PREFACE

The present thesis is an attempt to study George Eliot's concept of Destiny with special reference to her novels. Challenging as the subject is, the disconcerting ambiguity arising from the apparently incongruous conceptions of Determinism, Freewill and Responsibility made the task appear rather difficult at the outset. A close reading of her novels, essays and letters, however, helped me to recognise a compatibility between the superficially contradictory ideologies bringing with it the determination to carry the study to the end. Despite the abundance of critical expositions on the various aspects of her art, the concept of Destiny, as a whole, has not received the attention it deserves. References to the aspect may be traced in numerous analytical presentations but these also fail to present a coherent and consistent analysis of the concept relating it precisely to the serious thoughts that went in the making of her melioristic faith in human Destiny. George Levine (Determinism and Responsibility in the Works of George Eliot), Ian Adam (Character and Destiny in George Eliot's Fiction), and Neil Roberts (George Eliot: Her Beliefs and Her Art), no doubt, show an awareness of the philosophical context yet, whereas George Levine limits his scope to stressing the similarity between George Eliot's deterministic principles and those of Comte, Bray, and Mill; and Neil Roberts to an
exhaustive research into the extent to which the views of Feuerbach, Strauss, Comte, etc. can be traced in the thematic patterns of George Eliot's novels, Ian Adam's paper, obviously for want of space, fails to do justice to the broad implications of his undertaking. The purpose of the present study is, firstly, to enumerate those forces that exercised themselves in the cultivation of her mental faculty and, more importantly, to relate her belief in determinism to an equally strong belief in the human freewill which accounts for the particular strength of her concept of Destiny inherent in the all-pervasive benignity of her novels.

The thesis has been divided in five chapters with a view to underlining the gradual evolution of George Eliot's ideas. The first chapter, entitled, 'The Making of the Novelist' attempts a brief survey of the different influences which shaped the nascent mind of the author and developed in her an aesthetically novel attitude to life. The second chapter 'The Concept of Destiny and George Eliot's Commitment to Determinism' aims at presenting the concept of Destiny in the historical perspective. It further seeks to probe George Eliot's view of the deterministic philosophy, her unshakeable faith in freewill and her persuasive emphasis on the altruistic impulses that are unquestionably central to an understanding of her concept of Destiny. The subsequent chapters (third, fourth, and fifth) are concerned with an evaluation of the novels of the early phase (Adam Bede, The Mill on the Floss, and Silas Marner), of the middle phase (Romola and Felix Holt) and of the last phase (Middlemarch and
The primary sources of my research have been George Eliot's novels, letters, essays and reviews. Though the study is basically centred on the novels, references to her other writings have been repeatedly made in order to emphasise the consistency of her thought and ideology. The secondary sources of my work include some important volume criticism, a long list of research papers in various literary journals and contemporary as well as later reviews of her novels most of which are indexed in the bibliography at the end. Special reference may, however, be made to Basil Willey's essay in Nineteenth Century Studies; Thakur Guru Prasad's Comtism in George Eliot's Novel; U.C. Knoepflmacher's George Eliot's Early Novels: The Limits of Realism, and Religious Humanism in the Victorian Novel; Thomas A Noble's George Eliot's Scenes of Clerical Life; Ian Milner's The Structure of Values in George Eliot; John Halperin's Egoism and Self-Discovery in the Victorian Novel; B.J. Paris's Experiments in Life: George Eliot's Quest for Values; Neil Roberts' George Eliot: Her Belief and her Art, Ruby V. Redinger's George Eliot: The Emergent Self, George Goodin's edition of The English Novel in the Nineteenth Century: Essays on the Literary Mediation of Human Values and Peter Jones's Philosophy and the Novel.

The present thesis offers fresh and original ideas in the understanding of George Eliot's novels. I am sure that
this humble effort will open new avenues in the study of George Eliot for profounder evaluations of the subject and still better appreciation of her art.

It is my pleasant duty to acknowledge my profound sense of gratitude to Dr. Mohd. Yaseen under whose supervision and able guidance this work has been completed. In spite of his many preoccupations, he gave me full liberty to encroach upon his precious time and offered constructive criticism and countless suggestions which have been thankfully incorporated in the thesis.

I shall be failing in my duties if I do not acknowledge my indebtedness to Prof. A.A. Ansari, Head, Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, whose interest has been a constant source of inspiration to me.

In the end, I would take the opportunity of acknowledging my gratitude to all friends and well-wishers who have, in one way or the other, contributed to the completion of my research.