

From an Army veteran to a thriller writer

Surya Agarwal

IT'S A homecoming after 30 years for Mukul Deva, who is country's first military thriller writer.

Mukul was born in Lucknow in 1961 and went to La Martiniere College before he joined the National Defence Academy, Pune. Mukul was in Lucknow on Tuesday for a book reading session of his latest thriller *Salim Must Die*.

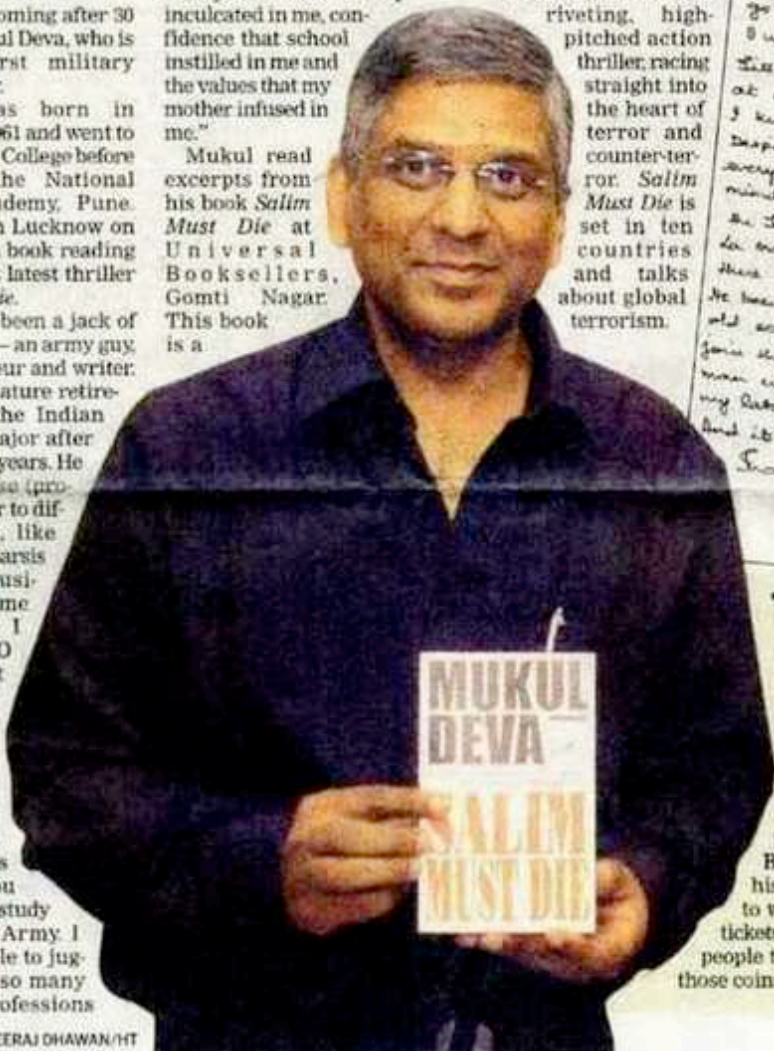
Mukul has been a jack of many trades — an army guy, an entrepreneur and writer. He took premature retirement from the Indian Army as a Major after serving for 15 years. He said, "All these (professions) cater to different needs, like writing is catharsis for me and business helps me run a family. I run my NGO CANassist because I feel that everyone has a social responsibility."

"I joined the army because I was told that you don't have to study to be in the Army. I have been able to juggle between so many different professions

because of three factors—the discipline that Army inculcated in me, confidence that school instilled in me and the values that my mother infused in me."

Mukul read excerpts from his book *Salim Must Die* at Universal Booksellers, Gomti Nagar. This book is a

sequel to Mukul's book *Lashkar*, which is a riveting, high-pitched action thriller, racing straight into the heart of terror and counter-terror. *Salim Must Die* is set in ten countries and talks about global terrorism.



I think it was an American author who'd written that - 'you can never go home again' - somewhere in the 80s used to believe that - till today. The Friday when I got off the plane at Amal Airport - in a moment I knew I was home again. Despite the passage of 30 odd years, everything came rushing back the minute my taxi entered Kharad gang - So think ke bahar, Prakash ki kuffiya la mat ki ganyan - it was all there - vibrant and fresh. He been a long journey for the 16 year old schoolboy who left Lucknow to join the Army - to this 48 year old man who has come back to launch my latest book *Salim Must Die*! And it great to be back. Thank you everyone!

Mukul

Favourite book: Chitrlekha. I've read it eight times, at different points in time. I've loved it every time I've read it.

Favourite author: JD Salinger

Movies: I watch a movie almost every day. I loved the movie *Slumdog Millionaire* but the book was better.

Idea of a weekend: I like to stay at home and spend time with my family. Just being around at home is great fun and it relaxes me. The weekends also give me time to read and write.

The city connection

MUKUL LEFT Lucknow 30 years back but remembers everything about the city. He said, "Lucknow is bigger, better, with wider roads, taller buildings and more people. It's like a homecoming for me. I had never thought I'd come back. My family is now based out of Lucknow, and I had no reason to come back. As soon as we (my taxi driver and I) hit the Vidhan Sabha it all came rushing back to me. I directed the taxi driver to take me to River Bank Colony (the place I am putting up at)." Mukul recalled his days in Lucknow when he and his friends went to Mayfair to watch movies. He said, "We always bought the front row tickets for 25 paise. The reason: when these movies showed songs, people threw coins at the screen and we used to rush to collect those coins. This money was an extra pocket money for us."