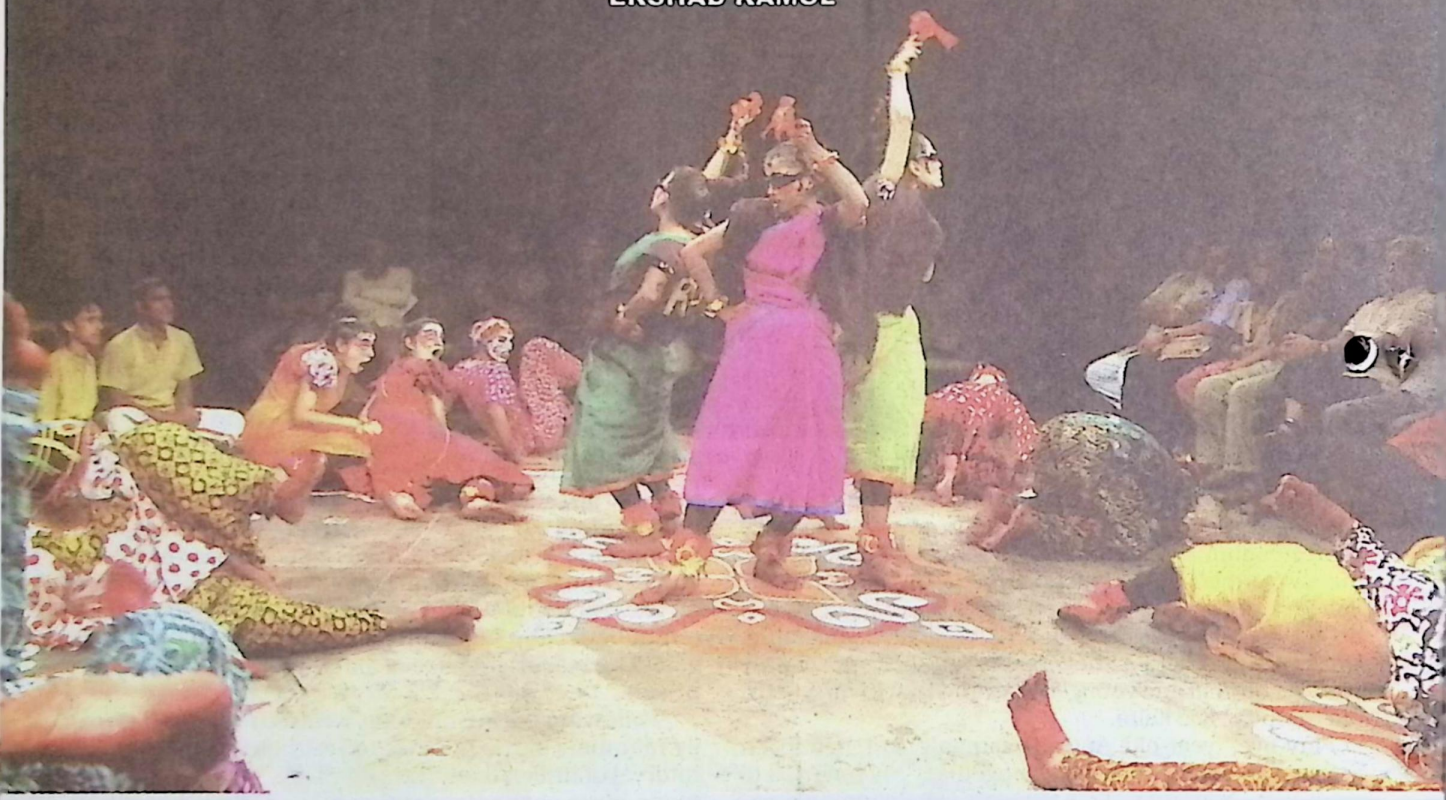
The Art of Clowning

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Many theatre directors these days are experimenting with traditional theatre forms. Syed Jamil Ahmed is undoubtedly one of the pioneers in this urban theatre trend, and has been doing experimentation on traditional *pala* forms for decades. Recently the seasoned director presented a sophisticated theatre performance titled *Shong Bhong Chong* based on traditional *Shongjatra*.

Ahmed's approach to *Shongjatra* will be considered one of the few exceptions in this trend in terms of its application of an indigenous performing art form in context of contemporary urban theatre and his sense of proportion in art. Usually, most contemporary directors dealing with indigenous performing art forms over experiment with so many elements, which sometimes becomes a burden for the audience. Sometimes the result is that the traditional forms are not presented authentically onstage, which is not surprising as it is not possible to represent any traditional form as it is in an urban theatre.

Addressing the genesis of *Shong Bhong Chong*, however, Syed Jamil Ahmed has honestly mentioned the nature of his experimentation with the traditional Shongjatra from the point of view of a contemporary urban theatre director and his technique of incorporating other theatre elements such as Chinese traditional style of make-up and western Comedia-Del-Arte style.

However, Ahmed has in no way distorted the authenticity of style of the traditional *Shongjatra*, rather the incorporation of these foreign elements during the experimentation have added a new dimension to traditional art form to be presented in a theatre hall for an urban audiance.

There is logic behind fusing such elements since the traditional *Shong* artistes paint their face during the performance. Ahmed has just made it more polished using the style of Chinese theatre make-up. Again both Shongjatra and Commedia Del Arte deliver the message through laughter and humour.