PREFACE

Bapsi Sidhwa, is Pakistan’s leading diasporic writer. She has produced four novels in English that reflect her personal experience of the partition of the Indian subcontinent; abuse against women; immigration to the United States; and membership in the Parsi / Zoroastrian community. She has received numerous awards for these works which include the Pakistan National Honours of the ‘Patra Bokhri Award’ in 1985 and the highest honour for arts in Pakistan, the ‘Sitara-I-Imtiaz’ in 1991. Her third novel Cracking India was awarded the German Literaturepres and a nomination for the Notable Book of the year from the Library Association, and was mentioned as a ‘New York Times’ Notable Book of the Year’, all in 1991. She has also received a Bunting Fellowship from Radcliffe /Harvard-Mary Ingraham Institute and a National Endowment of the arts grant in 1987 and is a recipient of the Lila Wallace Readers Digest Writers Award of $105,000. She is also chairperson of (Eurasia) Commonwealth Writers Prize. Her works have now been translated into Russian, French and German. In 1983 Bapsi Sidhwa migrated to the United States, following her three daughters already studying there, where she got involved in teaching, and became a US citizen in 1992. In 1985 she was appointed Assistant Professor of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Houston. Between 1986 and 1987 she was Bunting Fellow at
Radcliffe/ Harvard and in 1987 she was Fellow for the National Endowment for Arts. Sidhwa was on the advisory committee to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto on Women’s Development till 1996. She represented Punjab at the Asian Women’s conference at Alma Ata in 1975. Sidhwa has also worked among women to create an awareness of their rights. She used street power, the platform and the media to protest against the repressive measures aimed at women and minority communities in Pakistan. Sidhwa has also been voluntary secretary in the Destitute Women’s and Children’s Home in Lahore for several years. Sidhwa’s novels portray life in Pakistan, the tumultuous history of the partition of the subcontinent, struggle for independence, theme of marriage and the survival of the tiny Parsi community. In the context of the writers of English fiction in the sub-continent, Bapsi Sidhwa is unique, because of her strident humour, irreverence of established traditions, sense of fair play and subtle characterizations. She aptly reflects the cultural multiplicity in which she has lived. The strain of extraordinary ribaldry in her work has given a new dimension to sub-continental English fiction.

The dissertation **Exile in the Novels of Bapsi Sidhwa** is an attempt to identify the all pervasive effect of ‘exile’, in the physical displacement of, and a crisis of disconnection and detachment involved in, Sidhwa’s various characters who find themselves part of the partition of the Sub-
continent, as well as the social milieu in pre- and post-partition India and Pakistan; tapping in the process the demeanor and bearing of a tiny minority community – the Parsis. This dissertation has been attempted on the basis of the theory of Post-colonialism, the issues of migration and diaspora, and the poignant effects of psychological exile. Gathering support from the social, cultural and political effects of exile, an attempt is also made to trace the growth of Post-Colonial writing and identify South-Asian English writing, Sidhwa’s depiction of her community in her novels, and her characters’ journey through physical dislocation and psychological exile, both individually and in comparison to others, drawing in physical manifestations of ‘exile’ and hidden nuances of discrimination. For this purpose the dissertation is divided into seven chapters, a preface, a selected bibliography, and a glossary.

The first chapter throws light on Sidhwa’s personal life—her childhood, her struggle with her deformity, marriage and drastic uprooting—her transformation into a full-fledged novelist and her literary output. The second chapter defines ‘exile’ and the social, cultural, psychological and political significance of exile. The third chapter deals with a study of Colonialism, Post-Colonialism, Post-Colonial writing, and writing in English in the sub-continent, the Parsee perception of the Partition and Partition Literature in general. The fourth chapter consists of a detailed
discussion of Sidhwa’s novels ‘The Crow Eaters’, The Bride’, The Ice-
Candy-Man, and ‘An American Brat’ and in-depth studies of the various
characters in these novels. The fifth chapter deals with an analysis of the
different patterns of exile found in her characters and novels. The sixth
chapter consists of a study of Sidhwa’s treatment of her characters and her
diction and style. The seventh chapter forms a conclusion, bringing
together the different characters of her novels and highlighting the depth of
their social and psychological exile.