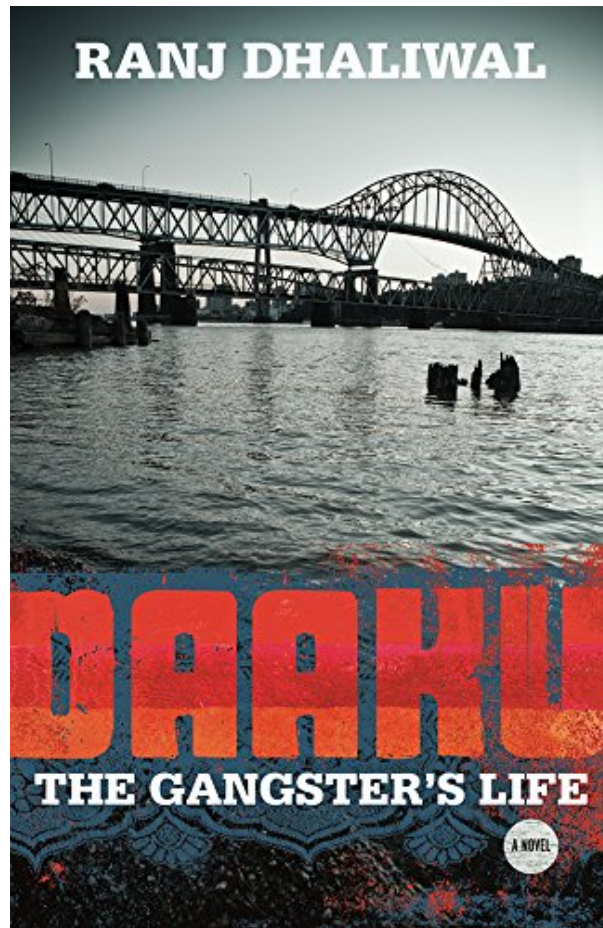
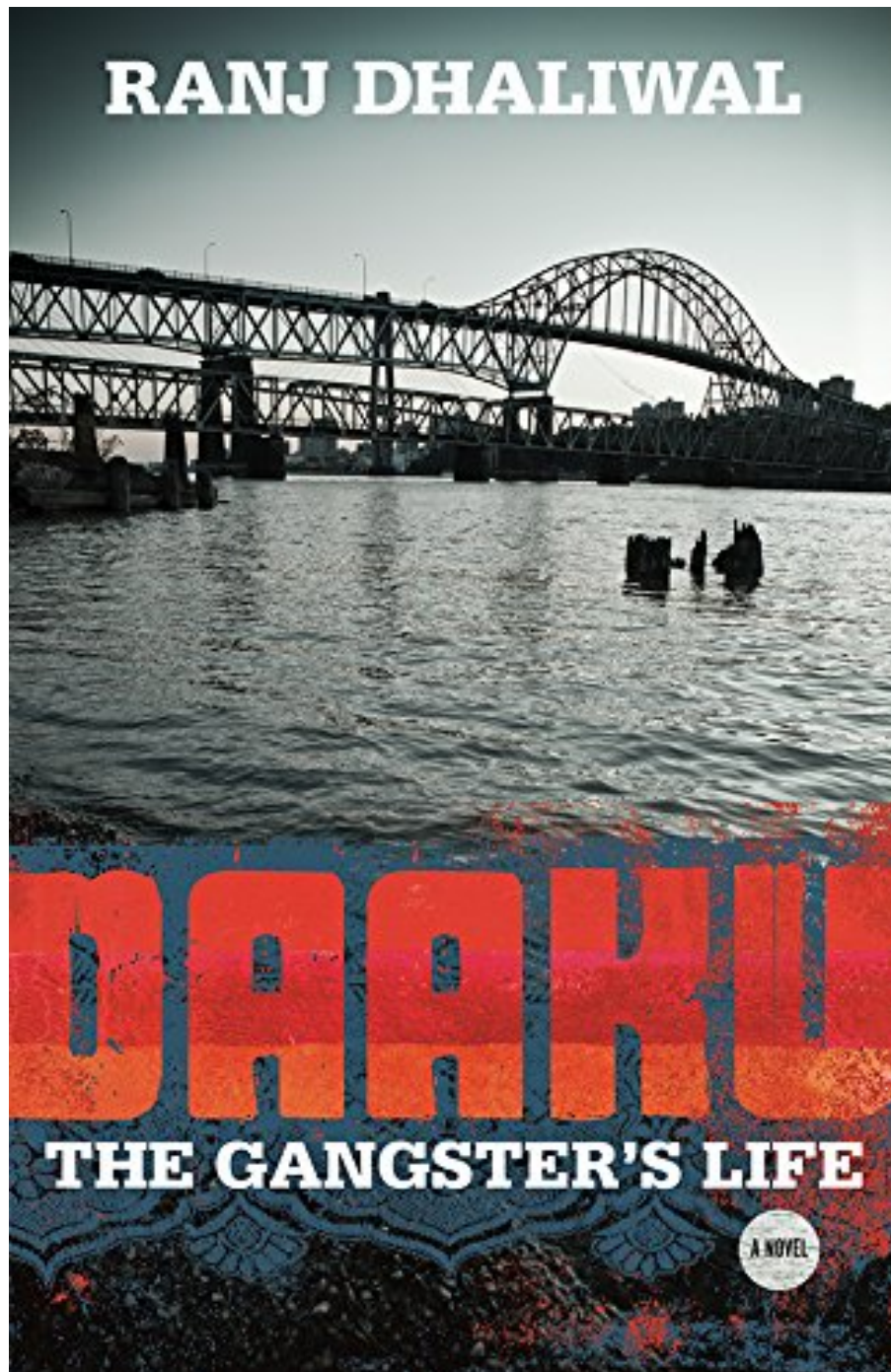


DAAKU: THE GANGSTER'S LIFE BY RANJ DHALIWAL



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About the Author

Ranj Dhaliwal has been warning youth against the dangers of crime and gang life since shortly after his own teen years, and wrote Daaku (2006), which was widely praised for its unique insights into the Indo-Canadian gang culture.

Ranj continues to speak on youth gangs and violence and is active in community politics in Surrey, where he lives. He is hard at work on the third volume of the saga of Ruby Pandher and his relatives and friends.

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DAAKU: THE GANGSTER'S LIFE BY RANJ DHALIWAL PDF

Daaku: The Gangster's Life picks up the story of Indo-Canadian gangster Ruby Pandher, the hero of Ranj Dhaliwal's bestseller Daaku, as he recovers from a failed hit by his own associates.

Violence, wild partying and flashy purchases mark Ruby's comeback. Ruby's eyes and perspective are widened by the new contacts he makes, as he tries to measure up to — and then sideline — big-time gangster Khalsi. Joining forces with a sinister associate and sounding very much like the modern businessman, he sets out to expand his criminal enterprises — all while battling his conscious and wondering what a life outside the underworld would be like.

Soon he comes to see his old self as minor-league, and, joining forces with the sinister Darshan and sounding very much like the modern businessman, he sets out to expand his criminal enterprises.

Meanwhile, life intervenes in the form of the possibility of love for this hardcore gangster; and in Ruby's brother Kam, who worships his bro' and wants to follow in his footsteps — something Ruby knows he's not equipped to do. Meanwhile, Ruby's activities pull him deeper into the violent side of the world of Sikh temple politics.

Will Ruby's heart open, or is the flashy lifestyle too much to tear away from? Can he stop Kam from following in his own footsteps? Most of all, can Ruby break the cycle and leave behind "The Life"?

Here's what critics said about Daaku:

"A fascinating look into the gang world's twisted morality, casual murder, commodification of women, and the inevitability of violent demise." — Quill & Quire

"A haunting parable about unfulfilled potential and lives wrongly lived. . . an edgy, politically incorrect novel about South Asian youth and their vulnerability to organized crime, an issue treated far too simplistically by the mainstream media. Dhaliwal . . . has painted a grimly realistic portrait of the West Coast gangster life and the flash-and-burn trajectory of all those drawn into it." — The Tyee (www.thetyee.ca)

"An excellent novel about Indo-Canadian gangs. . . A scary peek into a subculture about which we know nothing, a tour of Vancouver suburbs as alien as Mars, and Dhaliwal makes as believable as your own back yard." — Margaret Cannon, Globe & Mail

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Daaku Book Review

By A Customer

[...]

Synopsis: A story of betrayal, cold-blooded murder and the rise and eventual fall of one gangster, "*Daaku*" is a bullet-riddled grand tour of Indo-Canadian gangland.

Daaku, in Punjabi, is another term for outlaw. A *Daaku* is a person who has no regard for life and is an outcast in society. This person believes that whatever he does is right, even though it is against all laws of his country. The *Daaku* can be found in every culture across the globe and has been around since the birth of mankind.

The *Daaku* referred to in Ranj Dhaliwal's book is Ruby Pandher, an Indo-Canadian gangster. We meet Ruby when he is 7 years old or thereabouts and realize right away that he's a trouble-maker, he loves danger and seeing how far he can go before he's caught - it started with childish pranks like stealing a dime from his teacher's desk, pasting "kick me" signs on his teacher's chair, but he soon grows bored and moves on to arson "I wasn't a pyro, but I loved the power it(fire) had over items and their demise" to stealing cars and to beating up people for just giving him "the look" . Soon he graduates to carrying guns, selling cocaine, making collections for Indo-Canadian drug dealers, organizing a jailhouse smuggling ring whilst in prison ... eventually we see him betraying his closest friends and taking out anyone he perceives as a threat - 19-year old Ruby is determined to be the fiercest gangster in Western Canada.

This is a hard book to read because of its very graphic subject matter. You hate Ruby's attitude to life, his blatant disregard for the law and for human life. You cringe at how easily he will pick a fight and beat another human being to pulp for the littlest grievances, and yet, when he talks about his "poor mom" and how he loves her daal roti (lentils and Indian bread) and how he demands that his friends and girlfriends respect her, or when he holds off having intimate relations with a girl who is coming onto him because he wants to lose his virginity with his girlfriend whom he loves, or even when he beats up a bully for calling his younger brother a "bun head" you realize that somewhere inside that hard exterior there is a heart and you want so much to believe he is more than a hardcore gangster.

The question I kept asking myself as I read the book was 'why'? Why do kids opt to live on the edge, when

they could have stability and security? Why do they knowingly hurt the people that love and care for them? In Ruby's case, a hard drinking, brutal father who ruled his home with violence and a community that appears to respect masochism and bravado, could have contributed to making Ruby the tough guy that he was, but at some point the lure of fast money, power and the adoration of the female sex as well as the admiration and fear of his peers was mainly instrumental in keeping him in the business.

I was curious why Ranj Dhaliwal, a first-time author, would choose this subject (Indo-Canadian gang warfare) as a topic for his first novel for as far as I know topics like these tend to be very controversial. Apparently, growing up in Surrey (home to the largest population of East Indians in Vancouver) Ranj Dhaliwal was exposed to the Indo-Canadian underworld and saw many young men joining gangs and losing their lives in the process (In the past 10 years in Greater Vancouver, atleast 60 men have died in an Indo-Canadian gang war over drugs, money and women).

Despite losing so many of their young men to gang violence the Punjabi community remains tight-lipped about this ugly phenomenon because of the stigma associated with it. I think Ranj Dhaliwal aims to break the code of silence in Surrey's Indo-Canadian community and is hoping that his novel will raise awareness of gang culture and will prompt some sort of dialogue about gang violence and the effect of it has on a community. I commend him for that and I commend New Star for publishing his book. I can't predict the effect it's going to have on other readers, but it sure opened my eyes.

I'll leave you with this very thought-provoking statement from a letter by the author on his site:

"When you open this novel you enter the daaku's world, and when you close it you leave it--unlike the life of a real daaku whose only exit is death."

Posted by Lotus Reads

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

DAAKU - Cold hard truth

By cookie

I would highly recommend this book to any law enforcement officer investigating gang violence in the Lower Mainland. Although this book is fiction, the similarities are shocking. The book is a very easy read. I read the book in three days. The story keeps moving in a familiar style, and very rarely goes off track. After reading this book, I had a greater understanding of the "game" and the players in it. Great Job!!!

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