

CHAPTER 9



MAHISHI'S RAGE

Communitas and Protest at Sabarimala, Kerala

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The pilgrimage shrine to Lord Ayyappan at Sabarimala, located in a remote jungle area in the southern Indian state of Kerala,¹ is a liminal space and site of *communitas* par excellence. Sabarimala attracts people from across the religious and socio-ethnic spectrum, including many of the most socially and politically excluded and marginalized in the complexity that is contemporary India. There worshippers of different identity and station in life move outside the hierarchies of routine existence and form a unity, an existential *communitas*, as Victor Turner ([1969] 1995) might have said, in the primordial presence of Ayyappan.

Central to Turner's discussion in *The Ritual Process* is the idea that *communitas*, an anti-structural dynamic, is intimately bound with structuring, hierarchizing processes. Although one is overcome in the other, they are mutually implicated which is a force in driving social process, its dynamics of transition and transformation. Moreover, *communitas* is an immanent potential of hierarchy (structure) as hierarchy is immanent in *communitas*. There is a unity even in their contradiction producing a paradoxical intensity of sometimes violent dimensions that Turner discusses, for example, with reference to initiation rites.

Such became starkly apparent at Sabarimala over the main festival and pilgrimage season from October 2018 to January 2019.² Events of protest and violence broke out, drawing the attention of the national and international media. The liminal space of Sabarimala, far from being apart from or outside the orders and structures of everyday life, became an intensity, a vortex, for the inflamed expression of the conflicts and contradictions at the heart of the



Figure 9.1. The temple sanctum. © R.K. Sreejith.

existential realities of India, the more focal, such as those of gender, having significance also for global discourses of egalitarian or equalitarian concern.

The events of protest and violence in relation to Sabarimala were sparked by the announcement on 28 September 2018 of the majority decision of the Supreme Court of India that the vital rule banning women and girls of fertile menstrual age (i.e. those between the ages of 10 and 50) be abandoned, and



Figure 9.2. Pilgrims before the sanctum. © R.K. Sreejith.

that all females of whatever age be admitted entry to the site (Supreme Court of India 2018). The judgment had been reached in response to a petition of the India Young Lawyers' Association (IYLA) to the Supreme Court to direct the Kerala government and the ritual authorities governing Sabarimala to allow all females access on the grounds that the then legal regulations supporting the menstruation rule were in contravention of the Indian Constitution and its provisions against exclusionary practices on the grounds of biology or caste.³

The decision of the Supreme Court coincided not just with the start of the Sabarimala season but also the heightened period of political campaigning as India moved to its national elections. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was seeking re-election appealing to Hindu nationalist and traditionalist interests promoting Brahmanic values, part of the India-wide Hindutva populist movement for which the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) militant right-wing organization is a primary force. The BJP had made virtually no successful political inroads into Kerala, famously politically secular and ruled by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) – or CPI(M). Significantly, the state of Kerala had, in the recent past, been part of a region where royal and Brahmanical value, of a remarkably oppressive, exclusionary and marginalizing kind, had held sway (Roopesh 2018). This was very much alive in the historical consciousness of many, a ghost of the past that haunted the present.

The very historical and sociopolitical context of Kerala was a ready fuel for the protests and violence that exploded upon the court's decision.⁴ The court judgment struck at the nationalist and religious sentiments and value that are at the roots of the populist appeal of the BJP among traditionally oriented elites and that also cross-cut into the interests of those populations otherwise subject to the hegemony of such elites. The direction to abandon the menstrual rule restricting the access of females to the Sabarimala site (not all females are excluded, only those of reproductive age) hit at what may be conceived as a value of central hegemonic potential.

Louis Dumont (1980) has famously argued for the general and overarching significance of religious/ritual values centring around purity and pollution in India in the dynamics of hierarchizing structuring processes in the routines of everyday life and their tragic impetus in the discourses of modernity (e.g. in the violence of Partition). Dumont conceives concepts of purity and pollution as active in the reproduction (and resilience) of caste relations. The concepts of purity and pollution also have relevance for the understanding of class (in which caste plays a role, see Kapferer [1983] 1991) and in the politics of ethnicity and identity. Dumont's understanding is controversial among anthropologists and other scholars of India, not least because it relies on Brahmanical value which has played a significant role in national politics as Perry Anderson (2012) and Arundhati Roy (2014) have stated. Notwith-

standing the controversial reception of Dumont's perspective, his approach extends an understanding of the furies that erupted at Sabarimala, and also, in this particular case, the limitations of Dumont's perspective.

Sabarimala and the Assemblage of Division

Initially there was general enthusiasm in Kerala for the court decision. But this quickly assumed divided shape when members of the Nair Service Society, representative of the elite fraction of the dominant caste in Kerala, with ties to the Brahmin ritual head of Sabarimala and the erstwhile royal seat at Pandalam, declared the court ruling to be an assault on Hindu tradition. Women from elite sections of the Nair organized protest marches throughout Kerala, chanting the names of Ayyappan (*namajapagoshayatra*). The protest was joined by the *Thazhaman Tantri* (the ritual head of Sabarimala), members of the *Pandalam* royal family (who once owned Sabarimala tem-



Figure 9.3. The *namajapagoshayatra*. © G. Sivaprasad.

ple), the caste organization of Kerala brahmins (*Yogakshema Sabha*) and the organization of brahmin priests (*tantri samajam*). At this point the RSS and the BJP joined the protest, and a host of short-lived organizations sprang up in support of opposition to the decision.⁵



Figure 9.4. Abasement of a twice-born in protest. © G. Sivaprasad.



Figure 9.5. Hindu militants surround the Ayyappan shrine. © G. Sivaprasad.

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In response, the CPI(M) conducted what they called a ‘Renaissance Assembly’ (appropriate to the spirit and potency of Ayyappan at his annual festival) throughout the villages in Kerala to resist the BJP and Hindutva attempts at Hindu nationalist communalization. The Kerala government, with the support of well over a hundred local social and political groups, organized some five million women into a ‘women’s wall’ across the state to coincide with New Year’s Day 2019, with the aim to defend gender equality and to protect progressive value against the forces of tradition. Gender activists conducted parades celebrating menstruation. Dalit excluded or out-castes and marginalized tribal groups (Adivasi) added their voice to the cause of the social revolution heralded by the court ruling. Adivasi took the opportunity to declare that their traditional authority and ownership of Ayyappan’s temple as well as land had been falsely appropriated by dominant castes (Sajeev 2019).

The situation worsened when women tried to enter Sabarimala.⁶ Hindutva groups including women, sometimes masked and bearing offensive weapons, attempted to stop their entry.⁷ Groups gathered at critical points along the pilgrim route, preventing the access of any female of inappropri-



Figure 9.6. A woman activist, even though protected by police, fails to break through a barrier of Hindutva militants. © G. Sivaprasad.

ate age. Anyone (including representatives of the media) who broke the customary rule was threatened with extreme violence, rape or death.⁸ On 2 January 2018, two women were given police protection to enter Sabarimala and this provoked state-wide violence. Indeed, throughout the festival season and with expanding intensity Sabarimala and its pilgrim route became a zone of violence, with protesters pelting police, vandalizing state-run buses and organizing state-wide protest strikes (*hartals*). There were stabbings of supporters of the verdict, and the throwing of home-made bombs. Hate speech was rife and this spread onto the internet, on Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Some supporters of the verdict were hunted into their homes and places of work. In the course of the weeks and months of the violence, some forty thousand protesters were arrested or charged, and a few jailed.

Ayyappan: Liminality and Heterodoxy in Myth and Practice

The division and violence that marked the events of Sabarimala has much to do with the liminal dimensions of the site influencing a high degree of social, ethnic and religious inclusiveness. The extensive range of Sabarimala's appeal made it attractive as an apparatus of capture (Deleuze and Guattari [1987] 2004) for hegemonic interests of the BJP and other powerful groups, as well as resistance to them.

The menstrual rule applies to all sections of society, whether Hindu or not, and may be considered as the principle for the forming of a cross-cutting community of adepts, if dominantly male, though not exclusively so. The menstrual rule is a unifying principle for the worshippers (including females who are not of reproductive age) in the encompassing primordial being of Ayyappan. Although exclusionary, this is not necessarily so in a negative sense, as in the assertions of traditionalists such as the BJP and Hindutva or in the views of many gender activists who regard the menstruation rule as a pollution rule.⁹ The negative valuation is supported in other contexts of ritual practice as it is part of widespread popular 'common sense' prejudice that wins easy acceptance transnationally.

There is a more positive interpretation of the menstrual rule in the context of Ayyappan: the female, in her reproductive centrality to the continuity of life and society, as *threatened* rather than threatening. In this sense, and as I will explain further below, the menstrual rule is more equalitarian in effect rather than hierarchical and exclusive, which is the force of its interpretation as a rule of pollution. The attempt by Hindutva hegemonic interests to assert the menstrual rule in terms of Brahmanic value accentuates the divisionary and hierarchical and subordinating potential of the rule rather than the more positive and less exclusionary (if still masculinist) understanding of the rule

that is apparent from an examination of the logic of Ayyappan myths and stories as well as practice at Sabarimala.¹⁰

Myths and Practice

There are numerous myths and stories surrounding Ayyappan, and new ones are continually being invented. They legitimate the rights of different caste, tribal, ethnic and religious communities or groups of interest to Ayyappan's temple (for such stories see Thekkumbhagam 1985; Sekhar 1992; Osella and Osella 2003; Rajeev 2019). During the period of protest and violence new narratives were invented (Sajeev 2019; also see episodes of the television drama '*Ayyappa Saranam*' telecasted through a pro-BJP channel). Hindutva groups constructed stories asserting the value interpretation of the menstrual rule as a pollution prohibition, broadcasting it via the internet. Adivasi (tribal) groups declared that Ayyappan was born in their community but was killed resisting a Tamil invasion of Kerala in the twelfth century and the stealing of their lands (Sajeev 2019).

The most popular and widely known myth of Ayyappan tells that he was born of the union of two male deities, Siva and Vishnu. This marks him immediately as a liminal heterodox god conjoining the two major divisions in Hinduism. His point in life, his *raison d'être*, is to kill the demoness, Mahishi,¹¹ who attacks fertility and reproduction. The baby Ayyappan is given to the childless Pandalam king¹² (a totalizing symbol of Mahishi's curse), who out hunting hears the child crying on the mudbank of the Pamba River. The king takes him to his palace and brings Ayyappan up as his successor. In the meantime, the king's queen gives birth to a son, and desiring to make him the royal successor plots the demise of Ayyappan. She pretends to have a stomach-ache that is to be cured by drinking leopard's milk. She asks Ayyappan to collect the milk from a lactating leopard, expecting him to be killed. In collecting the milk and avoiding death, Ayyappan also achieves his life's purpose which is the killing of Mahishi, whom he meets on the way. On his successful return to the palace, the queen, acknowledging her devious intent, accepts Ayyappan as the king's successor. However, Ayyappan renounces the claim, returning to the wilderness of Sabarimala where he continues to help those who seek refuge with him. Among the main boons that Ayyappan grants is the gift of children and the overcoming of threats to fertility and reproduction.

From this myth it is arguable that the banning of girls and women of reproductive age has much to do with the danger to their fertility and reproductive capability, a positive protective reason for exclusion, as against the more negative widely held understandings of impurity and pollution of Hin-

ditva insistence. The menstrual rule insulates (quarantines) reproductive females from the danger of Mahishi, the manifestation of death and discontinuity who causes infertility. Mahishi's destructive energy is not merely killed by Ayyappan but quite literally stamped out in Ayyappan's victory dance on Mahishi's dead body. The dance (*pettathullal*) is a major event in the Sabarimala season and is re-enacted by men (and occasionally non reproductive females) from across the socio-ethnic and religious spectrum (Muslims particularly, see below). Some of the dancers wear horned devil masks, others have their faces painted with tribal markings (participants say those of jungle tribal peoples who aided Ayyappan's victory) and wield swords, clubs and other weaponry.¹³

The pilgrimage to Sabarimala, the main event of the ritual season, plays out the logic of the myth. Pilgrims (males and non-reproductive females) effectively become Ayyappan and follow his path. They also, by symbolic extension, overcome death and act regeneratively. Pilgrims are addressed as 'swamy', an honorific of Ayyappan. They undergo a vow of forty-one days of strict purity involving abstention from sexual congress. This is understood by many (certainly Brahmin priests) as conforming to values of celibacy, but it may as well be a mimetic playing out of Ayyappan's birthing, a virtually autogenetic process outside that of heterosexual reproduction. The pilgrims wear black loincloths, indicative of death or perhaps their liminal or transitional state between life and death. They carry on their heads, throughout the pilgrimage, a cloth bag in which sacred (protective) offerings are contained.

The pilgrims' first stop (or initial stage of congregation) is at the Vavar mosque at Erumely (30 miles from Sabarimala). According to legend, Vavar, a Muslim warrior saint, became an adept of Ayyappan, helping him in his fight with Mahishi and other battles. The pilgrims circumambulate the mosque where they re-enact Ayyappan's victory dance (*pettathullal*) on Mahishi's body, from where they proceed to the Pamba River (where the baby Ayyappan was found) close by the main Sabarimala shrine. Finally, the pilgrimage is ended with the coming of the pilgrims into Ayyappan's shrine and their offering to the god of the sacred objects that they have been carrying on their heads.

Ayyappan: A Being of Unifying Communitas

Lord Ayyappan of Sabarimala is an all-inclusive divinity. He is a being born of division, himself a divided unity. He is a cohering force in a heterodox and heterogeneous socio-religious, ethnic and political reality. The continuing history of his formation indicates such. A diversity of religious and cultural

influences are evident in his construction. Many communities from the most dominant to the most marginal have narratives of their connection to him and of his beneficial potency in their existence. The stories of Ayyappan tell of him overcoming the conflicts and oppositions inherent in a heterogenous/heterodox reality. His potency is the facilitation of relations and transactions across divisions to common benefit.

The collective *pettathullal* performed by pilgrims at the outset of their journey to his shrine is intensely expressive of the character of Ayyappan's battles and war. They are conflicts of generation and the turning or transmutation of antagonistic, destructive and rupturing potential into forces of unity, generative beneficence and continuity. Ayyappan creates positive relations in the place of negative division and opposition.

The *pettathullal* (literally 'market dance') occurs in a centre of trade, an intense space of entropy threatening disorder in division, which Ayyappan overcomes in his killing of the prime agency of decline and destruction, Mahishi, who strikes at the generative root of life and its renewal. The dance is a symbolic action of conversion and metamorphosis. Mahishi's death is facilitated by the assistance of Vavar, an erstwhile enemy who became an ally. The dance also effects the emergence of the beautiful and fecund Malikapurattamma, Ayyappan's bride-to-be.

Overall, Ayyappan is the positivity of structure and anti-structure, in the senses of which Victor Turner writes, and the negation, or amelioration or reduction of their negative or internally contradictory possibilities. As such, Ayyappan describes a tension towards *communitas*. His is a decentred generative potency to be distinguished from the centred totalizing power of kingship, for example; hence the significance of Ayyappan's renunciation of kingly power, its hierarchy and potentially oppressive and fragmenting potency from which he is distanced in his jungle abode. Ayyappan interrelates heterogeneous populations horizontally rather than vertically, permitting their relative autonomy. His is a more equalitarian force facilitating unification in difference and its fruitfulness per se. In the jungle of Sabarimala, he becomes one with its abundance and its endless dynamic of renewal.

Sabarimala as a Liminal Vortex

It is the all-inclusiveness of worship at Sabarimala, Ayyappan being the dynamic of such inclusiveness, that sets the ground for the eruption of protest and violence throughout Ayyappan's festival season in 2018–19. To put it another way, the all-encompassing character of Ayyappan's domain makes it a fragile space open to the destructiveness, division and fracturing processes

of that which it brings into union. It is a place for what might be regarded as the pivoting of the sacred or the overturning of the very union (one that is virtually totalizing) that is achieved in Sabarimala's liminal space. What was potential became realized. Far from being a space apart from the realities of the everyday social and political world, Ayyappan's domain was converted into an epicentre, a vortex, for the expression of the many conflicts and tensions that lie at the root of contemporary India. Mahishi raged.

The conversion or subversion of the overarching *communitas* in the realm of Ayyappan into what may be described as a fractured *communitas* of intense and violent turmoil of opposing passions was triggered by the Supreme Court judgment on the menstruation rule. This affirmed the menstruation rule as integral to the logic of purity and pollution, and therefore to the exclusionary and subordinating effects of hierarchy, of structure. It agreed with Hindutva values, but gave them negative value rather than the affirmative weight of Hindu nationalism.

Diametrically opposed camps were united in their valuation of the menstruation rule and effectively combined to suppress its positive aspect or possibility that is apparent in the logic of the Ayyappan myths and stories. These indicate that the menstruation rule operates in the interest of protecting and securing fertile and reproductive females from the dangers to their generative potential, and therefore their benefit to society as a whole. Sabarimala in the festival season is a dangerous space in this regard. Moreover, the menstruation rule enables a *communitas* among the less vulnerable (males and non-reproductive females), a bonding against the present danger of Mahishi, who the pilgrims in their progress, as Ayyappan, will conquer.

The menstruation rule understood in the foregoing sense is a relatively equalitarian and unificatory principle. That is, it applies in the same way to all, regardless of religious practice, caste, class, ethnicity or identity. Moreover, the rule transects all communities, uniting them in a common purpose. All are placed in more or less equivalent relation to Ayyappan with their own mythic claims to the benefits of his potency.

The assertion by Hindutva interests of the menstruation rule as a pollution rule (in effect supported by the Supreme Court ruling) gave rise to its negative value over its more positive value in the situation of Sabarimala. Females are excluded because they are endangered rather than being themselves in a dangerous polluting condition. The stress on the pollution is not only subordinating of women but also gives force to the rules of hierarchy in traditionalist Brahmanic Hinduism especially, which has hierarchizing differentiating effect among Hindus and in their relations with other communities (affecting females and males).

The establishment and broad acceptance of the menstruation rule as one of pollution and exclusion counteracted the tension towards a singular unity

in *communitas*, the spirit of Ayyappan and the impetus of the more positive valuation of the menstruation rule. The re-evaluation of the menstrual rule opened the gates of hierarchical fracture and virtually unbridgeable division, indeed a fractured *communitas* of opposed camps bonded in passionate reciprocal antagonism.

All the above being said, the hierarchizing and subordinating effect of the pollution rule is nonetheless implicit in the more positive valuation that it dominated and suppressed. As gender activists would point out, that the rule is protective of females legitimates male control and subordination of females.¹⁴ The inequalitarian potential of what has been presented as a relatively egalitarian principle is immanent within it.

The abolition of the rule certainly expands the egalitarian and ahierarchical energy of Ayyappan and the sense of renewal or ‘renaissance’ expressed in the Kerala government’s support of resistance to the Hindutva reaction.¹⁵ Subsequent to the 2018 judgment, there were two other judgments of the Supreme Court concerning the Sabarimala issue. Among these two judgments, the first one came on 14 November 2019, which was on the review and writ petitions (there were more than forty such petitions) filed before it against allowing the entry of women into the shrine (Supreme Court of India 2019). The second one came on 6 February 2020, which was against the petition challenging the judgment of 2019. Rather than upholding the earlier judgment, the Supreme Court, through its November 2019 judgment, referred the review petition to be heard by a larger bench of the Supreme Court. Indicating such a judgment as unconstitutional, the supporters of women’s entry approached the Supreme Court again, but that too was dismissed by a nine bench Supreme Court judgment, which came in February 2020. Both these judgments undermined the spirit, at least for the moment, of equalitarian value. This keeping in abeyance of the otherwise made possible horizontal interrelations renewed social division and furthered differentiation centred around the value of pollution. By this, the Supreme Court, being the apex of structured juridical authority, destabilizes *communitas* despite having the potential to renew the ‘total community as an unstructured unit’ (Turner 1995).

More generally, the events of 2018–19 at Sabarimala underline the potential of ritual institutions of liminality and *communitas* to become vital foci for social and political transformation. As a catalytic vortex of social and political forces in contention, reacting explosively against one another, Sabarimala operated in a manner something akin to a catalytic converter. Thus contradictions at the heart of social and political processes in contemporary India were thrown into the open, made thoroughly part of public consciousness but in the main resisted with renewed overall unifying effect. It might be said that the spirit of Ayyappan prevailed against the forces of division.

The BJP did increase its vote among the population in Kerala but it won no seats there. The political commitment of Kerala to egalitarian value and to the overarching unity of its heterogeneous population held firm.

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NOTES

1. More precisely, at the Periyar Tiger Reserve of the Western Ghats in the Pathanamthitta district.
2. Unlike other temples, Sabarimala is only opened for worship and pilgrims during the festival season and on the first five days of every Malayalam month.
3. For a discussion on gender and law in relation to the Sabarimala case, see Acevedo 2018; Jassal and Chibber 2019. Also see Sarukkai 2018.
4. An early form of protests began in 2016 while the ruling Left government decided to file an affidavit favouring entry of women in Sabarimala, can be seen in the 'Right to Wait' campaign initiated by upper-castes women backed by Hindu-rightists. The campaign, which intensified during the time of violent outbursts at Sabarimala in 2018 and after, encouraged elite women to express their voice through declaring their willingness to wait until they reach the age of 50 to enter Sabarimala Temple. For details, see Devika 2020. Also see Kumari 2019.
5. I was told that in a meeting of Hindu organizations held in Kochi at the height of the turmoil, more than seventy Hindutva organizations participated.
6. Many women tried to enter Sabarimala but were prevented from doing so, although two eventually managed it with the support of the police. However, as a consequence, they had to live in hiding for several weeks and were subjected to abuse from their kin and at work. Very recently, one among them openly declared on Facebook that she was moving out of Kerala because it had become unsafe for her to live there due to the continuing hunting of Hindutva forces. The other one narrated a series of events of ill-treatment she had to suffer from both the kin and the right-wing supporters through a biographical narrative (see Jeevanlal 2023).
7. The women's organization of the BJP played a major role. Equally supportive and active were the members of the Nair Service Society, a caste-community organization of the upper and dominant caste of Nairs.
8. The situation became very threatening for the media. Many international and national journalists were forced to leave Sabarimala by Hindutva militias. Meanwhile, an otherwise poorly rated regional language channel run by the Hindu right wing had achieved a high rating during the period of conflict by (live) telecasting of protests and violence.

9. The relationship between religion and menstruation centred on purity and pollution had been discussed in the context of the Sabarimala verdict. For details, see Sridhar 2019; Joseph 2019; Cohen 2020.
10. The arguments made in two works published in 2019 underscore this notion. Nithin Sridhar (2019), through a comparative analysis of menstruation and religious practice among the Hindu, Christian, Islamic and Buddhist faithful, labours hard to state that menstruation is 'an agent of purity and a form of *tapa*', a key Brahmanic ideal. Likewise, Sinu Joseph (2019), anchoring on the value of 'indigenous science and religion', which I would read as Brahmanic ideals, argues that there are separate spiritual paths for men and women: strict austerities and renunciation of desire for men and fulfilment of desire for women (ibid.: 101). She would add that the insistence of purity is to preserve the energy of each sacred space, and has nothing to do with gendered-discrimination. The effect of the assertion of such Brahmanic arguments in the middle of Sabarimala controversy would be a legitimization and reproduction of hierarchy. A less impressive perception, meanwhile, illustrates the call for the entry of women to Sabarimala as a conscious move to dismiss belief on Ayyappan. It adds that the existing exclusion is founded not on the cause of menstruation or fertility, but on the hardship that Ayyappa had in this world as an adopted son and his preferred life as a celibate (Kumar 2017: 16). Making Facebook posts of women who rejects the Supreme Court verdict subject of discourse analysis, J. Devika states the idea that emerges out of these discourses is that 'the stated reason for prohibiting women of reproductive age from Sabarimala had nothing to do with their readiness or unwillingness to wait, but was all about *aacharam*, of the Malayali Brahminical kind' (Devika 2020: 9)
11. Mahishi is the sister of the buffalo demon Mahishasura, whose death at the hands of the gods (deva) Mahishi must avenge. She is virtually invincible. Only a being born of two males can defeat her. Ayyappan is her nemesis.
12. Pandalam royal family is said to have migrated from Madurai in Tamil Nadu. Their small kingdom was absorbed into the Travancore Kingdom in the eighteenth century.
13. It is customary that a first-time pilgrim (Kanni Ayyappan – 'virgin' or novitiate) to Sabarimala should perform the *pettathullal*.
14. Devika interestingly conceptualized this as 'new-savarna' mobilization to protect the Hindu culture, wherein women are subordinated under Brahmanic masculine value (Devika 2020).
15. Scores of books had published in the regional language of Malayalam (Jyothirghosh 2019; Namboothiri 2019; Puthukkad 2018; Rajendran nd; Rajeevan 2018; Surendran 2019), including the one by the chief minister of Kerala (Vijayan 2019) and major intellectuals of the Communist Party of India (Ganesh 2018; Pattaannur and Padmanabhan 2018; Rajeev 2019; Charuvil 2019; Jitheesh 2022), defending the judgment, condemning the Hindu rightists' violence and defending renaissance value. All are emphasizing the historical struggles through which Kerala became a progressive society and the commitment to uphold egalitarian value. An overall dimension of this discourse is to engender an all-inclusive communitas. However, in the statist discourses could be seen the recognition of social divisions, differentiations and hierarchy, on the one side, and an imagination of a generalized social bond, on the other. This contradiction resolves the otherwise differentiated voice of the state and the post-2018 positions of the Supreme Court.

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