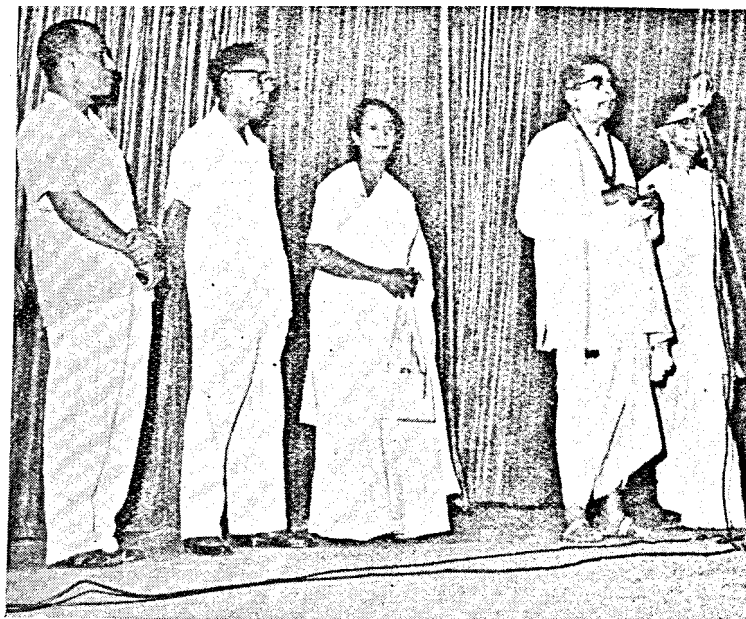


# Value of Art in



(From left to right) Sri U.N. Sen, Dr. Bibek Sengupta, Smt. Tara Sirkar (Vice-Presidents), Dr. P. V. Rajamannar, Sri Samar Chatterji (Founder C.L.T.)

## Children's Education\*

“ONE feels younger in the company of children. But I am afraid a grown-up can never become a child. Wordsworth no doubt was giving utterance to the feeling of regret which occurs almost to every one of us, when he said:

“There was a time when meadow, grove and stream,

The earth, and every common sight,

To me did seem,

Apparelled in celestial light,

The glory and the freshness of a dream.

It is not now as it hath been of yore:”

But with all respect to Wordsworth, when he says that every common sight seemed to him when he was a child apparelled in celestial light, I am sure he could not recapture that vision. His recollection was bound to have been tainted by his later adult experience.

“One oft repeated fallacy is that the life of a child is one unalloyed existence of happiness.

It is said that children have no worries or troubles, no grievances or disappointment, no grief or sadness. It is true that they have no worries over income tax, no troubles with budgets, no grievances against employers, no disappointment in career. But children have their own worries, troubles, grievances and disappointments. You can see the look of worry on the face of a boy who does not get his sum all right when doing his home work. Mischievous boys get into troubles with their teachers; a poor girl has a grievance against her mother for not dressing her in a pretty frock. A child will get disappointed in getting an ordinary prize when another child has received a more coveted prize. That is why, it is necessary that children should have as much of joy as possible, without which a child's life is empty.

“It should never be forgotten that a child's mind is not a faint or under-developed replica of the adult's mind. It has unique characteristics, though they are not adequately understood. Sincerity, directness, originality, naive freedom from inhibition, vitality and *joie de vivre* are characteristics of childhood at its best. As an authority on Child Psychology says, the mental

\*Excerpt from an inaugural speech delivered by Chief Justice Dr. P. V. Rajamannar at the Ninth Foundation Day of the Children's Little Theatre at Calcutta.

health of the race depends upon an increasing projection of these qualities into maturity.

"The Children's Little Theatre was established in May 1952, with the avowed object to supplement the basic education of children in an atmosphere of pleasant surroundings in which rhymes, music and dance will form a special feature. The Children's Little Theatre is not just another society or association intended to provide entertainment for the jaded, bored or idle public. It is a cultural and recreational centre for children. It is an organised and disciplined body with a purpose—a commendable and important purpose—to develop the latent artistic sense in the children, to stimulate their creative talent to develop their ideas of rhythm, colour and design, to give them an opportunity for self-expression, to endow them with an understanding of human nature.

"If the aim of education is, and I believe it is, to build a well rounded whole human being, then assuredly, Children's Little Theatre is an educational institution, because it is concerned with a very vital and oft neglected aspect, namely, the artistic and aesthetic aspect, the creation and appreciation of beauty. Through dance, music and other arts, C.L.T. is striving to build the total mind of the child, as one of your learned Judges remarked. But it is singularly free from one flaw of all instructional institutions for children, namely, regimentation, time-table routine, what I may call, watertightness. The atmosphere of C.L.T. is a free atmosphere. There is no cramping, no stifling, no confinement to the four walls of the class-room.

"I cannot adequately stress on the high place of Art in the education of children. The important place art should occupy in the education of children has not been, I am afraid, sufficiently realised in this country. Art is looked upon as a luxury for a few exceptional persons. As I have often pointed out, this is a wrong view of art. Now, play is a dominant factor in and means of education. The practice of the arts, music, dance, drama, drawing or painting, carving or modelling, gives full scope to this play aspect. The children play with their minds and hands. Art provides both a stimulus and an outlet for creative talent and imagination. It develops a sense of design and rhythm.

"Amongst the beneficent results of participation in the C.L.T., I can mention the acquisi-

tion of grace in movement and posture, poise in deportment and behaviour, self-reliance and absence of self-consciousness, community spirit and social qualities.

"C.L.T. is growing from strength to strength. It has achieved in these eight years marvellous success. Its reputation has spread throughout the country. The State Centres at Delhi and Bombay draw inspiration from it. It is therefore bound to suffer with other growing institutions from adverse comments and criticisms, sometimes well-meant, at other times probably not. It all depends on the basic ideals behind the movement which gave birth to this institution. I have one earnest appeal to make to those in charge of this Institution. The cry of the modern age is 'sophistication'. Let not those at the helm of affairs in C.L.T. yield to that cry. The greatest qualities of children are their spontaneity, directness, simplicity, sincerity, genuineness of thought and expression—qualities which, alas, the adults lack. If those qualities are destroyed or impaired, children will grow up into heartless, hardened beings. As our beloved Prime Minister once said, Children are the wealth of the Nation. That wealth must be safely preserved. Children live in a world of imagination—as real—if not more real than the actual world of fact—of humdrum existence. Children will believe in things which to the grown-ups will sound unbelievable—in fairies and myths, such stuff as dreams are made on. I appeal to you, do not trample on their dreams. The message of C.L.T. is a message of joy—sophistication will destroy it.

"I have glanced with great interest your journal, *'Rhythms and Rhymes'*. I have nothing but unstinted admiration for the talented artists like your General Secretary, Shri Samar Chatterjee and others, who are creating new dance sequences, original ballets, and children's plays. Every region of the country has its own traditional children's games, which combine words, tune, dance and action. Sometimes, the participants represent animals, or legendary or mythical figures. These games have all the elements of plays. They are probably the survival of primitive ceremonial dance dramas. Very often, these folk dances celebrate agricultural operations, like sowing and harvesting. Some deal with love and marriage, others are in memory of great heroes and saviours of the country. Every effort should be made to preserve such forms. More than that, they should inspire the creation of more modern varieties."