



# Rediscovering Dharavi: Stories From Asia's Largest Slum

*Kalpana Sharma*

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## **Rediscovering Dharavi: Stories From Asia's Largest Slum** Kalpana Sharma

A book that challenges the conventional notion of a slum. Spread over 175 hectares and swarming with one million people, Dharavi is often called 'Asia's largest slum'. But Dharavi is much more than cold statistic. What makes it special are the extraordinary people who live there, many of whom have defied fate and an unhelpful State to prosper through a mix of backbreaking work, some luck and a great deal of ingenuity. It is these men and women whom journalist Kalpana Sharma brings to life through a series of spellbinding stories.

While recounting their tales, she also traces the history of Dharavi from the days when it was one of the six great koliwadadas or fishing villages to the present times when it, along with other slums, is home to almost half of Mumbai. Among the colourful characters she presents are Haji Shamsuddin who came to Mumbai and began life as a rice smuggler but made his fortune by launching his own brand of peanut brittle; the stoic Ramjibhai Patel, a potter, who represents six generations from Saurashtra who have lived and worked in Mumbai; and doughty women like Khatija and Amina who helped check communal passions during the 1992-93 riots and continue to ensure that the rich social fabric of Dharavi is not frayed. It is countless, often anonymous, individuals like these who have helped Dharavi grow from a mere swamp to a virtual gold mine with its many industrial units churning out quality leather goods, garments and food products. Written with rare sensitivity and empathy, Rediscovering Dharavi is a riveting account of the triumph of the human spirit over poverty and want.

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