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BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

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# WHAT LIFE HAS TAUGHT ME

SERIES - I

GENERAL EDITORS

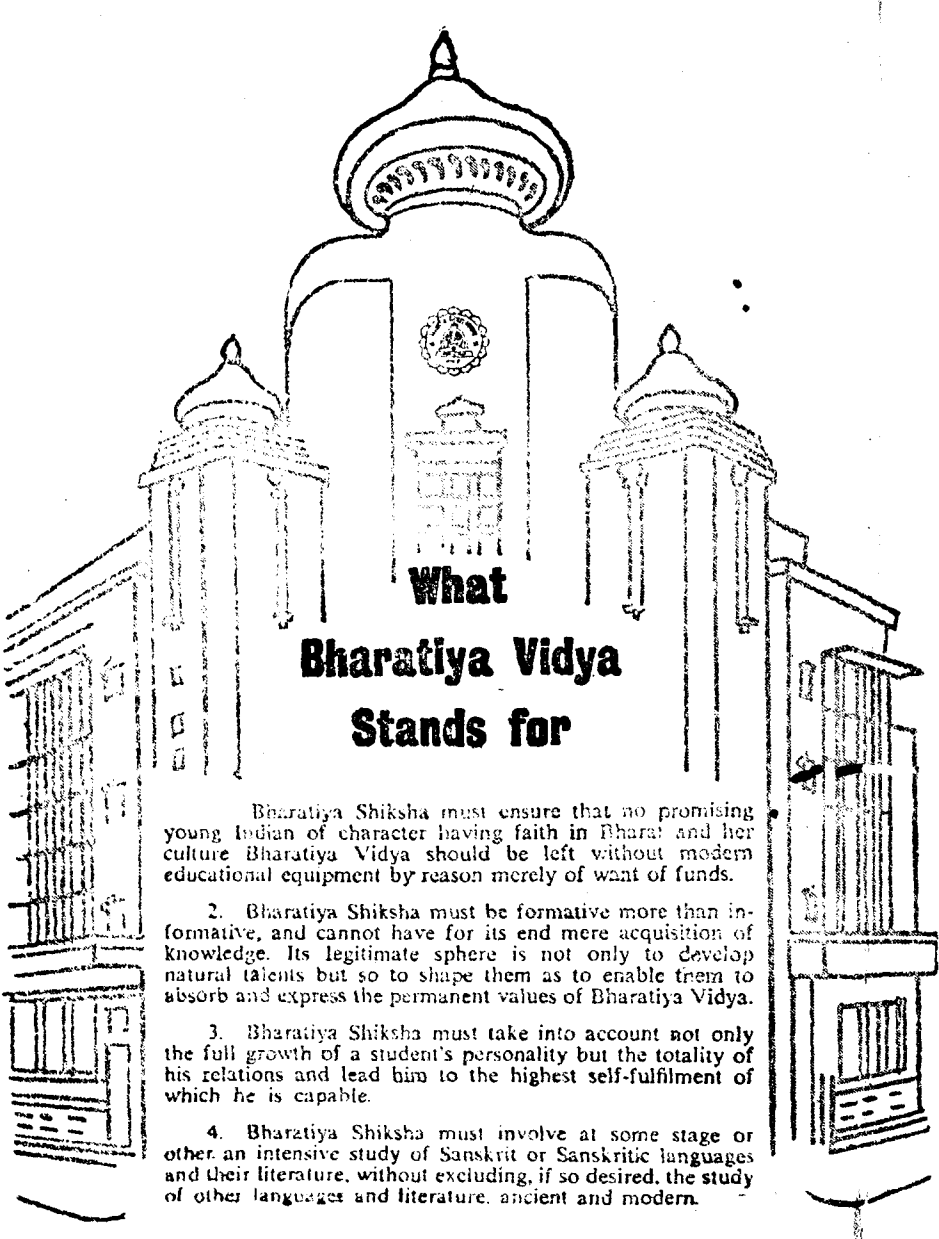
K. M. MUNSHI

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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN BOMBY



**What  
Bharatiya Vidya  
Stands for**

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, iddas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.



आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

*Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.*

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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**BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY**

*RUPEE SERIES*

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*General Editors*  
**K. M. MUNSHI**  
**R. R. DIWAKAR**

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**WHAT LIFE HAS TAUGHT ME**  
*SERIES I*

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**BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY**

# WHAT LIFE HAS TAUGHT ME

*SERIES I*



1964

**BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN**

**CHOWPATTY : BOMBAY**

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## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bhavan's Book University volumes had rare success. About a million and a quarter volumes have been sold in about eleven years. However, there is an insistent demand for the stray volumes which the Bhavan has issued from time to time at a lower price. In order to meet this demand, it has been decided to issue the new One-Rupee Book University Series side by side with the Book University Series.

I hope this new One-Rupee Series will have the same good fortune which the other Series had, of being useful to those who are interested in the fundamental values of Indian Culture, and of reaching out to a wider audience.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,  
Chowpatty Road, Bombay-7.  
*Vijaya Dashami*  
September 28, 1963

K. M. MUNSHI

## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Some years ago, the *Bhavan's Journal* conceived the idea of requesting eminent Indians, who have made their mark in the secular and in the spiritual fields, to tell the readers of the *Journal* 'What Life Has Taught Me'. The request was made to a fair cross section of our countrymen. It was quite a casual list of persons who were approached for this purpose and it was not done on any pre-meditated principle of inclusion or exclusion. The list included Sages and Saints, Politicians and Administrators, Lawyers and Judges, Army men and Film magnates.

It is gratifying to record that all those who were requested to write for us responded with pleasing promptness and generous warmth so eloquent of their goodwill for the *Journal*. For this, the *Bhavan's Journal* is very grateful. The contributions were serialised in it. Included among them were extracts from the writings of two leading thinkers of the West, Albert Schweitzer and Pitirim Sorokin. In this and its companion volume all these have been re-printed and issued together.

All the contributors have been very candid in the narration of their experiences and unsparing in their criticism of themselves. In writings of this kind, there is bound to be a measure of the didactic; and, that would appear to be necessary if others wish to learn from the failures and successes of those who review and reminisce about their past. However, the life-situations which project these

lessons are invested with a realism which would surely interest the reader, amusing him in not a few cases.

If, benefitting by the experiences of those who appear in these volumes, one is helped to go through life reflectively and purposefully, the publishers will feel amply rewarded.

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## MAHARSHI D. K. KARVE

Several turning points in my life are out of the ordinary. The accidental opportunity I got to learn English when I was 18; the unhappy death of my first wife, that was followed by my marriage with a widow; the opening up of new fields of work due to this event; the altogether unexpected call to work in the Fergusson College, which brought me into an atmosphere congenial to the development of new idealistic institutions that I started later on; the undreamt-of falling into my hands of the Japan Women's University booklet and lastly, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey's generous gift; all these taken together would incline one to think that some hidden power was guiding the course of my life. I myself have often felt that some unseen force was leading me on to the different steps.

But although I am more emotional than intellectual, I could not reconcile myself to the idea that any such power, which would involve the notion of a personal god, could interest itself in the innumerable lives that fill the universe, and supervise and guide their actions. At the same time I am conscious that individual efforts on the part of man are so feeble that he cannot achieve anything simply by his own exertions. I cannot therefore but feel gratitude for the help I received from seen and unseen sources to make me happy and successful in life.

## ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Even while I was a boy at school it was clear to me that no explanation of the evil in the world could ever satisfy me; all explanations, I felt, ended in sophistries, and at bottom had no other object than to make it possible for men to share in the misery around them, with less keen feelings.

That a thinker like Leibnitz should reach the miserable conclusion that though this world is, indeed, not good, it is the best that was possible, I have never been able to understand.

But however much concerned I was at the problem of the misery in the world, I never let myself get lost in brooding over it; I always held firmly to the thought that each one of us can do a little to bring some portion of it to an end.

Thus I came gradually to rest content in the knowledge that there is only one thing we can understand about the problem, and that is that each of us has to go his own way, but as one who means to help to bring about deliverance.

In my judgment of the situation in which mankind finds itself at the present time I am pessimistic.

I cannot bring myself to believe that the situation is not so bad as it seems to be, but I am inwardly conscious that we are on a road which, if we continue to tread, will bring us into "Middle Ages" of a new character.

The spiritual and material misery to which

R. P. MASANI

I wonder what interest free living, free loving, unconventional people of today can have in what life taught one who lived in the days of Queen Victoria when by her side sat Mrs. Grundy on the throne of Britain with her rigid code of etiquette and morals. However, in response to the invitation of Sri K. M. Munshi to co-operate with whom, in howsoever small a measure, in his stupendous effort to enrich our literature, is a real pleasure, I gladly take up my pen to relate how after passing through varying phases of scepticism, pessimism, doubt, despair and gloomy forebodings concerning the fate of human society I have learnt from life the lesson to have robust faith, despite setbacks and disappointments, in man's destiny and his progress, as he learns more and more to extricate himself from the wilderness of self and live comfortably on earth without treading on the toes of his neighbours.

"Live and learn" runs the adage the significance of which one realizes more and more the older one grows. Indeed, there is no end to what life teaches frail human beings day after day. Whether they profit by what they learn is another question. It was a pithy saying of Hegel that "men never learn from history". What seems largely true of the teaching of history is applicable also to the teaching of life. Its lessons cover all problems and aspects of existence from the sublime to the

## C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

The passage of years and the accumulation and analysis of experiences have even more borne in upon me the profound truth conveyed in the famous maxim of Shakespeare:

*There is a Divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough-hew them how we will.*

Most persons are bound, on retrospect, to discover that there is very little like sheer chance but that many so-called accidents, misfortunes or buffetings of Fate turn out, in the long run, very differently from what was apprehended. Apparent set-backs become blessings in disguise.

I graduated with distinction in Sanskrit and English about sixty years ago. Among the prizes of life, as then envisaged, were successes in competitive examinations for entry into the Provincial Service cadre or the Financial hierarchy; and Principal C. H. Stuart of the Presidency College who taught me higher Mathematics and took keen interest in my progress, nominated me for the competition. I was bitterly disappointed and discontented when my father, who was a very successful lawyer, vetoed the proposal and insisted on my pursuing the legal profession.

Looking back over the decades, there can be no two opinions about the wisdom of my father's choice but for which I should have, at the most, acquired a pension after a long and humdrum service (and probably diabetes in addition) several years ago.

## H. V. DIVATIA

I remember to have read a story some years ago in which three elderly persons were discussing what each had learnt from his life. One man said, quoting Longfellow: "Life is real, life is earnest and the grave is not its goal," and added that life was a trust which should be discharged by everyone as if he is not its owner but a trustee. The second man said: "I have learnt only one thing and that is that life is so full of evils and miseries that the shorter a man's life, the lesser would be his sufferings." The third man observed, "If I have learnt anything from life it is that life brings happiness as well as misery by turns. But we should learn to be indifferent to them by treating them as accidents of life, if they are due to circumstances beyond our control. We have got to take life as it comes."

The story is probably apocryphal, but it depicts the truth that each person's view of life depends on his mental temperament and individual experience. Nevertheless, the principles underlying human evolution being the same for all men, there are several lessons which all men can learn from their personal as well as collective lives.

In describing the lessons which I have learnt from life, I do not intend to be autobiographical. What I have learnt is more important than the incidents of my life from which I have learnt them. Every person, big or small, gets ample opportuni-

## PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

*Whatever may happen in the future, I know that I have learned three things which will remain forever convictions of my heart as well as my mind. Life, even the hardest life, is the most beautiful, wonderful and miraculous treasure in the world. Fulfilment of duty is another beautiful thing, making life happy and giving to the soul an unconquerable force to sustain ideals. This is my second conviction, and my third is that cruelty, hatred, and injustice never can and never will be able to create a mental, moral, or material millennium.*

So ends my *Leaves from a Russian Diary* published in 1924. These lines were jotted down earlier, in October, 1918, in a wild forest of Northern Russia. Hunted by the Communist executioners, with a prize on my head, I had to retreat into the protective vastness of the forest stretching for hundreds of miles. Hungry, cold, and in rags I had, during six weeks of my wandering in it, plenty of time to meditate about the basic problems of human life, the sunny and dark souls of the Russian Revolution, and about my own situation which at that time happened to be similar to that of Condorcet in the French Revolution (hunted by the Jacobins, he also had to retreat into the wilderness of a mining region until he was caught by the "French Bolsheviks" and died in prison at Bourg la-Reine). These lines were one of the results of this meditation.

## RAJ KUMARI AMRIT KAUR

To those of us who have been blessed with a long life and who believe that life is really one long lesson, there has, of course, been much to learn. Life's lessons come to each one of us in different ways and if one is diligent there is something worthwhile to be learnt every single day of our existence.

How often have I been grateful in my middle and old age for the lessons I learnt in my childhood. As a child the restraints exercised by wise parents on their children bear fruit and are understood in later life far better than in childhood when they are looked upon as irksome and unnecessary. I am more than appreciative today of a strict upbringing which has enabled me to realise the essentiality of discipline. There can be no happiness in a family unless every member is disciplined and discipline connotes not only conformity to rules but stands for what is far more important, an adherence to a moral code. We brothers and sisters were taught that telling the truth was important, that sharing our toys was proper, that quarrelling was all wrong, that rudeness to anyone was intolerable, that kindness to animals was a duty, that cleanliness and tidiness were essential, that disobedience would be severely punished. Today I realise that these are surely basic necessities which are applicable not only to the child but to every individual, however mature in mind or years he may be.

## SRI PRAKASA

The question "What life has taught me", is an embarrassing one. In the best of circumstances, it would be difficult to answer it absolutely correctly. Let us first of all consider what the purpose of a question like that can be, for generally speaking, there ought to be a purpose for which a question is asked. It may be that we ask a great many questions just for the sake of information. Apart from such of them that seek to meet some immediate need, these questions are the outcome of a natural curiosity that we have in our nature; and answers to them help to add to the store—large or small—of our own knowledge. It cannot be denied that satisfaction of curiosity is also a very definite purpose in life.

The question posed here, however, cannot be regarded as something asked merely to satisfy curiosity. It is of an intimate personal nature, and so if it were merely curiosity, it would scarcely be right to ask it, as it smacks of improper inquisitiveness. When the Editor of such a highly respected magazine as the *Bhavan's Journal* asks this, it cannot but be for some useful purpose. It is not to know the inner intimate struggles and experiences of the person to whom the question is put. It is really to enable others to learn from the experience of a brother, the purpose being that mistakes might be avoided by the younger in the light of the knowledge and experience of the elder.

## BHIMSEN SACHAR

The 'Bhavan's Journal' has done me the honour of asking me to furnish an answer to the question "What life has taught me?" I have tried to collect my thoughts, and the uppermost thought in my mind is that, circumstances being normal, as a rightful claimant to our attention, time and resources, nothing ranks higher than the rearing of children. A child is the bed-rock of our social order. This being so, I commend the following for the consideration of the reader:—

(i) A man's unfailing companion in life is his sound and strong body. It is thus wrong to make our children soft. We should develop in them the capacity to lead a rough and hard life. The world at large has no sympathy for those who have not the capacity to bear the hardships of life. Enable a child to face dangerous situations and feel proud of his scars. Small scars of childhood may save him from much bigger scars of later life. This will also kill the fright in the child, which is a man's worst enemy.

(ii) From the very beginning, cultivate in the child the habit of concentration. Help him to develop his powers of observation, assimilation and expression. Many happy starts in life have ended in dismal failures for want of one's capacity to express himself adequately.

(iii) Please do not change your child's school too often. If possible keep him in one school till

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An Oriental College teaching Sanskrit and Shastras by traditional methods for Shastri and Acharya (recognised as equivalent to B.A. & M.A. respectively) and for Vachaspati (research).

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An Academy of Indian Classical Music, affiliated to the Bhatkhande Sangit Vidya-pith, Lucknow, which is recognised by the Central Government for courses leading to the Bachelor of Music Degree.

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## PRAKASHAN MANDIR

Apart from our HISTORY and BOOK UNIVERSITY SERIES, this department also publishes the results of the research and other activities of the various Mandirs of the Bhavan and books of cultural value. Its publications include:

**Bharatiya Vidya Series:** Critical editions of texts, translations and original works of research in Indology—in Sanskrit and English. Published volumes 22.

**Singhi Jain Series:** Critical editions of ancient works and manuscripts connected with Jain religion and literature. Published volumes 52.

**The Glory that was Gurjaradesa:** A comprehensive study of Gujarat in 7 volumes. Published volumes 2.

**Munshi Sahitya:** Social novels, historical plays, biographical works of Munshiji and Smt. Savati Munshi in Gujarati and English, the copyright whereof has been kindly gifted by them to the Bhavan. Published volumes 30.

## JOURNALS

**Bharatiya Vidya:** An Indological research quarterly in English started in 1943. Published volumes 22.

**Bhavan's Journal:** An English Fortnightly devoted to life, literature and culture started in August 1954. Present circulation 50,000 copies. Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50.

**Bharati:** A Hindi Fortnightly started in August 1956. Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50. **Samargan:** A Gujarati Fortnightly started in November 1959. Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50.

## DEPARTMENT OF PRINTING

Bhavan's press where all its publications and periodicals are printed and where practical training in printing is given to the students of the Bhavan's College of Journalism, Advertising and Printing.

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An Institution for providing systematic instruction in Journalism, Advertising, Sales Promotion, Public Relations and Printing.

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The Academy teaches four foreign languages, viz., German, Russian, French and Spanish.

## MUNGALAL GOENKA SANSKRIT TRUST

The income from this Trust goes to support the Post-graduate and Research Department of the Bhavan.

## ASSOCIATED BODIES

Sanskrit Vishva Parishad, Bharatiya Stree Seva Sangh, Bombay Astrological Society.

## ABOUT THIS BOOK

SOME EMINENT PERSONALITIES of the present day, leaders of thought and action, speak in this book about the lessons they have learnt from their eventful lives. Each one of them, who has attained success and celebrity in a particular field, looks back reflectively on the course of his life, on his failures and achievements. It will be seen from their accounts that their lives were marked by an interplay of fate and circumstance and that a kind Providence gave them the wisdom and the opportunity to surmount obstacles in their way. The lessons that they have learnt from their lives are only amplifications of the central maxim that "where there is Dharma, there is Victory", that there are no short cuts to success and that it cannot be achieved by passing the eternal laws of morality.

The contributors, who are from various sections of contemporary life, write with a revealing candour and, in not a few cases, are unsparing in the criticism of themselves. Projecting the situations, they keep their personalities in the background, sustain interest and take care not to be boastful.