CHAPTER - III
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I insist on theatre: I insist on it because I recognise it as a ritual without which our survival loses ground to the pale of death, always encroaching, death with its breathless silence moving down on us.

-Julian Beck

Drama in literature, like the ritual in religion, is basically “a social or ensemble performance” (Frye 107), invoking the ability to communicate in time and space. A live performance is the concretisation of a script by the precise and specific vision of a director. If it is done effectively, it makes the spectator free from the shackles of imagining the play for himself. The concretisation of the varied details enables the spectator to concentrate on the developing action, the relationship among the characters, and the complications of action and character. In effect, every spectator may observe the play as he would see a scene from life. A facilitation of the same may be impossible for an arm-chair reader who has to imaginatively recreate every aspect of the entire play.

What a spectator sees and hears is also affected by the space in which he experiences a performance. Therefore, it is essential to know if the theatre has a proscenium arch stage, or a thrust stage, or an arena stage because the type of stage
influences the playwright’s deft manipulation of spectacle. But it is difficult to evaluate whether the structure of a play requires a certain kind of stage, or the physicality of the stage determines the kind of drama, for both are mutually reciprocal in their influence and impact.

Since drama is “as much a thing of the stage as of the page” (Watson 4), it is essential to get to know the stage conditions and techniques which lend a considerable share of effect to the doing aspect of drama. The gravity and amplitude of the Greek drama demanded “an austere, uncluttered stage”(4). The acting style was declamatory because the audience sat in tiers around the stage which was about sixty or seventy feet across. Conversely, the Elizabethan playhouse, which distinguished itself from the Greek theatre with its provision for the platform stage, was more intimate and informal due to the relative proximity of the spectators.

Shakespeare’s stage was flexible because the action took place not only on the platform stage, but also on an inner stage, and on balconies and galleries over the stage. Moreover, Shakespeare’s plays were not bound by the three unities. Sophocle’s Antigone which had “an austere single-line focus”, and Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra with its multitude of short bustling scenes are evidences for the two types of stage conditions.

As against the non-naturalistic conventions of ancient theatres, we have the proscenium or picture-frame stage which allows realism in terms of settings and styles. The stage provides an acting space behind the proscenium arch from which hangs the
curtain. The audience, as it were, see the action of the play through the “window" formed by the proscenium arch.

From the sixteenth century to the present century, the proscenium arch continues to be the feature of European theatres. The Italian artists during the Renaissance, desired a visual illusion of the real world on the stage: "This arch framed the picture they drew, and it has continued to be associated with spectacular scenery dominating the actors, or at least rivalling the attention given to them" (Morgan 33).

Another advantage of the proscenium arch, in those days was, it rendered assistance to the dramatist, in changing the scenery that worked the changes. The audience marvelled at what they saw with little knowledge about the technique that brought it about. From the nineteenth century onward, the performers got accustomed to confinement behind the proscenium arch entirely within the fictional world of the play. Later, when lighting was introduced, the acting space received brightness, and play-watching became a more intense and hypnotic experience in an auditorium which was darkened.

The sinking of the orchestra pit, where the musicians played below the level of the rest, separated the stage and the audience in a new way. The public turned into silent witnesses of characters who were forgetful of their presence. Thus came about a theatre of scenic illusion which encouraged a naturalistic treatment of subjects. The theatre was realistically furnished, due to which the objects on stage lost the exclusive symbolic quality that had so readily attached to them in earlier forms of theatre.
As regards the custom of dropping the curtain, much can be said. The introduction of curtain enabled the producers to conceal some changes at the cost of sacrificing continuity of performance. The practice is still continued in many productions, for the front curtain which conceals the stage from the audience is highly evocative. Often made of rich fabric such as red velvet, it sets the mood for a pleasurable occasion. From the moment when it rises, revealing the stage for the first time, to the very end when it falls for the last time, the audience is caught up in the enjoyment of a make-believe world.

It is true to say that most modern plays are written with the pre-conceived notion that they will be played within a proscenium arch, with its clever scenic and lighting effects. Many a time, this kind of staging is called 'the fourth-wall theatre'. The audience forms the fourth wall of an imaginary room, and the characters enact before them in the space of other walls ignoring or pretending to ignore the spectators. This is more artificial than the Greek chorus and the Elizabethan soliloquy, which faithfully acknowledged the presence of the audience.

The Indian theatre movement was akin to that of the West in traversing a classical tradition (Sanskrit Drama) which was rigid, and giving way to the growth of the folk theatre, which still prevails for being naïve, exciting, flexible, and culture-based. Currimbhoj's stage shows more of the Western theatre modes than of the East. His stage has always been a strongly visual experience. The images, which once merely decorated the stage of the other dramatists, are totally incorporated into the feature of his production, "not only providing environmental support for the actors but
contributing a visual response that is metaphorical rather than literal (Fransis Reid. Prologue. Designing For The Theatre. By Reid).

The visual effect required in the theatre can be created with three elements, which are scenery, props, and lighting. Until the time of Bernard Shaw none of the playwrights seemed to worry about how their plays were staged. We are aware of the conventions of Shakespeare's stage, but he has left us no direct indication in the form of prefaces, directions, descriptions of characters as to how he desired his work to be staged and interpreted. Many twentieth-century dramatists, on the other hand, are concerned themselves with the audio-visual form that their works take on the stage. Currimbhoy is one such playwright who has given elaborate statements in the form of theatre directions, and added production notes for staging his plays.

Of the three components used in creating the scenic effect required in the theatre, one may begin with the scenery which creates appropriate surrounding: "Another word used for it is the set" (Devlin 137). Setting is a broad word. It covers the places in which characters are presented; the social context of characters, such as their families friends and class; the customs, beliefs and rules of behaviour of their society; the situation for the events of the work of art; and the total atmosphere, mood or feel that is created by these. A successful setting is one which is appropriate to the scenic division of the drama in which it appears and also, possibly to the entire play as a whole.

The setting shows how a character is situated. It tells us whether his world is dark, oppressive, lonely, frightened and hostile, or not. In The Clock,
A man enters the room with a brief case in hand. He is about 45 years old with a very tired look about him. He drops the brief case, removes his over coat, kicks a roller-skate out of the way and plonks down heavily on the divan, stretching out without removing his dirty shoes. (12)

The general shabbiness of the room, and the weary appearance of the hero stand for the economic constraints of the family and its subsequent burden on the hero.

Currimbhoy's setting is basically emotive. Like Eugene O'Neill, he too believes in eliciting emotions on the stage to move an audience.

Our emotions are a better guide than our thoughts. Our emotions are instinctive. They are the result not only of our individual experiences but of the experiences of the whole human race, back through the ages. (Mullett. "The Extraordinary Story of Eugene O'Neill." American Magazine 34)

On Currimbhoy's stage, actions speak louder than words. Henry's kicking of the roller-skate out of the way is an expression of anger and agony. In other words, it embodies the utter helplessness of the working class community.

The setting reveals the theme of the work too. We must remember that we are not concerned with one scene but with how a particular setting, or series of settings, points to the theme of the work. The Clock is a one act play with a single scene. Hence
the setting remains the same emphasising the central idea - the need to make good in life on time.

Closely related to scenery are properties. This word, usually shortened to props, is the theatrical term for the countless objects that need to be brought on to the stage and used during the course of the play:

Props help an actor to make the story clearer or a character more convincing, so they must be used in ways that let the audience see them without being distracted by them. . . .

(Mccaffery 120)

In The Clock there is a radio. Henry “switches on the radio”(36), to listen to the commentator’s voice to know about the results of the boxing match. There is also a telephone: “Henry looks up the directory and dials the phone”(26), to talk to his friend and secretary. Apart from the props which go with the character, there are props which form part of the scenery:

In the centre wall of the room there is an immense illuminated wall-clock with a maddening “tick-tock”. A varga calendar is suspended under the clock. It is the 31st of December. The clock chimes ten times. (12)

In addition to these, “a few books among which Hemingway’s short stories are prominent”(12), in the room. Currimbhoy’s props are neither superfluous nor decorative, but functional in the general delineation of the theme of the play. The dramatist’s exclusive choice of Ernest Hemingway’s writings as a scenic prop
substantiates the observation. Hemingway’s heroes emphasise “the need to live each
moment properly and skillfully to sense judiciously the texture of every fleeting act and
Interpretations of American Literature 299).

Whether Henry is going to live each moment, or he is going to abandon the
principle of fortitude is the anticipation that the setting creates in the minds of the
audience. Another important element, in the stage designer’s visual language, is the
method by which stage space can be manipulated within a time sequence. During any
performance, there will definitely be a progression of time which may possibly involve
changes of place. The various means of handling such changes contribute to the overall
production style:

While it is possible to leave to the actors’ words the
stimulation of all the appropriate changes in the audience’s
imagination, most production styles seek the support of
lighting changes and/or physical movements. (Reid 31)

Lighting changes are often used without physical movement. That is, the set
remains static throughout, with all changes of time and, where appropriate, place
indicated by light. On the other hand, physical movements, which refer to change of
stage environment by repositioning the elements of scenery already present, can be
used without the light appearing to change in either quantity or quality. These changes
may take place within the sight of audience or be hidden behind a curtain or other form
of screening:
To change the stage environment ‘before your eyes’ is one of the most powerful techniques available to theatre. And this fluidity has been considerably enhanced by the developing possibilities of lighting. . . (Reid 35)

In all performances, the provision of lighting, thus, is a great consideration, for it assures the audience that they can see the stage action. Artificial lighting serves the basic function of illuminating the action of the play.

The Clock shows not outer action, which entertains and excites, but inner action which affects and captivates one’s soul. The very physical inactivity of Henry conceals a complex inner activity arousing a mass of associations, reminiscences fear, frustration, and uneasy feelings. As the play tries to discover subtleties and silent protests in the mind of Henry, the other characters do not have an individual identity. Though they are audible, they are not visible on the stage. This is made possible by the method recommended by the dramatist himself in the Preface:

A circle of light constantly envelops the single actor. This beam of light becomes larger or smaller, and lighter or darker, depending upon the desired theatrical effect, but it never leaves the actor. Since the rest of the stage is in darkness the audience can identify the presence of the other characters only by their sounds and shadows. (9)

Currimbhoy’s lighting technique reminds us of Tennessee Williams who relies on lighting, an extra-literary device, in The Glass Menagerie in order to
express the emotional content of the play. In keeping with the atmosphere of memory, the stage is dim throughout the play.

The Production Notes in The Glass Menagerie, however, emphasis the need for "shafts of light . . . focused on selected areas or actors, sometimes, in contradistinction to what is the apparent centre" (9). For instance, in the quarrel between Tom and Amanda, Laura is an astonished onlooker. Hence, the spotlight is on her figure. But the situation in The Clock is entirely different. The play does not have satellite characters, but only the centre character. Hence, the quality, intensity, and frequency of light shown on Henry changes not with respect to other characters, but with regard to the varying degrees of self-introspection.

Currimbhoy combines the features of expressionism, symbolism, realism, and naturalism. The common elements of expressionism and symbolism are externalisations in acting, setting, and incident of the inner emotional content, and inner psychology of characters and action. As a symbolist, Currimbhoy uses selective and atmospheric lights in The Clock. Selective lighting facilitates the audience to concentrate on chosen areas of the stage action:

While Mary is talking, Henry gets up from the divan and walks over to the window. The light follows him. The sound of Mary's voice trails off and the light circling Henry becomes dimmer, perhaps of a blue or indigo hue. (17)
The light creates a proper atmosphere for the character to soliloquise. The dramatists choice of a blue or indigo colour deserves a special mention. According to colour symbolism, blue stands for spirit. As it denotes the colour of the sky, blue is "readily used for depicting spiritual contents..." (Laszlo. The Basic writings of W.C.Jung W.C.G.Jung. Ed. 327). In the Orient myths, blue, which represents the immensity of the sea and the vast expanse of the sky, is associated with Lord Krishna and in the West, blue is the traditional colour of Virgin Mary. The indigo blue is referred to as blessed blue.

Indigo is not a colour by itself but a compound of blue and violet. Violet is the mystic colour, and it "certainly reflects the indubitably mystic or paradoxical quality of the archetype in a most satisfactory way..." (329). The Paradox of violet is, it is a harmonious blend of blue and red. Blue signifies the spirit and red denotes feelings and emotions. Henry in his first soliloquy says,

There's always a little window in the prison of life. And it looks out into a wider world and into an infinite heaven. Nothing filthy up there. I could sit and watch the stars all my life... and be happy. It is... a mere quiet solitude that beckons me within myself... or rather away from all of you. (18)

It reveals to us the dialectical opposition between the material bindings, and the spiritual prospects that he experiences at the time of self-analysis. To indicate the same,
light, an effective means of visual communication in terms of emotions and thoughts, becomes dimmer, "perhaps of a blue or indigo hue" (18).

Apart from the symbolic interpretation, the use of coloured light in the theatre has another practical use. Light energy is transmitted in the form of waves which have got three characteristics. They are, frequency, wavelength and velocity. Frequency is directly proportional to the energy content of the wave. So indigo has got maximum energy compared to all other colours. It produces "higher colour saturation" according to Kenneth M. Cameron and Theodore, J.C. Hoffman (391). The coloured light is meant to enhance visibility, concentration, mood, atmosphere and overall impact of the play.

Currimbhoy, further, employs the technique of light to conceal and reveal the distinction between dream and reality in the play. To present an instance, when Jane takes leave of Henry, he lies down on the coach, closes his eyes and goes off to sleep and the Production Notes pertaining to the scene describe thus:

The circle of light around him dims, then blacks out completely. Now the whole room takes on the indigo light, subdued and barely visible. In previous scenes the indigo light merely encircled him during soliloquies, but in this instance the whole room has the coloured light. It is meant to indicate a dream sequence with demi-real dream characters. (35)

Henry is lying on the couch, and on the stage facing the couch, appear two ominous characters who wake him up:
The figure lying on the couch gets up. But in his place there is another person still asleep. They both resemble Henry. This is the key that indicates to the audience that they are witnessing a dream-scene with Henry asleep and his dream image getting up. A dummy concealed in the dim indigo light should take Henry's place during the short black out.

The onerous responsibility of the dramatist does not stop with a mere presentation of the script to the stage. He gets himself associated with every phase of the production. His presence is not behind the screen but on the line. Currimbhoy desires a distinct acting style for Bhima in The Dumb Dancer. So he remarks,

... the acting of Bhima must follow the curious pattern of one who is subject to deep and varying moods. He is at times spontaneously exhilarating and at other times silent and morose. The volatility of adolescence gives him a certain charm, which fascinates as much as it intrigues. (2.1.26)

The umbilical cord between the creator and the created is so intense and spontaneous that the playwrights recommendations to the directors in matters of character selection and presentation should be treated with due respect. Currimbhoy tries to paint as full a picture as he can for the reader, and for those who will produce the play. The audience will not know what it is missing, but the precise information will help the stage designer and directors and actors in understanding what effect Currimbhoy wishes to achieve.
As regards the allegation that Currimbhoy shows unhealthy scenes on the stage, much can be said in favour of Currimbhoy. It is true that he shows violence to a certain extent on the stage but the severity of the act is scaled down with the assistance of stage instruments such as lighting, for instance. To perform a great sacrifice, Bhima recedes into the shadows:

. . . then suddenly a scream that turns hoarse . . . Bhima emerges again into the flickering light, dancing with the shock of one about to collapse. His eyes gleam with satanic victory, and blood gushes out from his mouth. He throws at the feet of his Guru . . . his own severed tongue. (2.1.46)

The spirit of drama is not in reportage but in the visual applications of events. Currimbhoy combines these two as and when the dramatic need arises. In the final scene, after the autopsy, Prema approaches the table in the dimness of the operating theatre: “She then removes from a bag she carries the mask of Duryodhana and puts it on the corpse” (72), after which she recedes into the darkness. And in the ensuing conversation between Dilip and Guru we are given to knowledge that Prema’s life is in danger.

Suddenly, the audience are interrupted by a woman’s piercing scream from the direction of the amphitheatre. We see Dilip running to the theatre. Currimbhoy hardly considers light a technical object but a living thing on account of its dynamism and fluidity. When Dilip opens the door,
The light falls on his face. There is an expression of horror on it... as the light shifts gradually, like some living thing, on what he sees... Prema is in Bhima’s arms. She is holding his hand over the loose hair on her head... stroking it...

while the blood flows over her hair.... (3.2.73)

Currimbhoy “alights upon theatrically effective means and materials through which he registers his communication with his audience” (Nigam 25-26). To depict Bhima’s insane fantasy, in The Dumb Dancer, Currimbhoy emphasises an under-water scene which can be created with the assistance of a cine-projection on a semi-transparent curtain covering the stage so that the image of the waves gradually rises from the bottom until the complete scene is immersed seemingly underwater:

Before the water-scene commences, within the lights and shadows of the inner stage (heightened with colour), the outlines of a row of jail-like structures begins to emerge which cages the insane.... (2.2.48)

The projection of the cage-like structure is indicative of a temporary imprisonment that Bhima might have gone through before being confined to the Asylum or the mental hospital itself or even the Kathakali training institution as Bhima’s fantasy dictates. Currimbhoy’s lighting technique shows the brilliant convergence of time present and time past.

The transition of light, from one visual structure to the other with the least chronological sequence, is not to confuse the spectators, but to identify the morbidity of
the thought processes of Bhima. Currimbhoy’s fantasy technique is visually appealing to accommodate what Shakespeare calls “the two hours’ traffic of our stage”. While William Faulkner’s interior monologues and stream-of-consciousness expressions are narrative, Currimbhoy’s fantasy frame is pictorial. Therefore, it promotes concentration and immediacy which are the virtues of the stage performance. In the fashion of the more contemporary dramatists, Currimbhoy realises that between him and his audience there are directors and designers who must interpret his work and he gives them,

... overtly and by inference, a range of opportunity which is presently leading to an anarchy in some modern theatres where the director’s work may be raised even above that of the dramatist. In Currimbhoy’s work, however, as might be expected of one for whom thought dominates, the control of the play is never meant to pass from his hands. (I. Messerve and J. Meserve. Foreword. 9-20)

Realistic drama is often opposed to romantic presentation. The romance is said to present life as we would have it to be-more picturesque, fantastic, adventurous or heroic than actuality. Realism, on the other hand, is said to present life as it really is.

The scene of action in The Doldrummers is a shack at Juhu beach in the suburbs of metropolitan Bombay: “The shack is made of thatched coconut-palm and one section of it is visible on the stage”(9). As the beach forms the setting of the play, to maintain realism, it does not have artificial lighting devices. There are only kerosene lamps to indicate the arrival of night and those lamps cast “shadows on the curtains and one sees
the pantomime of life mutely played” (10). In order to present the modern youth and their purposelessness in life, the dramatist adheres to realistic details in terms of setting and characters. As a mark of recognition, Srinivasa Iyengar states that “the play is but a vivid portraiture of certain segments of every day actuality”. (249) The Physicality of the stage has its own constraints. Hence at times of necessity, Currimbhoy resorts to the reportorial manner of staging events in The Doldrummers.

Liza talks excitedly about how Rita rescued Tony in the sea. She is absolutely overwhelming in her narration that the “bored looking policeman” (2.2) is allowed to tell her about the death of Joe only after her picturesque report. Creating shade and darkness where and when needed is as important as providing light. Hence as a part of stage innovation, Currimbhoy introduces black-out technique to conclude scenes. Instead of lowering the curtain, which breaks dramatic continuity, the sudden turning off of stage lighting during the performance sets a proper mood for the dream-scene during which a dummy concealed in the dim light takes Henry’s place in The Clock. And Henry gets up as a dream-image to challenge the killers. Black-out technique, as part of Currimbhoy’s stagecraft, conserves time, and it enables the audience to live through a moment of dramatic suspense, which is the essence of the illusory staging. As stage instrument it vibrates interest and excitement.

Apart from arousing the visual thinking of the audience, the introduction of dream-scene in The Clock serves the following purpose. It provides psychological interest in the character analysis of Henry, for it is through dream, the dramatist plumbs the deep mysteries of the human mind. Freud explicates,
Dreams contain images . . . and they arise spontaneously without our assistance and are representatives of a psychic activity . . . Dreams indicate certain basic trends in the psychic process . . . dreams are nothing less than self-portraits of psychic process. . . . (345)

The two gun men who appear and threaten Henry in his room are the externalisation of fear that he experiences on account of his professional setbacks. The air-drawn-dagger and the ghost of Bango in Shakespeare's Macbeth are part of the imagination of the principal character. But the Gun men are shown as demi-real characters with “heavy overcoats, low slung felt-hats and hands deep in the overcoat pocket” (35) in order to add to the visual realism of the stage.

The reader of a play-text, to experience the fullness of drama, performs the whole play in his imagination. Whereas, a live performance arouses an elemental desire in mankind to go to the play houses which are places of excitement and the aspects of the physicality of the stage include the use of the physical grouping of the actors, and the skill to juxtapose different dramatic contexts, which enhance the visual impact of the play. In The Dumb Dancer the scene of action is the operation theatre of a mental asylum where a dance sequence from Duryodhana’s slaughter is enacted. The setting imparts a feeling of fear, terror, sickness and psychological oppression:

The stage is in complete darkness. Gradually, one perceives the faint glow of a luminous line dividing the stage in two . . .
on the stage there are two separate groups of audiences
witnessing the dance-play. They are oblivious of each other,
as though the line in-between was a dimensional separation
of time and space. . . . (1.1.12)

The audience who are on the right side of the stage are insane, and therefore they
are contained in a strange cage-like structure. They scream, howl, and tear the clothes
and hair, in sheer despair of madness. This is in sharp contrast with the left side
audience who are sane, quiet, well-dressed, and gracious. The main character, Bhima,
moves as he dances to the right and left side of the stage following the symbolism of the
centre line represented by the stage light.

To put it in the other way, the very crux of the problem with the main character
is revealed in the lighting technique. Similar to that of a simple pendulum, Bhima
sways between the right and left side audiences on the stage. But this human
pendulum, unlike the mechanical apparatus, never achieves a resting point because the
mentally-deranged audience curiously impel the dancer to their side from time to time
like birds of the same feather to flock together.

The Dumb Dancer is a dance play within a play. The play-within-the play is a
complex but undeniably powerful stagecraft intended to create dramatic simultaneity
on the stage. The rewarding examples are Shakespeare’s Midsummer Night’s Dream
and Hamlet. The centre stage captures our attention when it shows Bhima dancing
ecstatically after killing his mortal foe and dipping the hair of Draupadi in the blood of
him. At the same time, the response of Prema, one of the members of the left side of the
stage to the dance recital, is also highlighted. At one time during the performance, she
had bent down and picked up a strand of black hair which fell from Draupadi’s wig.
She continues to tighten and loosen the string during the rest of the dance performance.
There are technical difficulties while introducing simultaneous actions on the stage. But
Currimbhoy offers excellent and elaborate footnotes, a sign of far-sighted prudence, to
combat the constraints. He writes thus:

\[ 
\text{\ldots since she forms part of the audience, and the centre of} \\
\text{attraction has been the dance, it may be difficult to single out} \\
\text{her reactions and the movement of the string around her} \\
\text{fingers. Perhaps an extra light can be thrown in her} \\
\text{direction, particularly the movements of her hands, to create} \\
\text{this interest. \ldots (15)} 
\]

The black string is in the foreground, for when it gets snapped, the tension in the
hall is released. Every one is relaxed and normal. But Prema is "still standing, looking
fixedly at the frayed ends of the broken string. Then she raises her eyes and looks up at
the young man who is staring at her seriously" (15). Watching drama is a moment of
life and death; life because it enlivens our understanding of events and death because it
signifies the incalculable forces that are yet to be identified and acknowledged.
Currimbhoy’s recommendation of an extra light to the exposition scene which predicts
evidences of abnormalcy justifies the same.
Currimbhoy introduces flashback devices to isolate and underline the past which has a direct bearing on the present action and development of the dramatic character. In Act II scene i, the audience are shown the interior of a large bamboo or palm leaf hut which represents a small village in Kerala. To maintain stage realism the dramatist stresses that the “focal point of light is a great brass lamp with flickering cotton wicks lit from coconut oil” (25).

As the curtain opens, one sees at a glance, in this learning centre, the different facets of training and preparation for the dance in which each pupil is engaged. Bhima, the first pupil, is receiving an oil massage from the Guru. Madhu, the second pupil is reciting the couplets from The Mahabharata. The third one is practising mudras and the fourth one is applying facial colouring on himself. Currimbhoy states, “The above exercise are shown simultaneously for stage effect, although in practice this need not be so” (26).

The average human mind experiences joy not in solitude but in the multiplicity of events and co-existence of beings. Currimbhoy has succumbed to one such psychological urge on account of which he assembles characters on the stage. On the stage, a dramatist can ill-afford to be whimsical. While the audio-medium is time bound, stage, the visual medium, is space bound. The presentation of training centre activities, thus, serves the purpose of keeping the stage fully occupied and gives an eye-full delight to the viewers.

It appears that a work of art hardly belongs to the writer but to the public, the moment it is published, to that extent, that the readers or the viewers by virtue of
implication enjoy the privilege of interpreting the work in the manner they desire. When Currimbhoy was interviewed by Rajinder Paul and Paul Jacob who represented Enact to ascertain whether or not he was deliberate in his reference to the then political situation on the eve of the invasion of Goa, the dramatist answered as follows:

\[\ldots\text{Infact I never was really conscious that it was going to have such depths of political meaning, that people could read so much more than what I thought I put in, but that is so with very many writers and playwrights.}\ldots\] (1970)

Though the public take liberty of interpreting a work of art, in the stage execution of a play like *Thorns on a Canvas* it is worthwhile to concede the recommendation that the playwright suggests. Currimbhoy makes two important overall considerations regarding the development and production of the first scene.

Firstly, all movements and directions must be subsidiary to the single action of the thorn and the bubble. The dancing and music and other improvisations can either be concurrent or in successive transition, but they are on the periphery so to speak of the central action, comprising the young man, the ungainly girl, and the beautiful daughter who is intrigued by them. Secondly, the arts must have a mechanical character, and gradually the individual variations must be reconciled to a uniform and harmonious action. As the scene develops, the initial individual exuberance is replaced
by unemotional and repetitive forms with the effect of the
full orchestrations.” (1.11-12)

As stated earlier, the dramatist’s view, as regards the performing aspect of
drama, may help the producers concentrate on the singleness of effect as well as avoid
slickness of execution. Similarly, in the scene of art exhibition in Thorns on a Canvas
Currimbhoy shows a great deal of stage acumen. Malti and her father enter from one
side of the stage and gradually move clockwise through the crowd. But Yakub and
Nafesa move anticlockwise. The conversation shifts from one centre to another during
their polarised movements. When they meet after having completed the semi-circle,
Nafesa and Malti become variable forces. Consequently, Malti seems to mentally share
a sense of communion with Yakub though she is physically seen with her father. That
she desires to exchange her thoughts with him is made explicit with the help of stage
lighting device:

This sense of reciprocity may be manifested through brighter
and dimmer glow of spotlights. For example if Yakub’s
speech is directed to Malti who is on the other side of the
room with her father, the light is brighter on the two of them
and darker on the rest of the room. (3.35)

In all the pre-electrical theatres, no actor or scenic element could ever have been
isolated. The purpose of light was to throw illumination on action. But “modern stage
lighting could itself generate three-dimensional space and that a single object could be
spatially changed by altering the light falling on it” (M. Cameron, and J.C. Hoffman,
Equally, the device of lighting is used to indicate transitions. The father and daughter defect over to the group of apprentice artists, when Yakub and Nafesa go over to the "Establishment" group. At one point of concurrence Malti and Yakub come closer till their fingers almost touch each other.

To visually indicate the physical nearness of them "the light becomes more intense on the two and the rest becomes darker" (3.45). The power of the play is bound up with its scenic method of presentation. Lighting is thus a means of ensuring visual communication and visual learning.

In order to show the texture and form of the three-dimensional art Yakub helps Malti see the real nautch dance during which he requests her to stretch her imagination and look beyond:

As though with magic perspective, a curtain behind the dancer lifts to reveal a thin veil behind which is a perfect reproduction of the Nautch held in the Moghul Court of the 17th century with all the colour and richness of the old times when Nawabs and Maharajas patronized the arts. . . (4.50)

Currimbhoy has chosen to depict a scene which is "almost 300 years old" (4.51) because "it isn't so difficult to see that far back, is it? Why it might well have been . . . yesterdays, or tomorrow if you want it to be that way. . . (4.51). So he advises the producers as follows:
If production difficulties restrict the use of artists and décor,
a film of this scene can equally well be projected on the
transparent screen to depict this fantasy. (4.51)

Adoption of film techniques appears to some purists of the theatre art,
unwarranted and unjustifiable, for it dilutes the darling singularity of the theatre.
Currimbhoy's stage techniques have a revealing function rather than an embellishing function. There has been a mingling of diverse elements not for the sake of novelty but for an inherent necessity of introducing experimental moods and visual styles for the benefit of the more sophisticated and technically oriented theatre audiences of the future.

To cite another instance of the complex aspect of dramatic simultaneity with reference to setting and lighting, the following scene of action can be taken for analysis from *Thorns on a Canvas*. A little while after scene iv, the stage is shown mostly composed of darkness and shadows except for two areas of light.

In the far left corner is a shabby room with a bed positioned in such a way that the spectators cannot see in the semi-darkness whether there is anyone lying in it or not. There is no sound or movement from this direction. But there is another bed-room in the near right corner of the stage, with a dressing table and mirror in front of which Malti is found combing her hair. She then wears her bracelets, and anklets, and proceeds towards the other side of the stage.

Now the light dims on the right side of the stage and grows expansively towards the side of Yakub's bed-room.
above) with a door somewhere in the centre of the stage. . . (5.59)

When Malti enters the bedroom which lies in silent semi-darkness, her voice wavers:

Suddenly there is the click of a light-switch, and the bedside-table-lamp throws a sharp circle of light that cuts through the darkness, partially blinding Malti – and the audience behind who experience her shock effect. . . (5.60)

Through the blinding light, the forms on the bed seem to emerge into focus. Yakub and Nafesa are shown in an intimate embrace. A traditional stage can hardly produce an uninterrupted visual effect. On the other hand, a picture-frame stage which shows fluidity in accommodating simultaneous sets, gives way for dual scenes and multiple emotional effects, as that of shock, horror and indescribable rage that Malti experiences, and an impassive expression that Yakub articulates to the audience.

Currimbhoy’s stage is contrary to Badal Sircar’s New theatre which marks a different theatre movement in the modern Bengali drama. The New Theatre is anti-proscenium in nature and it does not depend on the elements of staging. On the contrary, Currimbhoy is highly emotive. Hence, he manipulates the scenic means, at his disposal, to give his plays the emotional resonance that affects his audience.

As a consummate playwright, Currimbhoy is fully aware of the limitations of the stage possibilities, and he takes deliberate efforts to create an organic and dramatic unity through stage directions and visual replays which are the most obvious means of
rendering assistance to the process of production so that the play may develop along
the line he desires. For instance, in Goa, the scene of the play is the Patio, an immense
square, in the center of the stage. To the square or Patio (facing the audience), a white
curch built on the foundation stone of a temple with Hindu carvings. To the West of
the Patio is a Taverna and to the East of the Patio jutting out partly on the square, a
trellis balcony with a partial view of the residence, around which most of the action of
the play takes place. Except for a few changes, this main scene remains unchanged
throughout the play. As the action of the play takes before the Indian takeover of Goa,
the setting acquires a historical colouring. Several groups of people are seen at the
patio benches. They exchange remarks. Yet their voices are inaudible to the audience:
"It is not as though the scene we pantomime, but merely that their voices are either
not loud or clear enough to be over heard. There is a reason for this method . . ." (1.1.13).

The patio walk is important in the play, and by the end of the first act, three
principal characters will have taken this walk before the eyes of the bench-watchers
whose reciprocal reactions will reveal to the audience a lot about the characters of the
three players. For instance, when Maria walks coquettishly on the Patio, there is "a
suggestion of nudge and smile" (1.1.14) among the bench-watchers informing us of her
flippancy in matters of morality.

In order to alight on the advantages of sign language or body language,
Currimbhoy makes the bench-walkers talk less and show more signs. But it is to be
acknowledged that his direction notes are at times dubious, ambiguous and
challenging. To cite an evidence, Currimbhoy describes that Rose's voice "comes like a single silvery shaft of moonlight" (15). Equally, while introducing Krishna, he says that "there is a strange precocity about him, a distant mystery" (1.3.44). Such remarks are too difficult to be executed visually on the stage.

Similarly, Currimbhoy's off-stage techniques too raise debatable issues. For instance, the last scene where it is not clear whether Krishna is killed by Rose or he commits suicide. When the interviewers from the Enact had approached him for clarification, he told them:

I've been asked this question very many times, I've as far as possible avoided giving an answer because I left it to the director to work it out any way he or she chose. I've had three directors for this play and I think most of them have thought, if not all, that she killed him. (1970)

But the playwright's concept is that "Krishna was an idealist" (1970), and out of sheer remorse he might have killed himself. Currimbhoy says that he did not discuss this point because he thought "a director needs to have an anchorage in terms of his own thinking, and somehow I'm myself as a playwright not all dogmatic" (1970). However, to indicate that Krishna has killed himself it was agreed that "there must be a line added" (1970). And the dramatist frankly admits that he has not done it because "it will spoil the whole thing. India hasn't committed suicide yet" (1970). Brushing aside the political association, if one takes Rose and Krishna as mere fictional characters, the
dramatist shows poetic justice in the death of Krishna who has brutally violated the innocence of Rose.

The rape scene is a crucial incident in the play but it is not shown on the stage but off the stage. However Currimbhoy's verbal ejaculations and repetitions help us realise the gravity of the situation:

Now! Now! Come, Maria! Hold her! Hold her... by the black hair! see for yourself! feel... for her! (Maria rises fainting, beyond herself, yet rising to his command) Come, Maria! Now! Now! Hold Her!... (2.2.78)

Apart from on stage and off-stage events, Goa is significant in its absorption of light and shadow devices. It is used in Act I scene II to convey to the audience the suggestion that the Portuguese Administrator’s opening speech is reflective of his thought processes and not meant to be heard by others. Again in the opening of the last scene "a mere spotlight" is focused on the Goan Nationalist to imply a soliloquy. With the creation of sophisticated lighting systems, area emphasis and area identification have become possible stage features:

The extreme selectivity of modern lighting allows single actors to become, as it were the playing area: spotlighted on an otherwise dark stage, they are the stage. More subtly, area can be emphasized or de-emphasized by more or less light, or warmer or cooler light, and the reflectability of
costume colours and materials can be exploited to give certain actor emphasis... (M. Cameron 301)

Maria inflicts pain on her by making Krishna whore his love with her. The unnaturalness of this act is visually emphasised “when she changes her clothes into bright scarlet with a black scarf and dark red lipstick across her white expressionless face” (1.3.52). Undoubtedly, the scene projects “the image of the whore of Babylon” (Pan 83).

Light including lightning and shadow is employed most effectively to evolve surrealistic effects at the time of Rose being tarnished by Krishna: “There is a flash of lightning outside. It strikes the cross atop the church, which falls. While Rose screams, with pain and horror and a deeper death...” (2.2.78). Equally at the beginning of the last scene, light stands for the response of the elemental forces of nature which bears witness to the sad spectacle of the human tragedy. When Krishna skulks in the darkness of the Tavern to kill Alphonso, “there are indications of thunder and lightning, forecasting yet another night like that of the invasion” (2.3.81). When the murderous act is over, lightning falls on Krishna to show his hideous face whereupon “he hides it, covers it, withdrawing within the collar and dirty and torn clothes” (81). But there is neither thunder nor lightning, the sky is clear and the balcony stands silhouetted in the moon light when Krishna decides to approach Rose on her own terms of detachment and on his own way of intimacy at the end of the play.
If cosmic agitation forecasts an impending danger, its stillness can give a warning of something bad that is going to happen. And a good lighting system on the stage can evoke pity, the impulse to approach, and terror, the impulse to retreat.

The flexibility of light on the stage includes the four basic functions. They are light intensity, colour, direction and size of the area lighted. Light, which gives animation to actors, action and space, in itself is an animated object and in the world of Currimbhoy, as he has already stated in The Dumb Dancer "the light shifts gradually like some living thing" (73) on what one sees.

As regards lighting in The Hungry ones it is observed that the playwright introduces scenes which abound in darkness to spread gloom and doom:

Sam and Al look around slowly, peering through the darkness. They see, along the foot paths, rows upon rows of maimed and deformed beggars, some begging for alms, some moaning softly, some bearing patiently, some waiting. They start at the beginning of the row, lighting matches to see the faces of each individual beggar, to blaze out shockingly, in disease and deformity. . . . (13.37)

The desire for perfect realism with regard to the presentation of scenes can hardly be attained. In fact, conceptions change about what is acceptable as a realism. Just as outmoded clothes look crude and comical, so conventions of realism also go out of style. Nevertheless, the quest for visual realism continues. Currimbhoy, in tune with
the spirit of the theatre, shows his characters in relation to their environment by means of appropriate scenery, props and lighting.

For some dramatists, the technique of light, as a stage device, is an evil but a necessary evil because it is an intriguing and frustrating field of experiment. Regarding the question whether or not stage instruments are indispensable, much can be said on both sides. It is true that sometimes actors and playwrights are wearied by the technical complexities of scenic effects, knowing, that the power of the imagination to build scenery can be greater than the most lavish set. But it should be earnestly acknowledged that the art of scene design has its own charm. So, on examining stagecraft we discover a contradiction. Scenery is expendable, for the basics of theatre are actors, audience, a time and place, a drama to be performed. On the other hand, scenic art, the invention and physical creation of an imagined place has a powerful allure. It appears as if man has achieved the power of God to create a world at will, like the magician Prospero does in Shakespeare’s The Tempest.

The world is a great theatre, where Gods and nature are the director, designer and playwright. Conversely, theatre represents the created world. Perhaps, if we see, enjoy and understand the significance of the image, we may see, enjoy and comprehend the world more easily, and the following chapter, “The Attributes of Music and Spectacle”, may confirm the observation.