

**The Honorands of
The 2013 Commencement**

**Jean Arasanayagam
Doctor of Letters**

Jean Arasanayagam is one of Sri Lanka's most prolific and best-known contemporary writers of English-language poetry and prose. Born to a Dutch Burgher family (of Dutch and indigenous ancestry) in Sri Lanka, she graduated from the University of Peradeniya. Her husband is a Tamil, a member of a minority ethnic group in Sri Lanka, and she and her family endured the dangers and disruptions of a quarter-century of civil war between separatist Tamil forces and the Sri Lankan government. Her writings are informed by a deep understanding of the nuances and complexities of personal and family identities that reaches well beyond simple categories of race, ethnicity, class, and gender. Arasanayagam attributes the experience of being confined in a refugee camp in 1983 to her focus as a writer on the social and psychological issues that accompany displacement and dispossession. She is the author of numerous collections of poetry and has been a lecturer for several years at the ISLE (Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Education) Program offered by a consortium of colleges, including Bowdoin.