

HKU 186th Congregation
Citation of Aung San Suu Kyi (Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*)

Following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and Vaclav Havel, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi stands as a global inspiration for peaceful resistance to harsh repression. She also symbolizes Burma's struggle for democratic reform, having spent one third of her adult life in detention in the cause of freedom and democracy.

Daw Suu was born in 1945, the daughter of Burmese independence hero General Aung San, who was assassinated in cabinet when she was only two years old. She was educated in Burma, India and the United Kingdom, where she lived for many years with her husband Dr Michael Aris, and their sons Alexander and Kim.

In March 1988, Daw Suu returned to Burma to care for her ailing mother, and soon became actively involved in her country's mass uprising in support of democracy. Following her landmark public address at Rangoon's Shwedagon Pagoda in August 1988, the National League for Democracy was formed with Daw Suu as its General Secretary. Inspired by a philosophy of non-violent change, she organized rallies across the country to call for peaceful democratic reform.

However, a September 1988 military coup took Burmese politics down a very different path, and in July 1989 generated the first of what were to be three terms of house arrest for Daw Suu totaling more than 15 years. Although a general election was held in May 1990, and won in a landslide by the NLD, the incumbent dictatorship refused to recognize the result, and used ever more repressive measures to cling to power.

Shortly thereafter, Daw Suu was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. During her long periods of house arrest she was also garlanded with many other international awards.

Only after Burma's generals had completed a tightly-managed November 2010 general election, which enabled them to reverse the NLD's 1990 triumph by engineering a sweeping victory for their own party, did light begin to appear at the end of the tunnel for Daw Suu.

Released from house arrest six days after the election, she emerged with undiminished determination to resume active political involvement aimed at achieving her twin goals of democratic reform, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Nine months later, in August 2011, Daw Suu participated in a historic meeting with reformist President Thein Sein that built the foundation for the process of change now unfolding. In December 2011, she welcomed US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to her lakeside villa in Rangoon.

In April 2012, Daw Suu secured election to parliament, and a few weeks later embarked on her first overseas trip in 24 years, visiting Thailand. She soon followed up with valedictory tours of Europe, North America and India. Just yesterday, she met with President Obama in Rangoon.

In Oslo in June of this year, the 1991 Nobel Peace Laureate was able finally to deliver her acceptance speech. In Washington in September, she was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal.

Today, as Burma faces the abundant challenges of implementing a full and genuine transition to democracy, Daw Suu embodies the hopes and aspirations of her 60 million compatriots who have long yearned for such change. She also remains a powerful global advocate for democracy and the rule of law, and a vocal critic of authoritarianism in all its guises.

Mr Vice-Chancellor, it is my honour and privilege to present to you Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for the award of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*.