

# Dharavi – Slum in India-

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/05/dharavi-mumbai-slum/jonas-bendiksen-photography-47767>



**Dharavi** (Hindi and Marathi: धारवी; Portuguese spelling **Daravi**;<sup>[1]</sup> British Anglicised spelling **Darravy**, **Dorrov**) is a slum and administrative ward, over parts of Sion, Bandra, Kurla and Kalina suburbs of Mumbai, India. It is sandwiched between Mahim in the west and Sion in the east,<sup>[2]</sup> and spread over an area of 175 hectares, or 0.67 square miles (1.7 km<sup>2</sup>). In 1986, the population was estimated at 530,225,<sup>[3]</sup> but modern Dharavi has a population of between 600,000<sup>[4]</sup> and over 1 million people.<sup>[5]</sup> Dharavi is one of the largest slums in the world.<sup>[4][5][6][7][8]</sup> It used to be the largest slum in Mumbai at one time, but as of 2011, there are four slums in Mumbai larger than Dharavi.<sup>[9]</sup>

In most large cities, the floor space index (FSI) varies from 5 to 15 in the Central Business District (CBD) to about 0.5, or below, in the suburbs. In Mumbai the permitted FSI is uniform and in 1991 was fixed at 1.33. The regulations that restrict the FSI greatly reduce the floor space available for residence and business.<sup>[10]</sup> In expensive Mumbai, Dharavi provides a cheap alternative where rents were as low as US\$4 per month in 2006.<sup>[11]</sup> Dharavi exports goods around the world.<sup>[12]</sup> The total (and largely informal) turnover is estimated to be between US\$500 million<sup>[3]</sup> and over US\$650 million per year.<sup>[11]</sup>

Dharavi is situated between Mumbai's two main suburban railway lines, the Western and Central Railways. To its west are Mahim and Bandra, and to the north lies the Mithi River, which empties into the Arabian Sea through the Mahim Creek. To its south and east are Sion and Matunga. Both its location and poor drainage systems make Dharavi particularly vulnerable to floods during the wet season.

Dharavi covers an area of 535 acres (217 ha).<sup>[13]</sup>

## History:

In the 18th century, Dharavi was an island.<sup>[14]</sup> In February 1739, Chimnaji Appa attacked Bassein. Before that, he took possession of Dharavi.

The area of present-day Dharavi was predominantly mangrove swamp before the late 19th century, inhabited by Koli fishermen.<sup>[15]</sup> However, the fishing industry disappeared when the swamp areas filled in. A dam at Sion, adjacent to Dharavi, hastened the process of joining separate islands into one long, tapered mass. Thus began the transformation of the island city of Bombay. In the process, Dharavi's fishing town was deprived of its traditional sustenance, but the newly drained marshes provided space for new communities to move in. Migrants from Gujarat established a potters' colony, tanners from Tamil Nadu and Maharashtrian tanners belonging to the Charmarkar caste migrated to Dharavi and set up the leather tanning industry. Other artisans, like the embroidery workers from Uttar Pradesh, started the ready-made garments trade.<sup>[15]</sup> Tamil migrants, including Tamil Muslims, Adidraavidars and Nadars started coming into the area in the late 19th century, many of whom worked in nearby tanneries; a large influx came in the 1920s. Bombay's first Tamil school and Dharavi's first school was constructed in 1924. It remained the only initiative of Shri. M.V. Duraiswamy, a well-known social worker and congress leader of that region. The Dharavi co-operative housing society promoted 338 flats and 97 shops and was named "Dr. Baliga Nagar."

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## Economy:

In addition to the traditional pottery and textile industries in Dharavi,<sup>[15]</sup> there is an increasingly large recycling industry, processing recyclable waste from other parts of Mumbai. The district has an estimated 5000 businesses<sup>[16]</sup> and 15,000 single-room factories.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Redevelopment plans:

There have been many plans since 1997<sup>[18]</sup> to redevelop Dharavi like the former slums of Hong Kong such as Tai Hang. In 2004, the cost of redevelopment was estimated to be ₹5000 crore (US\$800 million).<sup>[19]</sup> Companies from around the world have bid to redevelop Dharavi,<sup>[13]</sup> including Lehman Brothers, Dubai's Limitless and Singapore's Capitaland Ltd.<sup>[13]</sup> In 2010, it is estimated to cost ₹15000 crore (US\$2.4 billion) to redevelop.<sup>[19]</sup>

The latest urban redevelopment plan proposed for the Dharavi area is managed by American-trained architect Mukesh Mehta.<sup>[15]</sup> The plan<sup>[20]</sup> involves the construction of 30,000,000 square feet (2,800,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of housing, schools, parks and roads to serve the 57,000 families residing in the area, along with 40,000,000 square feet (3,700,000 m<sup>2</sup>) of residential and commercial space for sale.<sup>[21]</sup> There has been significant local opposition to the plans, largely because existing residents are due to receive only 269 square feet (25.0 m<sup>2</sup>) of land each.<sup>[15][21]</sup> Furthermore, only those families who lived in the area before 2000 are slated for resettlement. Concerns have also been raised by residents who fear that some of their small businesses in the "informal" sector may not be relocated under the redevelopment plan.<sup>[22]</sup> The government has said that it will only legalize and relocate industries that are not "polluting."

## Sanitation issues:

Dharavi has severe problems with public health, due to the scarcity of toilet facilities, due in turn to the fact that most housing and 90% of the commercial units in Dharavi are illegal.<sup>[23]</sup> As of November 2006 there was only one toilet per 1,440 residents in Dharavi.<sup>[24]</sup> Mahim Creek, a local river, is widely used by local residents for urination and defecation, leading to the spread of contagious diseases.<sup>[15]</sup> The area also suffers from problems with inadequate drinking water supply.<sup>[25]</sup>

## Guided tours through Dharavi:

A few travel operators offer guided tours through Dharavi, showing the industrial and the residential part of Dharavi and explaining about problems and challenges Dharavi is facing. These tours give a deeper insight into a slum in general and Dharavi in particular.<sup>[26]</sup>

## Media depiction:

- Dharavi has been depicted in a number of Hindi films produced by the Mumbai film industry. These include Salim-Javed films such as *Deewaar* (1975), Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* (1988) where several child actors were from the Dharavi slum, Vidhu Vinod Chopra's *Parinda* (1989), Sudhir Mishra's *Dharavi* (1991), Ram Gopal Varma's "Indian Gangster Trilogy" (1998–2005) and *Sarkar* series (2005–2008), Vikram Bhatt's *Footpath* (2003), Anurag Kashyap's *Black Friday* (2004) and *No Smoking* (2007), Madhur Bhandarkar's *Traffic Signal* (2007), Rajeev Khandelwal's *Aamir* (2008), and other films based on the Mumbai underworld.
- Dharavi has been depicted in films from other Indian film industries, particularly the Tamil film industry. Several films by Mani Ratnam based on the experiences of Tamil immigrants to Mumbai have depicted the Dharavi slum, including *Nayagan* (1987) and *Bombay* (1995).
- Dharavi features prominently in Danny Boyle's 2008 film *Slumdog Millionaire*, where several of the child actors in the film are from the Dharavi slum.
- The movie *Mankatha* was shot here starring Ajith kumar.
- The movie *Business Man* was shot here starring Mahesh Babu.
- In *Kaminey*, the 2009 Hindi movie, starring Shahid Kapoor.
- In the 2009 Swiss/German documentary *Dharavi, Slum for Sale* of director Lutz Konermann.<sup>[27]</sup>

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- In a programme aired in the United Kingdom in January 2010, Kevin McCloud and Channel 4 aired a two-part series titled *Slumming It*<sup>[28]</sup> which centered around Dharavi and its inhabitants.
- The poem "Blessing" by Imtiaz Dharker is about Dharavi not having enough water.
- For The Win, by Cory Doctorow, is partially set in Dharavi.