

rivers, the hills or the valley. Both sectors of the teaching profession thus find rest from their toil and the satisfaction of their desires through this interesting and quite natural exchange.

One of the principal aspirations of the Bolivian school teacher is to achieve mastery in the true skill of teaching, to "practice intuition" as the expression goes. He will wear himself out in the attempt and stop at no economic sacrifice to obtain the necessary books and materials. While fully appreciative of any balanced theoretical doctrine, he remains eminently practical. He is not fond of theorizing, pedagogic chatters and is more interested in seeing and learning "how it's done" than in hearing merely "what ought to be done". He tends to be skeptical the kind of pedagogic literature in which teaching is made to appear as one uninterrupted succession of achievements, successes and triumphs, and sometimes wonders whether the school-teachers, children and young people overseas are not as human as those of his own country. He is no longer much impressed by the well meaning theories of missions or by any verbal form of cooperations. For forty-seven years he has seen and is still seeing the development of a technical work that speaks for itself, that is its own practical proof. The work of the National Teachers' Training School as it is known today, and of the other teaching centers of the country.

Primary and secondary teachers have made considerable contribution to the cultural development of

the country by publishing books for the use of teachers. Today the fervent wish of a Bolivian school teacher is to obtain practical aid in the attempt to revise and improve his techniques, and to broaden his essentially balanced and pragmatic culture.

The teaching profession in Bolivia is grouped into two large unions: the Syndicate of Fundamental Education Teachers and the Syndicate of Urban Teachers. Each has a central committee presided over by a government official, and both together form part of the National Confederation of School teachers, with the leadership of the Central Executive Committee which sits at the headquarters of each in turn. If the latter Committee fails to serve the interest and wishes of the profession adequately, it may be deprived of its authority. The district unions agree to pass a vote of censure, and control of the Unions is taken over by a Provisional Committee.

Every two years a School Teachers' Congress discusses all Union matters concerning the profession as well as those connected with the organization of the schools and the economic structure of education. These Congresses have been highly influential in building up a unified teaching staff. They have eliminate all barriers between the different types of education, and have even done away with political differences.

I hope this modest effort will go some way towards providing you with the information you wanted about the education system and activities of school teachers in my country.

Three B's of Assamese Culture

By Naranjan Singh Uppal

THREE "B" 's dominate the cultural life of the people of Assam, an Indian state sandwiched between East Pakistan and Burma. They are Bhaona (drama), Bhaoria (the lyrical poet) and Bahua (the jester).

Bhaona may not come within the full definition of drama as it is understood in the West, but it conveys events and characters with great dramatic effect, and uses dance and music in the presentation.

The **Bhaoria** is a lyrical poet who composes verses extempore. These verses are sung, mostly on religious and social occasions, either solo or in chorus with others. After a day's hard work, the Assamese enjoy an evening's rollicking and dancing to the Bhaoria songs and, for a moment, they forget all the worries of life.

The **Bahua**, in his jester's garb, regales the audi-

ence with his pokes and comic acting his "turn" is generally interspaced between acrobatic feats by other performers.

Early dramatic expression in Assamese took the form of naratives accompanied by singing and dancing. Tales from the **Puranas**, the Hindu sacred book, were presented occasionally with the help of "mudres" or gestures. Later, the **Ankiya-Natas**, one-act plays, came into being.

The oldest form of Assamese drama is called **Ojapali**. It is performed in the open space with the people forming a ring. The principal actor narrates mythological stories in verse. Occasionally he dances and holds dialogues in prose with another actor, and the whole company joins in singing and dancing. Once or twice during the play, a muste female character called **Deodhani** dances to please the Goddess **Manasa**.

There is much vigour in these dances, which vary from place to place. The **Mudras** or stylised gestures are exquisite, the whole basis being the footwork, the timing and the rhyming of the verses. The theme is narrated with great emotion and pathos.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, Assamese drama came into its own. The main guiding force was a saint and reformer, Shankerdev (1449-1568). He cultivated the art of dance and music and propagated his themes through the **Ojapali**.

It was his disciple, Madhavdev (1489-1596), who introduced the **Ankiya-Natas** (one-act plays) to spread his master's religious message. With their music, dance and metre, these plays were rich and original in their technique, though their main basis was the Sanskrit drama.

The actual play is prefaced by chorus singing to the accompaniment of khols and cymbals. This is followed by a concert of khols called **Guru Ghat**. Then the **Sutradhar**, who serves as the main link between the audience and the drama, comes on the stage to give an elaborate dance and sings a devotional song. Only after these preliminaries does the actual play begin with the appearance of actors on the stage. At the end of the play, come the **Mukti Mangal** and **Bhattima**, songs in praise of the Lord by the entire troupe of artists.

These plays, inspired by religious fervour, were colourful and appealed to popular sentiment. The scenes were descriptive and replete with romance and chivalry. There were no women-actors, female roles being taken by men. In some of the plays, where demons like **Baka Sur** (Religious Mighty Power) and **Kali Nag** (Black Dragon) appeared, huge masks were used to represent them.

This glory lasted for nearly 150 years, but the decline came when local kings withdrew their patronage. New life, however, was again instilled into the drama toward the end of the 18th century when Lambodar Bora translated the famous Sanskrit drama, **Sakuntala**, into Assamese.

And the real renaissance of Assamese drama was brought about in the 19th century by Makhinath Bernarua. He wrote many plays such as **Litikai** and **Chikarpati Nikarpati**, introducing mirth and humour into the theatre.

This period also marked the advent of modern Assamese drama with the appearance of about a dozen prominent playwrights. Plays nowadays have varied themes. Some centre round patriotic scenes of India's struggle for freedom and the country's effort in the social and economic field. Others depict village life. Social dramas, written by Hemchandra Barua for instance, concentrate on the defects of

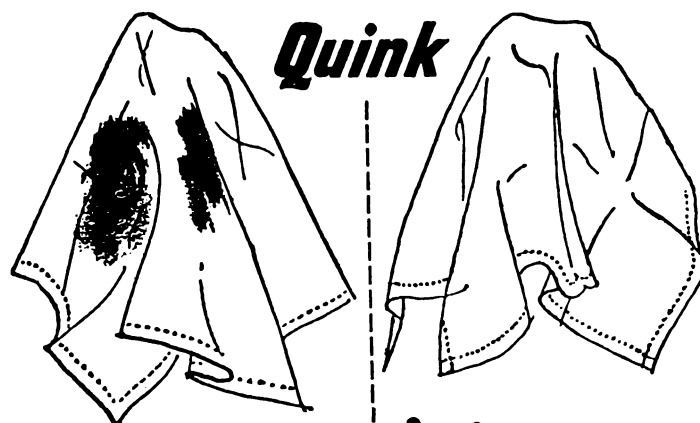
society. But general pattern of their presentation continues to be modelled on the **Ojapali** and the one-act plays, the **Ankiya-Natas**.

Many plays still depend on music and dance for their appeal. The main exponent of such plays is Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla, author of **Sonit Kunwari** and **Larenger Ligiri**, who has a natural aptitude for blending different kinds of tunes. Songs based on these tunes have created a world of romance and beauty.

Even today there are no commercial theatres or professional actors in Assam. Dramatic activities are confined primarily to amateurs in towns and villages which have stages and halls. In other places, plays are stage under specially-erected canopies. And nowadays women have also taken to acting, meeting with a good measure of success.

The wave of drama seems to have caught the Assamese people and it is assured of a promising future. (UNESCO)

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