

In the column WRITER'S BLOCK, published Sunday June 10th 2012

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What were your beginnings as a writer?

As a mad child who actually enjoying writing essays and compositions.

Are there any rituals that get you going on a literary project?

The end of a previous project is usually all I need to be thinking about the next one.

Rituals? Opening up a new document on my laptop, placing my fingers on the keyboard and feeling that familiar old frisson.

What induces you to set to work? Why do you write?

Now that I've heard other people say it, I don't feel silly any more but I write because not doing so simply isn't an option.

Have you ever been blocked, unable to write, and if so, how did you get going again?

Plenty of times. There's one of two approaches to take. Either let the block gradually dissipate away on its own and take a break from the writing until the urge returns. Or – perhaps more advisable – ignore the block and carry on producing a compulsory few pages every day. It's very likely the whole thing will get deleted somewhere along the way but, more often than not, the sheer act of writing jogs some submerged ideas and, magically, the writing starts to flow again. ☐☐☐

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What is the most difficult aspect of writing for you?

Self-doubt, which usually kicks in about twenty pages into a new manuscript when I'm convinced it's all total nonsense.

For whom do you write? Do you have an imaginary reader?

The answer to this should be 'no' but I'm afraid it's too often either my editor or agent I see in my mind's eye (wearing very disapproving expressions too).

You have skipped genres -- lit-fiction, historical fiction, and commercial fiction. What are you most comfortable with?

I enjoyed my brush with historical fiction more than anticipated but research requirements do make the genre more taxing and time-consuming. Commercial fiction was the most fun because I could go all-out with the glam elements I'd been asked to

throw in of well-heeled characters and fabulous settings.

Is literature elitist?

Of course it is, as it demands a certain level of education and exposure to appreciate - unlike cinema, which is far more egalitarian. Thankfully, however, publishers came to acknowledge the need and demand for commercial fiction so the literary scenario is now a bit less exclusive. The change came relatively late in India but, thanks to the sales figures of writers like Chetan Bhagat and Amish Tripathi, it's here to stay.

Among all the books you wrote, which one is your favourite? Why?

I've said all those things in the past about this question being akin to a mother being asked to name a favourite child but I'll now confess that 'Secrets & Sins' (the middle book of the 'Secrets' trio) has an edge over the others because it's what I call my 'Everywoman Fantasy'. I can't think of many girls who wouldn't want a famous film-star on his knees, begging for their love.

Name a book you wish you'd written.

'God of Small Things', although I'd surely have ruined it.

What's the best advice anyone ever gave you?

'Keep the day job'. As a put-down, that's pretty damning but the message was about how poorly most writers are paid. No point in trying to romanticize that whole poet-in-a-garret thing when every artiste knows that their output depends on not being hungry. Virginia Woolf recognised this ages before any of us when she said, 'A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'.

What's the worst thing anyone has ever said about you?

A review of 'Ancient Promises' which gleefully promised that its writer was going to sink without trace.

Q&A in DNA, Bangalore

Written by Administrator
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