

Haku Shah

Painter

'Wherever I find freshness, I touch God'

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Haku Shah, Painter.

What does spirituality mean to you?

When I look at a tree, I do not only see its beautiful flowers, I also feel its roots, its trunk, its branches, its leaves, trying to connect with its core. This is spirituality to me, something to be constantly and concretely experienced. When I am looking for God, I find it in the sprout, in the leaf, in a cloud, in a trace – wherever I find freshness, I touch God. It is also about connecting to the truth, beyond all layers of corruption and pollution that so easily set in, especially in our modern lives so full of market and showmanship. There is so much power in a deep breath yet we have little time for it as we always run, busy with something or the other. So the breath gets smaller and smaller. If instead one uncovers all those blurring layers and manages to connect to the essence of things, unhappiness can't ever set in our innermost core.

Do you believe you are guided and protected by a superior force?

Octavio Paz says in one of his poems that we are written by the stars, and "at this very moment, someone spells me out". I do believe there is something beyond us. To feel it and hear the guidance, we ought to go deeper and deeper inside and just be ourselves. Then there is no question of why and how.

Do you believe you have a special mission or purpose in this life?

I would think it is about seeing, to the core and as much as possible. The energy of living beings is so vast and we ignore most of it, so I have been trying to feel it and expose it through my paintings. Ever since I was very young, I would see a painting in every place and situation. That is the way I have been seeing the world.

What is spirituality for you in your day to day life?

When I paint, when I walk into the park, when I watch a cloud – it is about trying to touch the essence of things at every moment of my life.

What has been the role of spirituality in your art?

They are synonymous, or rather art is a manifestation of spirituality. The soul of the act of painting is about being a channel, a conduit for something beyond. When I get up in the morning, the first thing I do is to go and look at the painting. And it is not an academic exercise. Something inside tells me to put a line or a dot, and that makes me happy. Every time I do it, I feel completely fresh, as if I had just been born.

What have been your main spiritual inspirations?

I have been inspired by a vast number of traditions. But it is maybe among tribal communities that I feel most at home, with their magical sense of connection with events and natural cycles, with the dead ancestors and guardian deities they worship. In their eyes you can see they have a direct connection with the divine. They approach the universe in a spirit of reverence with all things of the world clothed in the aura of the sacred. They also showed me the power of sound, whether it is a word or silence. When you really mean something, the words you utter happen.

If you were to be reincarnated, what would you like to be reincarnated as?

There is so much to feel and experience. Every time I look at a tree I learn more, and yet there is so much left to discover. So I would want many lives, to see and explore the world in all its details.

If there was one question you could ask God, what would it be?

I need not ask a question. When I look at a leaf or a child or a drop of water, I get all the answers.

What is your idea of happiness?

It comes through this connection to all that is pure, beyond corruptions of any kind, beyond time and space.