



Bombay, Meri Jaan: Writings on Mumbai

Jerry Pinto (Editor) , Naresh Fernandes (Editor)

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When King Charles II of England married Princess Catherine de Braganza of Portugal in 1661, he received as part of his dowry the isles of Bom Bahia, the Good Bay. Reclaimed from the sea, these would become the modern city of Bombay. A marriage of affluence and abject poverty, where a grey concrete jungle is the backdrop to a heady potpourri of ethnic, linguistic and religious subcultures, Bombay, renamed Mumbai after the goddess Mumbadevi, defies definition. Bombay, Meri Jaan, comprising poems and prose pieces by some of the biggest names in literature, in addition to cartoons, photographs, a song and a Bombay Duck recipe, tries to capture the spirit of this great metropolis. Salman Rushdie, Pico Iyer, Dilip Chitre, Saadat Hasan Manto, V.S. Naipaul, Khushwant Singh and Busybee, among others, write about aspects of the city: the high-rise apartments and the slums; camaraderie and isolation in the crowded chawls; bhelpuri on the beach and cricket in the gully; the women's compartment of a local train; encounter cops who battle the underworld; the jazz culture of the sixties; the monsoon floods; the Shiv Sena; the cinema halls; the sea. Vibrant, engaging and provocative, this is an anthology as rich and varied as the city it celebrates.

Bombay, Meri Jaan: Writings on Mumbai Details

Date : Published September 2nd 2003 by Penguin Books India (first published 2003)

ISBN : 9780143029663

Author : Jerry Pinto (Editor) , Naresh Fernandes (Editor)

Format : Paperback 356 pages

Genre : Cultural, India, Nonfiction

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From Reader Review Bombay, Meri Jaan: Writings on Mumbai for online ebook

Akshay says

A city like Mumbai cannot be described in a few words. I have always wondered why Mumbai feels the need to endlessly market itself and mythologise itself. Through Bombay Meri Jaan, Jerry Pinto and Naresh Fernandes have captured the spirit of Bombay before it became Mumbai. A brilliant compilation of poems, prose, cartoons, photographs, songs and a recipe too written by some of the finest names in the Indian English literature space like Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Arundhati Subramaniam, Busybee etc. The stories chronicled through the book range from slums, chawls to high-rises. Other aspects like beaches, local trains, the jazz culture, floods are also handled well. This book is as engaging and vibrant as the city itself. For someone who loves the city, the book is a must-read and the authors wonderfully capture the essence of Mumbai in an all-encompassing book.

Siddhartha Srivastava says

A mixed bag, as is to be expected from an anthology, though it does feature some great essays by Suketu Mehta, Naresh Fernandes (on the Mumbai Jazz scene), Saadat Hasan Manto and especially Paromita Vohra, whose contribution is the best among the varied offerings in this book.

Lea says

really enjoyed this

Shama says

You cannot ever get enough of a city like Bombay. So many writers and so many faces of the city! Keep a copy handy to go back to it now and then because you cannot devour this city at a go. It has to unravel slowly.

Razi Shaikh says

Such a fine collection. The best piece in this was by Shabnam Minwalla 'Never at Home.' It chronicles the story of the Bene Israel, a tiny community of Jews which lived for nearly two millennia by the coast in Maharashtra. Migration to Israel since the 1950's has made the community more or less disappear. Yet it is not the migration, but what stays, what endures, what fits and what doesn't that forms part of their story.

There are some other great pieces in it as well. Manto's gossip column of an article, VS Naipaul's tryst with the bureaucracy, the story on basketball in Bombay, the story on the encounters carried out by the police in

the 90's, the report on slum demolitions all make for a riveting read. If you love Bombay, pick this book. If you don't love Bombay, then all the more, pick up this book.

Rakesh Vanamali says

Excellent rendition of first-hand accounts of many lives and their tryst with Bombay and how this city has in time become an inherent part of their lives and minds.

Articulate, nostalgia-evoking, replete with memories, vivid accounts of people, places and events all of which base Bombay as a common denominator.

Sheetal Dash says

Vibrant, engaging and provocative, this is an anthology as rich and varied as the city it celebrates. Book also depicts many aspects of the city (its water problems, the slums, high-density living).

Sharayu Gangurde says

A charming read on Bombay! Two friends gave me two books on Bombay to read during my Birthday week. Bombay, Meri Jaan gets my upvote for being the better of the two. This is a most delightful selection of quirky anecdotes on Bombay lived and seen through the eyes of people like Kipling, Rushdie, Khushwant Singh, Behram Contractor, Pico Iyer and even Naipaul on his visit to the city. Their eccentric musings left me chuckling and in even deeper love with this city, I am so fond of. I ended up ordering a copy as a gift for a non-Bombayite who's in awe of the city and I am sure this book will offer him moments of laughter and belonging as a reader. It's a must-read for all, for Bombay dwells in everyone's hearts once they have been to this city.

Sairam Krishnan says

A lovely, lovely read.

The first on my long list of Bombay books, I came to it in a dark time. I hadn't been able to read for a while (or do anything, actually), and it brought me back, the way good books do, to why you started reading in the first place.

It takes you around Bombay in its own way and in its own rhythms, and with its heavy focus on social history and memoir, paints a portrait of the city the present seldom gets to see. Though it has literary superstars in its lineup (Pico Iyer, Naipaul, Ezekiel, Kipling, Theroux, Kiran Nagarkar, Manto), as befitting a city of this size and scale, the best for me was Paromita Vohra's memoir of young life in a gentrifying slum-turned-suburb. So many things, so many feelings about this city are told in that story, directly and indirectly,

that I know I'll go back to it several times.

Credit to the editors. This must have taken some doing! The Parsis, the rise of the Shiv Sena, the jazz age of Bombay (Naresh Fernandes dazzles us here!), almost everything you'd heard about what it was like in India's biggest megapolis is given an introduction to.

In the preface, the editors say to us, "...we wanted to serve up the taste of the Lived Bombay rather than the more exotic flavours of the Visited Bombay."

I dare say they've succeeded.

Supriya says

The definitive book on Bombay, way before it became Mumbai. It's a great, almost eclectic mix of writings on Bombay. As someone who loves the city, I will say it is a must read. Even if you have never been to Bombay, it is still a must read. It presents Bombay as a living, breathing, thriving, loving and above all a very very bewitching city. The sections on history of Bombay, jazz in the city make for truly fantastic stories, while the selections from Rushdie, Manto and Mistry put together a lovely mosaic of the city.
