

= Neerja =

Neerja is a 2016 Indian Hindi @-@ language biographical thriller film directed by Ram Madhvani and written by Saiwyn Quadras and Sanyuktha Chawla Shaikh . It was produced by Atul Kasbekar 's company , Bling Unplugged , alongside Vijay Singh 's Fox Star Studios . The film features Sonam Kapoor as the title character , with Shabana Azmi , Yogendra Tiku and Shekhar Ravjiani in supporting roles .

The plot centers on the Libyan @-@ backed Abu Nidal Organization 's hijacking of Pan Am Flight 73 in Karachi , Pakistan , on 5 September 1986 . The film is shown from the point of view of the flight 's head purser , Neerja Bhanot , who thwarted the hijack attempt by alerting the pilots , thus grounding the plane ; Bhanot gave her life to help save 359 of the 379 passengers and crew on board .

Development began in September 2014 , when Kasbekar signed Madhvani and Kapoor for a film to be made by Bling Unplugged and Fox Star Studios . Saiwyn Quadras and Sanyuktha Chawla worked on the script , with principal photography taking place in Mumbai . The film features music by Vishal Khurana , with lyrics written by Prasoon Joshi . Neerja was released on 19 February 2016 to positive critical reception , with praise directed to Kapoor 's performance , and became one of the highest @-@ grossing Bollywood films featuring a female protagonist .

= = Plot = =

The film opens with 22 @-@ year @-@ old Neerja Bhanot ( Sonam Kapoor ) arriving late for a house party . Later that evening , her mother ( Shabana Azmi ) expresses concern about Neerja 's job as a flight attendant , suggesting that Neerja should return to her old modeling job . Neerja , who insists on keeping her job , is driven to the airport by her boyfriend Jaideep ( Shekhar Ravjiani ) .

Neerja reflects on her brief , unhappy arranged marriage to Naresh ( Kavi Shastri ) , a professional in Doha , Qatar , who constantly abused Neerja over her dowry and inability to cook or clean . She eventually returned home for a modeling contract ; however , Naresh sent back a humiliating letter attacking her parents about the dowry and lack of domestic skills , and demanding that Neerja either bring back money or not return at all . Neerja left Naresh and landed a highly competitive job with Pan Am Airways .

As Neerja boards Pan Am 73 , it is revealed that the Abu Nidal Organization , a Libyan @-@ sponsored terrorist group , has planned to hijack the plane in Karachi . The plane takes off from Mumbai 's Sahar International Airport and lands in Karachi , where the four Abu Nidal terrorists , disguised as security officers escorting a Libyan diplomat , hijack the plane . Neerja quickly alerts the cockpit , and the three American pilots escape through the overhead hatch , fleeing to the terminal under fire from the hijackers .

When an Indian American passenger inadvertently reveals himself as an American , one of the terrorists murders him and throws his body off the aircraft in front of the Pakistani negotiators . The terrorists try to locate a radio engineer among the passengers by ordering Neerja to make an announcement over the intercom . When Emran Ali ( Shashi Bhushan ) , a Pakistani radio operator , begins to stand up , Neerja signals for him to sit down . The terrorists have the flight attendants collect all passports to identify the American passengers and hold them hostage ; Neerja and her colleagues collect the passports , disposing of any American passports by throwing them down trash chutes or hiding them under seats . Dejected over not finding any American passports , the hijackers locate a British passenger and hold him hostage .

The Pakistani negotiators inadvertently reveal the name of radio engineer Ali , whom the hijackers bring to the cockpit so they can use the radio for negotiations . Meanwhile , the Pakistani authorities try to stall for time . When a younger terrorist assaults the passengers and molests the attendants , the terrorist leader chastises him ; humiliated , enraged , and out of control , the younger terrorist storms into the cockpit and shoots Ali , screaming wild threats over the radio . While negotiations with the Pakistani air controllers drag on , the negotiators slowly lose control of the situation , with the hijackers becoming more agitated by the minute .

Around 17 hours later , the plane loses auxiliary power , and the lights go out inside . Despite Neerja and the other attendants ' attempts to explain , the terrorists assume the Pakistanis cut the power deliberately , and anticipate an imminent Pakistani raid on the plane . The panicking hijackers begin shooting down passengers indiscriminately ; at great peril to her own life , Neerja opens the rear door and deploys the chute , directing passengers out of the plane . Choosing to let the passengers escape first , Neerja is fatally shot by the terrorists when she tries to shield young children from the gunfire . The film ends with a tribute to Neerja , who was eventually honoured posthumously with the Ashoka Chakra , India 's highest military decoration awarded for peacetime valor , courageous action or self @-@ sacrifice .

= = Cast = =

= = Production = =

= = = Development and casting = = =

Pre @-@ production work on Neerja began in September 2014 , when the film 's executive producer Atul Kasbekar said that his company , Bling Unplugged , would co @-@ produce Ram Madhvani ? s film along with Fox Star Studios . Kasbekar later tweeted , ? Do U Know Who Neerja Bhanot Is ? No ? Well U Really Really Should ... ? . He said , ? For us [ ... ] , a story of courage as exceptional as Neerja ? s simply deserved to be told . We just decided that we would our bit to ensure that India would remember one of its great heroines . ?

The film 's script and screenplay were penned by Saiwyn Quadras , and the dialogue was written by Sanyuktha Chawla Sheikh . The director of photography for the film was the cinematographer Mitesh Mirchandani , who had been previously associated with 2012 film Luv Shuv Tey Chicken Khurana . The editing for the film was done by Monisha R Baldawa and Manohar Verma served as the stunt director for the film ..

Kapoor was contracted by Kasbekar to play Neerja Bhanot , the senior flight crew member who became the youngest recipient of the Ashoka Chakra . On receiving the role of Neerja in the film , Kapoor told PTI , " I thought doing this film just reaffirms that it is about not bowing down . It is an inspiring story for me to do . I am blessed . "

It was reported in May 2015 that Shekhar Ravjiani , one half of Bollywood 's performing / producing duo Vishal ? Shekhar , would play a short role in the movie , marking his acting debut . Shabana Azmi played the role of Neerja 's mother in the film . In an interview with The Indian Express , Azmi describes her character and explains , " It was very difficult to play her , particularly the last scene where Rama addresses an audience . It is an extremely well @-@ written emotional scene , which does complete justice to the moment . "

= = = Filming and post @-@ production = = =

Principal photography of the film commenced 19 April 2015 in Mumbai . After two months of filming , the shooting was wrapped up on 19 June 2015 . Kasbekar tweeted , " Amazing ! And it ? s a wrap on Neerja ! ! ! 32 shooting days ! ! ! That ? s Two More days than Birdman took ! " During the principal photography of the film , many Bollywood celebrities visited the film 's sets , including Vidya Balan , Boman Irani , Anil Kapoor , and Raju Hirani . " I knew that getting Aamir Khan , Boman Irani , Vidya Balan , Raju Hirani and Anil Kapoor to speak to the 220 cast would help instill dedication and effort that this film would require , " director Madhvani said in a statement .

The makers of the film acknowledged the responsibility of portraying the story . One challenge faced was acquiring a real plane for shooting ; director Ram Madhvani and Rucha Pathak decided to re @-@ create the plane because a major part of the film required shooting against the plane back @-@ drop . It took them 48 days to build the plane , which closely resembled the original one .

The film 's visual effects ( VFX ) were by Tata Elxsi . VCL produced a wide range of visual effects , including the creation of Karachi airport and buildings , and also helped in creating the 1986 period restoration for various locations . Huseini Barodawala , the head of Tata Elxsi , said that ? It has been our constant endeavor to leverage our VFX expertise to transform the director ? s vision onto the big screen and offer larger @-@ than @-@ life experiences to all our viewers . ?

= = Soundtrack = =

Music rights were acquired by T @-@ Series ; the film 's music was composed by Vishal Khurana , with lyrics by Prasoon Joshi . The first song from the film , titled " Jeete Hain Chal , " was released on January 26 , 2016 .

= = = Reception = = =

The soundtrack received a positive critical response . Mohar Basu of The Times of India gave the music a 3 @.@ 5 out of 5 rating , saying that it " is beautiful , pensive , touching and all of it sans melodrama , " and that it " is straight from the soul . " Joginder Tuteja of Bollywood Hungama said that " the songs of the film heard are strictly functional and won 't really be into play once the film is through . " He added that the songs " Aankhein Milayenge Darr Se " and " Gehra Ishq " would make the most impression . A critic of The Quint praised the music album and said , " The brilliance of this album is that it features songs which will not hijack and / or disrupt the flow of the narrative . The sound is delicate , fearless , vulnerable and always intimate . "

= = Release = =

The film had a special screening on 16 February 2016 in Mumbai , which was attended by celebrities , including filmmaker Karan Johar ; Subhash Ghai ; Kapoor ? s father , Anil Kapoor ; Sachin Tendulkar ; Yuvraj Singh ; Sunil Gavaskar ; Ayushmann Khurrana ; and Amit Sadh . The film received a positive response from many Bollywood celebrities , with Tendulkar calling Neerja Bhanot a " Braveheart " and saying that " the people should definitely watch the film . "

The film was released worldwide , in approximately 671 theatres , on 19 February 2016 . Upon release , Neerja received positive reviews , with praise directed to Kapoor 's performance , and was a moderate box office success . The film was also praised by Delhi 's Chief Minister , Arvind Kejriwal , who tweeted that the film 's message was , " Live for others , die for others . " The film emerged as one of the highest @-@ grossing Bollywood films featuring a female protagonist .

Neerja was banned in Pakistan since the film shows Pakistan in a negative light . The Central Board of Film Certification ( CBFC ) maintained that the film should not be considered " banned " in Pakistan because it was not submitted to them .

= = = Tax @-@ free = = =

The film was declared tax @-@ free by Government of Maharashtra and the Government of Madhya Pradesh .

The Finance Minister , Jayant Kumar Malaiya , said , " The movies Neerja and Jai Gangaajal will be free from entertainment tax in Madhya Pradesh on account of International Women 's Day which was celebrated yesterday . " Producer Kasbekar , replied on Twitter , " Big thank you to MP Poonam Mahajan and the Hon CM Devendra Fadnavis in declaring Neerja tax free in Maharashtra . Quick and decisive decision . "

= = Critical reception = =

Upon release , Neerja , as well as Kapoor 's performance , won acclaim from film critics around the world .

== = India == =

Shubha Shetty @-@ Saha of Mid Day gave the film 4 @.@ 5 out of 5 stars , calling it " a deeply moving experience " , and writing for Kapoor deemed it as " her best performance till date " . Meena Iyer of The Times of India gave Neerja 4 out of 5 stars and said , " Neerja raises a toast to the daunting spirit of India 's daughters ; every one of us must salute Neerja . " Bollywood Hungama gave the film 4 out of 5 stars and said , " As a movie watching experience , Neerja is flawless . There 's not a single false note . " Writing for Hindustan Times , Anupama Chopra awarded 4 out of 5 stars , saying that " Neerja is a truly inspiring story that will grip you from the first frame till the last . " Sarita Tanwar from Daily News and Analysis gave 4 out of 5 stars , writing , " Neerja is quite easily the finest film in recent times ( on par with Talvar ) based on a true story . " Raja Sen from Rediff.com gave 4 out of 5 stars as well and called it " an absolute must @-@ watch , " adding that " Sonam Kapoor is exceptional as Neerja Bhanot . " Suahni Singh of India Today rated the film as a 3 @.@ 5 stars and stated , " Sonam Kapoor delivered her career @-@ best performance as she assuredly plays an abused wife , a beloved daughter and a flight attendant caught in her worst nightmare . "

Rummana of Yahoo ! gave it 4 out of 5 stars , stating , " Neerja deserves loud applause because not only is it an exceptional story of courage but because it is an ode to the undying spirit of humanity " and called Kapoor as " the star of the film " . The Economic Times also gave a 4 out of 5 star rating : " Neerja is a must @-@ see , not just for its cinematic value , but also as a reminder to salute Neerja 's spirit . " Rajeev Masand of CNN @-@ News18 gave a 3 @.@ 5 out of 5 rating and said , " Neerja is " a well @-@ intentioned , heartfelt film that pays tribute to a real hero . " Shubhra Gupta of The Indian Express also gave the film 3 stars out of 5 , writing that " Minus the songs and the excessive schmaltz , Neerja could have been outstanding . But still , the film holds , and hold us with it . "

== = Overseas == =

Manjusha Radhakrishnan of Gulf News rated the film 4 out of 5 stars ; while he criticized the terrorists ' lack of depth and weak points in Neerja 's second half , he wrote that " the climax of the film is powerful and makes up for that blip . " Don Groves of Forbes wrote that " the film fetched \$ 626 @,@ 000 on 73 screens in the U.S. , an estimated \$ 500 @,@ 000 at 41 locations in the U.A.E. and \$ A117,000 ( \$ 84 @,@ 000 ) on just 15 screens in Australia , posting healthy per @-@ screen averages . " Jason Klein of Variety declared that DAR @-@ Film Leaderboard was notably absent of Oscar @-@ nominated films , but part of the gap was filled by Neerja . Sonali Kokra of The National praised the film : " Neerja is a great story told well . Mitesh Mirchandani 's jerky camerawork does a great job of using the claustrophobic confines of the aircraft to showcase the oppressiveness of the situation and the terror of the hostages . "

== = Box office == =

== = India == =

On its first day , the film earned about ? 47 million ( US \$ 700 @,@ 000 ) net , much of it from Mumbai , Delhi NCR . It collected ? 76 million ( US \$ 1 @.@ 1 million ) net on Saturday and ? 97 @.@ 1 million ( US \$ 1 @.@ 4 million ) on Sunday , with a weekend total of ? 210 million ( US \$ 3 @.@ 1 million ) .

On Monday , the film netted around ? 37 million ( US \$ 550 @,@ 000 ) , with only around a 20 % drop in revenue compared to first day . On Tuesday , the film earned around ? 34 @.@ 1 million ( US \$ 510 @,@ 000 ) . The film 's Wednesday , Thursday and Friday earnings were ? 31 @.@ 4 million ( US \$ 470 @,@ 000 ) , ? 36 million ( US \$ 530 @,@ 000 ) , and ? 31 @.@ 5 million ( US \$

470 @, @ 000 ) , respectively . On Saturday and Sunday , Neerja had a massive jump and earned ? 50 million ( US \$ 740 @, @ 000 ) and ? 66 @. @ 5 million ( US \$ 990 @, @ 000 ) respectively , for a total collection of ? 501 @. @ 2 million ( US \$ 7 @. @ 4 million ) at the box office .

On the 11th day ( Monday ) , Neerja collected ? 21 @. @ 2 million ( US \$ 320 @, @ 000 ) ; ? 19 million ( US \$ 280 @, @ 000 ) on Tuesday ; ? 18 @. @ 5 million ( US \$ 270 @, @ 000 ) on Wednesday ; and ? 17 @. @ 6 million ( US \$ 260 @, @ 000 ) on Thursday . By the end of its 38 @- @ day run , the film had grossed an estimated ? 108 crore ( US \$ 16 million ) domestically and ? 25 @. @ 9 crore ( US \$ 3 @. @ 8 million ) internationally , for an approximate worldwide total of ? 135 crore ( US \$ 20 million ) .

= = = Overseas = = =

Neerja opened strong , collecting ? 1 @. @ 56 million ( US \$ 23 @, @ 000 ) in foreign theaters . The film had the highest opening weekend for a female @- @ led film in the U.S. and Middle East ; in the UK , it had the second @- @ highest opening weekend of 2016 .

= = Accolades = =