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## **Dongri to Dubai: Six Decades of the Mumbai Mafia by S. Hussain Zaidi Roli Books 2012.**

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S.Hussain Zaidi, the author, is a veteran of investigative crime and terrorism. He is perhaps the best crime reporter Mumbai has ever produced. He has been the chief crime reporter of Mumbai's best newspapers. His first book 'Black Friday' went to become a bestseller of its time and then adapted into a movie of the same name. The book traces the evolution of the Mumbai mafia from a group of thugs and smugglers to the present day mafia dons of organised crime. It traces the journey of Dawood Ibrahim from the by-lanes of Dongri where he first cut his teeth in crime, to Dubai, where he eventually established his empire. The book was adapted into the film *Shootout at Wadala* by Sanjay Gupta. Zaidi was the only one to get an interview with Dawood Ibrahim after he left the Indian shores forever. It is only befitting that Zaidi after two decades of work gives the city and the country a brief glimpse into that world. Dongri to Dubai is not just a narrative of the Mumbai mafia but it's a chronological epic, set near the time of independence, it records the birth of the Mumbai mafia. With small and humble beginnings, the formation of gangs and alliances, the book chronicles the growth, activities, expansion and the massive revenues of the Mumbai mafia. With brief glimpses into the lives of dons like Haji Mastan, Vardha Bhai, the Pathans who made Mumbai not just their home but the hub of criminal activities. Places like Byculla, Dongri, Kamathipura and Chor bazaar are known the world over today due to such activities. The lives of these people and the culture of Mumbai has been painstakingly described to the finest detail but all of this forms only the base of what the book really is about. Born to a highly respected police officer, how a boy went from being a street urchin of Suburban Dongri to one of the world's most wanted terrorist is really what Zaidi has written. Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar, world's most wanted man, is a son of a Mumbai police personnel who was known for his integrity and hard work. *Dongri to Dubai* is one book that gives the complete picture of what the underworld is, and how it came into existence. Dongri to Dubai is an encyclopedia on the Indian underworld. Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar's life can be described as that of a Bollywood movie. His life has been described with majestic detail from his birth to his first crime, his romances, escapades and how he went on to give birth to one of the world's biggest crime syndicate D-Company. Dongri to Dubai describes us how Dawood who was used as a pawn by Mumbai Police to catch other criminals and how Dawood checkmated the police in their own game, how he virtually controlled Bollywood. Zaidi also gives us the history of many other things like the meaning of the word 'Rampuri' or about the lady who had come dangerously close to finishing off Dawood and also the first ever registered encounter of Mumbai police. Dawood, the second oldest son of the Kaskar family, had a criminal bent of mind even before he turned ten. Dawood was raised in a poor family and always dreamed of being rich and powerful. He and his elder brother Sabir were the ring leaders of their gang which used to commit small

cons in Crawford market, little did anyone know that this small kid would grow up to give birth to the dreaded D-gang. Dawood had a very cool, cunning, calculating mind. He understood at a very early age that nothing matters more in this world than money, and that everyone, right from politicians to cops to the man on the street needs it. So, if he gives them what they want, they will give him what he wants. Dawood was attracted to Haji Mastan's lifestyle. His impeccable white clothes, the chauffeur driven Mercedes-Benz and the mansion at Peddar Road. Haji Mastan was the first celebrity gangster of the city, for smuggling movies, he had done it all. He was widely respected in all circles and was the Godfather of his time. The underworld in those days had rules which were more like a cultural setting. Unwritten rules which were strictly adhered to by everyone. All criminals knew family was off limits; all dues had to be settled without any collateral damage. Haji Mastan looked after this culture like a hawk and made sure no one broke it until Dawood arrived. Dawood and Sabir were sworn enemies with the Pathans and when they murdered Ibrahim, all hell broke loose. Dawood went on a blood thirsty revenge which made Bombay tremble with horror. Those were the bloodiest years this city had ever seen. Dawood wanted to avenge Sabir's murder and this time he made it personal. No one was spared, right from threatening family members to brutally killing members of the Pathan gang. Dawood had transcended everyone's imagination. After avenging Sabir's death, he went on to become one of the biggest gangsters of Mumbai. It is this gang war which made the Bombay police wake up from its slumber. Soon the police were witnessing multiple horrific crimes every week and one thing was found common, Dawood had become virtually, omnipresent in every crime. He managed to flee from the clutches from the hands of the police after a last minute tip off. It is said the tip off was from someone who worked for the government. Dawood had fled for Dubai knowing very well that he may never return to India. He still has not overcome his melancholy at leaving Bombay. From the 93 serial blasts to the November 2008 attacks, Dawood has been accused of having a hand in all terrorist activities in India. Even after Dawood shifted base to Pakistan, he has not been able to overcome his love for Bombay and neither has Mumbai been able to forget him. That is the reason why Dawood chose to reside in Karachi, a port city and known as 'Pakistan's Bombay' whose atmosphere gives Dawood a wave of nostalgic memories of the city where he grew up, the city which taught him life's lessons the hard way and also the only place in the whole world which made him feel at home even in the most challenging of times, his legendary and yet terrible deeds make him the most profiled gangster in modern times especially in Bollywood where his reach is still present. Dongri to Dubai is a book which is a very essential source of information for anyone who wants to understand the Mumbai from the early fifties till the nineties and for those who are in awe and hate of Dawood's rise as an international terrorist. This book is worth every penny. Zaidi's journalist background has greatly influenced the style of the book. Although written with eloquence and brevity, some people have criticized the book. The argument is that Zaidi has written the book on communal lines, i.e., he has portrayed *Muslim* mafia superior to the *Hindu* mafia. However, the truth is that there's nothing called a Muslim or a Hindu mafia. A gangster is a gangster, he has no religion. And if only few Hindu gangsters have been mentioned in the book, it doesn't imply that Zaidi is biased, rather he has made a point to include only relevant characters. Each one of us has some expectations with the book

at hand and it is highly likely that we may end up disappointed, but it's also important that we set our expectations right.