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Where fact meets fiction

Author Mukul Deva analyses the anatomy of a terrorist



The profiler Author Mukul Deva.

Mukul Deva calls himself "a profiler of the times". He'd rather write about the times we live in rather than about "three generations of people in the Kerala backwaters or about the British rule in India." A former army man and now spearheading a security agency, Mukul Deva first explored non-fiction before warming up to fiction. His first fiction, *Lashkar*, released last year, took shape on the day of the Sarojini Nagar bomb blasts in New Delhi in 2005. The book was born out of eight months of research and discussed "the proxy war India has suffered in the last three decades". The author was in town to release *Salim Must Die*, the sequel to *Lashkar*, published by Harper Collins. *Salim Must Die* takes off where *Lashkar* ends.

Mukul Deva is probably the only well known writer exploring the military action thriller genre in India. Coming from an army background has worked in his favour. He tells us, "There are three reasons why I wanted to explore this genre. One, because no one else is doing it. Secondly, there is a hazy manner in which the army is portrayed in the mass media and thirdly, this genre suits the best to talk about terrorism."

His new book is second in the four-part series. "The book highlights geo-political reasons for terrorism; the story moves out of India across 10 different nations in 10 different time zones." *Salim Must Die*, like *Lashkar*, merges fact with fiction. "The technical data is all available on public domain in the internet. I haven't used classified information and wherever necessary, I've cleverly distorted technical details. For example, if there is a chemical equation, probably a numeral would be misplaced. I did this so that no one can use what is described in the book as a blueprint for the wrong reasons." He feels that chemical, nuclear and biological warfare hold a threat in future and we have seen only a tip of the iceberg in the nerve gas attacks in Japan and the anthrax episode in the US.

Lashkar has caught the attention of film-maker Govind Nihalini and may be adapted to the big screen. "A few other film-makers have also shown interest. But a film would shape up only after my third sequel is out and I can disclose the plan for the fourth one to a film-maker," says Mukul.

Mukul Deva takes the topic of screen adaptations with a pinch of salt. "After *Gone With The Wind*, I haven't seen any great adaptation. And I'm yet to meet an author who is happy with the film adaptation of his book, and I guess I will be no different," he grins. But he insists he will not interfere with the vision of a director.

Both *Lashkar* and *Salim Must Die* have been translated in Hindi. Mukul reiterates, "Terrorism has nothing to do with religion. Though *Salim* refers to a name, it also refers to a narrow minded fundamentalist thought process that has to be destroyed."

SANGEETHA DEVI DUNDOO