

BUDDHISAGAR

Full-Time Writer

It was sunny day in 2013.

I was going to the office. I was the editor of a literary supplement in one of the Nepali daily newspapers. In one week's time, I was to be engaged to my girlfriend.

All of a sudden, I decided to quit my job.

I was tired of writing for the newspaper. The incessant manufacturing style of writing was taking its toll on the quality of content. I had started to feel that there was so much content that was brewed up only to be wasted like an immature wine taken out of the barrel before its time. All these discontents led me think (and I still think now) that life is unpredictable, therefore one has to be fulfilled at heart—and the heart's contentment cannot wait until tomorrow, it has to be fulfilled Now, Right Here, at this Exact Moment.

I have met many prosperous people, who are successful in their endeavours. But they are empty at their very core, like a chocolate donut. That black hole at their core has sucked their cheerfulness during life's celebrations. Even when they laugh, they laugh with half their mouth shut, as if they are saving it for a time of scarcity.

At 32 years old, I didn't want to see that hole of sadness and nothingness grow inside me. So, I decided to become a full-time writer.

Fortunately, I had a publisher that encouraged me from the very beginning, and my first novel had already been received well by readers. Financially, I was secure, and with the help of hefty royalties from my first novel, I was able to marry my beloved. (Guess what? Royalties helped us celebrate our daughter's fifth birthday, too!)

Then there was a new problem: I had the whole day for myself, to write. Which led to procrastination. By putting off writing for another hour, another day, I didn't even realize that a good chunk of time had already passed. My friend group, formed largely in the workplace, became sparse as months and years passed by.

When I belonged to a workplace and people inquired about my work, I instantly answered that I was journalist. But after I had taken up writing as a full-time job, I used to stare blankly in the face of this question and, trying not to sound jobless, I told them that I was a writer.

People used to dismiss my answer and question me further about my real Work (with a capital “W”).

My answer to them was, *My Work IS to Write!*

My answer made them feel sorry for me, as if I was the most pitiful human being in this world.

ICPL and the International Writing Program Panel Series, September 13, 2019

Madara Gruntmane (Latvia), Thawda Aye Lei (Myanmar), Batsirai Chigama (Zimbabwe), Buddhisagar (Nepal)

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“Can you really live off of writing?” they would ask, very sorry indeed.

Bimal Niva, a Nepali poet, has a very interesting answer to that question. He says, of course you can live off writing on the condition that you take one tiny dose of breath at a time.

Time has changed in Nepal. Fortunately, my readership has also grown. Since the publication of my second book, my readers have continued to bless me with the hefty gift of royalty.

It has been six years since I've become a full-time writer, and now I can proudly say that I write for a living. Sometimes I miss the office world. During the hour when everybody leaves for work, I pack my laptop set off for a café in the city. I write there. As I'm getting ready, my five-year-old daughter gets excited and goes around house announcing that her daddy is going to the office. Sometimes she won't let me go alone.

I do not have a financial safety net in the bank, nor a retirement fund, but I also know that every book is like a seed that you sow in the soil. In the future, it may yield fruit, or it might just wither away, nobody knows—but if you get paralysed with fear of withering, you will freeze, unable to keep sowing, unable to keep travelling on the path of Creation.

I respect all those Writers who keep writing despite the drudgery that they have to carry on in order to survive. Their minds and their hands might be engaged in their everyday work, but their hearts are always in their Creation. Therefore, I believe that all the Writers of this world, at the end of the day, are full-time Writers. Each one of us is the destined traveller of our passion (who sometimes gets lost in the transit of daily life).

Can you really live off of writing?

I used to smile at that question. Now, after some time, I have an answer. I don't know whether you can live off of writing or not. But one thing is certain: if I don't write, I won't survive.

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