



# The King in Exile: The Fall of the Royal Family of Burma

*Sudha Shah*

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In 1878, as the king of Burma lay dying, one of his queens schemed for his forty-first son, Thibaw, to supersede his half-brothers to the throne. For seven years, King Thibaw and Queen Supayalat ruled from the resplendent, intrigue-infused Golden Palace in Mandalay, where they were treated as demigods. After a war against Britain in 1885, their kingdom was lost, and the family exiled to the secluded town of Ratnagiri in British-occupied India. Here they lived, closely guarded, for over thirty-one years. The king's four daughters received almost no education, and their social interaction was restricted mainly to their staff. As the princesses grew, so did their hopes and frustrations. Two of them fell in love with 'highly inappropriate' men. In 1916, the heartbroken king died. Queen Supayalat and her daughters were permitted to return to Rangoon in 1919. In Burma, the old queen regained some of her feisty spirit as visitors came by daily to pay their respects. All the princesses, however, had to make numerous adjustments in a world they had no knowledge of. The impact of the deposition and exile echoed forever in each of their lives, as it did in the lives of their children. Written after years of meticulous research, and richly supplemented with photographs and illustrations, *The King in Exile* is an engrossing human-interest story of this forgotten but fascinating family.

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