

PREFACE

PREFACE

Ahmed Ali (1910-), though not a prolific writer in English, is regarded as a prominent modern Pakistani writer. He is the only Muslim novelist writing in English who opted for Pakistan at Partition. Ahmed Ali, who was educated at Aligarh and Lucknow Universities, is the recipient of the White Memorial Gold Medal and the prestigious Jhallawar Gold Medal. Besides his career as Lecturer at Lucknow, Agra and Allahabad Universities, Mr Ali worked on various responsible posts at various places. He worked as Professor and Head of the Department of English at Presidency College, Calcutta (1944-1947), Representative and Director, B.B.C., New Delhi (1942-1944), British Council Visiting Professor at National Central University of China, Nanking (1947-48), and Director of Foreign Publicity, Government of Pakistan (1948-49). He also visited the U.S.A. as Professor of Humanities and lectured at various American universities including Texas, Arizona, Illinois, Wisconsin etc.. The wide ranging subjects like Literature, Language, Religion, Culture etc., that Professor Ali talked on clearly show the large scope of his scholarship. Professor Ali is also recognized as a very distinguished diplomat. He is the first person to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China for Pakistan. He served as Pakistan's Ambassador to China and Morocco. In recognition of his great service to the nation he was honoured with the most coveted award of *Sitara-e-Imtiaz* by the Government of Pakistan.

Professor Ali, a multi-dimensional literateur, has produced three distinguished novels, Twilight in Delhi (1940), Ocean of Night (1964), and Rats and Diplomats (1985), collections of short-stories in Urdu and English, some anthologies, translations, plays and poems.

Professor Ali, who was one of the founders of the Progressive Writers' Movement in India and is a founding fellow of the Pakistan Academy of Letters, has aroused a considerable interest among critics since the publication of his first novel Twilight in Delhi. However, a brief resume of the major critical responses received by Ali proves the fact that he still needs a wider critical attention to have a deeper insight of his novels. At the moment his Twilight in Delhi is the only novel that has received intensive critical attention. Its position of acknowledged greatness certainly demands a reference to the various critical responses to it. For example, Bruce King considers Ali as the first major Muslim Indian novelist and by laying stress on his Muslim identity, he analyses the novel Twilight in Delhi on the basis of nostalgia for the civilization of the Moghul empire which preceded the British Raj. Professor H.H. Anniah Gowda tries to work out some distinct affinities between the work of Achebe and Ahmed Ali by pointing out how both the writers have a keen awareness of the movement of social forces, memories of the colonial past and their impact on the people. Laurence Brander acknowledges that Twilight in Delhi represents "an irreplaceable record" of old Muslim life in Delhi due to its "intense realism". Harish Trivedi says that Twilight in Delhi is neither a novel of action or plot,

nor a novel of character or manners. It is, rather a novel of historical moment, a novel of community, and above all else, a novel of place. Govind Prasad Sarma cannot decide whether Twilight is a 'social novel' or a 'political novel' and he even tries the category 'socio-political' to see if that would fit, and more significantly, he eventually refuses to consider Twilight as a political novel because the political nationalist spirit breathed by the novel does not belong to any recognised phase of our freedom struggle. D.A. Shankar approximates Twilight to a minor classic. Muhammad Hasan Askari says that the theme of Twilight is not confined to a few characters and their biographies, but to an entire city of Delhi. Twilight is, in reality, a collective novel whose hero is the city itself.

No doubt most of these critics have thrown light on Ahmed Ali's creative genius in their own way. However, my analysis of the novelist makes a point of departure in the sense that it treats Ahmed Ali as a progressive novelist. His stance as a progressive writer becomes evident from the fact that he was a founder-member of the Progressive Writers' Movement and that he has been actively engaged in the activities of the Pakistani Academy of Letters, an institution that tries to place the writer in a proper perspective as far as his moral position is concerned. In the present dissertation my attempt has been to study Ahmed Ali as a Progressive Novelist with Special reference to the moral position that he has consciously



acceptd.

In this prefatory note it remains only to be said that the two novels that form the subject of my analysis in this dissertation are those in which Ali shows his concern with the pre-Independence India.