

Literary Stormtrooper

Mukul Deva's mantra — If you can imagine it, you can achieve it — certainly rings true in his own life as prolific writer, founder of a security corporation, literary mentor and conflict management consultant.

He's a breezy, urbane presence whose hale and hearty demeanour belies his seriousness of purpose. Mukul Deva has authored nine books in as many years, with his 10th and 11th already scheduled for release in 2011 and 2012 respectively. The titles cover a diverse range of topics which reflect his pursuits at various points in time, with the most recent three — military thrillers — reflecting his passion, which he intends to stick with for a while. Sent to boarding school at the tender age of five, Deva discovered that when one has no choice, one gets on with the challenge at hand.

Trained at the National Defence Academy and then the Indian Military Academy, he's seen more than a decade of action in some of South Asia's hottest spots. Post-army tenure, he turned his sights to the corporate battlefield and successfully launched into the professional security business, crisis and conflict management consultancy and mentoring writers. The latter is a natural extension of his successful one-book-per-year recipe.

Mukul Deva chats with **STORM** following his well-received dinner talk held as part of the first **STORM**break, a series that brings writers in direct contact with **STORM** readers to share experiences and issues that are shaping the world.

STORM: Did you set out to complete X number of books in X numbers of years, or did it just happen that way? And what's coming up?

MUKUL DEVA: It was not planned that way. However, when I did get my writing technique right, I decided to do one book a year — to keep the bar raised high at all times — something that is very important for me. It is a self-imposed deadline and I see it happening for the next seven to eight years for sure, maybe longer. I'm currently wrapping up the book for 2013 so I see no major problems in keeping it going.



STORM: The topics you've covered vary widely. Does this reflect a search for your definitive 'voice', or simply a matter of choosing topics that captured your interest at different points in time?

DEVA: The different genres basically reflect where I was at that point in my life's journey. When I found something working well for me, I wanted to share it so I wrote about it — hence the management primer and the self-help book and so on. However, with thrillers I have found my passion — the dark side of the human mind — and I plan to stay with this for some time for sure.

STORM: You've been described as a pioneer of the Indian thriller novel — why do you think this genre of fiction has been fairly 'absent' from the literary scene in India? Is it because this particular genre is a Western one, with typically Western references, or is it that the Indian 'sensibility' was not traditionally wired this way?

DEVA: Frankly I have never been able to understand this myself, especially when it comes to military action thrillers, since India has such a rich military tradition that one would expect more people to write in this space. Anyway, I think this is now a thing of the past since Indian writers are delving into every aspect of thrillers and some are doing a very fine job of it. I must add that writing thrillers requires a huge amount of research and technical construct, which make it hard, but challenging and fun.