

**IS THE CURE WORSE THAN
THE DISEASE?**

**REFLECTIONS ON COVID GOVERNANCE IN
SRI LANKA**

**EDITED BY
PRADEEP PEIRIS**

Preface and acknowledgements

Pandemics go far beyond mere public health crises, leaving an indelible mark on the contemporary social fabric. The tangible and intangible transformations emanating from pandemics that societies experience require intense probing. In the final analysis, the evanescent quality of human memory demands these events be critically chronicled to benefit future generations, not least to avoid the quicksand shores on which we find ourselves.

Is the Cure Worse than the Disease? Reflection on COVID Governance in Sri Lanka is the result of an initiative of Social Indicator (SI), the survey research arm of the Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPA). The ‘Socio-Economic Index In the Face of COVID-19’, an island wide opinion poll conducted from February-March 2021 by SI, aimed to capture the experiences and perceptions of Sri Lankans through the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings derived from this survey compelled a more in-depth consideration of many of the themes therein, leading to the idea of a research volume germinating in the minds of the project team.

Stemming from this context, this volume examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the political, economic, and social life of Sri Lankan society, and its’ transformative effect, if any on the political culture of the country: How have the strategies and policies adopted by the government to fight the pandemic impacted society? More particularly, how have such strategies and policies impacted on delivering governance, health, and education fairly across all communities? Chapters of the volume are a quest for answers to these questions focusing on different sectors of society, their experience of the pandemic, and the implications of such experience on their future trajectory.

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The different chapters in the volume have all benefited from frequent and lively dialogue between my collaborators. I wish to make special mention of their team spirit and commitment to genuine scholarship that went a long way towards making this book project a meaningful intervention at this crucial juncture we find ourselves at. It would be an unforgivable mistake on my part if I fail to acknowledge the contribution of Hasini Lecamwasam in singularly coordinating the content and design of this volume. I also wish to extend my sincere thanks to Ammaarah Nilafdeen for her research assistance in bringing this work to completion.

Ishan Amaraweera, the layout editor, provided his expertise and professional opinion to see this volume to fruition. The diligent teamwork of those at Karunaratne and Sons, our printer, that went into this volume made this production see the light of day. I am thankful to both of them for their cooperation, and perhaps more importantly, their willingness to produce results at such short notice.

I am sufficiently recompensed if the scholarship within these pages piques the interest of our peers and the wider public and nudges them towards further exploration, public debate, and social engineering ventures.