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NB: Welcome to this edition of the Being a Writer podcast—a podcast that explores writers’ creativity and resilience. This series is part of The Literary Consultancy’s new programme of support for writers that focuses on cultivating and safeguarding literary creativity. With a range of special guests, we explore what it means to be a writer today.

In this episode of the Being a Writer podcast, we sit down with author and screenwriter Nikesh Shukla, to discuss the topic of balancing work, family and writing. Nikesh shares how he tries to strike a balance in all aspects of his life, how he takes time out for himself, and a few gems about what he’s still learning along the way, and the legacy of his work.

This episode was recorded at home on our laptops whilst observing social distancing during the COVID-19 lockdown.

NB [00:00:51]: Welcome to the Being a Writer podcast, Nikesh, we’re really excited to have you on. How are you doing?

NS [00:00:55]: So, I don’t know when this podcast is going to be released, Nelima, but just for transparency’s sake, for the listeners, we are recording this the morning after the US election, and both Nelima and I are feeling weird. But, apart from that, I’m okay. I’m okay. I’m okay.

NB [00:01:15]: I mean, we don’t know who’s won just yet, so, we’ll see. I’m sure you guys will find out as the podcast progresses. [So], I think it’s great to just jump right in. I think you’re fabulous for this topic in particular, of how to balance work, family and writing, just because you’re quite vocal in sharing those aspects of your life through social media and everything. I think I want to jump straight in with one of the main questions, which is how do you prioritise and manage your time, being a father and a family man, as well as writing and teaching and being quite an activist as well?

NS [00:01:49]: Well, it’s helpful that my children have broken my sleep forever, and I don’t require much sleep anymore.

NB [00:01:59]: He’s adapted.

NS [00:02:01]: Yeah, I don’t know. It’s interesting talking about this because, you know, there’s always been this trope for so long, that women writers are always asked… about how they balance writing and motherhood, and all that kind of stuff. Male writers are never asked it, because the assumption is that it’s probably not a burden to them, because the wife does all the house care, and they do all the magic of literature. I guess, you know, it’s a partnership, at the end of the day. What we do is a partnership. We schedule everything to a T, [and] when one of us is busier than the other, then the other picks up the slack.

It’s been interesting during lockdown, because it’s really forced me to be in one place, which is not something that I’m used to. I’m used to spending not much time in the house, unless it’s raining. I work in a co-working space and I teach in London and I live in Bristol, and I do events—*did* events—all around the country. Lockdown has really forced me to consider what I will and won’t leave Bristol for, now; what I consider important, which has actually been a really positive thing for me, because, for the longest time, I really struggled to say no to things, doing all of my novel writing on trains, to and from places, coming home late and getting up at stupid o’ clock, to ensure that I wasn’t dropping the ball with my childcare responsibilities and stuff.

The other day, I was asked to do a festival in London for £75, to chair someone I really admire, and I kind of had to think, well, it’s Covid, and sure, £75 for an hour’s on-stage time, a couple of hours of prep time, is good, but it’s not just that. It’s half-an-hour for me to walk to the train station, it’s then an hour-and-a-half for me to get to London, it’s then 45 minutes to an hour for me to get to the part of London that I need to be then it’s 45 minutes to get back to Paddington then it’s two hours after 10 o’clock on the train, and so on and so forth. And. You know, when you start quantifying time like that, I don’t know when I will ever leave the house again, but I guess that’s just to say that it’s just a partnership. We juggle, and we don’t always get things right, and sometimes there are communication breakdowns and sometimes we get stuff wrong. But actually, it’s a really joyful part of my day, to look after my kids. It forces me to be in the world, as well, because I think the other thing about being a writer, because, if you’re in your head, and you’re in your head in your manuscript then you’re flicking between your manuscript and Twitter because the news is—the listeners can’t see but I’m gesturing to the world—then I never really leave my head. And that’s a bad thing.

Ensuring that I’m being present with my kids, ensures that I’m in the world. And when I’m in the world I’m engaging with it in a way that I can put back into fiction.

NB [00:05:25]: That’s great. So, in a way, it really does help you step out of yourself and just distance yourself from the words and the writing, and just approach it differently?

NS [00:05:34]: Yeah, because my job as a writer is to think about people, and observe people. There’s this quote I have that I wrote down in my notebook that I really love. Zadie Smith once said, in one of her essays in *Feel Free*, “The hidden content of people’s lives proves a very hard thing to discern. All we have to go on are these outward manifest signs, the way people speak, move, dress, treat each other. The way of things in reality.” And I think that’s such an open-hearted way of looking at how we build characters and how we observe people, as writers. We can only really do that by being present in the world, and being with my kids forces me to be present.

NB [00:06:26]: That’s great. I totally agree with you, in that spending time with children and around young people in particular, it just gives you a completely new perspective of everything. So it’s great that you mentioned that.

A lot of writers with families, and other commitments, say they often feel like they’re fighting a losing battle, where sometimes it might seem like one aspect of their life is suffering, or receiving less time than everything else. Do you think, at this point in your career, you’ve managed to strike a balance that works for you?

NS [00:06:56]: That’s a good question. I probably spend the least amount of time on myself, like I have lost the ability to relax. And that is something that I think about a lot. It’s a weird thing, that the things that I used to do to relax are now my job, you know? I write for television, and I used to watch TV to relax. Now I’m watching TV to deconstruct it. And I read to relax, but also I’m reading to put back into my writing. I’m either reading stuff around the things that I’m really interested in, or I’m reading amazing fiction (or sometimes terrible fiction, but we don’t like to talk about it). That kind of pushes me to be a better writer, so

The thing that I’ve done recently, because I’ve just noticed in lockdown, especially as we… are about to head into a new lockdown, and I have this old Wii, this creaky old Nintendo Wii, that hasn’t been switched on in about seven years or something, no, less than that, maybe about five years, or something.

NB [00:08:19]: Hidden treasures. Just finding things to entertain yourself.

NS [00:08:23]: Well, in lockdown we got it out, we fired it up again for our kids to do the Wii Fit stuff, on days when the weather wasn’t amazing [and] when we couldn’t really leave the house. But I found a couple of games in a charity shop, and I was just like, you know what? I’m going to give myself something interactive to do in the evenings, because if I just, you know, my thing around 10 o’clock when I’m the only one awake, is I will put on something like *Seinfeld* or *The Office*, in the background, which is something I’m familiar with [and] which gives me the space to doom scroll on my phone. And I was just like, this is not healthy. This is not a healthy way to spend your last hour or so before bed—doom scrolling and then sharing stuff in WhatsApp groups with friends. So, I was like, if I try and complete this game, then I am interacting in a way that forces me to not look at my phone. I have to pause the game to look at my phone. You know, when I’m swinging through the streets of Manhattan, I can’t really stop that momentum.

NB [00:09:36]: You should add superhero to your CV. [It’s] great that you found something that is just solely for you, because, like you said before [about] how you find it difficult to relax, I think that’s the case with a lot of people. They don’t really have something of their own to just be getting on with, that is completely separate to what they do during the day, with their writing and their kids and, possibly, their nine-to-five and everything else in between. So, it’s great that you’ve found something just for you.

It leads on nicely to the next question, which is do you have any routines or methods or coping mechanisms that help you in your day-to-day, and do you have tips for other writers with finding the thing that works for them?

NS [00:10:17]: So, I try and ensure that the novel that I’m working on, or the script that I’m working on, is the first thing that I do every day. And I don’t just launch myself into it, I do a little bit of journaling or freewriting before I start working, just because I need to free myself of whatever issues I’m battling with that day.

During lockdown, because I’ve been in the same place, writing this novel [which] takes places at a very specific time in a very specific place, I created a set of 20 songs… that I would play every morning as I was getting ready to work on the novel, just to kind of warm the room up, and put me in that specific time and that specific place, which I found really helpful. I just find that if I don’t look at my emails, if I don’t schedule any Zooms, I mean today’s an exception because I teach at 11 on Wednesdays, but I don’t schedule any Zooms before 11 o’clock. I’ve then got a couple of hours to work on my novel, and, actually, a couple of hours maximum is all I need, really.

What I also try and do, is… ensure that when I’m writing, I’m also planning. So, I feel like a lot of writers focus on wordcount as the thing they want to get done every single day, so like, I find it painful during NaNoWriMo, [when] people hit their word counts for the day, because I think volume, for me, just doesn’t do it anymore. I know I’m in a different place than I was, because when I was battling against a full-time job to write a novel, volume was important because volume was proof that I was working on it, and not just letting it slip in favour of other distractions. Now, I realise more and more that time is what I need. So 45 minutes a day is what I really need to spend concentrating on my novel, and if I write 250 words or 500 words or 1,000 words in that 45 minutes, that is great, that is what needs to get done that day.

But then I also spend time thinking about the structural stuff and anything else. The other thing that writers do, writers who plan, I know there’s this whole thing about pants writers and planning writers, writers who fly by the seat of their pants, and writers who plan. I personally think that you have to be a hybrid. So, if you plan out the direction of travel of the novel, and you’re working towards that, invariably you find things, in the fly by the seat of your pants [strategy] you find things in your writing that enhance the novel, [or] give deeper understanding of the characters, and so if you have a planning document, don’t knock it off and go this is the thing that I’m writing towards. It is a living, breathing document that needs to be adjusted and melded with, and spoken to and adapted as you go.

NB [00:13:29]: So, it’ really important to maintain that relationship you have with the plans and the ideas throughout?

NS [00:13:34]: Yeah, definitely, because we tend to not really have a deep understanding of our characters until we’re really deep into the book, but, often, by the time we’re really deep into the book, we’ve hit that wall and we’re really struggling to get stuff done. The hard work then becomes ensuring that the deep understanding of the character is there from the start, rather that something that occurs halfway through.

NB [00:13:59]: So it’s just [about] finding time and space in your day—that’s part of your routine and your method—and just distancing yourself and just carving out that path of the day or the week that just works for you really well?

NS [00:14:15]: Yeah.

NB [00:14:16]: There’s obviously a great deal of pressure in trying to raise a family while also writing, because, as we’ve seen, writing itself is so unpredictable. What was your journey like, and is there anything you’re still learning about the process? You just mentioned that it’s different for you now than it was in the beginning.

NS [00:14:33]: Yeah, of course. I think writers are really shy about talking about money, right? Sorry, writers who’ve been published are very shy about talking about money, especially white writers, because, as hashtag publishing showed me, they’re being very overpaid for stuff that I’m doing; [stuff that] I’m being underpaid for and doing it better than them (not that I’m arrogant).

NB [00:15:01]: We appreciate the honesty!

NS [00:15:03]: I don’t mean that in an arrogant way, I just mean that in—

NB [00:15:07]: It is what it is?

NS [00:15:09]: But also, that there comes a point in your marginalisation when you’re just like, pay me what I’m worth.

NB [00:15:15]: Of course.

NS [00:15:16]: But first you have to understand what I’m worth. So, obviously there is a big money thing going on. I’ve been a parent since 2014, and up until last year, I had a full-time job. And then during the time that we were setting up The Good Literary Agency, I was working for [that]… as well doing other writing stuff. Like, I am now in a position where I’m lucky enough to just get by on the income I generate from writing, which is really amazing. I mean, I’m fully aware that it won’t last, but I have to take the time while I have that time.

NB [00:16:11]: [So] is there anything you’re still learning about the process, because there’s probably still a massive difference between just starting out, and then being years into your career and being quite established in what you do?

NS [00:16:22]: Here’s the thing that I’m still learning, and it’s a hard thing to learn: I am still in feast or famine mode, which is, like, currently, while people are thinking about me, I’m getting lots of opportunities. I have to take every single opportunity. I have to say yes to everything, because, if I say yes to everything, then I’m earning money. And if I’m earning money, the family is secure. And that is, actually, for me, at the stage that I’m at in my career, it’s the wrong thing to be doing. I should be working slower and more deeply on things. And just trusting that I am at a stage in my career, where the stuff that I put out should do the talking. I don’t need to take this project and that project and this project and that project, in order to get by.

So, I’m learning to say no, basically. And I use that example of saying no to a thing that would’ve been a lovely gig to do, chairing a writer who I really admire at a lovely literature festival, all the way on the other side of the country for 75 quid. But when you think about what your day is worth, and what 75 quid actually pays for, when actually you’ve taken the whole day out to do a thing in a city where everyone else is, it really makes me realise what I should be saying yes and no to.

I guess the thing, to people who are listening to this who are probably like, well you have the privilege to be able to say no to stuff, yeah, I do, and that’s what I’m wrestling with at the moment.

NB [00:18:07]: But it’s not something that came overnight. There were years of [work] poured into this, and, as you said, you’re still wrestling with it.

NS [00:18:17]: Yeah, I’m still wrestling with the fact that I do have the privilege of saying no; of turning stuff down. And I’m fighting that all the time, you know? I just had a really lovely opportunity to record something for Radio 4 with a producer I absolutely love working with. And, it was a relatively simple brief that, probably, if I’d sat down, probably would’ve taken a couple of hours of my time. But I didn’t manage her expectations very well, because I kept saying I’ll do it, I’ll do it, I’ll send it, I’ll send it, I’ll send you the recording. And then I ended up, over the weekend, just realising that it a lovely gig, but somebody else should be doing it and doing it well and I shouldn’t be trying to fit something like that in. She she’s such a great producer that she would’ve understood if I’d just said I don’t have the time to do this well. I could fart this out, and it’d be okay, but it won’t be to the best of my standards, because I’m just not mentally in the right place for this, because I’m working on too many other things. And she would’ve understood that if I’d said that at the time. But I didn’t. Instead, I managed her expectations badly by keeping her waiting, and then finally pulling out at the last minute, which sucks for her as a producer. I could have handled it better.

I guess what I’m saying is, the ‘saying no’ thing is so important. But also, saying no and managing expectations is something I’m constantly having to learn, because I don’t always do it very well.

NB [00:19:52]: I think that’s a great takeaway, actually: that sometimes it is about being honest, and knowing what you can and can’t handle. But, at the same time, I completely understand your point about how some writers would feel that pressure, you know, while I’m being talked about, while I’m relevant and need to strike while the iron’s hot and take every opportunity that I can. So, I think it is just about what you said. It’s still a learning process, I suppose, whether you’re starting out or you’re quite far ahead in your career.

NS [00:20:23]: Yeah, and I can’t believe I’m admitting this on a podcast, but the other thing is, there is this sort of little bit of an ego thing going on as well. I love working with young writers of colour so much, and I get so much out of the mentoring I do [with] those writers, as well as hopefully giving them the experience and advice and stuff. But they all call me uncle, and I’m like, I’m three years older than you, I’m, like, five years older than you! I’m not your uncle. And also, if you uncle me, that means that you’re not seeing me as a peer. But part of me is this weird ego thing where I’m saying yes to things that I honestly don’t have time for, because I want to be relevant.

The reality that I have to keep reminding myself, is [that] I got to where I am because the right people turned opportunities down, but pointed the producer or the editor my way, you know? And I have to do the same. And I do do the same but every now and then, like with this Radio 4 thing, I say yes, and flop. And you don’t want to say yes and flop. I should’ve just said I’m really sorry, I love working with you, but now’s not the right time for me because I’m about to start the edit of the new novel, and it’s all I can think about, which was the truth. And it would’ve been so easy for me to say that.

NB [00:21:55]: And I think it’s great that you’ve been honest about being honest, because it’s something that a lot of writers need to hear—that’s it not a fault, or anything. It is what it is, and those are your circumstances and it’s impossible to do every single thing.

NS [00:22:11]: Yeah, because I think there is a fear, that if I say no, I will never get this opportunity ever again. If I say no, I am closing the door, that someone has opened. And that is just not true. If someone asks you now, and you’re not ready to do something or you don’t have time to do something, saying no and saying no well enough that you keep the door open for the future… in a way that people understand, is a really important thing to do. It’s part of the process. If somebody has thought of you once, they will think of you again.

That’s why, when I say no to things, I always say no, but here are five people you could ask instead, because that’s what was done for me, and that’s what I benefited from early in my career, and that’s what I can do to pay things forward as well.

When you’re working in the margins, like we are; when you are a writer of colour, when you are a writer from a certain background, the worst thing that could happen could be that someone asks the editor of *The Good Immigrant* if they could do something and the editor… says no they’re too busy, and then that person goes, well I don’t know any other people of colour. I just won’t do this. Or I’ll just get someone white to do it. Whereas, if I’m like, here are five people you can talk to, they can never say that they don’t know who else is out there.

NB [00:23:46]: That they weren’t given options. But that’s so wonderful that you open doors for other people, and I genuinely believe that things always have a way of coming back around to you. So even if you have said no to something, eventually another door will open.

NS [00:24:00]: Yeah.

NB [00:24:03]: So, going back to, I mean, you mentioned that you find it difficult to relax nowadays, but me-time is incredibly important for your mental and physical health, especially under current circumstances. What do you do to distance yourself from the writing and the kids and the general chaos of the world? Because, obviously, sometimes it can feel like a bit much.

NS [00:24:29]: It’s a mixture of things. As I said earlier, it’s hard when the thing that you loved doing to relax is now the things that you’re trying to turn into a career. And I find that, in my roster of podcasts to listen to and books to be reading and TV to be watching, as long as at least one of those things is purely for pleasure, and not because it’s sort of related to the type of writer I want to be or the type of stuff I’m interested in, then I find that is really helpful.

I guess people reduce these to being guilty pleasures, but I don’t mean them to be guilty pleasures. I don’t mean for them to sound like they’re guilty pleasures. I read a lot of comics, and for me that’s pure escapism, because, much as I would love to write a *Spiderman* comic, or work on a *Ms. Marvel* Comic, I don’t think I’ve got the chops to do it. I watch panel shows obsessively, safe in the knowledge that I will never be good enough to be on a panel show. I don’t even think it’s a guilty pleasure. I listen to podcasts like *Office Ladies*, which is Jenna Fischer, who played Pam in *The Office* and Angela Kinsey, who played Angela in *The Office*. [They] are doing an *Office* rewatch, where they watch an episode of *The Office*, and then they do a behind-the-scenes insight into the filming of that episode, and it’s just the most joyful hour-and-a-half of my week, because it comes out Wednesday mornings, and I always drop my kid off at school Wednesday mornings (apart from today). When I teach, I always listen to it; go for a long walk and listen to *Office Ladies*, and that’s my little me-time thing.

Apart from that, I don’t know. I wish I had the meditative abilities to do something like yoga, or swim, for long periods of time without getting bored, or letting my mind wander. But I just find that I can’t be present in the action, which is what swimming and yoga require you to do. They require you to be present in the act of doing, rather than allowing yourself to be in your own head, and be like a swimming robot or a yoga robot. I just don’t have the mentality to do either of those things for a long period of time.

NB [00:27:16]: But, after all, it is just finding something that works for you, no matter how simple it might be.

NS [00:27:223]: Yeah, so listening to Pam and Angela reminiscing about filming *Beach Games*, the [penultimate episode of] season three, which is what I am doing.

NB [00:27:31]: How do you build resilience, just in your day-to-day? How do you keep yourself going and moving and knowing that you’ll get through it, whatever the task is?

NS [00:27:44]: Well, I think there’s something about having a really supportive friendship group, that moves you forward. I have a bunch of friends who are also artists, and we all support each other, in really visible ways behind the scenes. I think that without having those support systems I wouldn’t be very resilient. Nor would some of them I don’t think. I think resilience is, for me, in practice, something that I’m not always 100% on. I’m not always 100% resilient on absolutely everything, and a lot of the work I do, a lot of the subject matter I tackle, is quite difficult, and exposing, because it’s about the mental health impact of horrific things, like racism.

The thing I didn’t do very well when *The Good Immigrant* came out, and when I was touring [it], was distance myself from the book, and that that book meant, because it meant so much to so many people. And also, I did so many gigs where people would be telling me that the book changed their life, so for me to sort of play down, you know, do that self-deprecating things that writers tend to do, would be disingenuous to those people who had actively felt changed having read this book.

But also having people share with me their own experiences of racism was hard. And then having people invariably deny that what we were going through even counted as racism was really hard. I wasn’t resilient in those years. I was a complete emotional wreck. I think, I don’t know if I am resilient, basically.

NB [00:29:39]: But it’s [about] not being resilient in everything. It goes back to being honest, I think, about having bad days. Because, a lot of the times, I think, especially when you’re an up-and-coming writer or up-and-coming anything, to be honest, it’s so easy to look at the success of everyone else and think, that’s where I need to be. I need to get there [and] I can’t stop until that’s the end result. And the truth is, that they haven’t really seen the graft and the grime that goes into achieving that end result. And so they’ve come down on themselves really hard, and it can be quite self-deprecating, sometimes, to feel like you’re not doing enough, or you’re not good enough, or anything like that, when, in fact, it’s totally fine and normal to have those bad days.

NS [00:30:20]: Yeah, totally.

NB [00:30:23]: I mean, do they become easier, as the years go by, in your career? Do you think it gets easier?

NS [00:30:33]: I guess the thing that I talk to writers about a lot, is about imposter syndrome, and how it never really goes away. And it’s just about working out how to move within that space. Writers are always like, should I be doing this? Should I be writing this novel? And I’m like, I feel like that, and I’ve written X amount of books at this point. I constantly feel, should I be doing this? Am I good enough to be doing this? But, if the story compels you to write it, and if you feel compelled to tell that story, then you need to find the best way of telling it. We put so many barriers in front of ourselves to stop us doing anything that the worst thing that we can do is also put ourselves in front of ourselves. You know what I’m trying to say—be our own barrier.

NB [00:31:35]: Sometimes we do talk ourselves down, but I think it’s about learning how to undo those feelings, and progress.

I kind of wanted to move on to some more, I guess fun, quirky, behind-the-scenes questions, for the last segment of this podcast. What do your kids think you do, and how much influence do they have on your writing? Are they aware?

NS [00:32:01]: They know I write books, but they don’t really know what that means. I remember a friend came to stay once with her kid. She’s a stand-up comedian, and when my daughter asked what she did for a living, she said, ‘I tell jokes for a living.’ [And my daughter] looked at me like, is that a job? This woman tells jokes for a living. I don’t understand.

So I do think that my kids have this weird view of the world, that I sit in this room. Sometimes the door’s open, sometimes the door’s closed. There’s always music playing. Sometimes I’m on the sofa, reading. Sometimes I’m at my desk typing away. But that’s how books get written. But, at the same time, they don’t really have much awareness of the books they read so voraciously having been written by other people. I think they know about it. They know what I do in the abstract, but they don’t really interrogate what that means.

And in terms of what influence they have on me and my work, I mean look, *The Good Immigrant* was a project I did when I was thinking about being a father, and legacy, and reading books like *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. You know, re-reading *The Fire Next Time* by James Baldwin. What those kind of projects mean, not just for Ta-Nehisi Coates’ son, or James Baldwin’s nephew, but what they meant for the world. And that’s kind of what I wanted to do with *The Good Immigrant*; it’s what I wanted to do with my memoir. I didn’t want my memoir to be for everyone, I wanted my memoir to be for my two girls, so they understood a bit more about me.

I see them as acts of love. I’m constantly thinking about them, when I approach what I’m doing next.

NB [00:34:05]: Is there a piece of writing, or a part of your writing journey that you’re particularly proud of?

NS [00:34:11]: All of it mate! Look, you know, I’m proud of the two novels I wrote when no one noticed who I was, before *The Good Immigrant*. I’m incredibly proud of *The Good Immigrant* and the legacy it’s had, and the impact it’s had on not just the publishing industry, but on a generation of young people of colour in Britain, and increasingly in America as well. I’m incredibly proud of writing YA and writing complex social issues in a way that teenagers find interesting and exciting. I’m proud of all of it, I think.

NB [00:34:50]: As you should be.

NS [00:34:53]: There’s stuff I think I could’ve done better in some of the novels, but, you know, that’s just because, as a writer, you’re constantly getting better at being a writer. You’re constantly re-evaluating the stuff that you did on your way to where you are now.

NB [00:35:09]: It kind of relates to the next question. I know it’s like asking a parent to pick their favourite child, but what do you think has been your greatest writing-related achievement to date?

NS [00:35:21]: It’s somewhere between sending a lamb chop into space, and Paul Merton making fun of it on *Have I got News for You*, to promote my second novel. I really love *The Boxer*. I think it’s such a personal book, [and] the schools tour that I did shows the impact that it had on lots of young people. And yeah, *The Good Immigrant*.

It’s interesting, because when you have one book in your huge body of work blow up, and that’s the only book that people really want to talk to you about, I see lots of writers shying away from it. Like [with] Hanif Kureishi, everyone always wants to talk to him about *The Buddhist of Suburbia*, and he’s like, I’ve written 30 other books. But, for me, seeing the impact that that had on people, I would be doing that, and them, a disservice by not acknowledging that it was a huge fucking deal, you know? It changed my career, but it also did something really positive for a lot of people.

NB [00:36:35]: I completely agree with you, and I’m sure it will be one of those books that people read and look back to for generations to come, because it is that powerful, and it has had such an impact on so many people already.

What’s a writing pet peeve that you’re still trying to get around?

NS [00:36:54]: Of my own?

NB [00:36:55]: Yeah.

NS [00:36:57]: Rushing.

NB [00:36:58]: Ah, okay. As in, just trying to get the words on the paper?

NS [00:37:04]: Getting stuff off my desk before I know in my heart of hearts it’s done, just to get it off my desk my desk

NB [00:37:12]: Okay, so, I mean, is that something you’re still working on, or is it something that you can’t help, like it just happens?

NS [00:37:22]: It’s something I’m still working on. That’s why I like working slower. It’s good for me, with this next novel that I’m working on, because I just have to take it slowly.

NB [00:37:35]: I think that’s a great reminder to writers everywhere, actually. To just slow down, and really take the time.

I think something that would be really nice to round-off with, is do you have any words of encouragement, or tips, for writers who are trying to balance work and family and writing, especially under these circumstances?

NS [00:37:57]: Maybe a thing to consider, is if you can make your novel, or your book, the first thing that you do every day, before you sit down at your desk to do your work, even if that means sitting down at your desk at 08:15 to do 45 before you start at 9, then do that. And don’t worry about word count. And just take your time. Take your time. You’ve got all the time in the world to write your first book, but you’ve only ever got the time between your first and second book to write that one.

NB [00:38:56]: Well, I think that’s great advice. Brilliant words of wisdom from you. Thank you so much for joining us, Nikesh. This has been a brilliant episode. Thank you so much for sharing so much with us. We were really thrilled to have you on.

NS [00:38:49]: Thanks for having me.