

So, yet another book has now triggered Bollywood's interest. No, it is not a book like Bimal Mehra's that was made into the classic film *Sahib, Bibi Aur Ghulam*, or one on women victims of Partition like Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar*. Instead, it is a real-life take on how the so-called Jihadis are picked up from anonymous Indian streets and prepared, their operations and more. It is "Lashkar", penned by soldier-turned-author Mukul Deva.

Smiles Mukul, "There are three filmmakers who are on my priority list. But I would agree as long as they stick to its storyline and not extract only a part of it for jingoism and misguiding the audiences."

The author, who took premature retirement from the Army and started his own business of providing security services, says that he has stopped connecting to religion. "They say that terrorists have no religion, but the fact is most battles are fought for religion and it is proven by history."

Ten years of counter terrorism experience in Jammu and Kashmir, including Siachen, besides Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Punjab, and Mukul found himself in "dire need of sharing" his experiences with the public. So "Lashkar" was born early this year, and published recently by Harper Collins. The book is considered the first such effort by an Indian author. Earlier Tom Clancy from the U.S. did a book on operation series which apparently has not done too well.

"Lashkar" tells many tales with great ease. Though it opens with the gory details of the bomb blasts in Sarojini Nagar in October 2005, it creates an urge to know more. It helps a reader grow into a smart observer.

With experience

Shares Mukul, former Second Lieutenant in the Sikh Light Infantry of the Indian Army, "Though I had firsthand experience of how the terrorist organisations work, still I needed to do some research to know about their weapons, pattern of recruitment, etc." On his experience of the recruitment hands, he says, "Earlier they used to look for semi-literate, innocent and confused young boys. But now with our security forces using sophisticated technology to combat them, they target educated, young technically-inclined boys who can understand their nuclear-chemical biological weaponry, to conduct the devastation."

In the future, says Mukul, terrorist outfits would be able to produce devices 10 times more powerful than those that have wreaked greatest havoc so far.

Mukul, part of the team that escorted the LTTE Supremo Prabhakaran back to Jaffna after he signed the accord treaty with Rajiv Gandhi, has several incidents to relate about India's "regional

The right chord

BOOKMARK Mukul Deva's new book "Lashkar" has just hit the stands. RANA SIDDIQUI speaks to him



REAL TO REEL Mukul Deva in New Delhi PHOTO: V. SUDERSHAN

aspirations". He is often found complaining about it.

He relates, "Sri Lankan President Jayawardene wanted to get rid of Prabhakaran without involving himself. So he called Rajiv Gandhi. Rajiv sent IPKF there and we suffered unnecessary attrition. Why do we burn our hands because of our regional aspirations,

whether it is in Bangladesh, Maldives or Sri Lanka! Why can't we take a strong stand when it comes to Pakistan? Because of the lack of political will and leadership, we suffer. Why do we need the U.K., the EU or America to solve our problems when we know where Dawood is and that Pakistan is sponsoring terrorists?"

He feels that our Army is able to carry out any operation.

"What we need is a good Prime Minister to support us. We have underdogs (subordinates) dictating terms to us."

Mukul's next book "Salim Must Die" is a sequel to "Lashkar". Meanwhile, the filmmakers wait.