

Member and guest feedback for *All We Imagine as Light*

I enjoyed the very real, ordinary characters, distilled against the overwhelming struggle to survive and find meaning.

The best film I have seen in a long time. When it was over, my neighbour said: "It was a bit slow" What was she expecting? Clint Eastwood? I thought that the pace was just right. In the first half we were gradually introduced to life in Mumbai, life in the hospital, life in the flat and so on. The main characters were excellently portrayed and the kaleidoscope of images and noises made one feel part of it. The film as a whole reminded me of Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* because the first half was grey and not at all light-hearted, whereas the second half was all sunshine! Shakespeare had a 17-year gap between the two halves but here one half slipped seamlessly into the other. But what a second half! It was not until it was over that I realised that the first part was Una's fantasy - where did Shiaz appear from? - capering in the woodland, followed by the discovery of the cave and then it became seriously romantic culminating in sexual union. Prabha's fantasy, in the second part, was an ordeal leading to the expurgation of the memory of the husband. She got over him! One could go on....

Poetic with perhaps more of a debt to magical realism rather than naturalism (I had expected an updated Satyajit Ray experience), this could go down as an important film. Loneliness, repression and standing up for what you believe in are the key markers here. Need to watch again to full appreciate it. Thanks for bringing it.

I enjoyed the film, although I thought too much of it took place in semi darkness. It was interesting to see the contrast between life in Mumbai and Parvaty's seaside village.

I thought it was a bit long and drawn out and I didn't buy into the 'magic realism' at the end, I felt it spoilt the authenticity of the film.

I found it really dark, far too slow with nothing going on.

I had high expectations from this film and they weren't quite met. Nevertheless, it gave a fascinating glimpse of life in India today and a sympathetic and very credible portrayal of the different challenges faced by the three women.

Good to see a film with an optimistic end, the main characters (and the bartender) charting a new life for themselves.

The film was quite dark, so they must have been imagining what it would be like if it was light.

Good – great cinematography and camera work and the film very much captured the feeling of Mumbai and we liked the fact that the scenes were mainly in the dark, indicating the claustrophobic nature of the city. We found the pace seemed to slow in the second half which didn't work as successfully for us. The scenes in the country repeated a lot of the same ground that had already been covered and didn't advance the story greatly. The magical realism element worked well and we found ourselves wondering whether anybody had washed up at all and whether the character had imagined everything from that point. We did feel the film wasn't really quite sure how to end and that the magical realism element was a device to come to an ending. We wondered if there could have been another way of the character coming to terms with the loss of her husband and becoming ready to move on.

I really enjoyed the first half of the film - loving the glimpses of life in the city and the setting up of the characters. I found the second half rather slow and less interesting.

I felt it was too slow, poorly shot almost amateurish and unresolved story line. Quite possibly the worst movie I have ever seen.

Wonderful acting by the three women central to the story, very dreamlike and compassionate study of sisterhood in the sprawl of a huge city. The camerawork was exquisite and I loved the documentary style beginning. I found the scenes in Mumbai very engrossing but was not so sure about some of the scenes in the village. Definitely worth seeing and was very appreciative of the helpful introduction. Thank you.

I realise we were in the minority here but felt despite the some [Ed?] of the cinematography and some touching moments overall the film dragged on.

It gave another perspective on life. It was dark and I was disappointed one character accepted 'fate' rather than challenging the status quo. I wonder if I missed the messages through a lack of true understanding of Indian society.

I was a bit disappointed in the film overall. So much of it happened in the dark/gloom that I wasn't sure what was happening some of the time. And I found the pace too slow, though thought the characters were interesting and well-drawn. The introduction from Jon Hackett was very good and helped to understand the film.

Beautifully crafted film exploring love and loss. The film is at a gentle pace and gives space to the characters involved. Very interesting use of ambient music that is almost hypnotic.

A very subtle film with beautifully nuanced acting by the three women. They were all waiting for their lives to really start. The use of darkness was in the beginning quite useful and added to the atmosphere but became increasingly annoying.

An intimate look at the life of three working class women in Mumbai ... but rather too slow paced for me.

A quiet, soulful film. The introduction from Jon Hackett was very interesting, as well as helpful in understanding what was going on when the film moved into 'magic realism' mode.

Great soundtrack. Too dark camera work at times for me.

I thought it was excellent – Beautiful, thoughtful film.

A beautifully crafted film about female oppression and solidarity in the coastal region of Mumbai. The city is presented as a dark, forbidding, overcrowded concrete jungle. It rains continually. But at least it offers employment to nearby villagers. Prabha, Anu and their widowed friend Parvaty all work long hours in a hospital. One has been deserted by her husband, another's relationship with her Muslim boyfriend offends her parents while the widow is being threatened with eviction by her thuggish landlords. There is both consolation and humour in their friendship. In the end they all manage to confront these dilemmas and move on. With its meticulously detailed focus on the lives of a powerless underclass and its humanity, the film struck me as reminiscent of Ken Loach at his best.

A truly mesmerising film. The gentle unfolding of an unremarkable story in a fascinatingly real city made me care for each of the characters.

Sadly, this film was so, so dark that it was difficult to see what was going on much of the time. I also found it very slow.

A very atmospheric film which was well acted and visually attractive. I think I would have preferred slightly more of a resolution at the end though.

Beautifully filmed. Engaging depiction of the supportive relationship between the women, choosing to break free from the norms of their society and opt for a more peaceful life. This was my interpretation, although the ending was uncertain.

The strength of the film was its simplicity in telling a story of daily lives. It captured the realities of Indian life for educated women. The main actor Prabhay showed natural leadership and it was good to see humanity at work, helping each other in ways we seem to have forgotten. I was pleased that Dr. Jon Hackett brought up Indian politics today. The lesson of tolerance of faith, cast, ethnicity, etc. from the film needs to be worked on and re-established. The filming of Mumbai in almost semi darkness and a gradual day light as the women approached the village compared and contrasted lives in urban/rural areas in more than one aspect. The unusual choice of music by Emery Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou enhanced the film's exploration of loneliness, relationships and resilience. In such a short time the audience were part of these three women's lives, leaving the audience with a genuine concern, of how did life turn out for each of them. Thank you for all that you do.

I thought it was longer than needs be but had beautiful tracking shots and atmospheric music. On reflection, not a film I would want to see again. Too many storylines without a resolution, overhyped.

I'm new to this Society this year, so providing feedback is also new. So many eloquent submissions each week. But I will keep mine short. The intro by the film academic did provide some much-needed framing as we entered the world contemporary Indian realistic cinema. The story line which was very much set up in the first half of the film, brought to live the lives of three working class women living in the crowded metropolis, each with their own personal challenges and painted a grey, grim reality of living with a mix of hopes and fears. In the second half of the film, we did get a greater sense of space and serenity, as all the protagonists relaxed and maybe were given time to enjoy life, love and to dream. Ultimately, I found the film lacked pace, the dark scenes in particular although atmospheric, were just difficult to see. I was left feeling disappointed when I realised the second half of the film was, well simply a dream and in reality, there was no hope that better times were possibly ahead.

I can only give this film a Poor and cannot understand why it appears to be highly rated by the critics. I found it very dark, slow and long. What were we to make of the ending? Overall obscure and uninteresting.

For a film with light in the title it was very dark, could hardly see the characters at times. The cook came off best.

I thought this film very interesting to see how a young working Hindu girl might get round the strict system and connect with a Muslim boy and then a slightly older young married woman copes alone with her husband having left to work in Germany. Then in the second part of the

film a mystical future outcome which seemed to portray both girls as one and the same person with one tragic event for their relationships. A gentle intense surprising film.

Very atmospheric film. I could imagine myself among all the noise and bustle of Mumbai and the scenes in the village had a dream-like quality.

It was OK, very 'magical realism.' Perhaps I wasn't in the right mood. Of course, the Hindu trainee nurses would not like the smell of the placenta - they would be vegetarian. I liked the sound of the coucal in the first sequence as the younger female character met up with her Muslim boyfriend, although the bird would be found in the countryside not the city. How realistic are cross-religion relationships today with Modi's policies? Happiness lies only in a third country where no one cares what faith anyone has.

I found this film very slow, dark and long. I didn't really care about the characters and thought they could have been developed further.

This film was so well reviewed and the story line sounded as if it had so much potential but for me it just didn't work. I never felt as if I knew any of the characters.

An ambitious and interesting film and I think the best of the season so far. It could have been titled - Women don't have to take this crap. However, can't help but think that escaping the hell of Bombay and the constraints of Indian society might be a tad harder than how it was depicted. I think it therefore interesting that the Indian film powers that be failed to nominate it for an Oscar because they thought it a "European" film, a view that somewhat confirms the film's underlying message.

Thoughtful and touching storyline. I very much enjoyed the twist at the end and the questions it unleashed.

I enjoyed it as the filming was very good and sensitive. I wanted more action to make it excellent.

Interesting to see a movie coming out of India with hardly any sunshine. It was depressingly slow and dark. However, it was uplifting to finally see 'the light' at the end yet found it hard to understand the hype around this movie.

Poor verging on Dreadful. Sorry but, despite the talk and promises of an engaging viewing, I found this one very dull, disjointed and too dark (visually) to see what was going on (thank goodness for subtitles in dark films like this!). I found all three women rather feeble, they all seemed to be unwilling to break out of their roles of being victims (the abandoned wife refusing to move on, the tenant who was very lacklustre in fighting her case and the unenthusiastic lover unwilling to confront parental expectations) and I didn't really care what happened to them by the end.

Thank you for all that you do for the Society.

Second time around and I enjoyed it more. Slow paced but highly atmospheric and affecting.

Atmospheric and captivating music score - the opening tracking shot very vivid - I considered the characters sympathetic and their relationships portrayed in a complex manner showing their contradictions and predicaments- whilst the story of parental fixing of the lives of young women in particular is universal, the specific social, sexual and religious codes of Indian society

worked as central facts in shaping possible choices for all the characters. I found myself literally wanting more light! I struggled to see at times quite what was happening; however, the cave scenes and beach drama were also beautifully realised and moving. This tender portrait of yearning aspirations was rendered with careful consideration even if the pace was at times slow.

Good film, beautifully shot and well portrayed. Really gave you a sense of the hectic city and the simple coastal village life with contrasting opportunities, the inequality suffered by the excluded and the struggles of love across a divide.

Pity it was so dark - I'd liked to have seen more of Mumbai in the light. What a weird ending of the drowning man turning up - she should have stayed with the Dr.

A feast for the eyes and the ears. A beautiful, slow-burning story which manages to convey the overwhelming and claustrophobic nature of dense urban living. Against this backdrop the stories of the main characters were deftly realised and felt complex and nuanced. The film was then brave enough to take us to a different place, open, expansive and rural, next to the ocean, where the characters could breathe. Although magical and mythic, the second half of the film felt well-earned and made for a satisfying and transformative ending. A wonderful movie!

I really wanted this film to succeed but was left with a feeling of disappointment. I don't know if there was technical reason but many scenes were so dark that it was difficult to see what was happening. Some beautiful and moving moments but as a complete piece of work it didn't gel for me.

Great to see an Indian film following women living 'normal' lives e.g. work, flat share, relationships, local village etc. Absorbing colours, sound, images and atmosphere.

Don't have a taste for Indian cinema. This was an exception, in that it held my attention but it was unduly long. And where was the Light? Hidden!