

**MUKUL  
DEVA**

University professor and unpublished author...

— Sarthak Dasgupta, *Shikhar*

**SALIM  
MUST DIE**

## A War On Terror

THE STORYLINE OF MUKUL Deva's **SALIM MUST DIE** (HarperCollins) — sequel to the bestseller *Lashkar* — is strikingly similar to today's geopolitical scenarios vis-à-vis terrorism. A beleaguered American president wanting to create a legacy, a Pakistani dictator trying to save his government and his life, and an ISI brigadier plotting against the *kafir* (non-believers) are the main protagonists of the book. Iraq and Afghanistan are burning, and a "clash of civilisations" is looming large. And caught in the eye of this impending storm is an Indian prime minister — already battling allegations of being "soft" on terrorism — who has to save his country from this storm.

Deva's army days and the skills he learnt there are visible in the operation which sees the capture and subsequent death of a character loosely inspired by Osama bin Laden. Apart from its principal characters Col. Anbu and Brig. Salim Murad, the role of G.K. Rao — a portly, horn-rimmed intelligence expert — is bound to leave an impact on you with his sheer volume of information.

However, it is the planning, plotting and execution of operations that form the meat of the story. Deva gives an insight into the mind of a terrorist, and the deceptive mode of communication he uses. The creation of profiles on Shaadi.com and the near-anonymity of operational heads and subordinates is a brilliant example of this. Sadly, the pace and smart characters fail to hide its shortfalls; Rao drones on about his volume of information sitting at the National Intelligence Command, while Murad's lecture on "targeting the minds of the *kafir*" fails to impress. The book simply makes you think about the dangerous world we live in.

—Aayush Soni