

Terror is a two-sided tale

The books are just beginning. That the terror attacks would spawn a number of books is no surprise. While a series of books is beginning to examine the hows and whys of the attacks itself, others are looking at reasons why such tragedies arise at all — why humans become ready to hurt and kill each other, using the pretexts of religion

“NIA is an imperative need”

That the nerve centre for a lot of recent terror attacks, not just in India, but globally, is Pakistan is theory with fairly wide acceptance. It is no surprise that Mukul Deva, whose first novel, *Lashkar* was written in response to 2005 bombings in Delhi, returns to the subject of terror in his next novel, *Salim Must Die*. Suman

Tarafdar understands the kind of effort required to get the theory and research right for this emerging category of Indian military thrillers.



SALIM MUST DIE
Mukul Deva

HarperCollins
Rs 225, Pp 280

How easy was it to write a sequel? What aspects of continuation did you have to take care of?

Writing a sequel is never easy, especially when you want to take the bar up higher with each successive

book and want to ensure you maintain the pace every year. A multi-book series means you have to ensure that even the characters continue behaving in a manner keeping their basic profile and evolving as events shape their personalities.

You have said in the past that the 2005 bombings in Delhi led you to write *Lashkar*. How do you view the situation having developed since then?

The situation has developed in pretty much the same manner as has been written about in *Salim Must Die* — many of the things mentioned in it are (unfortunately) on the verge of becoming real issues.

Also pertinent to note that events, specially, in Pakistan, are moving too rapidly for anyone to keep pace with. For example — can anyone tell when the nukes in Pakistan will fall into the wrong hands?

Force 22 is seeing a real life parallel — a national security agency. How do you think this will help in tackling terror? Force 22 is not the parallel to the NIA/NSA. If you have read about the National Intelligence Command that I created in *Salim Must Die* a year back you will see a startling similarity to the NIA. Force 22 is a fictional military arm that responds to events just beyond the purview of the



regular forces.

The NIA is an imperative need of the hour and should, once properly implemented and fully functional, go a long way in making India safer.

Do you see Pakistan as the new nerve centre for global terror? Is India prepared to face the

kind of chemical-biological terror you describe in the novel?

Pakistan is undoubtedly the new nerve centre for terrorism — where is the doubt in that. This is a natural consequence of the fact that for three decades now they have viewed or nurtured terror groups as 'strategic assets.'

No, India is certainly not poised to handle a nuclear, chemical or biological terror attack. Not many countries are for that matter. This should be of no solace to us since most other countries are not so prone to terror attacks as we are.

How can security be made more adequate for common people?

In brief, it will be a combination of police, military, intelligence, economic and diplomatic actions — but most importantly political will and the need for our political leadership to segregate religion and politics and keep them far apart. Playing to the vote banks and playing divisive politics will only enhance these problems.

Also given the global dimensions of terror, can it be tackled by individual nations without coordination with each other?

No, the community of world nations have to act in tandem and always keep the long-term view firmly in mind. Then only we can hope to solve this problem.

It is unusual for a writer of 'thrillers' to feel passionately about his books? I am passionate about everything that I do — is there any other way to be? And yes, I do believe that passion always lends an undeniable edge to whatever we do.

How much fresh research did you have to do for *Salim Must Die*? *Salim Must Die* took me an additional eight months of research — in addition to the eight months plus that I had already put in for *Lashkar*.



26/11 MUMBAI
ATTACKED
Ed by Karinder
Baweja

Rs 295, Pp 224



“*Rabba raham kar. Ab aur bardasht nahin hota.*” That was what the commandos heard on the morning of November 29 as the 60-hour standoff at Mumbai's Taj hotel was nearing its end. *26/11 Mumbai Attacked* is a look by primarily journalists at the events in an effort to make sense of the tragedies that unfolded in those days.

The book, dedicated to the security personnel who lost their lives in the attacks, also begins with brief homages to some of them, recreating the humans within the uniforms; looking at the families left to tackle the gaps. It pieces together the various stages and locations of the attacks, filling up the gaps by follow up research and interviews. Eyewitness accounts also supplement the text, as well as look at the Lashkar-e-Toiba headquarters in Muridke, Pakistan. There are transcripts of conversations between the terrorists and their handlers, which makes for chilling reading. There is also the first interrogation report from Ajmal Kasab. Significantly, it also brings out the security lapses that occurred, looking at the way the different security agencies had almost all of the relevant information, but the dots were not joined as there was no one to do it.

MORE TALES

Sanjay Sonawani's book, *Mumbai 26/11* (Bharat Book House), in Marathi, was the first one to be released.

26/11: The Attack on Mumbai (Penguin, Rs 225) has reporters from *Hindustan Times* tracking the events of 26/11 as they unfolded at the various venues. It has their dispatches, commentaries, profiles and columns published during the siege and its aftermath.

The next few months are scheduled to see many other books, both on the terror unleashed on Mumbai and coping with different forms of terror.



DAMAGE
Amrita Kumar

HarperCollins
Rs 295, Pp 264

For an incredibly hospitable country that India is, it almost becomes sacrilegious to write about certain subjects — including conversion, nun-rapes and Evangelist missions. Looked at through Gudda's eyes, Amrita Kumar's *Damage* looks at hate crimes, especially, other community that has been at the receiving end of brutal attacks — Christians. Gudda's interfaith marriage does not go down well with her mother, Beatrice, who disinherits her. But Gudda's marriage disintegrates and she is forced to go back to her mother's house, who unwell, requires Gudda, but is unwilling to forgive easily. Her sisters, thinking Gudda wants to get back her share of the inheritance, are less than polite. The tone is sombre, the relief infrequent, the truths often uncomfortable.

Meanwhile, as she tries to give meaning to her bleak life, she discovers links to her family's past that had been kept hidden from her. A look at India's fragile secular fabrics, constantly under threat from fundamentalism of differing hues but similar effects for its victims — devastation.

Harsh Mander's *Fear and Forgiveness: The Aftermath of Massacre* (Penguin, Rs 225) looks at untold stories of faith and courage that endured amidst the fear and hate in Gujarat. Of Dharuji and Babun Thakur who sheltered 110 Muslims for ten days in their home; of Rambhai Advani who restored his Muslim neighbour's roof in the face of local opposition.