

WHEN JIHADIS UNITE

THE US KILLING OF OSAMA BIN LADEN WAS ACTUALLY A PART OF MUKUL DEVA'S SALIM MUST DIE. THE AUTHOR IS BACK WITH HIS NEW BOOK, *TANZEEM*

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IN his book *Salim Must Die*, published in 2009, author Mukul Deva described in detail how after getting the information from an insider, the American forces conduct a raid inside Pakistan and manage to kill Osama bin Laden. Two years later, the American forces actually killed Osama inside Pakistan. Their operation bore an uncanny similarity to Deva's raid.

A mere coincidence, one might say, given the fact that Deva's work is fiction. May be, but all through his Lashkar series (of which *Salim Must Die* is the second part), he has weaved his story around a series of actual events supported by his thorough research and understating of global geo-politics and his military experience. The result — he seems to have acquired a 'Nostradamus touch'; for the way terror is unfolding in our country, neighbourhood and even globally, the line between the fact and fiction is fast getting blurred.

GETTING TO THE FUTURE

Deva delves into future 'terror scenario' in his latest book *Tanzeem* (the fourth in the series). The jiha-

di elements are regrouping and reorganising under Ameer-ul-Momineem (Commander of the faithful) post Osama-era and are all set to unleash war against the kafir and redraw the world map.

It is then left to the protagonist Iqbal to let his personal vendetta against the terror merchants from across border

acquire a larger canvas and try and stop this 'unified' terror machine of jihads. "Iqbal's fight was personal even in Lashkar when in an angry, knee-jerk reaction he had gone (across the border) to avenge his mother and

sister. Their deaths had made him realise the futility of the jihad, but his fight had always been personal. So there is not much divergence in *Tanzeem*. Yes, he has started seeing the bigger picture also by now and knows that his vendetta has a larger motive. Hence his quest to kill Ameer has personal and national dimensions," says Deva.

THE ACTION HOTS UP

The author brings in more drama and a lot of 'luck' favouring the protagonist unlike in previous books where things went as per the plan and little was left to the chance or fate. Amidst the action, much space has been given to the history of the region and its geopolitics which at times slows down the pace of the narrative.

"We did discuss this during the editorial phase. I thought we'd been able to maintain pace even with that. Most of the reader feedback has been appreciative of the historical pieces since they felt it filled in gaps in their knowledge and added depth to the story. I wrote this book a year ago — and

like the other three books of this series — was able to foresee a lot of things coming true now. Unfortunately most of these things are not 'very good.' But then neither is the topic I write about," says the author.

Nevertheless, the plot is racy and you can feel the rush of adrenaline as the action unfolds in rugged areas of north-west Pakistan bordering Afghanistan. Deva virtually gets into the minds of these religious zealots and lays bare their psyche that knows no compassion, follows no law and bears allegiance to no one except the religion and its 'fundamentalists' followers.

He even talks about the conflict of Pakistani army with jihadis but hasn't dealt with the consequences it might have for that country.

And he is not satisfied with just four books in this series. "Let me assure you, it's not just four books in four years, I plan to come out with one every year and each will be different. That I can promise, you have a soldier's word for it", he says.

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