CHAPTER-IX

CONCLUSION
Post-colonial Literature consists of a body of writing emanating from Europe’s former colonies addressing the questions of history, identity, ethnicity, gender and language. The term should be used loosely and hesitatingly, for it is replete with contradictions and conundrums. Most of the British colonies won independence in the mid 20th century. In countries like West Indies, India, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya an important body of literature which is known as Commonwealth Literature or Post-colonial Literature has come up. Viney Kirpaul calls this Third world Literature. According to her, the term Third world Literature refers to the non-aligned group of countries which do not belong either to the capitalist block or the communist block. The term is also being used broadly today to refer to the world’s under-developed countries though quite a few of these countries are not non-aligned in their relationship with other countries. While Bruce King calls the third world literature, New Literatures in English, C.D. Narasimhaiah has named it Commonwealth Literature. According to him, the Commonwealth found themselves for the first time at the giving end. And while the mother country began to be at the receiving end and what it received was not gold, silver, diamond, jute, cotton, silk or spices, but the things of the mind and the spirit. This one act alone gave a tremendous boost to the creative talent in Commonwealth countries. C.D. Narasimhaiah rightly feels that the writers from Commonwealth
countries have produced a good body of literature that is being read with utmost reverence even by the teachers of English. Prestigious publishing houses like Oxford University Press, Heinmann and Chatto and Windus also came forward to publish books by the creative writers in English from the Commonwealth countries. African writing in English has some place in the realm of Commonwealth literature.

Of the literatures that emanate from the Commonwealth, the literature of Africa has come into literary foreground for total and informed comprehension. Africa in the eyes of Europe, remained as a dark continent. Most of the Europeans felt that Africans were in a state of nature and in perfect harmony with their environment. In most of the novels set in Africa, there have been vegetative references to the dark skin of the Africans; there is a tension between the restraints of society and the inner impulses of the white man. The pressures of society exerted largely through the press, mould the lives of the people in stereotype ways and produce a world of conformists. The ordered compartmentalized modern life has made man selfish and indifferent, whereas in the primitive ways of life, man is still full of concern for his fellow beings. In Conrad’s Heart of Darkness, the protagonist renounces the materialist world in favour of a world in which the sense of taste is finer, the sense of pleasure keener and the sense of terror deeper and purer.
The great Sahara desert separates the North African continent from Europe. So it was difficult for the Europeans to enter Africa. But some explorers and traders made use of the coastal line of the African continent and reached it. They even established their strong castles on the long coastal line and traded from there. The traders in the early 11th century established their roots that were stretched up to northern Kenya. They collected gold, ivory and above all, the slaves from Africa and established the line of commercial exploitation. In the 17th and 18th centuries many slaves were taken to the European countries. In the 19th century, the British established their sovereignty over Kenya. Many of them transacted a lot of business particularly in the trade of ivory. The slave trade and the trade of ivory had a devastating effect on the Africans in general and the Kenyans in particular.

Colonialism undermined the African culture, their religion and literature but consciously elevated English. So, the written language in a child’s upbringing at school became the child’s written word, but was not the word of his immediate environment in the family and the community. For a colonial child, the harmonious adjustment with the language of communication was completely broken. This resulted in the difference in the sensibility of the child. In a nutshell, it led to colonial alienation that brought in changes in the teaching of History, Geography and Music.
Most of the African countries were liberated from the clutches of colonialism during the 1960's. Unfortunately, the colonial tradition is continued in Africa by the international bourgeoisie aided by the flag waving native ruling classes. The economic and political dependence of the African neo-colonialism enforced on a restive population through police groups, barbed wires and a gowned judiciary and clergy. Their ideas were spread by a group of state intellectuals, the academics and the journalists of the neo-colonial establishment. In practice, the political independence has not brought the true independence as the post-colonial mind still engages itself the colonial experience.

Before attaining independence, the African creative writers made drama as an instrument in the struggle for freedom and political power. After independence, they have felt that it is their primary duty to expose the ill-effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism on the social and political order, nepotism, political corruption, dictatorship, the problem of tribalism, radicalism, religious and cultural clash. Playwrights like Wole Soyinka, J.P. Clark, Ngugi, John Ruganda and Francis Imbuga have powerfully treated these themes in their plays in their own way.

Francis Imbuga is now regarded as one of the prolific playwrights of East Africa. Unaffected by Mau Mau movement, which culminated in the national independence of Kenya, Imbuga enters into the complexities of social and political problems in post-independent African
countries. His plays are powerfully dramatic, revealing the ability in creating interesting situations, portraying realistic characters, writing powerful yet simple and humorous dialogue.

Francis Davis Imbuga's birth on 2\textsuperscript{nd} February, 1947 in Wenyange village in the Maragoli sub-tribe of the Luhya tribe of Western Kenya, marked the period of abject poverty and absolute repressive regime in the history of Kenya. In the face of the political and economic upheavals, his father, Samuel Govoga had to search restlessly for jobs in Nairobi on his removal from service after fighting in the Second World War to defend his white master's interests. His mother was a women's leader in a local church even though she could barely read the Bible. Young Imbuga taught her how to read the Bible. The circumstances which forced his father to leave for the city to look for work and his close association with his mother in Christian atmosphere have consciously and unconsciously influenced Imbuga's literary life.

Imbuga's study in a primary school has something to do with the kind of dramatist he became later. He studied in Alliance High School, which exposed him to English language and also to the intense theatrical activity. Encouraged by his teachers, he played an active role in some plays like \textit{Julius Caesar} and thus equipped himself with the art of Theatre. During his stay at school, (1964-68), he encountered some tragic events in his life. The first was the death of Amugune, the
foremost Christian Quaker and pioneer Christian, who inspired many Africans. Secondly, his mother's death too moved the tender mind of Imbuga. In fact, these two tragic events touched the mental proclivities of Imbuga. The death of the Christian Quaker and the tragic loss of his mother are vividly captured in his powerful plays Aminata and Game of Silence.

After the successful completion of his primary education, he went to Nairobi for higher studies in 1970. In fact, his university life too has a bearing on his dramatic career. At the University of Nairobi, he met friends, like Greg Adambo and Felix Osodo with whom he participated in the theatrical activity. During his studies at the university, he met Ngugi, a highly versatile artist and most evocative powerful writer of plays and novels. His relationship with Ngugi inspired him in understanding political and linguistic issues in Africa. In fact, he appreciated Ngugi's commitment to Marxist ideology and to Africa's rural people. This must have gone a long way in shaping Imbuga as a man of the Theatre. Joe de Graft, a playwright and senior lecturer at the university in the Department of English, has also shaped his aesthetic sensibility. Imbuga's friendship with de Graft was so long lasting that the latter recommended Imbuga for a UNESCO scholarship to further his education in drama and Theatre. The jobs Imbuga held gave him an opportunity to widen his literary horizons. His first assignment as a
lecturer in Communication and Technology provided him with the requisite nuances in writing his plays. His association with the University Drama Society also enabled him to produce quite a few plays by Wole Soyinka.

Imbuga’s literary trips to a number of foreign countries have also influenced his dramatic art. People abroad invited him to their countries and requested him to produce the African plays there. With an invitation from Geoffrey Axworthy, he visited Cardiff, Wales. His stay at Cardiff, attending hectic theatrical programmes between October 1974 and June, 1975 sharpened his critical acumen as a dramatist. He even worked under Adrian Mitchell, a playwright-in-residence and also lecturer in-charge of play composition and improvisation. In fact, Mitchell’s plays dealt with the themes of war compartmentalized inhumanity and private property. In a way, he was a playwright with certain well-defined ideas. As part of his exposure to drama in education groups, which were attached to professional theatre company, Imbuga watched Harold Pinter’s *Tea Party*, which tremendously influenced him to introduce certain dramatic techniques like *dream* into his plays.

His brief visit to the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, provided him with an opportunity to have useful contacts with Efua Sutherland. Imbuga’s short stay in the Department of Theatre
Arts, University of Ibadan, after his visit to Ghana, was important because of his association with the Unibadan Masks. These visits of Imbuga to various countries have benefited him with the experience he needed to initially evaluate the political moves of his motherland in his plays.

After having served as a lecturer at Kenyatta University, Nairobi, he went to the USA for pursuing Ph.D. In fact, he spent quite some time at the University of Iowa, USA, which stirred his creative imagination. He had an opportunity to witness the dramatic activity in that country. Much of theatre veneer has gone into his works. During his stay at Iowa University, he participated in many academic programmes including International Writing Programme there. He happened to meet creative writers, critics and scholars from different parts of the world and had an exchange of views with them. He gave a lecture on Amlnata throwing light on the major thematic concerns of the play including the gender issue in Africa. He also witnessed many American plays which kept him quite alive to the various trends in drama in the world in general and in the USA in particular. This certainly moulded him in making him a playwright of well-defined ideas.

All these influences have left their unmistakable impression on Imbuga's dramatic career. He wrote plays dealing with problems of independence, freedom and social equality in the post-colonial Kenya.
In this study, the main stress is laid on the dominant ideas that pervade the six prominent plays of Imbuga.

Imbuga's powerful play, *Betrayal in the City*, conveys the idea of the theme of marginality. The play also makes a study of disturbed political system in the post-independent African society, where evils like neo-colonialism and dictatorship have taken a firm hold. In Kafira, the government officials — Mulili, Tumbo, Kabito and Nicodemo — are the agents of the evils like oppression and neo-colonialism while Boss represents the entire evil group. Adika, a student leader, and his old parents, Doga and Nina, who have been killed, are the victims of the onslaught of this group. Jere, Mosese and Jusper are the revolutionary leaders, who have been thrown into prison for having opposed the misrule. But during the rehearsal of a play, in which Boss also partakes, Jere, Jusper and Mosese seize the guns from the security guards and take Boss as a prisoner and thus topple the government. Thus the play did not detract too much from what is good entertainment with the surprising sting in the tail.

Imbuga's next play, *Game of Silence*, is a powerful drama of ideas because it has comprehensively taken up the issue of oppression. It also projects metaphorically man's insensitivity to the suffering of fellow human beings. This tendency to cork one's ears to the miseries and agonies of the victims of terror and tyranny is best illustrated by
Flora and also by Bango. The self-imposed silence of the victims about their own suffering is also signified in the very title of the play. Throughout the play, one perceives an act of subversion of the dominant societal ideologies of silence. It was an explosion in the general void of silence which Imbuga saw obtaining in his country at that time.

In his The Successor Imbuga discusses the merits of democracy as an ideal system of government. The play exposes the weaknesses of one-man rule and suggests democracy as a model form of government. The idea that pervades the entire play is that monarchy is a dangerous and self-stultifying rule. Hence, there is a need for democracy where values like individual freedom and peace flourish. Emperor Chonda, a weak ruler, who doesn’t have male children to succeed him, foolishly concentrates more on his dreams than on the affairs of the kingdom. This fragile position of the emperor paves the way for his ministers, Oriomra and Sasia, to play power politics. In the end, the chief conspirator, Oriomra, is arrested. Jandi, the successor and Sega Sega, the emperor's food-taster, make the thematic statement that the country may embrace democracy exposing the inherent weaknesses of monarchy.

Man of Kafira is equally a drama of ideas. The playwright earnestly enquires into the matters of truth, love and the art of drama. In
the beginning, Boss is in exile in Abiara where he has fled after his overthrow in a coup in Kafira. During the coup, Boss abducts Regina, Mosese's sister, and Jusper's fiance, forcing her to marry him. The efforts of Gafi, the president of Abiara, prompts Boss to leave for Kafira voluntarily. In the end, he is dramatically killed by his third wife, Regina. The playwright examines the perversion of truth and substitution of love with the brutality in the society. The main thrust is on the fact that democracy and equality have not yet been achieved and everyone should strive to achieve these values.

Imbuga's powerful play, *Aminata*, takes up the cause of the *new woman*. Aminata fights for her just rights of inheritance of her father's gift of land property. Aminata, a liberally educated young lawyer, is set against Jumba, her traditional old uncle and headman of Membe. Her education is mainly derived from her father's teachings. Pastor Ngoya, her father, has challenged the superstitious traditions of his people. He has built his church in the place of the sacred tree. Contrary to it, his brother believes it as a curse that will bring disaster to the village. He preached equal rights for women. To support words by deeds, he defiantly made his daughter, Aminata, take the church's chicken soup in public, a privilege reserved exclusively for men. And to break away from the taboos that have denied women their just rights, he has written a controversial will in which he bequeaths a piece of land to his daughter.
Though the play focuses sharply on Aminata's antagonism with her uncle, Jumba, it transcends the confines of the particular and acquires universality of appeal.

Imbuga's *The Burning of Rags* makes a powerful dramatization of cultural conflict that comes about when a traditionalist father holds hard and fast to the old ways while his educated son strongly opposes the ways of his forefathers. Ultimately, the son identifies himself completely with his father after his death. This is not only a play of cultural conflict but also of inter-dependence of the cultures, traditionalism and modernism. While Aminata is set against her own uncle, Jumba, in the play, *Aminata*, old Agala is opposed to the modernist practices of his own son in this play. The circumcision of Denis's son and the ceremonial burning of his rags form the chief source of the conflict.

Imbuga's achievement as a playwright is marked by his fairly impressive contribution to African drama in English. In the first place, he has invested his plays with intense realism. He breathes an air of realism into his plays by making the setting, incidents, characters and dialogue contemporary with the time. Nevertheless, he is not a literal-minded transcriber of mere fact. His plays are genuinely a microcosm of African life with all its predilections, delusions, fantasies and capacity to live in the past. Thus, his plays are replete with an inter-play between
realism and fantasy, which gives them the unity and universality of great art.

As a realist, Imbuga’s interest in real life caused him to probe into complexities, tensions and frustrations of characters. He has succeeded in portraying his characters at the critical moments of their lives not necessarily those of violent physical action as in a melo-drama but of the inner crisis that penetrated the social façade and gave insight into their desires, aspirations and frustrations. He strongly feels that conflict is the life of theatre and as such he takes the utmost care to present the outer and inner conflicts of various characters to make his characterisation strong and realistic. In The Successor, Sasia is one character who is put to tremendous conflict. He is torn between love for Zira whom he impregnates, and the fear of punishment for the crime. In The Burning of Rags, Hilda struggles inwardly when she is thrown into a crisis of life and death by Denis. In Betrayal in the City, Jusper is struck between his responsibility for his family members and his duty to the student community as its leader. Thus, Imbuga is much more concerned

*with the conflicts within a person than with*

*those between persons.*
Imbuga's men characters are no longer the embittered elders of the village. They are depicted as exploiters and manipulators of their neighbours' magnanimity and affability. They are notorious for power, wealth and mismanagement of life and material things. John Ruganda rightly observes *Imbuga's men are the more blatant transgressors of polity.* Mulili in *Betrayal in the City*, Oriomra in *The Successor* and Bango in *Game of Silence* have been presented as malevolent political schemers and manipulators. People like Bin Bin in *Man of Kafira* are self-serving people.

Imbuga has never hesitated to focus on the alienated intelligentsia who have come to view vengeance as justice. Mosese, an intellectual in *Betrayal in the City*, appears to be a radical on the surface but he entertains the idea of accepting political office. In the play, there are exasperated men and women who groan under the weight of oppression. Their dreams of a better world have been challenged every moment of their lives. They appear utterly frustrated and apathetic, but they have not lost hope.

Imbuga is highly critical of the self-centered and corrupt practices of the ruling elite. In fact, the ruling elite continue to betray their nations. The political system they inherited through independence has been left intact, complete with prisoners, torture mechanisms, repressive laws and censorship edicts. The colonial economy of dependence is still the
same, only mismanaged to suit the interests of the ruling few. The social structures of self-abnegation and self-hate have been perpetuated to serve the interests of the neo-colonial master who finances the repressive regimes. Not in a position to trust its nationals, the ruling elite take to inviting foreigners to man essential services—the army, the prisons and the university. Mosese in *Betrayel in the City* succinctly summarizes the neo-colonial practices of the rulers:

> It was better while we waited. Now we have nothing to look forward to. We have killed our past and are busy killing the future. (pp.31-32)

Imbuga gives a special place to his women characters by exposing the unjust gender discrimination in the male dominant society. In the process, he portrays women not as weak and frail, but as courageous fighters against the oppressive treatment of their male counterparts to achieve their just rights. Aminata, the benevolent young lawyer, is steadfast and committed to bring about gender equality and social change by her concerted efforts to inherit her father's land in spite of a stiff resistance from the traditionalists like Jumba. Like a lioness, she exhibits her fighting spirit, *I shall fight them to the bitter end.* (p.42) Though her role is limited on the stage, her presence is constantly felt
throughout the play. Equally important is the role of Hilda in *The Burning of Rags*. She is set against her own boyfriend Denis, a university professor. She doesn't submit herself meekly at the feet of Denis as a traditional woman does, when he mercilessly charges her with immorality. She boldly retorts *Denis don't belittle yourself with that kind of pedestrian talk.* (p.64) Thus, she is a dominating force in the play.

Some women characters of Imbuga’s dramas, play revolutionary roles. Regina in *Man of Kafira* plays the role of a hero as it is she who ends the dictatorial rule of Boss, her own husband, by a persistent struggle and eventually stabbing him to death. In *The Successor*, Zira, an ordinary teenaged dancer boldly defies the stern warning of death from Chief Sasia and reveals the truth to Emperor. She, who is physically exploited by the ruling class, declares to her lover, Chief Sasia, *I am heavy with your child and there is no running away from it.* (p.14) This way Zira dominates the action of the play from the beginning to the end. Thus, like a champion of the cause of women, Imbuga offers the female an equal role as that of the male and at times the female voice becomes predominant. The unique nature of his portrayal of women is realistic as all these characters are victims of male-domination and their rebellious strength stems from their victimization.
Imbuga's plays may rightly be considered pieces of theatre par excellence. He experiments with a variety of theatrical and dramatic devices creating visual and auditory images, thereby producing the desired dramatic effect on the stage. Irony is one device, which he employs in his plays. There is a profound irony in Boss's self-evaluation in *Man of Kafira*. When Jere, President of Kafira, presents Boss before journalists to dispel the rumour that he has been killed, Boss boasts thus:

Boss would die just like that, like a chicken?

No, no, you are greatly mistaken. When I decide to die I shall do so in a big way, an honorable way. (pp.68-69)

But ironically, he is killed by his third wife, Regina, exactly like a chicken. At the political level, Boss's desire to reclaim his presidency in Kafira ends in his assassination by the very woman he had abducted. In *Aminata*, Jumba's lofty notion of masculine authority is ironically undercut by his vasectomy. It is the irony that Jumba's *stool of rule*, a symbol of time-tested ways of his ancestors, which he feels the tangible icon he can use to project and promote his image as *man* in Membe, is handed over to his wife, Mama Rosina. In *The Burning of Rags*, Denis, a university professor, who condemns the ceremony of burning of rags as *nonsense*, becomes the representative of tradition as he completely
identifies himself with his dead father, Agala. Orimora, who aspires for
the highest position of an emperor, turns a prisoner.

Even in Aminata, Imbuga makes use of irony as a technique. Agege in this play, goes on to imply that by subverting traditional
practices, Jumba has lost his right to lead the people of Membe. He has
desecrated the *stool of rule* of which he is the head. The unsettling irony
lies in Agege's observation that Jumba's problems have been
permanently solved now that he has cemented the dead man's grave.
He says,

That is what I say, always. A grave? No
problem. Get cement proper, add water
plus sand, basi (done, or finished). Koroga',
Koroga (mix and stir the ingredients)
together all! Result? Long lasting
permanganate (permanent) grave,
finish. (p.8)

Here, Agege is playing on Jumba's sense of guilt which the latter
had hinted at when he admonished his wife, Mama Rosina, ironically
thus: *You are the first one to threaten us with my late brother's reappearance.* (p.6) It is usual for Jumba to see the betrayal in others
without seeing his own set of betrayals.
Another instance of irony pertains to Zira's supposed death in the hands of Sasia in *The Successor*. Sasia is confused and perplexed by Zira's alleged death. So he begs Oriomra to put him out of his misery by killing him as he has stabbed Zira to death. But, Oriomra does not do him the honour of shooting him at his own behest for that would reverse the schemer from his dictatorial role. He must flatter his victim's vanity at his most vulnerable and pathetic level. *No, Masero needs you,* he diplomatically and ironically reassures Sasia. The irony is that Masero needs him not as a successor but as a murderer.

The greatest strength of Imbuga is his language which is natural, simple and is in keeping with characters and situations. As an advocate, Aminata wants to challenge her case in the court of law for justice. One sees the phrases from legal register in her conversation. In *The Burning of Rags*, Denis, a professor of culture, talks about African culture, Western culture and Art and thus exhibits his depth of knowledge in art culture. In *Betrayal in the City*, Mulili, a semi-educated soldier speaks English, which has syntactical and grammatical errors. He says, *That one he be a green grass in the snake .... That what you thinks.* (p.62)

In *The Successor*, Dr. See Through, the Diviner, speaks in a virtuous tone. In *Man of Kafira*, Osman, as a dramatist, explains the function of drama in society. The language that is spoken by the old
uneducated traditionalists is full of superstitious sayings and proverbs. Thus, the language is raw, natural and racy of the soil that makes the themes strong.

Imbuga's appropriate use of language becomes easy for him because he chooses the characters and situations carefully. Secondly, he doesn't use high doses of non-English words drawn from his native languages because he doesn't take scholarly interest of his people as Wole Soyinka does, whose roots are firm in Yoruba culture. However, like some of the Indian English playwrights – Asif Currimbhoy and Vijay Tendulkar, who use certain words from local languages – Imbuga also employs certain local words like Silika Wao Aasilile, Yooo..... hooo! (Animata). Zumu, noliegu okazia, omwami (The Successor). But these expressions are sparsely employed for our easy understanding of the play. Moreover, the use of these words adds African sensibility to the play.

An African writer always faces a problem in his use of the colonial language, which is deracinated in its strategies and inaccessible to the majority of his population. It is also said that the images, nuances and symbols of a colonial language are encoded in the mythologies of dominance and they are subversive of the colonized identity. Hence, a colonial language cannot meaningfully and correctly reflect the historical consciousness of the African people. Naturally, the African writer who
chooses a colonial language is confronted with the enormous task of demythologizing the strategies of dominance inherent in it. Further, he is also confronted with having to address an alienated audience, which has been conditioned by colonial education to ignore his vision of reality.

It may be concluded that genuine concern for society, the opulence of scene, mastery of dialogue, the bold experimentation of the technique, and above all, the captivating theatrical vitality have made Imbuga’s plays significant. In spite of a few limitations, his achievement is impressive and distinctive and he has already won a place of honour among the contemporary East African dramatists. His plays certainly deserve to be more widely known and produced as plays of ideas.
REFERENCES
