



**A Review on
'Dongri to Dubai -
Six Decades of the Mumbai Mafia'**

Author : S. Hussain Zaidi

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*** Mrs. Geetha G. Bhat**

The book under review - '**Dongri to Dubai – Six Decades of the Mumbai Mafia**' is a non-fiction, authored by an investigative journalist S. Hussain Zaidi. The book was published in 2012 by Roli Books.

About the Author

S. Hussain Zaidi is a well-known Indian author. He has worked as a crime reporter for leading newspapers such as Asian Age, The Indian Express, Bombay Mirror and Mid Day. He has the credit of having interviewed many underworld dons of Mumbai mafia including Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar. Zaidi is married to Mrs. Velli Thevar who is also a crime reporter. Zaidi lives in Mumbai with his family.

About the Book

'Dongri to Dubai' is 'the Story of Six Decades of Mumbai Mafia' as its cover page states. The book contains several episodes of dreaded gangsters such as Pathan Brothers, Haji Mastan, Karim Lala, Varadaraj Mudaliar, Dawood Hasan etc. The main focus of the book is on Dawood Ibrahim. In the book Zaidi gives a detailed account about Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, his family, children, his first robbery, his gang - D-Company, his love life, marriage, his contacts and life after his leaving India. There are details about the rise of Dawood Ibrahim from the streets of Dongri, a small Muslim dominated suburb in Bombay to become a multi-millionaire who carved his name in the 'Forbes' Most Powerful Peoples' list.

** Lecturer & HOD of Commerce, Indus College,
Bolwar - Puttur - 574201*

The book opens with a telephonic interview of the author with Dawood Ibrahim. As claimed in the book, this happens to be the last published interview of Dawood Ibrahim. Though Dawood Ibrahim might have spoken to journalists, he never allowed them to publish as interviews.

Narrating the family background, Zaidi states that Dawood Ibrahim's father, Ibrahim Kaskar was highly respected police officer. Even after his retirement, Ibrahim's reputation in the area was much more than that of a DCP or a prominent social worker. The book gives a brief account of Ibrahim and his family condition as follows : "The only policeman whom the underworld respected was Ibrahim Kasker... Ibrahim was a pauper and was struggling to make both ends meet, yet, he did not want to accept money from underworld mafia and preferred to survive on a meagre salary of 75 rupees a month" (p. 40). Despite his poverty Ibrahim was known to offer food, shelter, clothes and even money to those who needed them. He would even borrow money from the dons to help someone when he himself did not have the resources (p. 48)

Ibrahim lived with his wife Amina and a two year old son Sabir in a small, non-descript 10x10 square feet house in Temkar Mohalla, a far flung corner of south Bombay. It was here that his infamous second son – Dawood Ibrahim – was born on 26th December 1955. Havaladar Ibrahim Kaskar had an unquestionable sincerity towards his department of crime. Zaidi states how he took into task Dawood Ibrahim and his brother when they committed their first crime of robbery of bank money, when Dawood was just 19 years of age (p.70). The treatment given by Ibrahim Kaskar (Father) to Dawood and his elder brother Sabir was so severe that 'they screamed and the entire neighborhood trembled at the cruel punishment (p. 70). Even the crime branch officers spared the boys their own stock of blows by witnessing the pathetic plight of Dawood and Sabir and Ibrahim's sincerity (p. 71). The author remarks 'this incident and the 15 minutes of fame that followed is perhaps the event that gave birth to the man who would one day become Dawood Ibrahim, the **Don** (p. 71).

The book has many unknown facts unreported events and many

stories that have not been published before. About the killing of Dawood's elder brother Sabir, Zaidi opines that the murder of Sabir “opened a new chapter of blood and gore; revenge and broad daylight killings... Dawood not only turned vengeful but intensely motivated and driven, propelling him out of the small league in the Bombay pool and pushing him into the big sea of crime” (p. 173).

The author, Zaidi shows great appreciation about the positive qualities of Dawood Ibrahim. Zaidi states that he was 'utterly taken aback by the politeness and perfect phone manner' at the time of holding the interview. Zaidi states that throughout the interview, Dawood spoke in a very polite manner.

In the chapter 'Big D makes the Forbes Cut'. Zaidi records as “to those who know of Dawood's might, power and reach, it is no surprise that he has managed to upstage so many heads of state and business tycoons in the power list. Dawood Ibrahim is more cunning and smarter than most heads of state put together and has the business acumen of several Dhirubhai Ambanis rolled into one.... If you examined even one aspect of his business and survival skills you would be convinced that he thinks as fast that lightening” (p. 355). Surprisingly, the book states that the main source of income of Dawood in Pakistan is from selling the pirated movies of Bollywood. Zaidi further informs that Dawood Ibrahim is not an Islamic fundamentalist. His alliance with ISI is due to necessity rather than the fundamentalism.

The negative aspects of the book are –

- i) The size of the font is very small which strains the reader affecting the free flow of reading.
- ii) There are repetitions of some passages
- iii) In some places some vulgarity also peeps out. (p.162 – 163)
- iv) There are some contradictions too. For example, Zaidi states that Dawood Ibrahim's father was very sincere and honest to the police department. At the same time he remarks that the father was surrounded by friends who had ties with the gangster Bhaashu Dada.

Conclusion

To wrap up, the book is well researched. Though it is a non-fiction it reads like an exciting piece of fiction. The book contains some rare photographs. The language of the book is simple and interesting. While reading the book, one experiences the feeling of viewing a Bollywood movie. The book has the every quality of keeping the reader hooked. If one wants to know more about Mumbai Mafia stories of encounters, gang wars, political-Bollywood-underworld nexes the book is a good read.

Books authored by S. Hussain Zaidi

Black Friday – (2002)

Mafia Queens of Mumbai - (2011)

Hadley and I – (2012)

Dongri to Dubai – (2012)

Byculla to Bangkok – (2014)

My Name is Abu Salem – (2014)

Mumbai Avengers – (2015)