

ISHTI - SYNOPSIS

"Ishti" is set in the mid-twentieth century Kerala, when young Namboothiri Brahmins successfully challenged the orthodox, patriarchal traditions of their community which allowed the patriarch, the eldest male member of the family, sole control of family property and denied normal education to its members particularly women. The film has a feminist angle too.

Ramavikraman Namboothiri the 71-year old head of a family, is a Somayaji. That is, he has performed the Somayaga. His ambition is to perform an Athirithram, or the Agniyaga, and become an Akkithiri. The fire from the yaga would be preserved to light his funeral pyre. He is willing to sell the family silver to achieve his ambition but is unwilling to part with some money for the treatment of his brother's ailing son, born to a woman from a lower caste. Tradition allowed only the eldest brother to marry from within the community and bring home the spouse. He was often polygamous: in many cases elderly men married teen aged girls.

Ramavikraman Namboothiri's third wife, 17-year-old Sridevi, is literate. She inspires the younger "Ishti" is set in the mid-twentieth century Kerala, when young Namboothiri Brahmins successfully challenged the orthodox, patriarchal traditions of their community which allowed the patriarch, the eldest male member of the family, sole control of family property and denied normal education to its members particularly women. The film has a feminist angle too.

Ramavikraman Namboothiri the 71-year old head of a family, is a Somayaji. That is, he has performed the Somayaga. His ambition is to perform an Athirithram, or the Agniyaga, and become an Akkithiri. The fire from the yaga would be preserved to light his funeral pyre. He is willing to sell the family silver to achieve his ambition but is unwilling to part with some money for the treatment of his brother's ailing son, born to a woman from a lower caste. Tradition allowed only the eldest brother to marry from within the community and bring home the spouse. He was often polygamous: in many cases elderly men married teen aged girls.

Ramavikraman Namboothiri's third wife, 17-year-old Sridevi, is literate. She inspires the younger ones in the household and asserts their right to know, in the face of stiff opposition from the orthodoxy.

Ramavikraman Namboothiri's eldest son, Raman Namboothiri, can chant Vedic hymns but cannot read or write. He gets convinced by Sridevi's arguments, and this enrages the elders in the community. Soon a conspiracy is hatched against the two, alleging an illicit relationship between them. This is such a serious crime that the woman should be tried and expelled. To Sridevi's shock, her husband supports the conspirators.

Now comes the revolt. Sridevi, the hurt and humiliated woman, condemns her husband, challenges her tormentors, and walks out of the household, symbolically declaring her freedom.

"Ishti" literally means search for self, yaga, etc. The film is the first in Sanskrit with a social theme.

ones in the household and asserts their right to know, in the face of stiff opposition from the orthodoxy.

Ramavikraman Namboothiri's eldest son, Raman Namboothiri, can chant Vedic hymns but cannot read or write. He gets convinced by Sridevi's arguments, and this enrages the elders in the community. Soon a conspiracy is hatched against the two, alleging an illicit relationship between

them. This is such a serious crime that the woman should be tried and expelled. To Sri devi's shock, her husband supports the conspirators.

Now comes the revolt. Sridevi, the hurt and humiliated woman, condemns her husband, challenges her tormentors, and walks out of the household, symbolically declaring her freedom.

"Ishti" literally means search for self, yaga, etc. The film is the first in Sanskrit with a social theme.