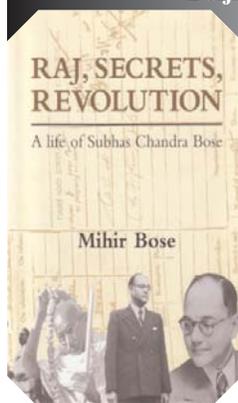


Book Review by
Daljit Sehbai



Subhas Chandra Bose was an icon in the 1930's for many Indian revolutionaries who believed in using more militant methods in the struggle for India's independence. His stature and legend grew further after his daring escape from house arrest in Calcutta to Germany, via Afghanistan and Russia, and then on to the Far East where he organised the Indian National Army. He was reported to have died in August 1945 after the end of World War II in an air crash in Formosa (now called Taiwan) but circumstances of his death are still surrounded in mystery. The Indian government has appointed three commissions to investigate the exact circumstances of Subhas Bose's mysterious death. The latest commission of enquiry under the former judge M. K. Mukherjee has not yet announced its finding but according to press reports, the Taiwan government has informed the Commission that the air crash on 18 August 1945 in which Subhas Bose was reported to have died never took place. Justice Mukherjee has confirmed that the Taiwanese authorities have no record of an air crash between 14 August and 20 September 1945. This has added a further twist to the 60-year old mystery of how and when Subhas Bose died.

Mihir Bose (no relation) in his book **RAJ, SECRETS, REVOLUTION - A life of Subhas Chandra Bose** has not only traced the life and career of this great man from his birth in Cuttack, Orissa, in 1897 to his reported death in 1945, but has given us an insight into Bose the man and Bose the revolutionary leader of India's struggle for independence. He has covered everything including his romance and secret marriage with Emilie Schenk in Vienna; the problems with his health during long periods spent in British jails; and his complex relationship with Gandhi, Nehru, and other leaders of the Indian National Congress. Gandhi's decision that Subhas Bose should succeed Jawahar Lal Nehru as President of the Indian National Congress in 1938 was an important step in the political

career of Subhas Bose. Mihir Bose vividly describes the polarisation of the right and left within the Congress when Bose in spite of a serious bout of illness and against Gandhi's wishes decided to stand for re-election as President the following year. Bose won by a narrow majority that created a split in the party and soured his relationship with Gandhi.

The most interesting part of the book is the detailed account of Subhas Bose's escape from house arrest and the difficulties faced by him in Afghanistan before he could manage to leave for the Soviet Union en-route to Germany. Bose stayed in Europe from 1941 to 1943 and established the Free India Centres in Berlin, Paris, and Rome. He also wrote speeches that were broadcast on radio arguing for the fall of British imperialism and advocating the cause of India's independence. He was, however, not happy with Hitler and the Nazi leadership's attitude, particularly their reluctance to sign the declaration guaranteeing India's independence, and decided to go to the Far East to seek Japanese help. On 8 February 1943 Bose sailed on a German submarine which a few weeks later made rendezvous with a Japanese submarine in Portuguese waters of the Mozambique Channel that took him to the Far East.

There are some people who have mastered the art of telling a story and Mihir Bose is certainly one of them. This well-written book has unfortunately not been properly proof-read and has a number of printing errors but that fault lies with the publishers who should have paid more attention to it. The author has, however, done justice to the subject by doing a great deal of research. He has incorporated a large amount of new material that has come to light in recent years, including the classified papers released during the last few years, to tell the fascinating story of the life and struggle of Subhas Chandra Bose. ■

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Daljit Sehbai, a journalist and publisher, was Editor of the *International Edition of World Book Encyclopedia* and later Managing Director of a publishing company which published a number of reference and general books and also handled the UK edition of *INDIA TODAY*, India's premier news magazine. He was Editorial Consultant to the *Mirror Group* and helped to publish the *Asian Edition of PEOPLE*, the national Sunday newspaper, from 1991 to 1992

Without Margins

by Dr. Sukrita Paul Kumar

Reviewed by Shyista A Khan

Without Margins : Floating Spaces and Transculturation

Without Margins: "continuously probes the issue of uprooted ness which can be personal as well as impersonal"

Without Margins as the name suggests is a collection of thoughts and expressions without being circumscribed by the limitations of nationality, history or even genre. It is an artistic response through the medium of writing as well as painting. The verses in this collection are beautifully complimented with the sketches and paintings drawn by the poet herself. It is an interesting attempt to liberate the medium of expression from generic tyranny.

The anthology offers a thematic variation allowing us an insight to the poetic sensitivity, her consciousness of the self and her social commitment. Most of the poems reflect an unmediated subjectivity. Poems like 'Seasonal Sadness' is an introspective concern about the self. The tone of the poem is confessional where there is a narcissistic confrontation between the subjectivity and the self. Questions regarding the self and the other and issues concerning identity are present in most of the poems. In fact the notion of the 'self' and the 'other' is intertwined with personal relationships in an interesting way. 'Parting Again' reminds us of the Lacanian world of self and identity. 'Fathers and Sons' on the other hand laments this world of self and identity and craves for "sharing the same permutations and combinations". This poem is about the generation gap building gradually between a maturing son and an aging father. It captures the disintegrating filial bond in the course of the making of the individuated identity. The poem harks back to the nostalgia of shared vision when the self and the other were yet not distinguished from each other 'when the earth between us has not cracked yet'. The poetic consciousness borders between self-effacement and self assertion.

This paradoxical urge for self-effacement and self assertion seems to be constantly present in most of the poems. 'Arrival' is an attempt to communicate in spite of geographical and cultural barriers. It reflects a human endeavour to come together and break the compartments of isolation. It captures a unique experience of identification through isolation or marginalization. In the coffee-house both the American Indian with feathers and the Indian with the tika on the forehead recognize each other's difference and yet can identify with each other's condition of homelessness:

both Indians in exile
one on his own land
the other for whom
the rising of the sun
was at once its setting
on her own land
seven seas away.

(p-18)

search of employment. However the poet's concern for the poor and the downtrodden is most explicit in the last section of the collection called 'We the Homeless'.

One of the most interesting poems



Without Margins continuously probes the issue of uprooted ness which can be personal as well as impersonal. If 'Voyaging at Ten' is a personal or autobiographical account of dislocation, 'Arrival' draws our attention towards the displacement of native American Indians. 'Voyaging at Ten' is a personal account of migration from Mombasa to Bombay-a journey from past experience to the present state. The poem concludes with a feeling of deracination where the baggage of past is lost, however the new foundations are not yet laid.

There is also an element of unashamed reality staring quite boldly through these poems. If 'Traffic Signals' articulates the struggle of a young beggar boy to collect money for the shroud, it also leaves a suspending doubt about the corpse which will get up at the night for a feast of 'biryani'. The poem does not hesitate to acknowledge that begging has almost become a profession in Delhi. However the poet's genuine responses are combined with a serious social commitment which is felt at a personal level. 'Precious Little Lila' unfolds the story of hundreds of village women who come to cities to work as domestic help. The poem is narrated by a part-time maid, a 'mai', working in the DDA flats. However, it is a double narrative, voicing the struggles of the maid and simultaneously articulating the making of the 'mai' who is the young Lila at the time of narration. The poem also refers to the constant mobilization of rural India towards urban areas in

of this collection is 'Laila's Call'. 'Laila's Call' is based on the famous romance of Laila and Majnu. It is Laila's plea to liberate her from the masculine poetic imagination because Majnu's/Qais's 'wish for immortality keeps us apart'. It is Laila's struggle to distinguish between the real and imagined Laila and to redeem her from a literary context. The poem urges us to recognize Laila as a real woman. **Without Margins** establishes a trustful relationship with the reader and leads them towards a kaleidoscope of imagination providing profound reflections. The flavour of these poems remains essentially Indian however it invites a cosmopolitan readership. The subjects vary from the mundane to the crucial issues like migration, dislocation, minority status and marginalization. It has a literary, social as well as political concern.

Ms. Shyista A. Khan is a lecturer in a Delhi University college, teaching English Literature. She has done her Graduation, Post graduation and M.Phil from the University of Delhi. She has researched for many projects and has contributed articles in magazines and newspapers. Her areas of interest include post colonial studies and women's writings particularly the third world feminist scholarship.

Without Margins (117pages) is published by Bibliophile South Asia, C-127 Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi 110017 India. Price: Rs.150/-

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