

## Transition of Thoughts

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# In conversation with Mukul Deva: India's first military thriller writer!

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An alumnus of La Martiniere College, Lucknow, the National Defence Academy, Pune and the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, Mukul Deva was commissioned in December 1981 into the Sikh Light Infantry of the Indian Army. He took early retirement from the army after fifteen years of service, including a decade of combat operations in India and overseas. He is now an entrepreneur and motivational speaker, leadership, business and executive coach, and consultant.

He is the author of '*Time After Time..It all Happened*', '*S.T.R.I.P.T.E.A.S.E: The Art of Corporate Warfare*', '*M.O.D.E.L: The Return of the Employee*', the recently released '*The Dust Will Never Settle*' and four bestselling books in the 'Lashkar series: '*Lashkar*', '*Salim Must Die*', '*Blowback*' and '*Tanzeem*'.

**Aseem:** An army man writing books. Now that's something new at least in India. How has your experience been?

**Mukul:** Yes I guess it's how most people perceive army men. And how army men view themselves. Most of the ones I know are very articulate and have great stories to tell. I simply decided to tell them, without thinking too much about it. In any case I have always believed that I can do anything if I wish to do it since it is seldom capability, but belief in our capability that matters. As for the journey – it's been incredible. And continues to be so... I find I am full of ideas and the words don't seem to stop flowing... 'Tis as though of (literary) Viagra I have drunk....)

**Aseem:** How easy / difficult was the decision to leave the Army?

**Mukul:** It was not difficult. I had two daughters to bring up, and they did and do take first priority.

**Aseem:** Today you are known as the writer who gave birth to the military thriller genre in India. But the Lashkar series wasn't your first attempt at writing. Any particular reason as to why your other earlier works are not written or spoken about?

**Mukul:** Yes, it is kinda fun being acknowledged as the pioneer of the Indian military action thriller...:). As for my first books. Shall we say they are part of my learning journey. And it's not as through they are not spoken about – in fact my second book S.T.R.I.P.T.E.A.S.E. The Art Of Corporate Warfare is being released in Europe and Asia Pacific by Marshall Cavendish in Dec 2012.

**Aseem:** Being in the army and having encountered such situations day in and day out, it would have been a cakewalk to write the Lashkar series, isn't it? Or was it a challenge?

**Mukul:** Cakewalk? Yeah right. Living a story and telling it for others to enjoy are pretty different things. You must also remember that with the success of each book the bar kept getting higher. Since I was always very clear that I would do minimum one book a year (what is the point of writing fast-paced thrillers if one cannot write them fast enough...:) the pressure was intense. Luckily I was able to channelized the pressure positively and ensure each successive book could continue to meet (readers and mine) expectations.

Was it a challenge? Of course it was dude, but what would life be like without challenges?

**Aseem:** Considering the number of love stories in the market today, weren't you

apprehensive whether people would read a military thriller?

**Mukul:** No. I must confess I had no such apprehensions. Perhaps I am too simple minded to really understand fear of failure. Perhaps I believe that failure is what teaches us and helps us to grow. Either way I was clear I had a good story to tell and also confident that I would be able to tell it in an interesting manner. The confidence shown in me by HarperCollins India also helped a lot.

**Aseem:** Was Lashkar always meant to have four parts? Or did you keep improvising on the way?

**Mukul:** Yes. Right from the start it was designed to be a series. Even when Lashkar was released I had mentioned this in my interviews that over the next four years there would be a book each, taking the story ahead. In fact, every year when Harper handed over the printed book to me I would ceremoniously hand over the next manuscript to them and we would go to work on it right away – they on that manuscript and me on the next one....)

**Aseem:** Your books have a Nostradamus touch about them. And more often than not they are a heady mix of reality and fiction. Does your experience of being in the army speak there?

**Mukul:** Nostradamus touch? Lol. It's dangerous to believe your own publicity... As I am sure George Bush will tell you...:) It was all a matter of solid research and studying the trajectory of events, analyzed using simple common sense. And of course the army experience did help.

**Aseem:** I am sure there would have been many interesting anecdotes and incidents you would have encountered during your army life. Would you like sharing any with our audience?

**Mukul:** Of course I would. Please stand by for my next book – and the next one. We have two thrillers (tentatively titled R.I.P. and DEATH CAME CALLING) and one on Breakthrough Thinking ( F.C.U.K. Your Way To Success) slated for release in 2013. The first and the third have already gone into edit. The second should be starting its editorial journey soon. And there are more coming up the curve real fast – so do watch this space....)

**Aseem:** From what I have read, you have been writing since your army days. How did you get the time? Were people supportive?

**Mukul:** That is right. I was writing even when I was in school. Time is available to all of us all the time. We simply have to respect it and learn to manage it well. And people are generally supportive when they see you are passionate about what you want to do, and believe in yourself.

**Aseem:** How did the idea of starting a professional security firm come about?

**Mukul:** I had pretty much nothing other than the shirt on my back when I quit the army.

And since I had left 3-4 years before my pensionable service I had to do something. Security was what I had been trained in all my life and I do love working with people. So setting up a security firm was a natural outcome.

**Aseem:** You have been releasing more than one book every year since 2010. What's the secret of your speed?

**Mukul:** It's no secret my friend. These are the same four things that we need to succeed in every endeavor – the ability to – Think with clarity, Listen for potential, Speak with intent, and Act with purpose.

**Aseem:** Voracious Reader or Passionate Writer – Your pick?

**Mukul:** Both...:)

**Aseem:** What do you think of the literary works in India today?

**Mukul:** Incredibly admirable and still not fully tapped. To my mind its the 'reader' we need to worry about – not too many of them...:)

**Aseem:** Movies made on books have always had mixed success with the readers complaining that books are always better. How confident are you that the movie based on 'Lashkar' will do justice to the book?

**Mukul:** It's a great story. I love the producers vision. So suffice it to say that I am very confident – that everyone concerned will give their best shot. Isn't that what the Bhagavad Gita tells us to do – focus on the act and not the outcome. I have a feeling we will see all the books of the Lashkar series hitting the silver screen in the coming years.

**Aseem:** You have planned your book releases till 2014. I have never seen an author do that.

**Mukul:** Now you have...:). We must all have plans – then only do dreams come alive. And I do want to ensure that I have a book coming out every year – till I'm around – *basitna sa khwab hai...*) (That's my small little dream)

**Aseem:** What kind of books do you read?

**Mukul:** Any and every thing I can lay my hands on. From fairy tales to philosophy... It's all grist for the mill.

**Aseem:** What's one thing about you which people don't know?

**Mukul:** That I am basically a romantic...:)

**Aseem:** Would you like to say anything to our audience?

**Mukul:** Have the courage to live your dreams. Live life KING / QUEEN size... You only have one shot. Reincarnation may or may not be happening. Even if it does, you're not likely to remember much of this life in the next one...:). Do remember – if you can imagine

it, you can achieve it.

Thanks Mukul for the lovely interview. We wish you all the best for all your future endeavours.

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**prateek mathur**

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Always a pleasure reading about military men! They are just "different"!



**aseemrastogi2**

on **September 30, 2012 at 2:22 am** said:

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Yeah they sure are an exciting lot 😊 .