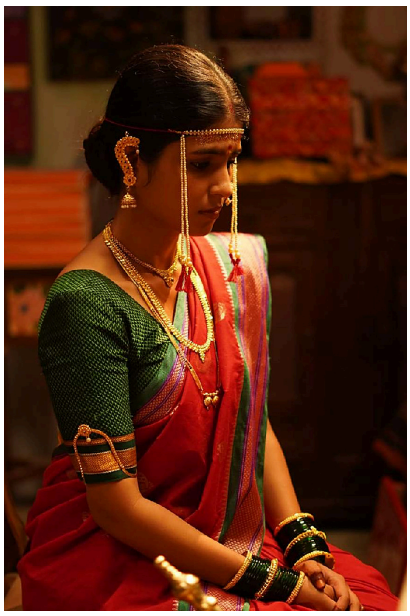
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HELLO MADRAS
hellomadrasdaily@gmail.com
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MOVIE REVIEW: GONDHAL – A Mesmerising Cinematic Journey Blending Tradition, Emotion and Suspense



CHENNAI – 15 Nov, 2026 Santosh Davakhar's powerful storytelling shines with Ilaiyaraaja's exceptional musical brilliance

Gondhal is an absorbing and artistically ambitious Marathi film that brings together traditional culture, human relationships, emotional conflicts and suspense in an engaging cinematic presentation. Written and directed by Santosh Davakhar, the film takes audiences into the heart of rural Maharashtra, where an ancient folk ritual becomes the backdrop for an intense story of love, betrayal, ambition and destiny.

The narrative unfolds over a single night against the colourful and spiritually significant backdrop of the traditional Gondhal ceremony. Beneath the celebrations, music and devotional performances, complicated relationships and hidden emotions gradually come to the surface. The filmmaker uses this distinctive cultural setting to explore the complexities of human nature and the struggles faced by individuals caught between personal desires and social expectations.

One of the film's major strengths is its unique storytelling approach. The narrative creates an atmosphere in which tradition and contemporary human conflicts intersect naturally. The unfolding events keep the audience engaged while giving considerable importance to the cultural identity and emotional depth of the characters.

Ishita Deshmukh delivers an impressive performance as Suman, bringing emotional intensity and individuality to a challenging character. Kishor Kadam is equally effective, adding depth and authenticity to his portrayal. Yogesh Sohoni makes a notable impression with his natural performance, while Nishad Bhoir brings considerable intensity to his role as Sarjerao.

Anuj Prabhu, Suresh Vishwakarma, Kailash Waghmare, Dhruv Thoke and the supporting artistes contribute effectively to the film's overall impact. The ensemble performances give the rural setting considerable authenticity and help establish the emotional atmosphere of the story.

Director Santosh Davakhar deserves appreciation for choosing an unusual subject and presenting it through a distinctive cinematic language. His work as the writer and director demonstrates a clear understanding of the cultural

environment, character relationships and dramatic possibilities of the story.

A particularly notable technical achievement is the film's extended opening sequence, reportedly presented in a continuous shot of approximately 25 minutes. This ambitious filmmaking approach adds to the immersive quality of the narrative and reflects the creative commitment of the director and cinematography team.

Ilaiyaraaja's music is one of the film's outstanding attractions. His compositions complement the cultural atmosphere and emotional progression of the story. The musical arrangements blend traditional elements with his distinctive orchestral sensibility, enriching the overall viewing experience.

Cinematographer Amalendu Chaudhary deserves special appreciation for capturing the atmosphere of rural Maharashtra with striking visual detail. The night-time settings, ritual performances, lighting and carefully composed frames give the film a distinctive visual identity.

Editor Ashish Mhatre has an important role in shaping the narrative, while production designer Sandeep Meher deserves appreciation for recreating the cultural surroundings and traditional ceremonial atmosphere. Sound designer Jayesh Dhakan further strengthens the immersive experience.

Gondhal is a commendable attempt to bring a lesser-known cultural tradition to a wider cinematic audience while exploring universal themes of love, freedom, relationships and human vulnerability.

The film's recognition at prestigious film festivals and its selection as India's official entry for the 99th Academy Awards further underline its artistic significance.

Overall, Gondhal is a memorable cinematic undertaking that combines cultural richness, committed performances, ambitious direction, striking cinematography and the musical brilliance of Ilaiyaraaja. Santosh Davakhar has created a film that deserves appreciation for its originality, technical ambition and distinctive storytelling.

A noteworthy cinematic experience for audiences who appreciate meaningful stories rooted in Indian culture.
