

Exclusive: It was about devotion and constitutional rights, say women who entered Sabarimala temple

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Bindu Amini, 44, and Kanakadurga, 42, made history this week when they became the first women to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the Sabarimala temple in Kerala. It took them ninety six days to uphold the Supreme Court order that allowed for the entry of menstruating women into the Lord Ayappa shrine but they stood their ground.

Speaking exclusively to India Today TV, the two women recounted their experience of having prayed at the temple on January 2. While many assumptions and allegations have been made about the intent behind their actions, the two clarified that for them it was purely a matter of faith and devotion. They said they were genuine devotees of Lord Ayappa and wanted to uphold equal rights enshrined in the Constitution.

The two are ordinary women from Kerala who had an extraordinary determination to live and realise their rights. Kanakadurga is an employee in the civil supplies department. She is from Angadipuram in Malappuram district of the state.

Bindu is from Koyilandy area of Kozhikode district. She was an active Naxalite but has reportedly stayed away from politics for the past 10 years. At present, she teaches at the School of Legal Studies, Kannur University.

They are really proud to have exercised their constitutional right.

While Kerala continues to burn after Bindu and Kanaka Durga managed to break barriers, the two women said they are afraid of anyone now. They expressed their disapproval over the protests and violence that has spread across the state. We are upset with what is happening across the state but these are people who are trying to create issues to force their agendas," they said.

However, this was not the first time the two women had tried to enter Sabarimala. Speaking about previous attempts, they said "The government and police had nothing to do with this [successful attempt]. After the first attempt, we lived at our friends' places. During the first attempt, the police tried to send us back."

When asked about how they prepared themselves despite failure and hostility directed towards them, they said "We did not have special preparation, one of our friends gave us some psychological advice."

After Bindu and Kanaka Durga broke the centuries-old tradition, the priest of the temple, Kandaraj Rajeevaru, closed the sanctum sanctorum to perform a 'purification' ceremony.

Expressing their anger at the dogmatic move, the two women said that they will file a case against a priest. "We will move legally against the priest who has shut the temple and did purification, it is untouchability," they said.