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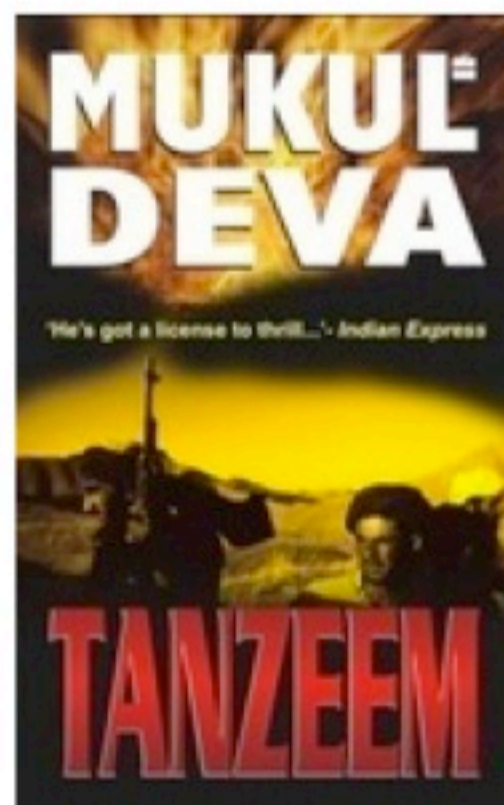
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The Final Countdown

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By Anjana Basu

Tanzeem is the final book of Mukul Deva's Lashkar series, with Iqbal whom we met in Salim Must Die and Blowback on a do or die mission to avenge the death of his wife Tanaz. The enemy he goes up against is the elusive warlord Ameer-ul-Momineem, who is in the process of putting together a group of international jihadi terrorists. We're used to Deva's expert detailing of weapons and strategies from his military background.



In this book he outlines how far terror has actually gone, sending its tentacles into the very heart of The White House and he speculates on where it may go. The action takes place on the Durand line in Waziristan, a place which has been in chaos since the days of the British.

Iqbal says goodbye to Force 22, the elite anti terror team to which he belongs, and to his very new baby, and sets out on his own to locate and stop Ameer if he can. As he progresses we discover how it was that the Taliban first started to become entrenched in Afghanistan, though violent do-gooding activities that gradually fanned out into fatwas against beards and all the rest of the diktats that the world has become familiar with.

As expected from Deva, women play a minimal role in the series, with the exception of Tanaz in Blowback, and this book sticks to that norm. Even Ankita who handles communications and sets up the secure links between Iqbal in Waziristan and Force 22 in India, is reduced to a few pages in the beginning and at the end.

Perhaps because this is the final book in the series and because there is something epic about Iqbal's determination to avenge, Deva has a quote before every chapter taken from the world's sacred books, starting with 'The end of birth is death; the end of death is birth...' from the Bhagavad Gita. There is also an extra dose of violence as with the bayoneting of a captured American soldier which Deva says 'goes with the script', though he is quick to add that incidents like that have been fairly common in the anti terror struggle.

Final books have been known to disappoint simply because the authors found the pressure to complete a series too extreme, but Tanzeem maintains the scorching pace that Deva has already set. One would wonder what the Tanzeem would have done when they got together – formulated something to make 9/11 look pale perhaps – but that must remain conjecture.

Yes, critical readers many find the patriotism a trifle overdone in places and some may quarrel with Deva's political theories but this is the kind of book that, if it were a movie, would guarantee lumps in the throat and frantic clapping by the time the curtain came down.

Tanzeem by Mukul Deva

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