

Function Of Art by Maharaj Kaul

When living life to the highest viable values is the art of living, then what is the function of art?

We do not know for certain whether the values of life we know of are the best goals for living? We do not even know if living for the best values is the best way to live. Life is such a unique experience and to the best of the human intelligence unrepeatable, it is only reasonable that the search for the best way to live will never end. There are many things that satisfy life momentarily but we do not know anything that will satisfy people permanently. This search for the absolute satisfier of life is one function of art. The other is to create out of the fabric of reality and man's imagination things that are closer to his soul than the reality itself. For man the battle is with the reality, to make the passage of his existence beautiful. Fortunately, for this his creator has equipped him with imagination. The battle of man's imagination with the reality fills his life with a grandeur that surpasses everything else he does during his lifetime. The struggles man goes through his existence makes him noble and among the highest of nature's creations.

Art creates, through the power of man's imagination, things and visions that are beautiful, elevating, and meaningful, that human beings are not able to see and experience directly.

Art and religion have similar goals: to give life a higher meaning than it seems to possess. While religion uses the tools of faith and other-worldliness to reach its goal, art uses common reality and logic to create beauty, truth, and meaning. Both believe that the ingredients of their vision are available here and now but, generally, religion points to the supernatural and art to the natural. A prayer and a poem are two different ways of saying the same thing. Both are indispensable to the higher level of living.

In the age of materialism and technology that we currently are in, both religion

and art have been devalued to a good extent. The present values point to social and political freedom, uniqueness of the individual, and the brotherhood of humankind; but they have ignored the bill of rights of the human soul. They have pushed under the rug the eternal struggle of the human soul to live in the world. But that struggle cannot be silenced, as it is the most fundamental of the human struggles.