

## **Why do I write?**

Anjum Malik

This is a question I have never asked myself. Now that I am presented with it, I really don't know. Except that I write and have done all my life, since I was quite young. Years before I became a professional writer, I wrote a diary every night before going to sleep. It turned out that I was writing poetry and stories in my diary. Quite a lot of the poems from those diaries ended up in my first collection of poetry *Before The Rains*, published by Huddersfield University Press.

Back then, I had notebooks which I filled using a pen to write with. I have all of these, with dates and stories in prose and poetry of what happened, more how I felt. When I read them, I am surprised by what occupied my writing when my memories of those times are so different.

Since becoming a professional writer, I do not write in notebooks before going to sleep. I still have some but a lot of what I write is on computers, notepads and my phone. Although I do come across writings I must have done on paper and in notebooks, then put away.

I know that when I have not written for a few days, there is a heaviness, a grumpiness, a short fusing in my mood. I feel I am dragging myself around.

My favourite routine of a day is to be up early, before even the birds, and write. It will be a commission I am working on, mainly scripts nowadays, sometimes poetry. I write for at least two hours, if I can write for four hours that sets me up. Smug and happy I will walk off to the gym, work out, drop in on my allotment and feel my way around what needs doing without any hurry. And then get back and have my lunch or a late breakfast, nap or clean and then get back to the office and do admin, deal with emails. I finish the

day by reading what I wrote in the morning and then I fall asleep, a deep, relaxing, dreamless sleep.

But it doesn't always work out like that. Sometimes it does, more often than not. It's brilliant when it does, or when I have the time to work in this way.

Nowadays, as a working writer, there are so many things other than writing to deal with. Preparing proposals, accounts, invoices, meetings, funding applications, setting up a business to do with my writing, all exciting despite being demanding. I do love every aspect of being a writer.

The best part for me is when my work is transmitted, performed, or I do a reading, run a workshop and see for myself how my writing, my work goes down with real people. That is one of my favourite parts of my job as well all of the above.

I write because there are deadlines, because I am lucky enough to be paid to write what I want, because I have waited for so long and at last someone has bought my idea and I can write it.

I like to write as a working writer. It makes me proud to look around my house and know that everything I own has come from my writing. I write because I can, and because without it I am miserable.

## **Anjum Malik**

Anjum Malik is a multilingual poet, scriptwriter, performer, filmmaker and a senior lecturer in creative writing at Manchester Metropolitan University. She writes drama regularly for BBC and independent companies. She is also a creative writing tutor for leading literary organisations in UK and overseas. Anjum is inspired by food, real stories and fiction for her writing. She also specialises in working with hard to reach, not normally seen groups and communities through her company 'Black Stories Matter CIC'. Over

80 of her scripts have been produced, transmitted or performed; her poetry is in numerous anthologies as well as her collection, *Before The Rains*. Anjum is a passionate promoter of her inherited lively poetry tradition of Mushairas together with the poetry she grew up with of *ghazals* and *shers*. She has been promoting the model of Mushairas (poetic symposiums) for over 20 years in the UK, with the Manchester Multi-Language Mushaira being the latest she has helped to set up. Her previous jobs include police officer, interpreter, salesperson, business owner and classical Indian Kathak dancer. She was born in Saudi Arabia of Pakistani heritage and has lived in Pakistan as well several cities in the UK. Agent: Georgina Ruffhead [www.davidhigham.co.uk/filmclients/anjum-malik/](http://www.davidhigham.co.uk/filmclients/anjum-malik/)

A recording of this talk can be found on the WritersMosaic website at

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