



The Lady and the Peacock: The Life of Aung San Suu Kyi

By Peter Popham

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Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi—known to the world as an icon for democracy and nonviolent dissent in oppressed Burma, and to her followers as simply “The Lady”—has recently returned to international headlines. Now, this major new biography offers essential reading at a moment when Burma, after decades of stagnation, is once again in flux.

Suu Kyi’s remarkable life begins with that of her father, Aung San. The architect of Burma’s independence, he was assassinated when she was only two. Suu Kyi grew up in India (where her mother served as ambassador), studied at Oxford, and worked for three years at the UN in New York. In 1972, she married Michael Aris, a British scholar. They had two sons, and for several years she lived as a self-described “housewife”—but she never forgot that she was the daughter of Burma’s national hero.

In April 1988, Suu Kyi returned to Burma to nurse her sick mother. Within six months, she was leading the largest popular revolt in the country’s history. She was put under house arrest by the regime, but her party won a landslide victory in the 1990 elections, which the regime refused to recognize. In 1991, still under arrest, she received the Nobel Peace Prize. Altogether, she has spent over fifteen years in detention and narrowly escaped assassination twice.

Peter Popham distills five years of research—including covert trips to Burma, meetings with Suu Kyi and her friends and family, and extracts from the unpublished diaries of her co-campaigner and former confidante Ma Thanegi—into this vivid portrait of Aung San Suu Kyi, illuminating her public successes and private sorrows, her intellect and enduring sense of humor, her commitment to peaceful revolution, and the extreme price she has paid for it.

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Editorial Review

Review

“[A] rich new biography of Burma’s most famous dissident.”
?NewYorker.com

“Peter Popham’s vivid new biography, *The Lady and the Peacock*, illuminates the qualities that have made [Aung San Suu Kyi] one of the twenty-first century’s great political personalities.”
?New York Review of Books

“Peter Popham tells this story superbly in *The Lady and the Peacock: The Life of Aung San Suu Kyi*, by far the best book yet written on this elusive heroine.”
?The Wall Street Journal

“In the latest, and very timely, biography of Aung San Suu Kyi, Peter Popham ably chronicles the incredible story of her life.”
?The New Republic

“Peter Popham’s life of Aung San Suu Kyi is gripping, partisan and emotional . . . It contains fascinating new material and conveys, better than any other account, the stirring drama of her confrontations with the junta. But perhaps the most interesting thing about it is its timing. . . . *The Lady and the Peacock* is an essential record of the struggle for democracy in Burma before the mysteries and promise of the Thein Sein era: a reminder of the 49 long years that preceded eight breathless months of reform.”
?London Review of Books

“Peter Popham’s richly detailed biography sheds new light on Burma’s heroine and the still unfolding struggle against military oppression she personifies. An important book.”
?Joseph Lelyveld, author of *Great Soul: Mahatma Gandhi and His Struggle with India*

“A masterly narration of the life of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi . . . She makes one proud to be human in her company. What a gift to our world and what a splendid telling of it in this book. We are deeply indebted to Peter Popham for such a superb account.”
?Archbishop Desmond Tutu

“This is the definitive and superbly written account of one of the most intriguing and admirable political and moral figures of our times.”
?Pankaj Mishra, author of *An End to Suffering: The Buddha in the World*

“A spellbinding biography of Aung San Suu Kyi . . . provides a complex and nuanced portrait of her on so many levels.”
?The Huffington Post

“Popham paints a sympathetic and well-rounded portrait of Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi in this timely biography. . . . In addition to recounting Suu’s remarkable life story, Popham, a foreign correspondent

for *The Independent*, deftly outlines the political climate of the troubled nation, and shows how this revolutionary woman became a global symbol of democracy, resolve, and freedom.”

?**Publishers Weekly**

“Peter Popham’s biography of Aung San Suu Kyi could not be better timed, as the woman who has been the real leader of her country is at last free to participate openly in its politics. This book provides a rich and often surprising portrait of Burma and of Aung San Suu Kyi and her family, which for more than half a century has played a central role in the country’s drama. As an age of reform seems in sight for Burma, *The Lady and the Peacock* sheds exceptional light on its prospects and on the experiences that have shaped its coming generation of leaders.”

?**James Fallows**, *Atlantic Monthly*, author of *China Airborne*

“We live in a time of political pygmies, but even in an age of giants Aung San Suu Kyi would stand out. Peter Popham’s *The Lady and the Peacock* provides a compelling account of her life and career. Her intellectual evolution is deftly sketched, her marriage portrayed without sentimentality and her struggle against authoritarianism carefully outlined. Reading the book, one desperately hopes that by shaking the hand of the ‘world’ leaders who now line up to meet her, Suu Kyi transfers some of her exceptional courage on to them.”

?**Ramachandra Guha**, author of *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*

“If the generals think they can control Suu Kyi, they would do well to read . . . Popham’s biography.”

?**The Progressive**

“An inspiring biography and a rare glimpse of what Burma could have been, and could still be. . . In the aftermath of the first, tentative loosening of the military’s death grip over the country, Suu Kyi’s next chapter remains to be written. For now, enjoy this compassionate biography of an exemplary leader.”

?**Kirkus Reviews**

“Readers interested in modern Asian history and current events will find this book well worth reading.”

?**Library Journal**

“The most comprehensive, accessible, honest, and fair biography of Aung San Suu Kyi to date, blowing away all previous efforts . . . *The Lady and the Peacock* will leave the reader inspired.”

?**Benedict Rogers**, author of *Burma: A Nation at the Crossroads*

“A brilliant portrait of the most famous political detainee of our time, Popham’s book illuminates not just Aung San Suu Kyi but an entire nation as it makes its twisted, uneasy journey into modernity.”

?**Siddhartha Deb**, author of *The Beautiful And The Damned: A Portrait of the New India*

“In this eloquent and evocative biography, Peter Popham supplies fresh insights into the personality of the stoic lady who is the symbol of Burma’s democratic aspirations. Aung San Suu Kyi’s success or failure is measured in terms of her own ethical yardstick rather than the calculus of state power.”

?**Sugata Bose**, author of *His Majesty’s Opponent: Subhas Chandra Bose and India’s Struggle against Empire*

“Suu Kyi emerges as a wonderfully human figure, adding a softer dimension to the remotely beautiful, stubbornly determined, unfailingly polite, and breathtakingly brave woman.”

?**The Times** (London)

“A portrait both warm and objective . . . it will not be bettered for a long time.”

?Independent on Sunday

“The first serious biography of Aung San Suu Kyi.”

?Democracy: A Journal of Ideas

About the Author

Peter Popham has toured Burma as an undercover journalist several times since his first visit to the country in 1991. A foreign correspondent and feature writer for the Independent for more than twenty years, he has reported from locations around the world, including South Asia. He is also the author of *Tokyo: The City at the End of the World*. Married, with two children, Popham lives and works in both London and Milan.

Users Review

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