5.

⁹⁰ Nehru, *Glimpses of world history*, 1, p. 203.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 204–7.

the panchayat represented the glory of India for it demonstrated Indians' capability of self-government and therefore opposed the continuation of British rule over India.

IV

The INA lectures recognized the INC as the contemporary hero of uniting the subcontinent, which could redeem the glory of India from the humiliation inflicted by the British empire. The celebration of the INC's achievements paralleled Behari Bose's 'Discourses' and his decision to position the INA as the military wing of the INC. In his 'Discourses', Behari Bose offered numerous examples to illustrate how the INC had been uniting India since its establishment in 1885. Among the INC leaders, Gandhi was highlighted. For example, he was commended for leading the Khilafat movement in 1922 to rejuvenate the harmonious relationship between Hindus and Muslims in India.⁹² Moreover, as Behari Bose suggested, the INC could foster co-operation among communities, including Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. That so many Muslims and Christians became affiliated with the INC testified to the political party's success in unifying India.⁹³ Building on Behari Bose's 'Discourses', the INA lectures celebrated the contribution of Gandhi and the INC towards Indian unity. The first lecture, for example, extolled Gandhi for guiding the INC to organize the masses into groups, such as the All India Peasant Association and the All India Trade Union Congress, to pursue complete independence from Britain.⁹⁴ The lectures also replicated Behari Bose's argument in the 'Discourses' that the INC had been gaining popular support across India: 'It has more Hindus in it than the Hindu Mahasabha, and more Mohamedans [sic] in it than the Muslim League.'⁹⁵ Thus, according to the INA, the INC was instrumental to the unity of India, and the development of the INC and the Indian nation was identical.⁹⁶

However, as mentioned above, Gandhi and Behari Bose held contrasting opinions about the ways to achieve Indian independence. For example, they disagreed not only over whether to seek Japan's support of the Indian anti-colonial movement but also about the use of violence against the British forces. In a letter to Chandra Bose in January 1938, Behari Bose expressed his opinion that, although the INC had contributed to the independence movement during the civil disobedience campaigns in the early twentieth century, the political party had become 'an inert body that prioritized "evolution" over "revolution"'. He believed that Indians should abandon non-violence, Gandhi's major principle.⁹⁷ Moreover, Behari Bose maintained in his correspondence with Savarkar in July 1938 that 'force is the arbiter of

⁹² Bose, *Collected works*, p. 135.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁹⁴ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 1', p. 5.

⁹⁵ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 5: Indian national evolution from 1930–1943', 21 May 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Quoted in McQuade, *Fugitive of empire*, p. 197.

[the] destiny of a nation'. Thus, rather than waiting for Britain to grant liberty to India, Indians should take that liberty through violence.⁹⁸

To better position the INA as part of the INC, the INA lectures suppressed the difference between Behari Bose and Gandhi over the use of violence. The historian John Solomon notes that the INA downplayed its ironies of using Gandhi and Nehru as symbols through censorship. For example, while the INA published photographs of Gandhi and Nehru in its periodicals, it censored the two INC leaders' declaration of support for the Allied powers.⁹⁹ Yet, the platoon lectures showed that the INA had another sophisticated strategy to bind itself to the INC. First, the lectures acknowledged that non-violent campaigns led by Gandhi and the INC helped Indian nationalism to grow. For instance, the non-violent struggles, including *satyagraha* (truth force) and the civil disobedience movements in the 1930s, gathered the Indian masses for the cause of independence. Even the colonial government's violent suppression failed to contain them.¹⁰⁰ The lectures contended that, thereafter, every Indian shared the same goal with the INC of attaining independence for India. Every Indian, therefore, was 'a Congressite at heart'.¹⁰¹ Following this logic, all INA members were part of the INC.

However, this argument did not lead to the conclusion that the INA would adopt the INC's non-violent tactics. Rather, the INA lectures argued for the use of violence by extracting Gandhi's criticism against the British policy of disarming Indians from the INC's declaration of *purna swaraj* (complete independence) in January 1930.¹⁰² One lecture read, 'Spiritually, compulsory dispossession of arms has made us unmanly and we cannot look after ourselves, let alone defend against foreign aggression.'¹⁰³ While Indians in the subcontinent were stripped of military power, the INA possessed weapons. Thus, the lectures urged the INA members to fight 'at any cost, even at the risk of our lives' for Indian independence.¹⁰⁴ Through these strategic moves, the INA negotiated its main difference with certain INC leaders, stirred up nationalist sentiment, and justified its violent struggle against the British empire.

Aside from following the INC, the INA lectures encouraged the members to learn from Japan. The lectures portrayed Japan as a mighty military power, especially compared to Britain. For example, while Japan had gained victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Britain had not 'won a single battle in the open field by fair means in the annals of history'.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, the British army could hardly function without a giant commissariat, but

⁹⁸ Bose to Savarkar, 11 July 1938, PMML, Savarkar private papers, R6450/23.

⁹⁹ John Solomon, 'Coercion and consent: being "Indian" in Malaya during the Japanese occupation', in Christina Twomey and Ernest Koh, eds., *The Pacific war: aftermaths, remembrance and culture* (London, 2014), p. 141.

¹⁰⁰ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 3', p. 6; DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 5', p. 3.

¹⁰¹ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 9: our policy, aims and objects in the Indian National Army', 29 May 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73, pp. 2, 4.

¹⁰² D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* (8 vols., New Delhi, 1951-4), III, p. 12.

¹⁰³ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 5', p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 9', p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 3', p. 4.

Japanese soldiers could carry out operations independently.¹⁰⁶ Most positive remarks about Japan in the INA lectures originated from Behari Bose's 'Discourses'. For instance, to demonstrate Japanese people's qualities, such as bravery and patriotism, the INA lecture on 'Bushido in Nippon' copied the examples from Behari Bose's article 'Indo-Japanese friendship'. Specifically, both texts expressed admiration for the three Japanese suicide bombers who sacrificed their lives to facilitate the invasion of Shanghai in 1932.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, both pieces shed a positive light on bushido. Behari Bose suggested that the characteristics of bushido, including loyalty, self-sacrifice, and love of country, made every Japanese person a 'potential warrior'.¹⁰⁸ Likewise, the INA lecture emphasized the national spirit and self-renunciation promoted by bushido.¹⁰⁹ By duplicating Behari Bose's 'Discourses' and highlighting certain qualities of the Japanese people, the INA lectures encouraged members to take up arms and sacrifice their lives for Indian independence. However, in contrast to the 'Discourses', in which nearly all articles saluted the Japanese state, the INA spiritual training confined the compliment to five out of twenty-three lectures.¹¹⁰ Such restraint could be a response to the aforementioned INA crisis in December 1942, which emerged from the members' distrust towards the Japanese government.

V

Nationalism was one of the many driving forces behind anti-colonial movements before and during the Second World War. Like many anti-colonialists at this time, the INA leader, Behari Bose, did not simply embrace nationalism. As Eri Hotta suggests, Behari Bose's pursuit of Indian independence has to be understood in the context of the pan-Asianist struggle. He aspired to liberate not only India but also other oppressed nations, especially those of Asia, from colonial rule.¹¹¹ Joseph McQuade demonstrates further that Behari Bose developed an expansive notion of India through Hinduism and the equivalence of Indian and Japanese civilizations, allowing him to connect India's struggle to its counterparts in Asia and the broader world.¹¹²

However, when Behari Bose is examined mainly in relation to Japan's pan-Asianists, one could easily overlook how he and the INA under his leadership fought for India's future by fostering Indian nationalism in Malaya and

¹⁰⁶ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 11: requisite characteristics for attainment of our object (continued)', 5 June 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 14: bushido in Nippon', 16 June 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73, p. 6; Bose, *Collected works*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁸ Bose, *Collected works*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 14', p. 3.

¹¹⁰ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 2'; DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 3'; DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 10: requisite characteristics for attainment of our object', 3 June 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73; DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 11'; DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 14'.

¹¹¹ Hotta, 'Rash Behari Bose and his Japanese supporters', p. 117.

¹¹² Joseph McQuade, 'The New Asia of Rash Behari Bose: India, Japan, and the limits of the international, 1912–1945', *Journal of World History*, 27 (2016), pp. 641–67, at pp. 657–60.

wider Asia. To strengthen the nationalist sentiment among its members, the INA developed its twenty-three platoon lectures for spiritual training. Throughout the lectures, the INA made claims to protect the sovereignty and territory of India that stretched 'from north to south from Peshwar to Cape Comorin' and 'from east to west from Calcutta to Karachi'.¹¹³ It affirmed the identity of India by highlighting the differences between India and other political entities, especially the British empire. Moreover, the INA encouraged the personal sacrifices and death of its members during the violent struggle for Indian independence.¹¹⁴

By piecing together the works of Behari Bose with those of Gandhi and Nehru, the INA lectures created a historical narrative to promote the INC's vision for India. According to the lectures, Indian history began with the Indo-Aryan civilization, moved to the Mughal empire and then the British empire, and ultimately arrived in the contemporary period when the INC rescued the nation. Partly inspired by Nehru's writings, the INA maintained that, during the Indo-Aryan civilization, Indians had already developed the capability for self-government, and that, since the era of Mughal rule, Hindus and Muslims had been united. By constructing the Indo-Aryan civilization and the Mughal empire as the golden ages of India, the INA rejected British official discourses that Indians were unprepared for independence. Moreover, the lectures borrowed Gandhi's ideas to criticize the colonial regime for emasculating Indian men through disarmament and English education. A desire to revive ancient education and the fantasy of masculinity were therefore integral to the INA's formulation of nationalism. In the meantime, the INA urged its members to fight in the battlefields on behalf of their fellows in India. Thus, while broadcasting the INC's political vision, the INA departed from Gandhi's principle of non-violence. Instead, it followed Behari Bose's long-standing practice of using violence against the British colonizers.

During mass mobilization, nationalism took centre-stage, overshadowing the rhetoric of pan-Asianism. The INA spiritual training mentioned 'Pan-Asiatic cooperation' only once, in a lecture explaining world historical development, starting from the 'glorious past' of India and continuing through military rule, 'capitalist civilization', and global mass struggles, to reach the emergence of 'a new order in Asia and Europe'.¹¹⁵ One possible reason why the INA restricted the language of pan-Asianism to a single line out of twenty-three lectures was to respond to what was happening on the ground. During the Second World War, people in the Japanese-occupied areas often experienced or witnessed Japanese soldiers committing violence. For the subjugated people, 'Asia for Asians' was mainly a slogan they heard over the radio and during their daily encounters with Japanese officers.¹¹⁶ It could signify

¹¹³ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 20: material resources of India', 17 July 1943, BL, MSS Eur A73.

¹¹⁴ For the recurring themes of nationalism, see Lloyd Kramer, *Nationalism in Europe and America: politics, cultures, and identities since 1775* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2011), p. 5.

¹¹⁵ DEC, 'Platoon lecture no. 15'.

¹¹⁶ Damodaran s/o K Kesavan, interview by Yogini Yogarajah, 19 Nov. 1981, OHC, interview 1, transcript; K Kesavan, interview by Yogini Yogarajah, 19 Nov. 1981, OHC, interview 2, transcript.

Japanese imperialism instead of solidarity among Asian countries against European colonizers. Thus, the INA suppressed pan-Asianism in its spiritual training and emphasized another anti-British idea, namely Indian nationalism.

Behari Bose did not live to see India gain independence in 1947. He passed away in Tokyo in January 1945 due to illness. Despite his lifelong struggle against British rule in India, in the histories about the INA, he has often been sidelined at best and painted as a collaborator of the Japanese government at worst. Behind such a portrayal could be a desire for a perfect hero against oppressors, an anti-colonialist who did not work closely with an authoritarian regime. It may also involve an unspoken comparison of empires: the Japanese empire was worse than the British empire. However, many activists who had endured European colonial rule did not subscribe to this comparative mode of thought. They were willing to pit the Axis powers against the Allies. In the early 1940s, anti-colonial leaders from various parts of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East gathered in Berlin, seeking resources from the German government for their independence movements against Britain and France.¹¹⁷ Anwar al-Sadat, a member of the Free Officers in Egypt, explained that he co-operated with Germany because he saw ‘anything that weakened the British position’ as vital to him.¹¹⁸ Similarly, in Asia, Behari Bose was determined to set India free from the British empire by all means.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

¹¹⁷ David Motadel, ‘The global authoritarian moment and the revolt against empire’, *American Historical Review*, 124 (2019), pp. 843–77, at p. 843.

¹¹⁸ Anwar al-Sadat, *In search of identity* (London, 1978), p. 31, quoted in Motadel, ‘The global authoritarian moment’, p. 853.

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