

ALL WE IMAGINE IS LIGHT

India (2024) 118 minutes

Director: Payal Kapadia

Cast: Kani Kusruti (Prabha)

Divya Prabha (Anu)

Chhaya Kadam (Parvathy)



Screening 21st January 2026 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Three nurses live in a small flat in modern-day Mumbai. Anu has only just moved in but is causing some scandal on account of her Muslim boyfriend. Parvathy is being threatened with eviction because a property developer has bought her apartment building. Meanwhile Prabha is uncertain whether to encourage the romantic advances of a young doctor, not knowing whether her absent husband will ever return from Germany.

Reviews



two nuanced and engaging performances, it's an impressive achievement from a perceptive independent storyteller."

Gavia Baker-Whitelaw, Empire

"Kapadia initially conceived this project while she was still in film school, during a period when two of her relatives were hospitalised. She spent a lot of time speaking to (and eventually interviewing) nurses, beginning to see the hospital as an ideal location for a drama about women's work.

Her documentary background makes itself known in voiceover interludes, where anonymous Mumbai residents speak about the city's identity. People travel from all over India to find work here, including the film's two protagonists, Prabha (Kani Kusruti) and Anu (Divya Prabha). Prabha is responsible and selfless, constantly trying to help her friends and coworkers solve their problems. Meanwhile the younger Anu is more fun-loving and rebellious, embarking on a secret romance with a Muslim boy while dodging parental pressure for an arranged marriage....

...Kapadia's vision immerses us in the rhythms of the city, guided by moments of unexpected happenstance and beauty. She has a real skill for precise, authentic characterisation. Yet every strand of this story is also deeply political, whether it's Anu's love life, Prabha's attempt to help an undocumented coworker keep her apartment, or the obvious gender dynamic of the hospital's all-female workforce of nurses. Led by

"In a 2017 interview, director Payal Kapadia observed, "One does not need to look too far for inspiration because the life that surrounds us is full of poetic possibilities including dreams and memories." This artistic philosophy was on display in her first feature, the documentary "A Night of Knowing Nothing," and it's even more explicit in "All We Imagine as Light," a narrative feature about three women in Mumbai struggling to make things work, whatever that might look like. The film's evocative title (Kapadia is gifted with those) actually describes the experience of watching it, how the nocturnal insomniac mood is sparked with distant colored lights, and how moving into the light requires "imagining." Perhaps the light isn't light, but it's good enough if we imagine it so."

Sheila O'Malley, Roger Ebert.com

Film Facts:

- This is the first Indian film to receive the prestigious Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival.
- While writing the script for "[All We Imagine as Light](#)," Kapadia and cinematographer Ranabir Das interviewed people about their lives in Mumbai. Some of their voices can be heard in the opening sequences of the film.