Foreword

As a fellow South Asian scholar-activist, it gives me great pleasure to write the Foreword to Professor Asoka Bandarage’s latest book, *Crisis in Sri Lanka and the World: Colonial and Neoliberal Origins, Ecological and Collective Alternatives*. During the forty or more years I have known Asoka, we have supported each other in our various endeavors towards peace, justice and environmental sustainability in South Asia and the world.

*Crisis in Sri Lanka and the World* is a most timely book—and urgently needed for the world that is at a critical crossroads of extreme and accelerating possibilities. For alternatives that are just and sustainable, the crisis needs to be understood both historically as well as in the contemporary context. I cannot think of very many who can do that—both with scholarship and passion—with a fusion of global as well as local and holistic perspectives as Asoka Bandarage has been able to do here.

To understand the roots of the contemporary Sri Lankan crisis and explore solutions that go beyond IMF debt restructuring, broader systemic analyses are needed. *Crisis in Sri Lanka and the World* provides that much-needed systemic perspective. It focuses on the external determinants of the Sri Lankan crisis and its exemplification of a broader global existential crisis facing more and more debt trapped countries, especially in the post-colonial Global South. As the book ably illustrates, the crisis in Sri Lanka is not an isolated one unique to the island but representative of the global crisis.

The book provides an in-depth analysis of Sri Lanka’s on-going political and economic crisis taking into account the island’s historical evolution with an emphasis on external political and economic intervention. This extensively documented and clearly written scholarly work demonstrates that Sri Lanka’s crisis is the culmination of several centuries of colonial and neo-colonial developments. The book’s discussion of the introduction of the plantations and the import-export economy under British rule and the expansion of Sri Lanka’s economic dependence during the post-independence era of neoliberalism and globalization with its emphasis on export production has great relevance to understanding similar developments elsewhere in the world.

*Crisis in Sri Lanka and the World* discusses the unequal economic and financial architecture of the global economy which set the framework for the debt and socio-economic crisis in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. Developing a broad political and economic perspective, the book explores the emergence of the crisis in Sri Lanka in the context of the accelerating geopolitical conflict between China and the USA in the Indian Ocean. Providing interesting information and important points of view

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111203454-001
which are left out in mainstream analyses, the book ponders if the debt crisis, economic collapse and political destabilization in Sri Lanka were intentionally precipitated for geopolitical reasons.

Moving beyond economic crisis and geopolitical rivalry, the book juxtaposes Sri Lanka's political-economic crisis with the broader ecological crisis of climate change and sea-level rise. As a country among the most severely affected by extreme weather events, the shift from the current trajectory of domination over nature and others to one of human partnership with each other and the rest of nature is urgently needed.

Transcending conventional capitalist as well as socialist thinking, Crisis in Sri Lanka and the World calls for a fundamental transformation of consciousness from a philosophy of dualism and domination to one of interdependence and partnership with nature and among humanity. The book concludes with a consideration of the ethical dilemmas behind the debt and survival crisis pointing out a range of social movements and initiatives which subscribe to collective and ecological alternatives and a Middle Path of sustainability and social justice.

Crisis in Sri Lanka and the World provides a courageous and incisive analysis and a compassionate and hopeful vision much needed in a world ridden with divisiveness, distrust, inequities, conflicts and despair. It is my hope that this work by Dr. Asoka Bandarage will receive the wide attention it deserves contributing to the discourse on the roots of global crisis and transformation toward a peaceable, just and sustainable future.

Dr. Sajed Kamal

Sajed Kamal, author of The Renewable Revolution: How We Can Fight Climate Change, Prevent Energy Wars, Revitalize the Economy and Transition to a Sustainable Future (Earthscan, UK, 2011), taught in the Sustainable International Development program at Brandeis University for twenty years.