

Sri Lanka: ‘Forced sterilisation’ ordeal: Dr. Shafi extols virtues of communal unity

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Highlights impact of same on tackling ulterior agendas & exposing truth

Obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr. Shafi Shihabdeen recently pointed out that the spate of incidents surrounding the allegations of illegal sterilisation surgeries against him have proven how unity among people can fight ulterior motives and bring out the truth.

Speaking at a public discussion held in Colombo this week, he thanked those who made commitments and fought for the truth. During the discussion organised by the Journalists for Democracy and which focused on the abuse of law, science, and mass media in Sri Lanka for opportunistic motives, the controversial allegations levelled against Dr. Shihabdeen several years ago were discussed.

“I have treated thousands of mothers, but I have never once thought about harming one,” he said.

During his address focusing on how he and those around him faced the allegations against him, Dr. Shihabdeen noted that his incident is an example of how unity can show strength. Adding that there were a few who apologised to him on behalf of the entire Sinhala community, he said that even certain mothers and Sinhalese people that doubted him have today accepted him. He underscored the importance of uniting as human beings irrespective of religious or ethnic differences, adding that such would in turn defeat racism.

“If a certain religion cannot respect a human being or if it teaches to destroy humanity, we should not follow such religions. Nobody should,” he said, adding that creating a next generation that lives in harmony should be a priority.

In 2019, allegations were levelled against Dr. Shihabdeen that he had carried out unauthorised sterilisation surgeries on Sinhala-Buddhist women during caesarean section surgeries conducted by him at the Kurunegala Teaching Hospital where he works. The incident attracted widespread attention with politicians, Buddhist monks and activists expressing anger towards what they called Dr. Shihabdeen’s ‘anti-Sinhala-Buddhist’ acts. There were also allegations that he committed the alleged acts due to money that he had received from a terrorist group. These allegations led to Police investigations, which involved recording statements from a large number of women who had undergone C-section surgeries conducted by Dr. Shihabdeen, and officers who had worked with him at the hospital. However, the investigations concluded that there was no proof to support the allegations against Dr. Shihabdeen, and he was released.

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