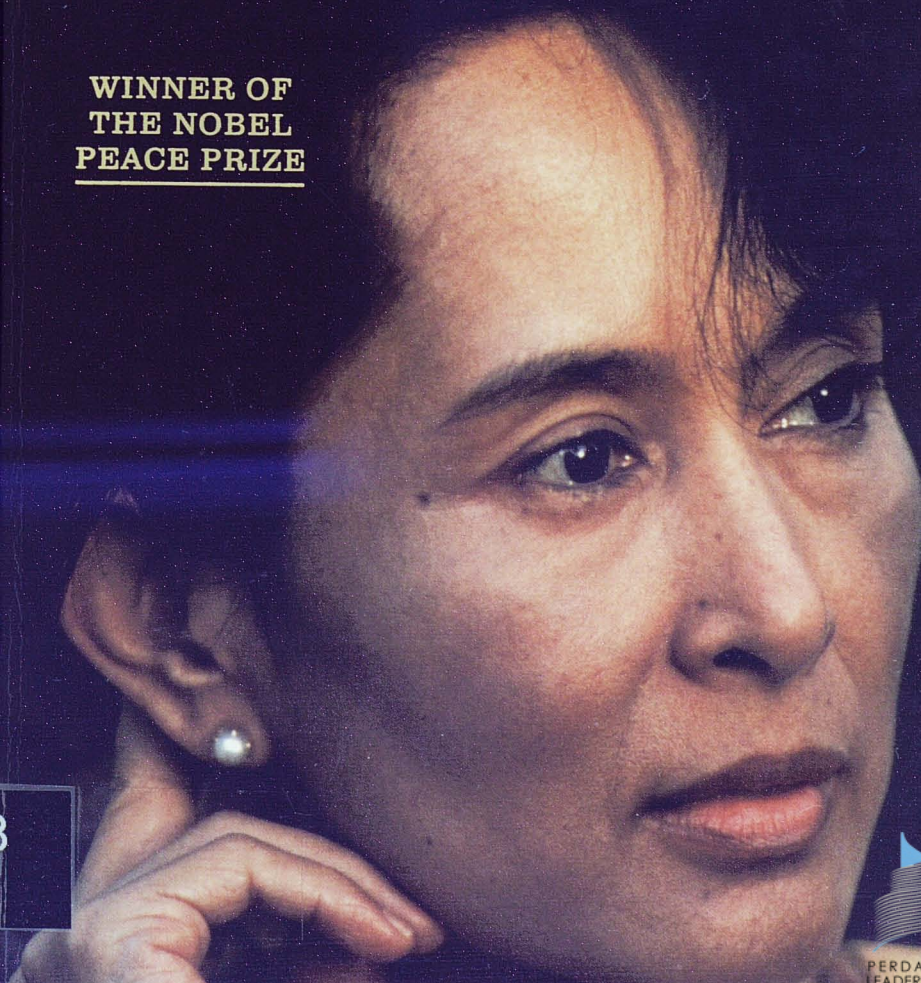


AUNG SAN SUU KYI

THE VOICE OF HOPE

CONVERSATIONS WITH ALAN CLEMENTS

WINNER OF
THE NOBEL
PEACE PRIZE



REVISED AND UPDATED

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Praise for The Voice of Hope:

'Suu Kyi is one of the most remarkable and brave women of our time. Her dying husband Michael was refused permission to go to visit her. Even the phone calls I used to have with her have been stopped for some years. The regime in Burma is an outrage, and it is a blot on the international community that we have done so little about it. This book is testimony to the staunch commitment and sacrifice of an astonishingly courageous and visionary person.'

The Rt Hon the Lord David Steel of Aikwood KT

'This is a remarkable book, as inspired as it is wise. Read it and learn from Aung San Suu Kyi's amazing life.'

Jack Kornfield, author of *A Path With Heart*

'[Shows] Aung San Suu Kyi's humour, erudition, wisdom and accessibility, and demonstrate[s] why she has become a world spiritual leader.'

New York Times

'I am delighted that *The Voice of Hope* is being republished. This is a message that the world should hear.'

Jimmy Carter



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CONTENTS

Preface to the New Edition	7
Introduction	15
Chapter 1: “We are still prisoners in our own country”	25
Chapter 2: “Running away is not going to <i>solve any problems</i> ”	43
Chapter 3: “Truth is a powerful weapon”	57
Chapter 4: “Working for democracy”	73
Chapter 5: “It still surprises me that people think of me <i>as an important person</i> ”	89
Chapter 6: “Each country is linked to the others <i>through the bonds of humanity</i> ”	103
Chapter 7: “Saints are sinners who go on trying”	121
Chapter 8: “I never learned to hate my captors”	135
Chapter 9: “Violence is not the right way”	151
Chapter 10: “Nobody can humiliate me but myself”	165
Chapter 11: “We only have ourselves to rely on”	179
Chapter 12: “The courage to face yourself”	195
Chapter 13: “To learn the power of the powerless”	209
Appendix A: A conversation with U Gambira	223
Appendix B: A conversation with U Kyi Maung	235
Appendix C: A conversation with U Tin U	271
Chronology of Key Events	309
Burma Related Links	325
About Alan Clements	331





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PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

We outside Burma cannot look away and ignore the plight of Burma's peoples. Our religious and philosophical teachings tell us that human suffering anywhere must be accepted as our own suffering. And our worldly experience convinces us that only practical political action can help end that suffering.

—Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Václav Havel, leader of the nonviolent Velvet Revolution of Czechoslovakia, says of his first becoming a political activist, “I stopped waiting for the world to improve and exercised my right to intervene in that world, or at least to express my opinion about it.” Howard Zinn, the great American author and human rights advocate, reminds us that “at many of the key moments in history some of the bravest and most effective political acts were the sounds of the human voice itself.”

From Burma we now hear and see a powerful expression of these values: the power of the powerless and the activism of the human voice, the sound of conscience itself. In this predominantly Buddhist nation of 50 million people, many, at this very moment, risk their lives for the right to choose their destiny—freedom from the most brutal military regime in the world.

The Voice of Hope reveals one of the most politically ravaged, yet spiritually vibrant societies on Earth. In conversation, Aung San Suu Kyi illuminates one of the most awe-inspiring, nonviolent revolutions in modern times. As Burma's democratically elected leader she remains, to this day, imprisoned by the violent military junta.

I first met this formidable human being in 1995, a few weeks after her release from six years of house arrest. Two additional long periods of incarceration were still to come. She told me, “Nothing has changed since my release. . . . Let the world know that we are still prisoners in our own country.”

Twelve years have passed since the first publication of this book. Has anything changed in Burma?

On October 24, 2007, Aung San Suu Kyi entered her twelfth year of detention since her initial arrest on July 20, 1989. Several thousand other prisoners of conscience remain incarcerated in Burmese prisons. Relentless ethnic cleansing—the murder, torture, and rape of minorities there—has left more than 3,000 villages destroyed. Nearly 1 million refugees have fled the country, and 1 million more are internally displaced, subsisting in primitive, malaria-infested jungle conditions. Hundreds of thousands of Burmese citizens are enslaved as forced laborers building roads, bridges, dams, and monuments for tourism. Millions more are tyrannized by one of the largest standing armies in the world. Dictator Senior General Than Shwe commands 400,000 rank and file soldiers. As many as 70,000 of them are children, some as young as eleven years old.

In its totalitarian terror, Burma is an Orwellian nightmare. There is no regard for human rights. None. Burma remains a land of 50 million hostages—prisoners in their own country.

Has anything changed over twelve years?

There is one notable difference: the voices of hope are multiplying, fast.

Aung San Suu Kyi, in her own words, offers insight into the courage of the Burmese people. Despite her silence and isolation, both her voice and her presence infuse them with strength and a vision of freedom. “Those of us who decided to work for democracy in Burma,” she explains, “made our choice in the conviction that the danger of standing up for basic human rights in a repressive society was preferable to the safety of a quiescent life in servitude. Ours is a nonviolent movement that depends on faith in the human predilection for fair play and compassion. Some would insist that man is primarily an economic animal interested only in his material well-being. This is too narrow a view of a species which has produced numberless brave men and women who are prepared to undergo relentless persecution to uphold deeply held beliefs and principles. It is my pride and inspiration that such men and women exist in my country today.”