

Have a Word - Why does a young man become a terrorist?**By: Aastha Atray Banan****Date: 2009-04-25****Mumbai**

Mukul Deva's latest book, Salim Must Die, tries answering that one. India's only military action writer tells Aastha Atray Banan why Pakistan needs a reality check, and how parents, teachers and religious leaders can be brainwashing agents

The intruder had an interesting tale to tell. In fact, what started off as the routine interrogation of yet another intruder captured during infiltration left the young captain open-mouthed and wide-eyed. Then he stepped across to the communications hut and called his battalion commander on the secure line. "He says his name is Iqbal. Says he is an Indian, a resident of Lucknow, but was studying in Delhi when he was recruited by the Lashkar and sent across to Pakistan for training."

"He says he was trained at Muzaffarabad by the same group that carried out the terror bombings in Delhi last month. Apparently, his mother and sister were among those killed by the bomb that exploded at the Sarojini Nagar market. He came to know about it when he got back to Lucknow after the training, so he killed the Maulana in Delhi who'd recruited him, and then returned to Muzaffarabad to avenge their deaths by killing those who had trained him and planned the bombings. It was the Lashkar-e-Toiba lunatics, as we all suspected."

Even if you aren't particularly clued in to which separatist group supports what terrorist group, Mukul Deva's **Salim Must Die**, will have you turning the pages, even if on the potty. The racy read is a sequel to the best-seller **Lashkar**, and comes from the ex-Army officer who is now Managing Director of MSD Security Pvt. Ltd. and India's only military writer. The fictional thriller rooted in reality offers you a glimpse into the mind of a young terrorist, and what motivates a man to make destruction his calling.

Drawing from your experiences in the army, you add excitement and intrigue to your books. Is being in the military forces really all that exciting?

Of course! Far more than words can express. The biggest reality check is the sound of a bullet zipping past you. That really gets the adrenaline going. My army background helped me add a high degree of realism to military action.

Your book brings Indo-Pak relations to fore. As an ex-army officer, what do you believe can be done to ease the tension? Indians should stop hyphenating their existence with Pakistan. India is a strong, economically successful and vibrant democracy on its way up. We have no issues with Pakistan, barring their perpetual interference in our affairs. That is what they need to understand. Pakistan must stop using terrorism as a strategic tool, and try instead, to get their own house in order.

You talk about an ideological terrorist, someone who doesn't offer a clear view of the world he is trying to create, and focuses on destruction of the infidels. How do you believe a young man gets to being that?

There are three groups of people in the world who can subvert a man parents, teachers and religious leaders. When you are a child, what your parents and teachers say becomes reality. Then, as the young child grows up, religious leaders alter his attitude by misquoting scriptures. A right wing Sunni fundamentalist is told by a maulana that Jihad means to wage a war for your religion. What it really means is to purify yourself and society.

A chapter in your book underlines reasons for a man to turn into a terrorist some believe they are carrying out the will of God, others say they are victims of economic and political repression. Still others are failures and crave personal fame and glory. Which of these is the most compelling?

Everyone has a different reason to do what they do the Klu Klux Klan fought for colour, the Hindu fundamentalists fight because they think they turned into a minority in their own country. The Palestinians are fighting political regression. They are all right. But some individuals take to terrorism because they have a streak of madness. Take the case of a man who plants a bomb, and then rushes home to watch TV coverage of the carnage. Isn't he a psycho?

Your book touches on the American occupation of Iraq, to secure its position in the oil market an observation made by many economists and political observers. Why then does America get away with it all? America gets away with it because it has military strength and political clout. Also, the fate of every country in the world depends on what America does. If it catches a cold, we get a fever.

