

# WRITING WHILE THE WORLD BURNS

How to Stay Sane,  
Keep Writing,  
and Love Every  
~~Damn~~ Glorious  
Minute of It All.

Sabyasachi Roy

# Writing While the World Burns

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**Authors Publish**

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## Contents

Introduction: Who Has the Time to Write? .....	6
On Waking to Noise .....	9
The Myth of the Ideal Writing Day .....	15
Writing through Crisis (Global or Personal).....	21
Writing in the Margins of Time.....	25
Sustaining a Voice When the World Screams .....	30
Conclusion: A Quiet Defiance .....	38
The End.....	42
About Sabyasachi Roy.....	43

## Introduction: Who Has the Time to Write?

Somewhere, right now, a missile is landing.

Somewhere else, a mother is googling how to keep her child warm in a tent that leaks when it rains.

Somewhere, a teenager is figuring out which version of the news won't get them arrested.

Somewhere, rent just went up again. Groceries cost more than last week. A job offer fell through. A visa was denied. A border closed. A headline clicked. A life unraveled.

And you're sitting here, reading about writing.

Seems stupid, right?

Frivolous. Self-indulgent. Like playing the violin while the house burns down—except you're not even good at the violin yet. You're just holding the bow, hoping no one notices how badly your hands shake.

Welcome to writing in our time.

There's no peace and quiet. No ideal writing desk. No golden hour where the world lets you pause and be creative. There's war in Ukraine. Bombs in Gaza. Girls disappearing in Iran. Economic collapse knocking at every second country's door. Refugees with no home to return to and no future to go toward. Attention spans shredded by doomscrolling and constant crisis. Climate anxiety that hums under everything like background radiation.

And then: you.

Just trying to finish a paragraph without getting interrupted by a push notification, a memory of something awful you read last week, or the deep, almost ridiculous guilt that your characters are fictional while someone else's pain is not.

Who has the time to write?

Maybe that's the wrong question.

Maybe the better one is: who gets to stay human if they *do not*?

Because writing is not luxury. Not now. Not here. Resistance. Not the loud kind. The soft, slow, stubborn kind. The kind where you keep paying attention when the world wants you numb. The kind where you insist that your voice still matters, even if it trembles. The kind where you notice something—some detail, some moment, some feeling—and you say: *this too. This gets to be real.*

This book is for writers who are trying to stay alive on the inside.

You would not find productivity hacks here. No morning routine will save you. You would not be told to “just write every day” like your nervous system is not already dangling by a thread. This is not a guidebook. It is a mirror. A crooked one, maybe, but it is honest. It will show you what writing really looks like in distracted times: fractured focus, guilt naps, rituals that barely hold, and a voice that changes shape depending on how much noise you've swallowed that week.

These chapters are not linear. Neither is your writing life.

We will talk about the chaos that greets you when you wake up. The myth of the perfect writing day that never arrives. What happens when personal tragedy or global collapse knocks your pen out of your hand. The

weird little rituals that somehow keep you from unraveling. The skill of writing in five stolen minutes between meetings. The grinding, ghost-like presence of self-doubt. The mess of existing online. The exhaustion of trying to sound like yourself when the world is screaming. And, most of all, the permission to rest—and the grace to start again.

This is not about being productive.

It's about being *possible*.

Possible as a writer. Possible as a person who still wants to make meaning when everything around you keeps insisting that meaning is dead.

Some days, writing feels like a joke.

Other days, it is the only thing keeping your edges from dissolving.

That weird middle place—where writing feels pointless and urgent at the same time—is where this book sits. If you've ever looked at a blank page while sirens screamed, inboxes blinked, and the news made you want to give up on language itself—good. This was written with you in mind.

You are exactly the kind of writer this book is for.

And maybe, just maybe, by the time you reach the end, you'll stop asking who has the time to write and start saying something quieter, truer, weirder:

*I am still here. And that means the story's not over yet.*



## On Waking to Noise

You wake up, and the first thing that punches your ears is not birdsong or your inner voice gently whispering plot twists—it's a garbage truck reversing with the volume of a war film. Or your neighbor's child practicing what can only be described as violin-adjacent murder. Or WhatsApp pings. Always the pings. It's not just sound—it's intrusion, before you've even had time to glue your selfhood back together from the night's fragmented dreams.

We used to romanticize the writer's morning. Wooden desk. Mug of something warm. Maybe a cat. Virginia Woolf-level calm. The truth now is this: you're brushing your teeth while doomscrolling, already halfway into five competing anxieties, and it's not even 8 a.m. You're not alone. But that doesn't make it any easier to get a sentence down.

Writing—at least the kind that tries to mean something—requires a particular texture of quiet. Not just “no sound,” but space. Space to stretch a sentence like dough. To get a thought wrong twice before finding the version that feels inevitable. That texture is getting harder to come by.

There's a reason monks went to mountaintops. You? You get emails from your bank at 6:03 a.m. reminding you of a balance you already cried about yesterday.

This isn't nostalgia for a golden age that never existed. There was always some form of noise: wars, radios, plagues, relatives. But

something's shifted. Noise now is ambient, portable, and somehow intimate. It's on your body, in your pocket, inside your eyeballs. You're lugging around bits of other people all day—someone's breakup post, a kid singing into a camera, a guy ranting about something you didn't even click on. None of it yours, but it sticks. Even in a quiet room, your brain's got this background racket—like a fan that won't turn off, or a mosquito that maybe isn't real.

So how does anyone write? Not theoretically. Literally. How do you string one sentence after another when the background hum feels louder than your inner voice?

Well. Some of us wake up at 5 a.m., pretending that this is noble instead of desperate. Others write in the notes app, on the toilet, while pretending we're meditating. We are not meditating. We are trying to remember how we once described rain so we can reuse it.

Here's something ridiculous: a writer I know once wrote a whole chapter on airplane napkins, because it was the only time she was unreachable. She now keeps a stash of airline napkins in her home office. Not as a gimmick. As a psychological decoy. If the phone rings, the napkin reminds her: you are not available. You are airborne. Emotionally, at least.

That's the thing. Writing isn't just about sitting in silence. It's about making a fake quiet, inside your skull, when the real world is collapsing outside like scaffolding on fire. You don't need nature sounds or lo-fi jazz or a Pinterest desk. You need to build your own bunker of attention. One sentence wide. One paragraph deep. That's all. That's it.

But even this is hard when the noise isn't just external. Sometimes the real noise is your own mind.

You wake up and remember: oh right, the oceans are rising. Fascism is trending. You forgot to pay your electricity bill. You missed your best friend's birthday. Again. Your back hurts. You're tired. And you haven't written anything that doesn't sound like reheated soup in weeks. The noise inside isn't loud—it's damp. It soaks everything. And trying to write through that is like trying to light a fire with wet matches.

There's no fix for this. But there are ways to write anyway. Not in spite of the noise. Through it. Around it. Sometimes using it.

One trick that works for me—if you can call it that—is starting not with the “writing” but with muttering. I open a file, type a line that's not even a sentence. Just a grunt. A sigh. Something like: what the hell is this even about? Or okay, so the character is still sad, wow, what a surprise. The point is not to be clever. The point is to show up. Even if you show up grumbling like an old radio no one asked to turn on.

That's what the noise doesn't want: your attention on one thing. It wants you scattered. Hopping tabs like a drunk flea. It wants your energy diffused across 87 alerts and 3 existential questions. Writing is the opposite of that. It's not multitasking. It's monotasking, painfully, sentence by sentence, in a world that punishes you for slowing down.

And yet here you are. Still trying. Despite the garbage truck. Despite your inbox, your inner critic, your unpaid bills, your disappointing breakfast. You showed up. You opened the file.

You muttered something.

That counts.

The second noise is always digital. First one might've been physical—dog barking, neighbor arguing with Alexa—but the next wave

is inside your screen. Notifications are never polite. They don't knock. They barge in, waving things you never asked to see. Some cousin got married. Someone posted another open letter to capitalism. Another writer won a prize you forgot to apply for. A war photo. A meme. Someone's cat is dying. Someone's cat is famous.

The brain registers all of this not as content, but as tiny alarms. Ping. Ping. Panic. Doesn't even take a disaster. Your body flinches anyway, like it's bracing for a slap that never lands. You could be sipping tea, but inside, something's still pacing. You're still on edge. You scroll, and it feels like doing something, but it's the same as running on gravel with bare feet: it hurts later, and you didn't go anywhere.

Writers live off attention. Not applause-attention—though sure, that's nice—but paying-attention. Slow, careful, borderline-obsessive noticing. It's how we build a sentence. It's how we hear subtext in someone's silence or remember that your protagonist hates mint but chews it anyway. Attention is the thing we write with. And it's the thing being eroded first, fastest, and most consistently.

Some people deal by cutting everything off. Full-on blackout. No phone. No internet. No talking. They go analog, which is brave, but not always possible when your landlord still expects digital rent and your writing gigs pay via email. So the rest of us learn a different trick: selective deafness.

Selective deafness is the art of choosing what noise to hear. Not all noise is equal. Some of it feeds you. Some depletes. The trick is knowing which is which—preferably before noon.

For example: the news. Important, yes. But the news is not written for your creative health. It's written for clicks, speed, outrage. It keeps you informed the same way a chainsaw keeps you warm—yes, technically, but not sustainably. You want to be a citizen, but you also want to finish that novel. That essay. That weird short story about two ghosts arguing over Spotify. You cannot do both at once. So maybe you read the headlines once, quickly, like ripping off a bandage. Then shut the window. Literally and metaphorically.

Same goes for social media. Some days it feels like everyone is screaming into a wind tunnel, and somehow your job is to scroll through it hoping for wisdom. Or connection. Or... something. But here's the thing: your writing doesn't need a viral tweet. It needs your weird, flawed attention. It needs you to stop lurking and start listening—to your own sentences.

One writer I know doesn't delete apps. She just logs out every day and makes the login absurd. She set her Instagram password to something so ridiculous—symbols, caps, the name of a dead pet spelled backward—that she had to scribble it in a notebook buried under laundry in the closet. If she wants to log in, it's a full-body chore: move the shirts, find the page, squint at her own handwriting. Most days, she doesn't bother.

Selective deafness isn't about becoming a hermit. It's about self-preservation. Not all noise is hostile. But even the good kind can crowd you out. Especially if you're the kind of writer whose ideas arrive quietly—like uninvited houseguests you secretly wanted.

There's also body noise. You know—your back hurts, your stomach's too loud, your neck clicks every time you look up from the

page. These things matter. If writing feels impossible some mornings, it might not be your willpower. It might be sleep-deprivation. Or the chair. Or the seven coffees you drank to fight the fog, which only made your typing sound like tap dancing on meth. Writing through noise also means noticing the meat of your body and asking it: what do you need to stay upright today?

Some mornings, the answer is not to write. Which sounds blasphemous. But let's be honest. You'll write better after a nap than after doomscrolling through five wars and two writer feuds. Rest is not laziness. Rest is noise-cancellation. The kind your brain doesn't know it's missing until it's quiet enough to think one full thought without biting its tail.

A final note on ritual—not in the grand, candlelit way. In the stupid, stubborn, mildly embarrassing way. Like wearing the same t-shirt while drafting. Or lighting a cheap sandalwood incense stick that reminds you of your teenage diary phase. Or reading a single line from some author who reminds you that writing is not just noise-making—it's the attempt to say something clear inside the blur.

Noise won't leave. It'll keep arriving: online, outside, inside. But some days, you'll find a narrow crack in it. A breath of real quiet. You might write a line in that crack. Or a page. Or a sentence that surprises even you. That's what we're after. Not a silent life. Just a moment loud enough with your own voice to drown the rest out, briefly.

Then the dog barks again. The neighbor's kid hits a high note on the fake violin. The email dings. But something's changed.

You wrote. Even in the noise.

Especially in it.

## The Myth of the Ideal Writing Day

It starts early, this fantasy. Somewhere between your third unfinished notebook and the first time you saw a photo of Joan Didion at her desk with a cigarette, looking like she had her life together. The idea slinks in: maybe I just need the right day to write. Not today. But the real one. The perfect one. The Ideal Writing Day.

You picture it—you wake up early, but not gross-early. The light is soft, not stabbing. It lands on your face just right, like a scene from a film where nobody has allergies or crusty eyes. You will journal. Stretch. Drink something herbal and morally superior. No phone. No panic. You will glide to your desk. The words will come. No hesitation. No second-guessing. You'll lose track of time in that mythical thing called flow.

It's a beautiful lie. Probably sold to us by someone who had a housekeeper, a grant, and no digestive issues.

Let's be honest: most writing days look nothing like this. Most writing days start weird, continue weird, and end with you wondering if you should've become a plumber instead. You wake up late. You feel guilty for waking up late. You check your phone and fall into a two-hour internet hole about glacier collapse or how to fix your attention span. Then you try to write but remember you forgot to buy detergent. And your desk is somehow sticky. And you feel slightly off—too warm or too cold, with a suspicious ache behind your right eye.

And yet you write. Badly, maybe. But still. Because writing doesn't wait for perfection. It waits for you to lower the bar enough to crawl under it.

The myth of the ideal day is sticky because it gives us something to blame. If the conditions aren't right, it's not our fault. We were willing. It was the noise. The laundry. The migraine. The wrong kind of silence. The itchy pants.

But here's the trap: the more you wait for perfect, the more you train yourself not to write under "imperfect." Which, let's face it, is 99% of life. Ideal is rare. Messy is default.

A writer I once knew wrote their entire debut novel in a laundromat. Not by choice. Their apartment was noisy, and the laundromat was heated. So they sat there, headphones in, next to the dryers, banging out sentences between cycles. They said the hum of the machines helped. A white noise of effort. You can romanticize that later. But at the time, it was just what worked.

The real writing day is less about schedule and more about friction. How much of it can you handle before giving up? Some days, not much. Other days, you surprise yourself. You write through the doorbell, the stomach gurgle, the sudden realization that your plot makes no sense. The ideal is not clean. It's ragged. Held together by coffee and delusion.

Also, let's talk about time. The idea that you need a full morning—or a sacred eight-hour block—is another convenient excuse. You can do a lot with thirty minutes. Ten, even. One page written while waiting for your kid's soccer practice to end is still a page. We think masterpieces are born in retreats and villas. But a lot of them come from



rushed lunch breaks and stolen half-hours. The only real ideal is the moment you didn't skip.

Of course, we all crave rhythm. Habit. Something that makes the writing part less volatile. That's fair. But rituals are built in chaos, not outside of it. No one hands you an ideal day. You steal time in scraps. Five minutes while the kettle boils. Ten while someone else's video loads. It's not a plan—it's more like grabbing fries off a stranger's tray and pretending they're yours. And once you've got that sliver of quiet? You sit on it like a pigeon guarding a phone charger at an airport. You write at 3:15 p.m. on a Wednesday because that's when the house is quiet, not because the muses sent you a calendar invite.

You know what makes a day ideal? Not how it starts. Not what tea you drank or which app you blocked. What makes it ideal is that something got written. Even one stupid, aching, sentence. That's it. You wrote. Not perfectly. Not efficiently. But you wrote anyway.

Which is what most people never do.

There's this strange pressure to have a routine. People love asking writers about it. What's your process? What's your schedule like? Do you write in the morning or at night? As if knowing someone else's caffeine-to-sentence ratio will unlock your own productivity. People love asking—so, when do you write? Morning person? Night owl? Like if they hear the magic combo—three cups of tea plus 9:15 a.m.—their own words will fall into place.

The truth is: most of us don't have a real routine. We have a handful of desperate workarounds disguised as structure. One writer I know starts every writing session by sharpening pencils. Do they write

with pencils? Absolutely not. They just need a buffer between life and the blank page. Another refuses to start until they've read three pages of something random—cookbooks, IKEA manuals, anything—because it lowers the stakes. You can't fail at writing after you've read instructions for assembling a shoe rack.

But routine, as it's usually described, is fiction. Especially now. Jobs are unstable. Time zones bleed. There's no standard 9 to 5 anymore—just blurry work hours glued together with exhaustion and back pain. You're supposed to fit writing into this like a decorative cushion. Something soft and harmless.

And yet, we still punish ourselves for not being more consistent. As if inconsistency means unseriousness. But inconsistency is survival. For every writer with a 6 a.m. routine, there's another duct-taping ideas together at 11:47 p.m. in the bathroom so they don't wake the baby. One isn't better than the other. Only one is more photogenic.

We crave an ideal day because it suggests control. A writing schedule that works makes us feel like we've beaten the chaos. But more often than not, it becomes another stick to beat ourselves with. Miss a day? You're a failure. Start late? Might as well give up. The schedule turns into the boss. And guess what? You already have enough of those.

Here's something heretical: some of the best writers I know are wildly erratic. They write in bursts. Go dry for weeks. Then bang out a chapter in one sitting while mildly hungover and eating cold noodles. Do they hate themselves during the dry spells? Sometimes. But they've learned not to confuse silence with laziness. Not every day needs to be productive to be worth something.

Also, let's address the mental calendar we all carry. The one that says: Once I finish this thing (the move, the breakup, the freelance hell), THEN I'll have time to really write. It's always "after." After the holidays. After the renovation. After the latest mental collapse. That "after" is a myth too. Life doesn't hand out clean slates. It hands out ongoing messes with new types of interruptions. You write in them, or you don't write at all.

So what does work?

A weird little commitment. Something just small enough to fail without shame. One sentence. Five minutes. A post-it note draft. Whatever gets you past the perfection gatekeepers in your skull. You do that often enough, and the bar gets lower in the best way. Not in terms of quality. In terms of fear.

That's what routine is supposed to help with, anyway. Reducing fear. Creating rhythm. It's not about being disciplined—it's about making writing slightly less scary to start. If a timer helps, great. If a candle helps, light it. If screaming into a pillow and then opening your draft is your ritual—go off.

But don't wait for The Day. It's not coming.

The ideal writing day isn't outside you. It's the one where, despite the weird breakfast and your itchy brain and the fact that your neighbor seems to vacuum every hour on the hour—you wrote. You scratched out something barely readable. You looked at it and didn't immediately delete it. Maybe you even found a sentence that felt, briefly, like it knew what it was doing.

Those are the ideal days. The broken ones you showed up for anyway.

## Writing through Crisis (Global or Personal)

There are mornings when you open your laptop and the only thing that comes out of your fingers is... nothing. Or worse—gibberish dressed up as effort. You're trying to write a story about two strangers on a train, but the real story won't shut up. The one outside your window. The one on your feed. Earthquakes, elections, explosions, someone's uncle who just got laid off. Your characters start sounding fake, like people in a play while the building's actually on fire. You look at your own plot and think—what's the point of this again?

People say: use the pain. Turn it into art. That's nice on a tote bag. But when you're mid-crisis—global or personal—you're not thinking about craft. You're thinking: how do I get through this without breaking? The idea of “using” it feels wrong, even a little gross, like trying to paint with water from a flood.

Still, some of us try. Not out of nobility. Out of habit. Writing is the one thing we know how to do with fear that doesn't make it worse. Not better, either. Just... less chaotic.

Crisis looks different each time. Sometimes it's big and visible—an illness, a lockdown, some breaking news alert that ruins the week. Some days, nothing's loud, but everything's... off. You're moving, sort of—typing your password wrong twice, spooning cold food into your mouth, staring at your phone like it owes you something. You're there,

technically. But not really in it. Like your body's running the errands, and you're stuck watching from the back seat with the windows fogged up. That's the kind of crisis that doesn't make the headlines but still wrecks your writing.

A certain someone once said she couldn't write for six months after a miscarriage. Not because she didn't want to. Because the words came out flat. Like they were trying not to make eye contact. She started again by copying out pages from other books. Not her own words. Just muscle memory. Something to remind her she still had hands. Eventually, her own sentences came back. Quiet at first. Not about the loss. About something else entirely. That's how it goes sometimes.

Writing through crisis isn't about turning the pain into paragraphs. It's about making enough space to remember you still exist. The page becomes this weird, stubborn mirror—it doesn't fix anything, but it reflects that you're still here. Still noticing things. Even if all you're noticing is that your coffee tastes like dishwater.

You don't have to be productive during a crisis. Let's just kill that idea right now. Writing doesn't need to save the world. It doesn't even need to save you. But it might keep you company. That can be enough. Sitting with the page is sometimes the closest we get to feeling okay. Even if we don't write a single sentence worth keeping.

And look, sometimes the work feels selfish. There's a war going on. Someone you love is in the hospital. Your rent's overdue. And here you are, tweaking a metaphor about crows. It feels absurd. Almost offensive.

But you're not ignoring the world by writing. You're processing it. Holding it still for a second. That matters too. Maybe not to the headlines, but to your own scrambled brain? It's huge.

Writing won't stop the crisis. It won't bring anyone back or unburn what's already ash. It doesn't cure grief. It doesn't pay the hospital bill. What it does is... weirdly minor. You sit. You string words. You make a line that doesn't lie to you. One honest sentence, maybe. Two if you're lucky. That's it. That's the whole win.

Some people expect too much from it. Like writing will explain the chaos or turn heartbreak into something meaningful. Once in a while, yeah, the writing does something. Lifts a little weight. But more often, it's just... there. Not helpful. Not harmful. Like an old coat draped over a chair you forgot you owned. Or like that stray dog that hangs around your street—not barking, not begging. Just sitting. Quiet. Waiting for you to say something first.

You'll hear people say: write through it. Like pain is this tunnel and writing's your flashlight. But that metaphor sucks if the flashlight flickers or keeps pointing in the wrong direction. Sometimes writing through it means you're still in the middle of it. Crying mid-sentence. Closing the document because your hands are shaking. That counts too. Showing up with the mess. Not sculpted, not elegant. Just raw and unfinished.

And then, oddly, there are days when crisis sharpens everything. The clutter in your head clears. Your characters say things you didn't expect. The pages come fast, like they were waiting for the world to fall apart so they could step in. You don't know why. You don't question it.

You write like your hair's on fire and your fingers finally know where to go.

That's rare. Most of the time, it's slow. Foggy. You forget where you were in the draft. You reread your own sentences like someone else wrote them while half-asleep. But you still come back. Not because it's productive. But because writing becomes a place to sit when the rest of your life has no chairs.

And it helps to lower the stakes. You don't need to write The Crisis Essay. You don't need to summarize your trauma in a clever metaphor that makes people clap. Maybe you just write a grocery list in your character's voice. Maybe you describe your tea like it's the last thing on Earth. It's not about being deep. It's about being there.

There's something oddly generous about a blank page. It doesn't expect you to be okay. Doesn't rush you. Doesn't require clean clothes or a clear mind. It just waits. You can show up wrecked and say, "This is all I've got," and the page goes, "Cool. I'm here."



## Writing in the Margins of Time

Nobody tells you this at the start, but you won't get long, uninterrupted stretches of writing time. Not often, anyway. Not after life really gets going. You'll think it's just a phase—this chaos, this broken routine. But no. The interruptions are the routine. The rest is wishful thinking printed on the back of fancy notebooks.

What you'll actually get: a half hour between errands. Ten minutes before the kid wakes up. The time it takes water to boil. Writing becomes something you do on the edges. It's a corner-of-the-eye activity. You catch it like a fly on the windowsill. If you wait for a full, perfect hour, you'll be waiting until the year changes.

There's this myth that writing needs space—physical, emotional, mental, the whole candle-lit desk fantasy. But a lot of people write in stolen slices. On grocery receipts. In cracked phone notes apps while hiding in the bathroom. Between meetings, between disappointments, between putting yourself back together.

You train yourself not to need the perfect setup. You learn how to drop in fast. To pick up a thread mid-thought and run with it before it slips away again. And sure, it feels like trash most of the time. But when you stitch all those fragments together, something starts to form. It's jagged, but it breathes.

An acquaintance of mine writes poetry during her bus rides. She says the movement helps. The lack of expectation. She doesn't sit down thinking, Now I will write. She thinks, Might as well scribble something before I forget how. And she does. One broken line at a time.

Another friend writes dialogue on the backs of old envelopes. Doesn't trust screens. Carries a pen in her bra. When something comes, she writes. Doesn't matter where. Once, she wrote a scene while standing in line at the post office, resting the envelope on a stranger's back. Didn't ask permission. Just needed a flat surface.

You start to look at time differently. Not as something to own, but something to catch before it slips out the side door. You stop waiting for inspiration. You stop saying, "I'll write when I have time." You learn to say, "I'll write now, while the soup's simmering and nobody's yelling yet."

And it's not glamorous. You feel disjointed. Half of what you write doesn't even match the tone of what you wrote yesterday. You forget where you left your plot. You mix metaphors with the urgency of someone late for a train. But even in the mess, something true sneaks through.

Writing in the margins is basically eavesdropping on your own brain. You catch it muttering, and instead of brushing it off, you write it down. Then later, you look back and think—wait, there's something here.

There's this idea that time arrives like a delivery. That someday, a package will show up at your door labeled Four Free Hours, Use Wisely, and you'll finally sit down and do the thing right. But time doesn't work like that. You don't get it. You take it. Or more often, you steal it from something else and hope nobody notices.

People say, “If it matters to you, you’ll make time.” But that’s crap. Time isn’t Play-Doh. You don’t shape it. You juggle it while it’s on fire and hope it doesn’t burn your face off. Writing doesn’t matter more than your job, or your rent, or your aging parents, or the kid with the suspicious rash. It just matters differently. Which means sometimes you write, and sometimes you wipe up spilled juice and try again tomorrow.

Still, something shifts when you stop waiting for “enough time.” You learn to work inside interruptions. You treat distractions less like enemies and more like weather. Uncontrollable, but manageable. You don’t fight the storm. You write while it’s raining, even if the page gets wet.

One writer I know keeps a tab open at all times. Just one doc, always there. So when a meeting ends early or a call drops or her kid suddenly decides to nap, she types. Two lines, maybe. Or half a sentence and a curse word. But the doc is there. Open means possible.

Another friend works night shifts and writes standing up during the ten-minute lull when the machines are cooling down. He told me once, “I don’t write daily. I write whenever the world forgets about me for a second.” That line stuck. It felt like something we’ve all been doing, quietly.

Writing in pieces doesn’t mean the work is broken. It means the process is honest. Reflective of how life actually feels. No one lives in a single emotional key. You don’t write joy all in one go. You don’t write grief without it getting interrupted by your phone buzzing or your stomach rumbling. So the writing carries that rhythm—half-formed, abrupt, real.

Some days, the writing's barely a whisper. One sentence. A fragment with no verbs. Other days, it pours out like it's been waiting behind your teeth. There's no warning. You just have to be near the page when it starts.

I used to hate that. The randomness. I wanted predictability. A system. But life laughed at that. Schedules fall apart. Alarms get snoozed into oblivion. You write at weird hours. You write with one hand while holding groceries in the other. You write while sitting in a car that's not even yours, scribbling on a takeaway napkin because your brain said now, and now doesn't come back later.

Sometimes you forget where you were in the story. You open the doc and think—who are these people and why are they fighting? And you scroll back, reread, reconnect. It's clunky. But it works. The story waits, even if it gets dusty.

And over time, the tiny scraps build up. The two-sentence mornings. The lunchtime edits. The midnight footnotes. They layer. They don't look like a process. But they're more real than the fantasy of a month-long writing retreat in the Alps where everything flows like wine. (Also, most of us don't like wine. Or snow. Or silence that expensive.)

Here's something else: you get faster. Not better—just quicker at jumping in. Your brain learns the entry point. It stops demanding candles or lo-fi playlists or the smell of eucalyptus. It adjusts to chaos. It figures out how to write while your other self is loading the washing machine or checking if you locked the door. It gets used to writing while partially present. That's enough.

You also become less precious about sentences. Less scared of bad starts. When you're writing in corners, you don't have time for doubt to monologue. You just write. It's not polished. It's not clever. But it's real—and it leaks into the sentences whether you want it to or not. The voice gets sharper. Less filtered. More you.

Of course, there are limits. You burn out. Your brain stalls. You sit there blank and itchy and no sentence comes. Fine. That's normal. Don't turn it into a moral failure. You're not a machine. You're not even a consistent person. You're just someone trying to catch their own thoughts before they vanish again.

There's beauty in the scraps. In the margin-notes kind of writing. Because you're not waiting for ideal conditions. You're writing in real ones. That makes the words tougher. More elastic. Less likely to fall apart at the first sign of disruption.

I once wrote a whole short story in thirty-minute chunks over six weeks, usually while eating cereal. It made no sense while I was drafting it. Just scattered lines about a guy who collected broken thermometers. But when I finally read it back—something clicked. The weird rhythm worked. The fragmentation felt intentional. Maybe because it was real. That story got published. Nobody asked when I wrote it. Nobody guessed it was born between mouthfuls of cornflakes.

## Sustaining a Voice When the World Screams

There are days when writing feels like betrayal.

You open your laptop. A blank page. Cursor blinking. And on the same screen, somewhere behind a tab, you've got footage of people dragging children through rubble. Another tab—stock market spiraling, unemployment up again. Next one—updates from Gaza, from Kyiv, from Tehran, from Sudan, from refugee camps pressed against invisible borders. Water vanishing where people beg for it. Water drowning towns that can't take more. A train flips. Trees burn. A president disappears. Kids die. Flags fall. All in one scroll.

And you're supposed to write... what? A short story? A poem about your cat? A scene where two made-up people eat dinner and almost fall in love? Who cares?

That's the voice in your head. It doesn't yell. It hisses. This doesn't matter. And it sounds convincing, because in the middle of so much noise, art feels quiet. Irrelevant. Selfish, even.

But here's the thing: silence is not neutral.

If you don't write, someone else will. And their version of the world might be shallower. Or colder. Or flat-out false. And their voice will fill the space you gave up. So yeah—maybe your story doesn't stop a war. But stories shape how wars are remembered. How grief is named. How survival is witnessed. You don't have to be loud. You just have to stay.

The world has always screamed. This isn't new. What's new is how fast the screaming gets to you. How often. How unfiltered. There's no delay now. No distance. You see it all, in real time, from a palm-sized portal you carry everywhere. That messes with you. It makes you feel responsible for things you can't touch. It makes the act of making art feel absurd.

Especially when the crises pile up. When one war isn't over before another one starts. When the refugee counts hit record numbers for the seventh year in a row. When food prices rise and wages don't. When your friend can't find work and your landlord raises rent. When the air smells off, and the summer starts in March, and the river's too dry to lie to you anymore.

And while all that's happening, you're meant to finish your draft? Sketch out a new plot? It's like patching the roof while the floor gives way. But still—you do it. Because some days, the words are the only thing that hold your lungs open.

Not as escape. Not as luxury. But as survival. Because if you don't find words for the noise, the noise lives inside you. It builds pressure. It rewrites your nervous system. Writing doesn't fix the world, but it gives your brain something to hold onto while it tilts.

The trick isn't ignoring the world. It's not pretending everything's fine so you can write a cheerful essay about your morning routine. The trick is writing through it. Around it. With it thumping in your chest. Let the scream leak into the sentence if it needs to. Don't wait for peace to tell the truth.

You don't have to write directly about the crisis. But it will be there. In the characters who can't sleep. In the strained dialogue. In the absence of clean metaphors. Even when you don't name it, it's in the tone. And sometimes that's more honest than a headline.

There's this pressure, especially now, to say the right thing. The politically sharp, morally aligned, unshakably researched thing. Which is important. But if that pressure stops you from saying anything at all, then the scream wins. The world doesn't need perfect writers. It needs real ones. Honest ones. Ones willing to sit in the murk and try anyway.

There was this poem that barely mentioned the war it was about. No facts. No dates. Just a kid staring at the sky and wondering if birds get evacuated. It was ridiculous. It broke me. Still does. That's what writing can do. Not clarify—complicate. Humanize. Tilt.

And sometimes what you write won't be about the world falling apart. Sometimes it'll be about a sandwich. Or a breakup. Or a quiet Tuesday. That matters too. Joy is resistance. Mundanity is resistance. The world doesn't just scream. It hums. And noticing the hum might be the only way to stay sane.

Because doom doesn't pause for your process. You don't get to say, "I'll wait till things settle down before I write again." There's no version of the world where everything's calm for long enough to finish your book. Write anyway.

You're not required to have answers. Most days, you won't even have clarity. But you have a voice. And it can sound like confusion. Like grief. Like a story that doesn't resolve. That's still a voice.



You may feel small. Powerless. You sit there thinking—what is this even for? People are digging through rubble, and you’re editing paragraph breaks. That guilt? It’s not wrong. Just don’t let it win. Let it push you to be more careful. More deliberate. More honest.

Writing while the world burns doesn’t mean writing despite it. It means writing within it. With soot on your hands. With smoke in your throat. With your characters trembling from things they can’t name.

It’s hard. No one tells you how much emotional energy writing takes. And now you’re spending half that energy just trying to stay human in a world that keeps asking for numbness. That’s the real exhaustion. It’s not the words—it’s the world.

Some days you’ll have nothing left. That’s fine. Rest is part of the process. Anger too. You can write from both. Or not write. That counts too. Watching, grieving, thinking—that’s part of being a writer. Even when the words don’t come.

But when they do—don’t hold back. Say the raw thing. The ugly thing. The true thing. Even if it scares you. Especially if it scares you. The world doesn’t need more sanitized language. It needs writing with teeth. With cracked knuckles. With real blood in the ink.

If you’ve got ten minutes before the next bad news hits, write one line. If you’ve got an hour between doomscrolling and insomnia, write a page. If your only free time is on the bus between two shifts, type on your notes app. It all counts.

There’s no right way to do this. No one’s going to give you a medal for staying creative during collapse. But every sentence you write is

a refusal. A small, stubborn act that says: I'm still here. I'm still paying attention. I still believe words matter, even now. Especially now.

You hear people say things like “use your voice,” but no one tells you what that sounds like when you're tired. Not tired like “I stayed up too late.” Tired like you've been holding your breath for three years and forgot you were doing it. That kind of tired.

And still—the world expects sound from you. “Speak up!” “Amplify!” “Say something!” But what if your voice isn't a trumpet? What if it's a splintered matchstick? What if the only thing you can say with any honesty is: “I don't know how to say anything right now”?

That counts too.

Sometimes your voice isn't about volume. Sometimes it's about choosing not to go quiet when it's easier to vanish. Because silence, when chosen, is powerful. But silence born from exhaustion, fear, or shame? That's a theft. Of your own presence.

Maybe your voice isn't ready to address the world's loudest problems. Maybe all it can do right now is describe a leaf you saw on the pavement. Or the weird laugh your neighbor makes when she waters her plants.

Because while the world is screaming, someone has to document the little things. The human things. The everyday miracles no one's paying attention to. Someone has to say: this happened. Even if it didn't go viral. Even if it wasn't tragic. Even if it was quiet.

That someone might be you.

And no, not everything you write needs to be a rally cry. But you do need to write like you mean it. Like it matters. Not because it'll fix

anything, but because it refuses to look away. It refuses to let numbness take over.

A writer I know keeps a folder on her desktop called “Useless Truths.” It’s full of paragraphs she wrote while feeling helpless. Lines that don’t solve anything. Observations that don’t spark solutions. But they’re honest. And she said, once, barely loud enough to hear—“sometimes I read these just to feel something move.”

Maybe your voice is like that. Maybe it doesn’t roar, but it leaves marks. Scribbles in the dark. Smudges that say, I saw this too. I felt it. That’s enough. That’s more than most people offer.

Because the scream of the world—it’s not just sound. It’s pressure. To be informed. To be perfect. To be productive. To be perpetually online, available, articulate. But writing can’t live in that pressure. It gets choked. It flattens out. It loses the tremble, and the tremble is where the truth is.

So you protect the tremble. You protect the cracked part of your voice. The part that doesn’t know what the ending is, or what the headline means, or how to fix anything. That’s the voice people will believe. Not because it’s right. But because it’s real.

Let’s talk about what it means to be real right now.

To be real is to admit that sometimes you can’t write. That your brain’s fried. That you’re scared. That you’re overwhelmed and under-rested and hyper-aware of your own inadequacy. You look at your journal and think, this is not resistance. This is nonsense. And maybe it is.

But it’s your nonsense. And writing it is a way of not giving up.

You don't owe anyone polished clarity. You owe yourself honesty. That's where your voice grows. Not in what you say, but in what you won't hide.

It's tempting to mimic other voices. Especially when they're louder. When they have more followers, more opinions, more authority. You think, "Maybe if I just sound like them, I'll be taken seriously." But that's not your job. Your job is not to become an echo. Your job is to sound like yourself, even if that sound is off-key, unfinished, unsure.

There's no formula for that. There's no content calendar for conscience. You have to feel your way through it, blind. You have to risk saying the wrong thing. Or not saying enough. Or saying too much. And then you get up and write again the next day.

Because writing is not performance. It's persistence. It's showing up to the page even when everything outside it is screaming.

Even when your hands shake.

Even when your thoughts loop.

Even when you don't think it will matter.

Especially then.

Some writers turn their voice up during crisis. Others turn inward. Both are valid. Don't let the internet shame you for choosing one over the other. Don't let the algorithm decide what your truth should sound like. Algorithms don't care about nuance. Your voice does.

And your voice might be weird. Or slow. Or tangled. It might not get you invited to panels or quoted in think pieces. But it's the one you've got. It came from your life, not a branding workshop. It came from late

nights, bad drafts, quiet rage, and whatever broken compass you use to make meaning. That's priceless. And it's yours.

Keep using it.

Even when the world is too loud to hear you.

Even when the story feels too small.

Even when your words can't fix anything.

Because the page doesn't ask you to save the world. It asks you to see it. To notice. To remember. To witness. That's what writing is, in the end. Not a scream. Not a solution. Just a stubborn act of noticing, done again and again and again.

So you write.

While the oceans rise.

While the news lies.

While the people you love forget how to speak.

You write—badly, stupidly, bravely.

Because it's the only thing that makes sense.

Because it's the only thing left.

## Conclusion: A Quiet Defiance

You made it to the end. Or maybe you skipped here. Maybe you read the first few chapters, then got overwhelmed, lost your charger, forgot the title, remembered it while brushing your teeth three weeks later, and now you're back. Either way—you're here. Still thinking about writing. That's the entire point.

Because writing, at its core, is not about achievement. It's about staying. Staying present. Staying curious. Staying human while everything else begs you to numb out or speed up or look away.

It's not glamorous. It's not always wise. But it's something like defiance. A quiet one.

You write because you care too much. Or because you're trying not to care. Or because your brain won't leave you alone until you write the sentence exactly how you heard it in your head. You write because fear's easier to face when it's got commas in it. You write because some corner of your brain still bets on meaning—even when everything outside says otherwise. Not in a grand “change the world” kind of way. Just in the tiny, private way that says: Here. I saw this too. It mattered.

Maybe the world doesn't want that. It wants content. Algorithms. Hot takes in 280 characters. Shiny things. Fast reactions. Loudness. Writing asks you to be the opposite of all that. It says: Take your time. Get it wrong. Say what you actually mean. Try again.

And in a time like this—where headlines blur together and attention spans die in broad daylight—that’s radical.

Not flashy-radical. Not revolutionary in the meme sense. Just steady. Just human. Just you, choosing to write something that didn’t exist before you sat down and tried. It resists the flattening. It resists the scroll. It resists the pressure to only exist if someone else is watching.

You exist when you're watching.

That’s the core of all of this.

You pay attention. To what hurts. To what changes. To what stays. You notice the way people say things when they’re lying. You notice the way your own voice shifts when you’re trying too hard. You learn to hear what’s not being said.

And then you try to put it down in a way that doesn’t betray it.

That’s writing. That’s all it’s ever been.

People think writers are trying to sound smart. Some are.

That’s okay too.

There’s no shame in writing for yourself. Or about yourself. Or from yourself. That’s how it starts. That’s how it often stays.

If it’s hard, say that. If you’re confused, write your way through the fog. If the world feels like a burning building and your keyboard is a plastic spoon, write anyway.

Not because it will save you.

But because it reminds you that you’re still here.

You still have a voice.

You still know how to use it, even when it trembles.

That’s a kind of freedom. And it’s yours.

No one can take it. No one can validate it for you, either. The likes don't count. The followers don't mean much. They come and go. Your voice stays.

Your ability to sit with discomfort—your own or the world's—is your writerly superpower. That's where the work lives. In the moment after the easy reaction fades and you're left with the messy middle, the gray zone, the part where you're not sure if you're getting it right.

That's where the real sentences live. You learn to stay there. To write from there. Not to impress. Not to sell. Just to see what the page will hold, if you let it.

Staying when the world burns and your impulse is to run or shrink or pretend you never cared.

You care.

You're still here.

And that's not nothing.

That's the work.

The truth is, no one writes forever. Not in the same way. Some people stop after one book. Some take ten-year breaks. Some switch to poems when novels stop making sense. Some never finish anything, but leave behind folders full of glorious fragments.

It all counts.

The industry has rules. Timelines. Deadlines. Metrics.

You don't have to live by those.

Your writing life is yours. It can be slow. Messy. Ugly. Intermittent. Spite-fueled. Joy-fueled. Grief-fueled. Nonlinear.

It can look like whatever it needs to look like.



But don't give it up just because the world says everything must be loud, fast, shiny, polished, important, monetizable. Writing is one of the last things left that doesn't need to be any of those.

Writing is where you go to remember. To make sense. To forget. To feel something real. To touch a version of yourself that isn't always performing.

It's a quiet defiance. You don't need to shout. You just need to return.

The End.

*(Or, depending on the kind of writer you are, maybe just the  
beginning again.)*

## About Sabyasachi Roy

**Sabyasachi Roy** is an academic writer, poet, artist, and photographer. His poetry has appeared in The Broken Spine, Stand, Poetry Salzburg Review, Dicey Brown, The Potomac, and more. He contributes craft essays to Authors Publish and has a cover image in Sanctuary Asia. His oil paintings have been published in The Hooghly Review. You can follow his writing on Substack [here](#).