Nikhildas and Sagar Sathyan’s Play: Mali

Playwrights: Nikhildas Puranattukara & Sagar Sathyan
Director: Nikhildas Puranattukara
Group: Punchami Theatres, Thrissur
Language: Malayalam
Duration: 1 hr 15 mins

The Play
Mali is based on the folk culture of Kerala, as told through the songs and tale of the hero and the imaginary god Ayyappan. It begins with the description of a girl named Mali, and Chappan, a fighter who grew up in the jungle to defeat the hiding forces called Maravippada. Chappan learns the tactics and expertise from Vithari Mooppan and fights against Maravippada. He goes to meet his beloved Mali, but Mali asks him to come later since she is menstruating and therefore prohibited to meet anyone. Chappan is upset about this discrimination and tells her that now he will return for her only when the society gives up all such beliefs. Mali awaits his arrival, and when he doesn’t return, breaks away from all social taboos and restrictions and leaves home to enter the forest to find her love.

Director’s Note
The play begins with the resistance of people towards outside forces. A number of contemporary questions have been dealt with in this play, especially the ones dealing with discrimination. Why can’t a warrior have a spiritual quest? Is the reason to create superstitions and customs a deliberate attempt to keep them subdued and at a distance? The play is based on folk tales and folk songs heard from the dalits of Sabarimala Sasthav, popular in Kerala. Live music related to Ayyappan is incorporated into the play.

The Director & Playwright

Nikhildas Puranattukara has received the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Academy Award for Best Director and Writer in 2019 for the play Mali. His children's plays have won accolades at the Kerala state youth festival during the last three years. Nikhildas has staged plays at national and international platforms like National School of Drama Theatre Festival, International Theatre Festival of Kerala, Bharat Rang Mahotsav, Rangayan Festival, Cuttack National Theatre Festival etc. He has adapted renowned writer Uroob's celebrated work Neelakuyil into a play. He was the director of Lavettam theatre camp in Perth, Australia; and Kalithattu theatre camp in Bombay. He is associated with Thrissur based theatre group Rangachetana and his own theatre group Punchami theatres. Some of his popular productions are Marathalayan, Manabave, Kunnukalkkumappuram, Palaharapanthayam, Markkadapuranam etc.

The Co-Playwright

Sagar Sathyan has been active in cinema and theatre for the past few years and has made remarkable contributions to both. He has been a part of Rangachetana, a well-known theatre group in Thrissur, and has written four plays directed by Nikhildas Puranattukara. Sagar has also written the script of a Malayalam feature film Ladoo which was released last year.

The Group

Punchami Theatres is a group of young people who have been studying drama and are engaged in theatre activities. Everyone in the group finds time for theatrical work while practicing his/her routine work. Mali is the first theatre project of Panchami Theatres. It won the Best Play award at the Kerala Sangeet Natak Academy's amateur drama competition, and also the Best Actress, Best Director and Best Writing awards. A number of colleges of Kerala participate in theatre activities under the banner of Panchami Theatres. The centre of the group is in Adat, a village in Thrissur district of Kerala.

Cast & Credits

Mali	Athira
Karuthi	Anusha Bahuleyan
Mahishi	Mekha Manoj
Chappan	Anand
Vithari Mooppan	Sathyajith
Kandan	Ramkumar
Kormi	Akhilesh Paliyan
Rajavu	Ramadas
Vendoran	Sajith Alukkal
Villan	Appu K.G
Kadutha	Athul
Mallan	Kiran
Karuppan	Abhishek
Moothoru	Henson
Kappatharu	Josprakash
Vaidhyar	Vishnu
Padayali	Ramesh Ramakrishnan

Light	Dhaneshkumar
Art	Shinoj Asokan
Co-ordinator	Mejo
Music	Midhun Malayalam
Instruments	Manikandan
Make-up	Francis Chirayath
Costumes	Anjali Raman, Leela Sathyan
Light	Assistant Gokul
Art Assistant	Mornima Dhanesh
Assistant Director	Nijildas

Playwrights	Nikhildas Puranattukara, Sagar Sathyan
Director	Nikhildas Puranattukara

Contacts
Punchami Theatres
Adat, P.O Thrissur, Kerala 680551
M: +91 9745260825, 9946302016

E: punchamitheaters@gmail.com

Prof. Khushalani’s review of the play and interview with director –

https://youtu.be/QqWpPEQ1_KA?t=128