The emergence of Commonwealth literature is primarily a 20th century phenomenon. It emanates from Europe's former colonies, without the capitalist block or the communist block that addresses the questions of history, identity, ethnicity, gender and language. Many critics refer to this literature as New Literatures in English, Third World Literature and Post-colonial Literature. Among the Commonwealth countries, the literature produced by some of the African countries after their independence is known as African Writing in English, which exhibits tremendous vitality and variety. Francis Imbuga, a distinct voice in East Africa, comes before us as a dramatist of ideas. His plays deal with the themes of ill-effects of colonialism, gender inequality and culture clash and they are deeply rooted in the realities of post-colonial Kenyan society. His plays certainly deserve critical attention as his creative output has gone almost unnoticed outside East Africa.

The present thesis is primarily a thematic study of Imbuga's six prominent plays in relation to his dominant ideas. Though the playwright has nine plays to his credit, only six have been selected for the study as the other three plays are not predominantly the plays of ideas.
The thesis is divided into nine chapters. The introductory chapter seeks to show the growth and development of Commonwealth literature placing Francis Imbuga in his deserving place in East African post-colonial drama. Chapter II discusses various influences on Imbuga in shaping him as a dramatist of ideas. Chapter III deals with Imbuga’s powerful play, Betrayal in the City which incisively examines the problems of independence and freedom in post-colonial African states. Chapter IV offers an interesting account of Game of Silence in which the devastating effects of tyrannical regime that is not at all interested in the well-being of its people, is vividly illustrated. The Successor, Imbuga’s another powerful play, finds a place in Chapter V. It exposes the inherent weakness of monarchy and suggests democracy as an ideal system of governance. Chapter VI focuses on Man of Kafira that seriously enquires into the matters of truth, love and the art of drama. In the play, the playwright earnestly examines the perversion of truth and substitution of love with the brutality in our society.

Chapter VII relates itself to Animata which presents the concept of new woman. It discusses realistically the impediments in the way of a woman who fights for her just rights of inheritance of her father’s land property. The next chapter concerns itself with The Burning of Rags which throws light on the playwright’s powerful dramatization of
cultural conflict that comes about when a traditionalist father holds hard and fast to the old ways while his educated son appears to be at loggerheads with the ways of his forefathers. Chapter IX is by way of conclusion evaluating Imbuga's plays as the plays of ideas based on the observations made in the preceding chapters.

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U. Venkata Ramana