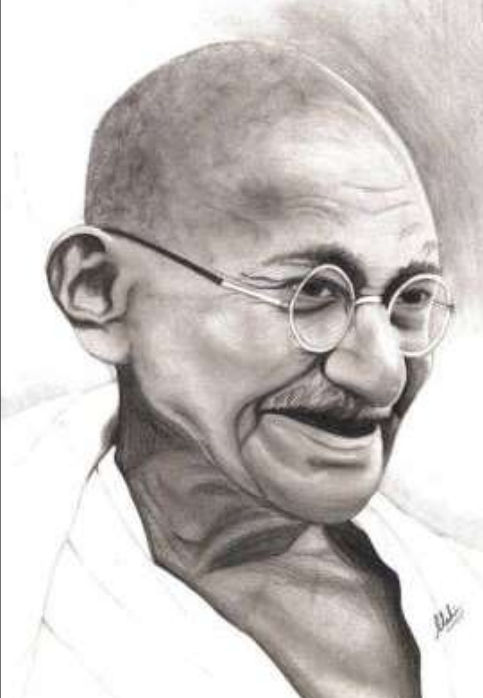




Sri Lanka India Society
in collaboration with
Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre
High Commission of India, Colombo
and
Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies
present
MAHATMA GANDHI ORATION
"Gandhian Principles and Practice: Relevance for Contemporary Sri Lanka"
By
Dr. Vinya S. Ariyaratne
President - Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

WEDNESDAY 5TH OCTOBER 2022

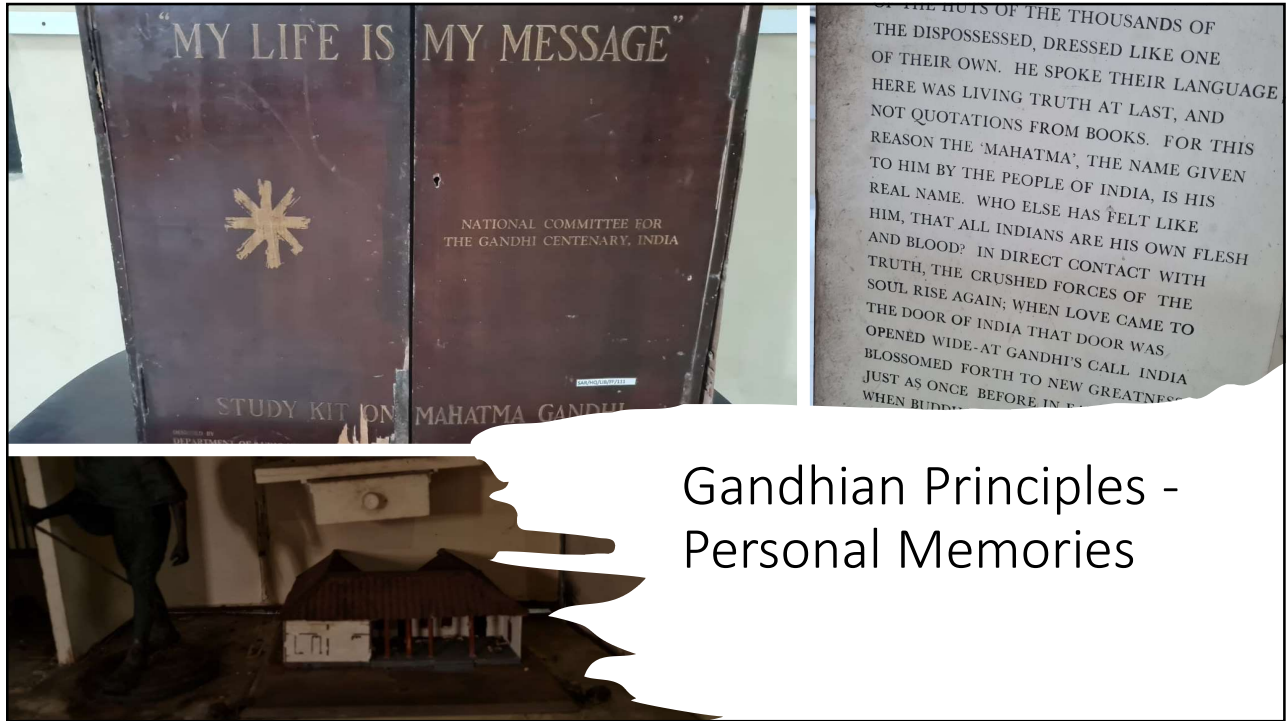
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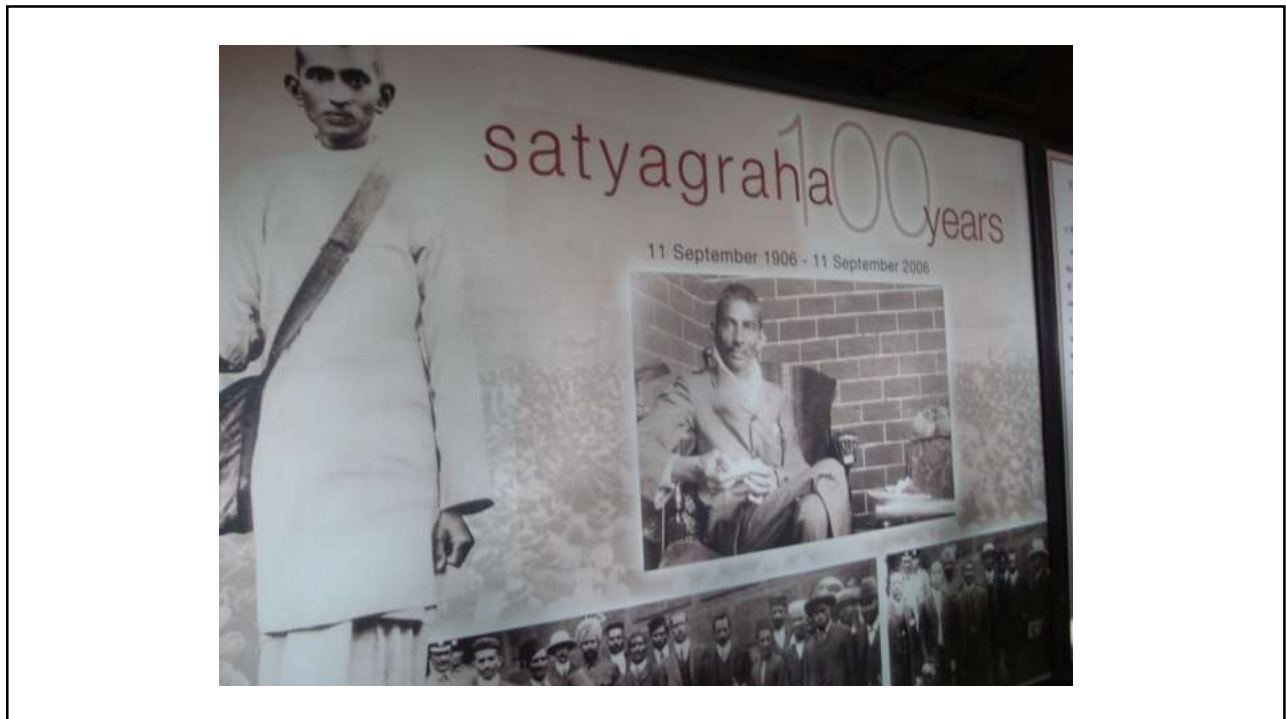
Mahathma Gandhi Memorial Oration 2022
**"Gandhian Philosophy and Practice;
Relevance for Contemporary Sri Lanka"**

Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne
President
Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

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“Gandhian Philosophy and Practice; Relevance for Contemporary Sri Lanka”

Introduction: Gandhian principles – childhood memories

The relevance of core principles of Gandhian principles and practice in relation to the current situation in Sri Lanka

Gandhian principles in practice – Sarvodaya Experience in Sri Lanka

Possible future directions for the country based on Gandhian principles and practice

6

Crisis

Pre-Covid-19
(Before 2020)

COVID-19
Pandemic
(2020-2021)

Economic
Crisis 2022

7

Nutrition Indicators lagging behind

• *Percentage of under five children (DHS, 2016);*

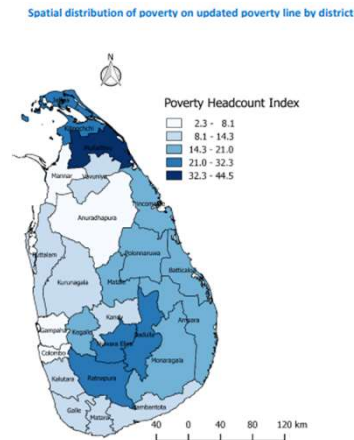
- Under weight (weight-for-age) - **20.5%**
- Wasting (Acute undernutrition) (weight-for-height) **15.1%**
- Stunting (Chronic malnutrition) (height-for-age) - **17.3%**



8

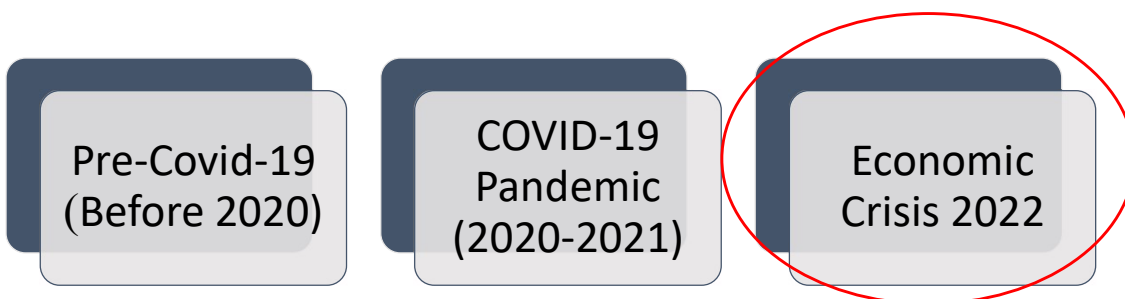
Poverty in Sri Lanka (based on 2019 HIES)

- In 2019, an estimated **14.3% population in Sri Lanka live below updated poverty line** of Rs.6,966 per person per month and amounts to 3,042,300 individuals live in poverty.
- The highest Headcount Index reported from Mullaitivu district (44.5%) and the lowest from Colombo district (2.3%)
- An estimated **11.9% households** are in poverty in Sri Lanka.



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Socio-economic Crisis



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The Crisis

- Sri Lanka is facing a **multidimensional crisis** compounded by food insecurity, threatened livelihoods, shortages of vital and essential medicines, and rising protection concerns for children, women and other socially vulnerable groups.
- Despite ongoing efforts by the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), UN and development partners, humanitarian needs in Sri Lanka continue to deteriorate.
- About 73% of households report either losing their source of income or having their income reduced.
- The majority of households (61%) are regularly resorting to coping strategies such as eating less nutritious food and cutting back on food portions.

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The Crisis

- An estimated 960,000 people are in need of protection services. Data shows an increase in high-risk child protection incidents such as sexual assault, physical abuse, and child negligence. The police, shelters and other protection services are reporting increased incidence of domestic violence and corporal punishment.
- Girls, women, and other marginalized groups are facing increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).
- Hospitals report shortages of essential medicines and other health items, while frequent power outages are affecting the delivery of health services.
- People are experiencing difficulty accessing health facilities due to the fuel crisis and high cost of transportation.
- Psycho-social impact - Rising number of persons needing mental health support psychiatric services, and counseling.

12



SPECIAL REPORT

FAO/WFP CROP AND FOOD SECURITY ASSESSMENT MISSION (CFSAM) TO THE DEMOCRATIC SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF SRI LANKA

September 2022

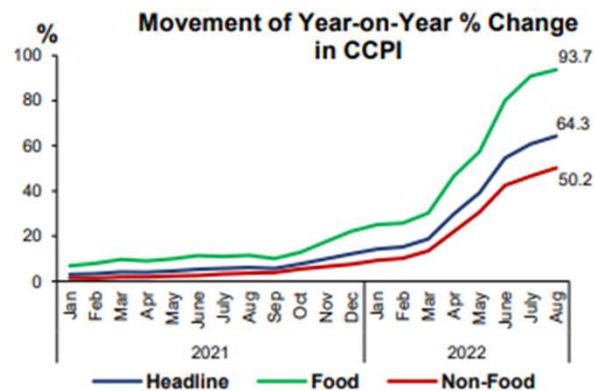
Food Crisis

- According to the latest Crop and Food Security Assessment (September, 2022) carried out jointly by FAO and WFP, 6.2 million people nationally have been found to be food insecure (28% of the population).
- Of these, at least 66,000 people are severely food insecure. The report further states that the situation is likely to deteriorate during the lean harvest season from October 2022 to February 2023.

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Inflation

- **Headline inflation**, as measured by the year-on-year (Y-o-Y) change in the Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI, 2013=100)¹ increased to **64.3% in August 2022 from 60.8% in July 2022**. This increase in Y-o-Y inflation was driven by the monthly increases of both Non-Food and Food categories.
- Food inflation (Y-o-Y) increased to **93.7% in August 2022 from 90.9% in July 2022**, while Non-Food inflation (Y-o-Y) increased to 50.2% in July 2022 from 46.5% in July 2022.



Contribution to Monthly % Change in CCPI

<https://www.cbsl.gov.lk/en/news/inflation-in-august-2022-ccpi>

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Status of Nutrition Among Children 6-59 months in age (MRI, 2022)

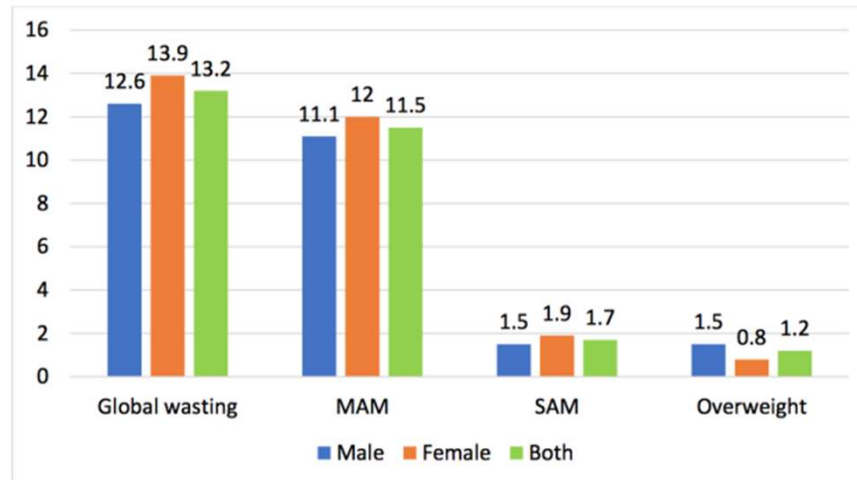
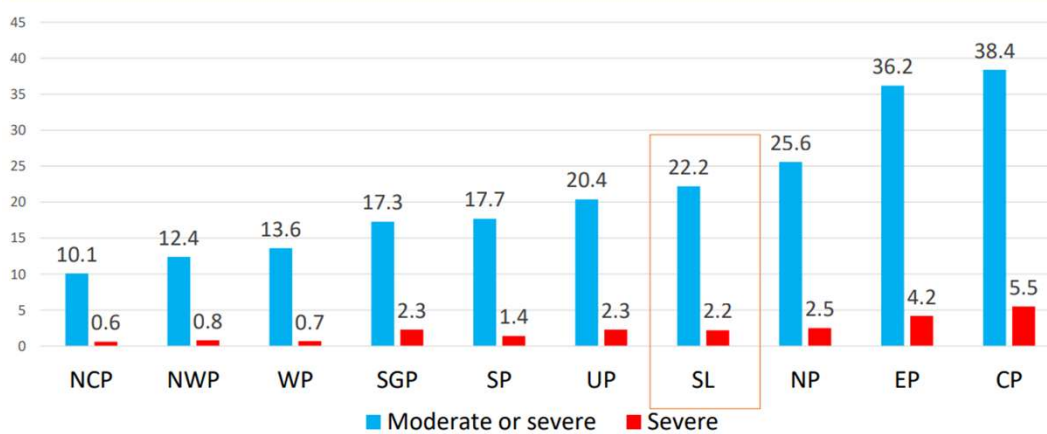


Figure 2 – Prevalence of wasting and overweight in children 6-59 months in age

Source: MRI, 2022

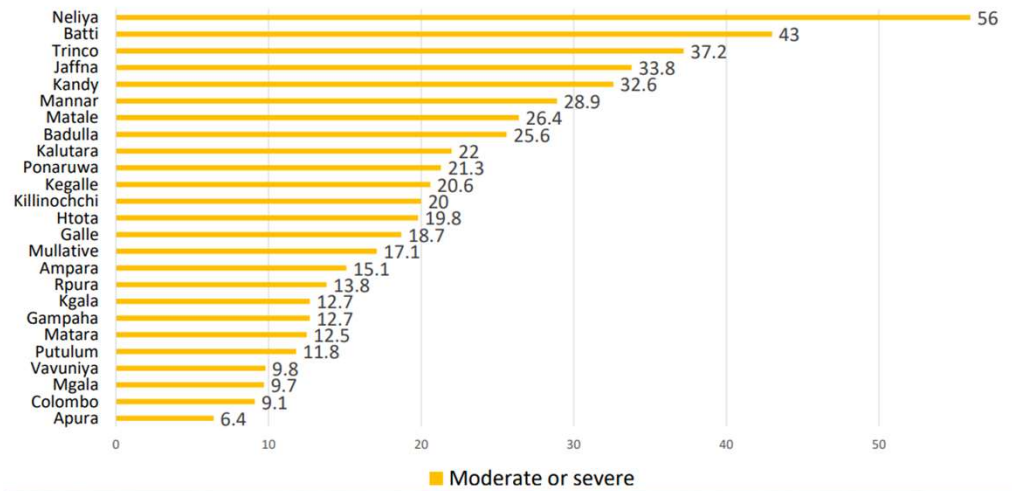
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Prevalence of food insecurity by province



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Prevalence of food insecurity by district

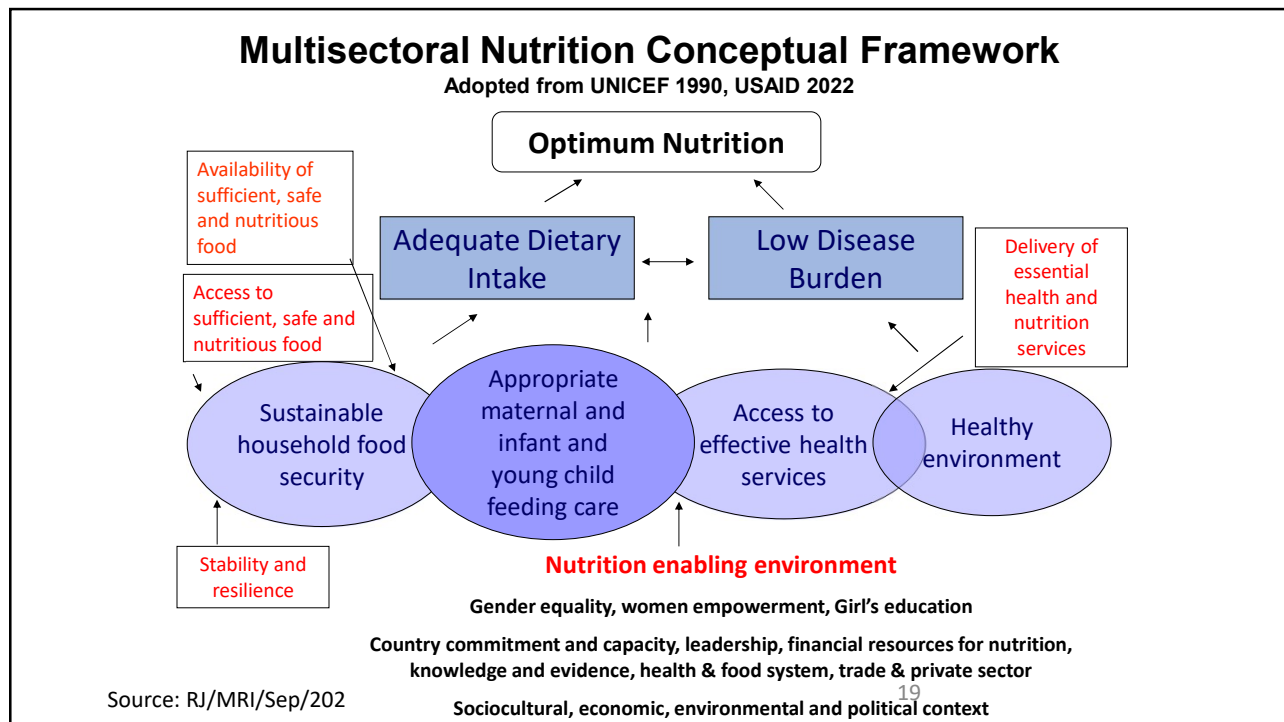


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We need solutions




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Gandhian principles in practice – Sarvodaya Experience in Sri Lanka

- Truth & Non-Violence (Sathyagraha)
- Gramswaraj – Village Self Governance



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Gandhian Concept of Gram Swaraj

According to Gandhi's thought, Gram Swaraj could be understood as twin beacons of truth and nonviolence.

The concept of Gram Swaraj states that every village should be independent and should be its only republic. The village should be independent of its neighboring villages and should not be dependent on them for any of its vital needs and wants.

However, the villages can be dependent on each other for some needs and wants in which dependency is a must.

Basically, Gandhi wanted that each village should be self-sufficient and self-sustaining as far as basic necessities of life.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution give effect to "self rule" at community level with establishment of Panchayat Ray system.

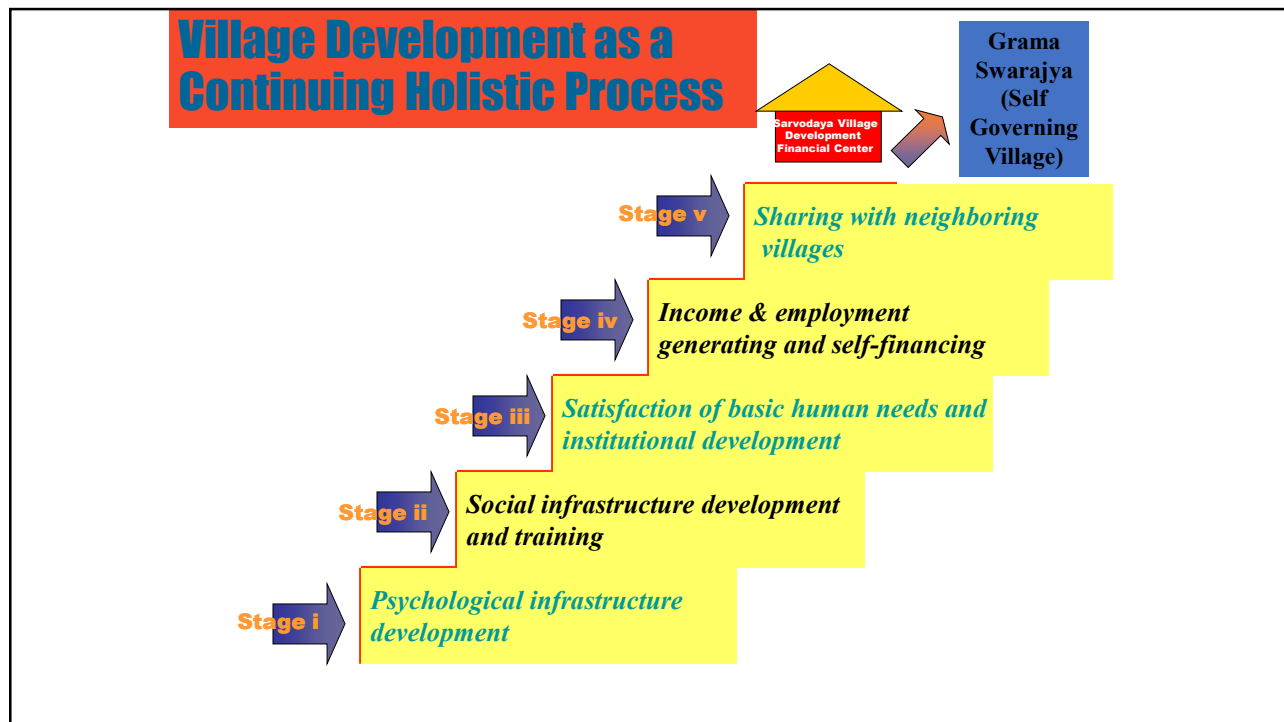
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Grama Swarajya Concept of Sarvodaya

- The Gandhian concept of *gramswaraj* has also been translated into action Sri Lanka as Grama Swarajya through a unique empowerment process by the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.

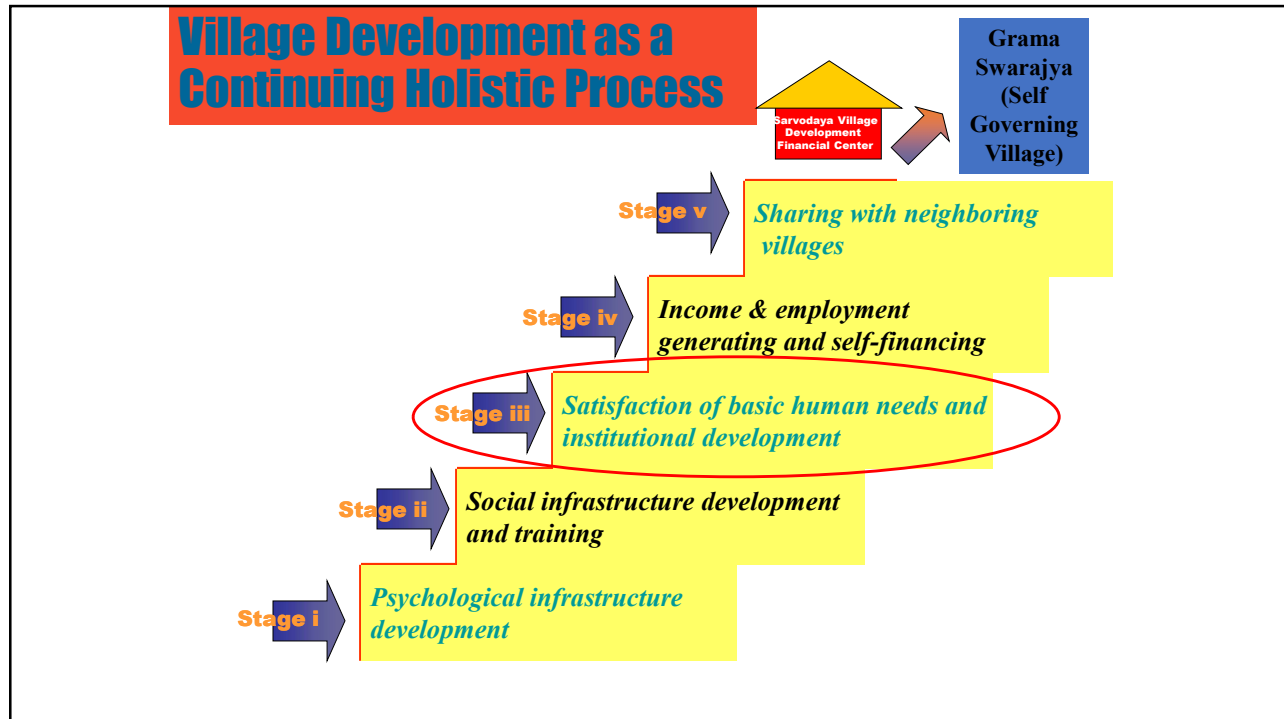
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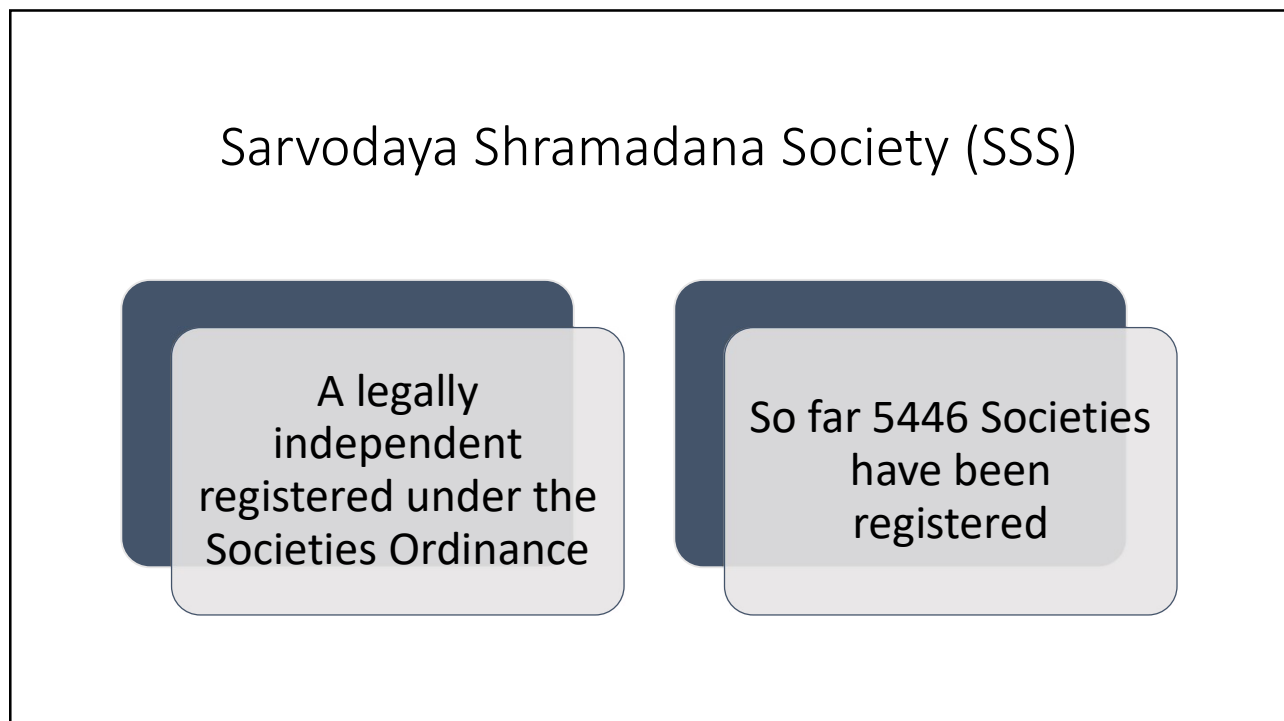
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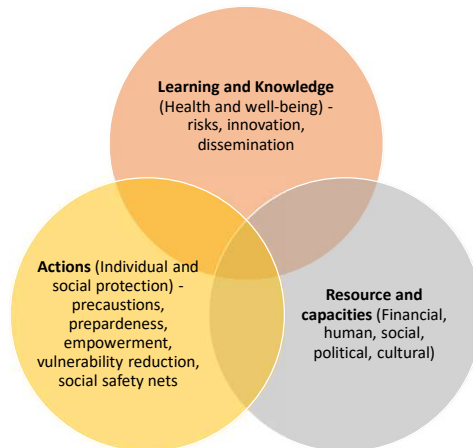


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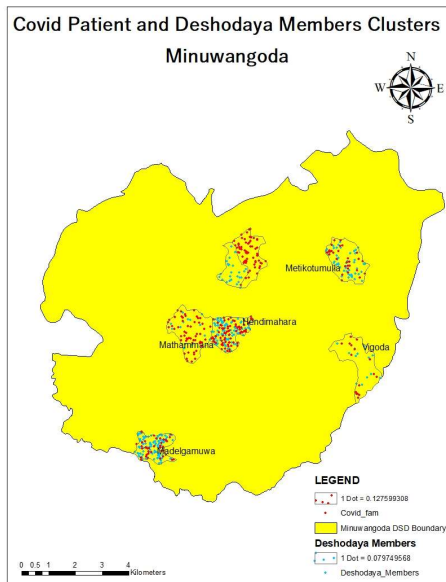


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Resilient Village Communities



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Resilient Village Communities

- Establishing a baseline through a participatory self-assessment.
- Use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT), for monitoring the progress/impact of interventions, and to connect to the learning/sharing platform.
- A pilot of 10 villages representative of geographic, socio-economic, ethnic and religious diversity of Sri Lanka.
- Psycho-social/Mental Health as an integral part of a COVID Ready Village

28

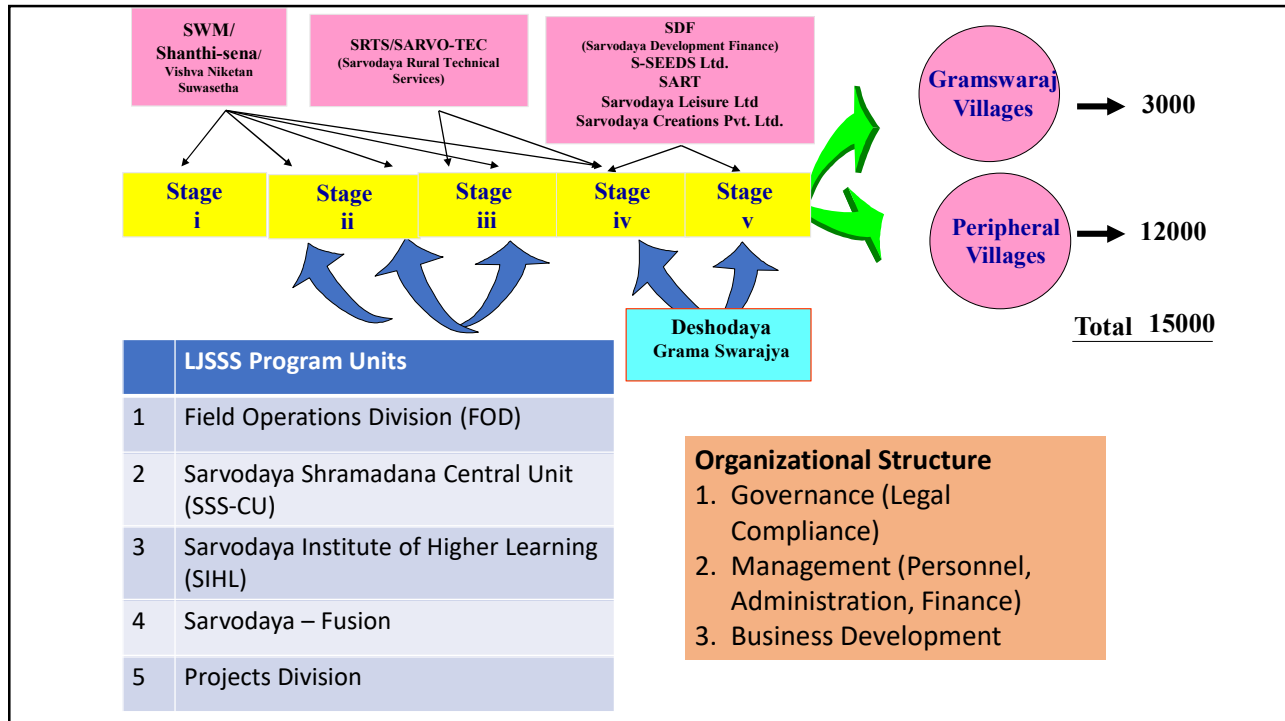
Building
Community
Resilience
through
“COVID-19
Ready Village”

29

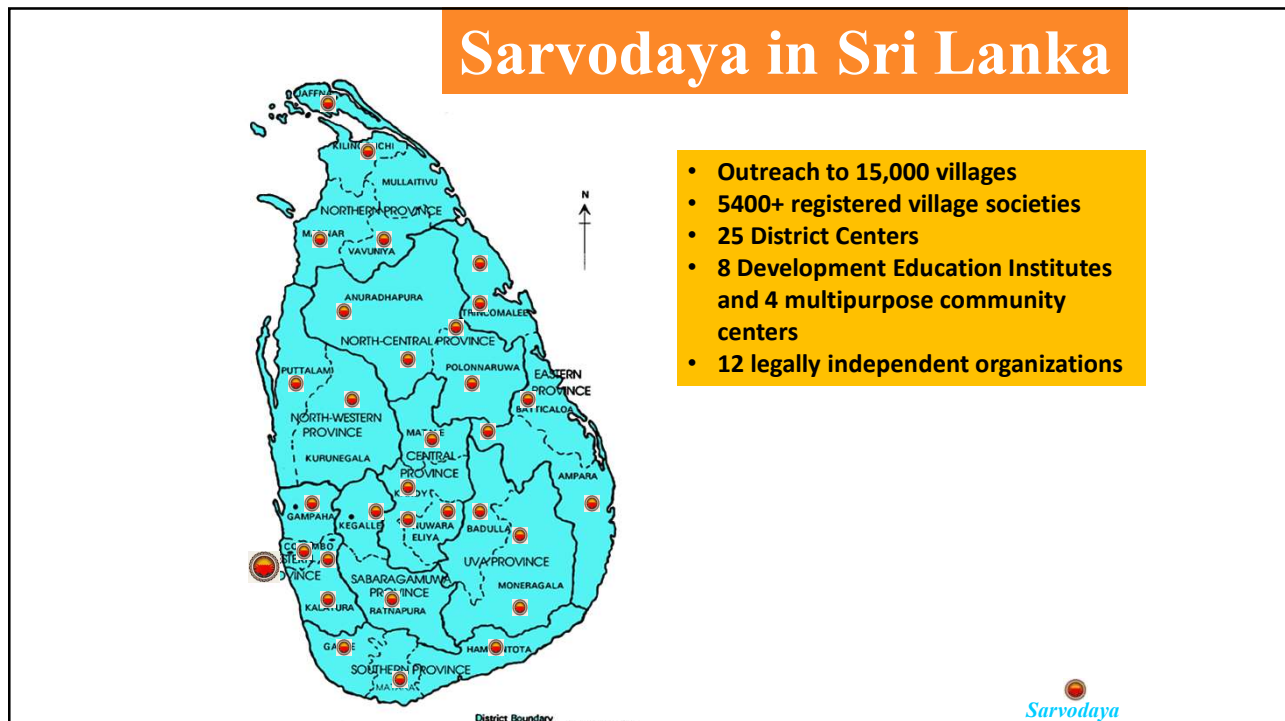
Capital formation at community level

- Spiritual**
 - Inner peace through meditation
 - Moral development through collective community action
- Social**
 - Relationship building, social cohesion, ethnic harmony, protection of vulnerable sections of the populace
- Financial**
 - Village savings mobilization, enterprise development/employment generation
 - Surplus generation and investment within and/or outside the village

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31



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Current Economic Model

- Primarily based on “profit generation” not on human welfare
- Environmental degradation
- Features of this economic model
 - “Survival of the fittest approach”
 - Unequal income distribution and inequities
 - International interventions and corporates
 - Disempowerment of communities
 - Creation of paper money
 - Credit led economic growth

33

Towards an alternative economic system

- “Spend one portion of the earnings for consumption, invest two portions in business or industry, save one portion to be used if & when in distress” (Singalovada Sutta)



34

Elements of an Alternative Economic System

- Satisfaction basic human needs
- Use of renewable resources
- People based approach
- Gender equality
- Self-sufficient economy
- Bottom-up approach for development
- Sharing and caring
- **Role of the State – Accountable to the people**
- Use of appropriate technology including information communication technology (ICT)
- Savings led economic growth

35

A call for a Radical Transformation An alternative Economic System

- Not trying to create “rich few”
- Not making “profits” by destroying the environment and/or communal harmony.
- Not engage in “immoral” activities though perfectly legal
- Not make unfair deals & not take poor for a ride
- Recognize & give priority to social objectives while working within the existing economic environment



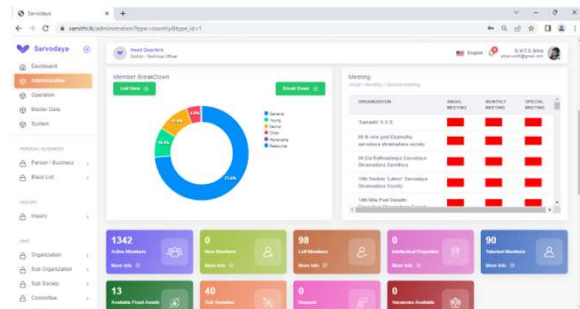
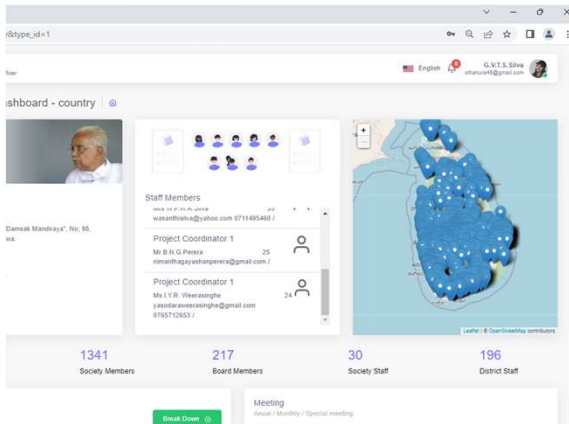
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- Listed in Colombo Stock Exchange
- 1265 Village Societies are Share Holders with Rs. 508 million investment



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Network of Interconnected Village Societies



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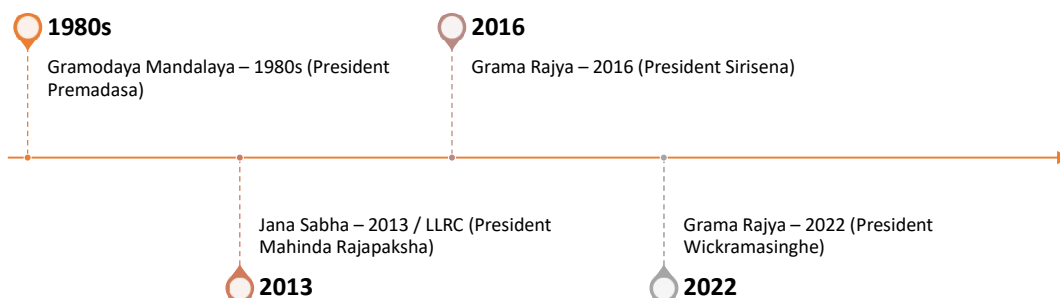


Transformative Approach based on Gandhian principles

- Voluntarily give up wasteful styles of living
- Share part of their wealth to enable the poor to generate enough income to meet their minimum needs
- Take steps to remove structural injustices that keep majority powerless & poor
- Does not regard spiritual activities as “uneconomical”
- Ensure community savings circulate within the community

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Attempts to adopt the concept of gram swaraj by successive governments



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Conclusion

- Relevance and importance of adopting a village centred, people-led community development model.
- Much of the work we do has been largely influenced by Gandhian philosophy and therefore largely modelled on the ideals of 'Swaraj'.
- It was identified as an alternative holistic development model spanning from the very individual level to the larger communal context. The very basic model was to enable village communities to decide for themselves and to encourage ideals of self-help enabling them to govern the village communities with greater
- Sarvodaya innovatively designed initiatives to address personal awakening (*Paushodaya*)
- Sarvodaya workers and volunteers themselves should undergo spiritual and moral transformation
- The Gandhian values of truth, non-violence and selflessness cherished and practiced
- From individual awakening to collective awakening.

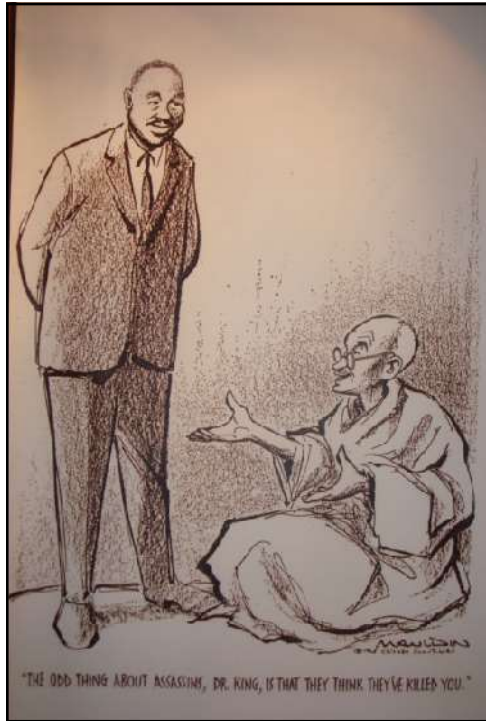
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Call for a non-violent "System Change"

- Recent wave of large-scale non-violent protests across the country led by the Country's youth and active citizens.
- Proposed 'Peoples' Councils' – demand for better governance, transparency, accountability and effective utilisation of public assets and resources.
- Desire to play an active role in key decisions affecting public life and governance.
- The ideals of Gramswaraj and its pragmatism since its inception has always been revolutionary.
- Re-imagining Gramswaraj

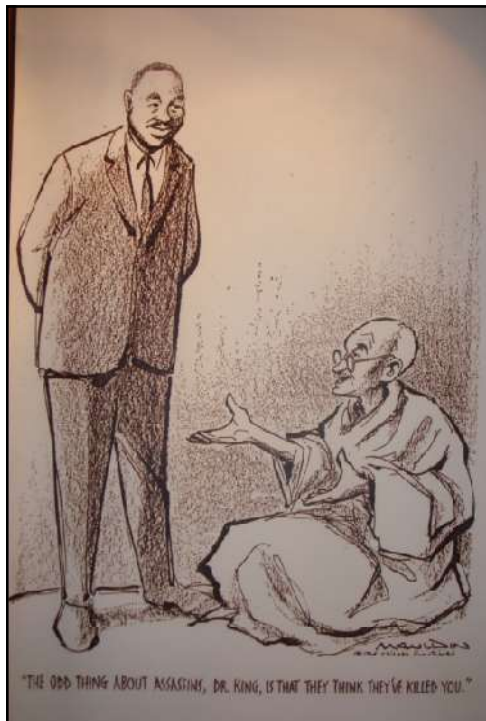


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“THE ODD THING ABOUT ASSASINS, DR. KING,
IS THAT THEY THINK THEY’VE KILLED YOU”

43



“THE ODD THING ABOUT ASSASINS, DR. KING,
IS THAT THEY THINK THEY’VE KILLED YOU”

Thank you!

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