

**From Hard Times to Great Expectations: Examining the  
Intersection of Migration and Education in Select Fiction of  
Marina Budhos**

Narmadha R

(21PEN010)

A Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for  
Women, Coimbatore 641043

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH**

**May 2023**

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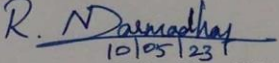
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Supervisor

*A. Vijayarani*  
Signature of the *10/05/2023*  
Head of the Department

DECLARATION

## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled **“From Hard Times to Great Expectations: Examining the Intersection of Migration and Education in Select Fiction of Marina Budhos”** submitted by me for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) is the record of work carried out by me during the period December 2022- May 2023 under the guidance of Dr. (Mrs.) M. Anjum Khan, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women and has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other titles in this University or any other similar institution of higher learning.

  
10/05/23  
**Signature of the Candidate**

CERTIFICATE

## CERTIFICATE

I declare that the thesis entitled **“From Hard Times to Great Expectations: Examining the Intersection of Migration and Education in Select Fiction of Marina Budhos”** submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) by Narmadha R (21PEN010), is the record of work carried out by her during the period December 2022-May 2023 under my guidance and supervision. This work has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree, Diploma, Associateship, Fellowship or other titles in this University or any other similar institution of higher learning.

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Signature of the  
Supervisor

*A. Vijaya Kumar*  
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Head of the Department

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## Abbreviation Used

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Abbreviated Title</b>	<b>Abbreviation used</b>
1.	Ask Me No Questions	AMNQ
2.	Tell Us We're Home	TUWH

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# Chapter I

## Introduction

**“The greatest nations are defined by how they treat their weakest inhabitants.”-  
Jorge Ramos**

Literature, as a form of art, plays a significant role in reflecting the true face of society. The purpose of literature, as many think, is not only to entertain or give aesthetic pleasure but allow a person to travel back and forth in time and learn about life from a different perspective. One can receive a better understanding of different cultures, through recorded histories, in the form of poetry, drama, fiction and non-fiction. Literature plays its role as a medium to promulgate ideologies and is often referred to as an expression of society. Besides this, literature also plays its role as a therapist, recognition, entertainer and teacher who teaches knowledge. The value of literature depends on the depth and breadth of the life it paints.

The terms ‘immigration’ or ‘diaspora’ refer to the process of migrating from one place to another in search of opportunities. In immigration literature, the terms ‘refugees,’ ‘migrants’ and ‘asylum seekers’ are often used to describe people who are on the move or have crossed borders. Refugees are forced to flee their countries due to violence, while asylum seekers leave their countries and seek protection in the migrated country. As for migrants, there is no universally accepted definition, but they are generally understood as people who live away from their native country.

After undergoing nation-building, the United States has become the most robust and powerful nation in the world, known for its innovative dynamism to the extent that the word ‘America’ has become universally recognized. However, opinions regarding

America vary greatly and change over time. America's gaze is open and subject to debate, as it is a 'complex, evanescent, contradictory collection of ideas' (Sanders 3). Many believe that America is a land of opportunity where people can experience a high standard of living.

Immigration to America dates back to the 17th century, and since then, America has become a destination for millions of immigrants. Adults migrate for various reasons, including life transitions, higher education, job opportunities, or marriage. However, some adults are forced to migrate to escape poverty, war, climate change, or violence, as America is seen as the land of golden opportunity. Initially, there were no laws to restrict immigration to the United States, but gradually, immigration laws were put in place, causing many immigrants to become illegal. Moreover, some people migrate illegally, violating "federal immigration laws", even if they have friends or family members who have crossed the United States illegally (Green 53). Mexican immigrants, in particular, believe that they have the right to migrate to America without government permission.

According to the Pew Research Center, most unauthorized migrants enter America with visas that allow them to reside in America for a specific period. These immigrants often overstay their visas and are referred to as "overstayers". Another way people enter America is by using a border crossing card to enter through Mexico. Some enter illegally by hiding in vehicles or evading immigration inspectors, while others enter through the Arizona desert. The vast majority of immigrants are Mexican, Canadian, and Asian, resulting in 12 million unauthorized immigrants.

Thus, America becomes a country of multi-ethnic and multi-racial people, which has led to a cultural discourse aimed at understanding the various constructions of

cultural identity. This discourse is used by ethnic writers from Asia, Africa, the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean, and other places to portray the experiences of their fellow immigrants in America. This has paved the way for a new literary genre called ‘American immigrant literature.’ In this genre, migrants write either about their own migration stories or those of others. It deals with the description of the migration experience, cultural and traditional differences, and the difficulties faced by immigrants in adopting multicultural America.

The American immigrant novel explores themes of assimilation and the relationship between immigrants and Native Americans. These novels often explore the generation gap between first- and second-generation immigrants. The genre also includes themes such as economic issues, education, prejudices, racism, violence, language barriers, and identity related to culture, ethnicity, and nation. The protagonists of these novels overcome these issues while also recalling happy memories of their homeland and their past lives there. Although the characters experience cultural complexity and discrimination, identity dominates the other themes. Migration is a topic that has been explored in classical literature, but this genre offers new perspectives, including the experiences of teenage migrants.

Young adult fiction, also known as YA or YAF, is a category of fiction written for readers between the ages of 12 and 18. It is a relatively recent American genre invention that was pioneered by women in the 20th century, and its popularity has been undeniable in the last five years. According to Stanford Journalism, “YA revenues have grown nearly 40 percent, and over 30,000 YA books are published each year, with dystopia and science fiction leading the charge”. There is no difference between young

adult fiction and adult fiction in terms of common themes like romance, fantasy, and dystopia. However, YA fiction mainly focuses on the age and experience of the protagonist, featuring coming-of-age stories that depict the transformation of adolescents into adults. These stories typically involve personal growth, taking responsibility for one's actions, and overcoming challenges.

When analyzing YA fiction, the most common themes include friendship, romantic interest, family life, and high school experiences, including self-identity and individuality. However, mature themes like violence, homosexuality, and depression/suicide are also present in YA fiction, which can be challenging for some readers. Teenagers often go through inner turmoil due to unhealthy relationships with their family and society, experiencing emotional abuse, instability, shame, guilt, and disconnection. For teenage immigrants, these traumas are even more pronounced. Stressors can include financial issues, political oppression, threats, abandonment, interpersonal conflicts, exploitation, and fear of deportation.

Recurrent themes identified by scholars in migrant literature include citizenship, borders, gender, stereotypes, exile, biopolitics, otherness, inhabitability, bureaucracy, and abandonment. Migrant literature directly represents the experiences of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. The invisibility of ethnic characters and their experiences in the cultural representation of the United States has long been a contentious issue (Verbruggen). Migrants often lack agency and are victims of history, as well as helpless participants in colonial discourse.

However, intellectual migrants did not stop at just experiencing struggles. They began to write about their experiences on paper, and as a result, literary figures such as

Khaled Hosseini, Chinua Achebe, Jhumpa Lahiri, Azar Nafini, Vladimir Nabokov, and Christina Garcia gained universal attention by creating indelible masterpieces. This gave rise to a new type of literature on immigration, aimed at presenting different narratives of cultural, economic, political, and social aspects of an immigrant's life. To be considered as migrant literature, such works must possess specific characteristics.

Junot Diaz is a Dominican- American writer and creative writing professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He also worked as a fiction editor at Boston Review and serves on the board of advisers for Freedom University (a Georgia volunteer organization providing post-secondary instructions to undocumented immigrants). Diaz's works have the central theme of the immigrant experience, particularly the Latino immigrant experience. Born on 31 December 1968 in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, Diaz was the third child among seven siblings. In December 1974, at the age of six, Diaz immigrated with his family to Parlin, New Jersey. Growing up in New Jersey, Diaz struggled greatly with learning the English language.

Shortly after graduating, Diaz created the character "Yunior", a fictional character who served as a narrator for his several books. Diaz published his first book of a short story collection, *Drown*, in 1995, after obtaining his MFA from Cornell University. In 2008, Diaz received Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*; in 2012, he received a MacArthur Fellowship "Genius Grant". Diaz's work has been renowned for its colloquial spin on a modern American voice- a blend of English and Spanish and poetry to create enormously pleasing human portraits. His other notable works include *This Is How You Lose Her and Other Stories*. This collection was

enlisted for the 2012 national book award. His first children's book, *Islanborn*, was published in 2018.

Elizabeth Acevedo is another Dominican-American poet and author. In September 2022, the Poetry Foundation named her the year's Young People's Poet Laureate. Acevedo is the only daughter of Dominican immigrants, raised in Harlem, New York. Initially loved to be a rapper, Acevedo realized that she really wanted to become a poet. With the influence of her English teacher Abby Lubin, she joined an after-school poetry club. She has published several poems, including her most famous one, "spoken word poem".

Acevedo is also the author of three young adult novels, *Beastgirl and Other Origin Myths* (2016) was a finalist for YesYes Chapbook Prize. Her first novel, *The Poet X*, was published in 2018 and is a New York Times best-seller, national book award, and Carnegie medal winner. *With the Fire on High* is Acevedo's third novel, released in May 2019. Her fourth, *Clap When You Land*, was published in May 2020 and it was a Boston Globe-Horn Book Honored Book. She also won the 2019 Michael L. Printz Award, the 2018 Pura Belpre Award, and the Boston Globe Hornbook Award Prize for Best Children's Fiction of 2018. She lives in Washington, DC.

The next immigrant writer whose works have contributed to immigration literature is Jhumpa Lahiri. Lahiri was born in London to Indian immigrant parents and raised in the United States. She is a well-known American author for her short story collections, novels, and essays on Indian immigrants, examining her character's dilemmas, anxieties, struggles, and details of immigrant behavior and psychology. Her

works focus on themes such as marital difficulties and the detachment between first- and second-generation immigrants in the United States.

Lahiri's debut book, *Interpreter of maladies* (1999), is a collection of short stories that won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction as well as the PEN/Hemingway award in 2000. Her first novel, *The Namesake* (2003), published in *The New Yorker*, was a finalist for Los Angeles Times Book Prize. It was also adapted into a major motion picture in 2007 with the same title. Lahiri's second short story collection, *Unaccustomed Earth* was published in 2008 and achieved number 1 on The New York Times best-seller list. Other important literary works include *The Lowland* (2013) and an Italian novel, *Dove mi Trovo* (2018). Currently, Lahiri is a professor of English and Director of creative writing at Barnard College of Columbia University.

Argentinean American young adult writer Maria E. Andreu's works has been appeared in *Newsweek*, the *Newark Star-Ledger*, *Teen Vogue*, and the *Washington Post*. Her debut novel, *The Secret Side of Empty* (2014), won a National Indie Excellence Book Award. Her next novel, *Love in English* was published in the year 2021 and is merely based on her own experience after her family settled in the United States. Her upcoming novel is *Julieta and the Romeo*. She also contributed by featuring in anthologies like *Come On In*, *Examining Images Of Urban Life* and *Five Minutes at Hotel*.

Mexican- American writer and Professor Francisco Jimenez was born in Tlaquepaque, Mexico and raised in California. His family immigrated illegally to California to work as migrant farm workers, and as a child, Jimenez worked with his family in the field at the age of six. Currently, he works at Santa Clara University as a Fay Boyle professor in the department of modern languages and literature. He served as

director of the ethnic studies program from 2000-05. In 1997, he published his first autobiographical novel, *The Circuit: stories from the life of a Migrant Child*. He has written three sequels for his first novel, *Breaking Through*, *Reaching Out* and *Taking Hold: From Migrant Childhood to Columbia University*. His four-book series has been included in the American library association booklist's 50 Best Young adult books of all time. He also received America's award for children's and young adult literature, the Boston global award for fiction, and the parents' choice award. His other works include *La Mariposa* (1998) and *Christmas Gift* (2000).

Viet Thanh Nguyen is a Vietnamese- American novelist and professor of English and American studies and ethnicity at the University of Southern California. Born in Vietnam, his family fled to the United States after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Initially, his family settled in Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, a camp that accommodated refugees from Vietnam, and later they moved to San Jose, California. Nguyen was interested in literature and graduated in literature and ethnic studies. He worked as a professor and began writing books on the Vietnamese American community. His debut novel, *The Sympathizer* (2015), won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. He has written several short fictions, including *The Refugees* (2017) and *Stranger Among Us: Stories of Cross-Cultural Collision and Connection* (2008).

Nguyen also works as an editor, in which he edited the book, *The Displaced: Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives*, which includes essays by 17 fellow refugee writers from different countries. He co-edited *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field* (2014). His non-fiction books include *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War*, the national book award finalist and *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in*

*Asian America* (2002). His most recent work is *The Committed*, the sequel of *The Sympathizer*. He has co-authored the book *Chicken of the Sea* along with his six years old son, Ellison.

Iranian- American novelist, essayist and short story writer Dina Nayeri is a well known author of novels *A Teaspoon of Earth and Sea* (2014) and *Refuge* (2017). Nayeri was born in Iran, and later they fled to Dubai and Rome as asylum seekers because the police of the Islamic republic threatened her mother with execution for converting to Christianity. Eventually, they settled in the United States, where Nayeri completed her education. Her other novels include *The Ungrateful Refugee* (2019) and *The Waiting Palace* (2020). Her second novel *Refuge* is a semi-autobiographical novel which talks about an Iranian woman who emigrated to the United States and her struggle as a refugee. Winner of the UNESCO City of literature Paul Engle prize, Dina Nayeri has also written short dramas produced by the English Touring Theatre and The Old Vic in London.

Abdi Nazemian is an Iranian-American young adult fiction author, screenwriter, and producer who is well known for his debut novel *The Walk-In Closet*, which won the Lambda Literary Award for Debut Fiction at the 27th Lambda Literary Awards in 2015. His other works include *The Authentics* (2017), *Like A Love Story* (2019), which was chosen by Time magazine as one of the hundred best young adult novels of all time, received a Stonewall Honor and a nomination for the Audie Awards, *The Chandler Legacies*, which is inspired by his time at boarding school.

Tahereh Mafi is an American author known for writing young adult fiction. She was also born to Iran immigrant parents in a small town in Connecticut and later moved to Northern California and then to Orange County. Her debut novel, *Shatter Me* was

published in the year 2011. Following it, *Unravel Me* (2013), *Ignite Me* (2014), *Destroy Me* and *Fracture Me* have been published. Mafi also released *Furthermore* (2016), *Restore Me* (2018), *A Very Large Expanse of Sea* (2018), *Defy Me* (2019), and *Imagine Me* (2020).

IbiZoboi is a Haitian- American young adult writer known for her work *American Street* (2017), which was a National Book Award finalist for young adult literature in 2017. Born in Haiti, Zoboi immigrated to Brooklyn along with her mother at a young age. Before publishing her first novel, Zoboi wrote several short stories including *The Farming of Gods* (2012). Her debut novel *American Street* explores the theme of the immigrant experience of a Haitian American woman. Her other novels include *Pride* (2018), *My Life as an Ice Cream Sandwich* (2019), *Punching the Air* (2020), and *The People Remember* (2021).

Edwidge Danticat is another Haitian- American novelist and short story writer, best known for her novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), which went on to become an Oprah's Book club selection. She began writing at nine in Haiti, and later she migrated to New York with her father. She wrote about her immigration experience under the title *A New World Full of Strangers* for New Youth Connection. Her works focus on national identity, diasporic Politics and the mother-daughter relationship. Her other novels include *Krik? Krak!* (1996), *The Farming of Bones* (1998), *Behind the Mountains* (2002), *After the Dance* (2002), *The Dew Breaker* (2004), *Anacaona: Golden Flower, Haiti, 1490* (2005), *Claire of the sea Light* (2013), *The Art of Death* (2017), *Everything Inside* (2019).

Many writers who write about immigration have not received the attention they deserve, such as Bharati Mukherjee, Monica Ali, Khaled Hosseini, Meena Alexander,

among others (Quayum 1). Marina Budhos is one of the authors who deserve attention and appreciation for her contribution to immigrant literature. Marina Tamer Budhos is an American author who was born in Queens, New York. Tracing her background, Budhos is the granddaughter of indentured workers from India who migrated to Guyana in the late 19th century.

Budhos is the daughter of an Indo-Guyanese father and a Jewish-American mother. In an interview with Sadanand regarding the release of her second novel, Budhos mentioned that her grandparents were Indians who settled in Guyana. Her father spent most of his childhood in Indian villages there (Budhos, "In Search of Her Roots"). After settling, her family converted to Christianity in order to improve their social standing during that time. Her father then came to America to pursue his education in international relations at NYU and remained there.

Marina Budhos was raised in Parkway Village, a community built for international, mixed, and ethnic families during the ferment of the civil rights and social changes era. She completed her education at Cornell and Brown University. Currently, Budhos lives with her husband, Marc Aronson, who is also an author and editor, and their two sons. She is a full-time associate professor at William Paterson University, where she teaches courses on creative writing and multicultural literature. Her specialties include Asian American literature, fiction, non-fiction, and young adult fiction.

In an interview with Pen Parentis, Marina Budhos, who is a parent and a writer, talks about how her experience growing up in Parkway Village inspired her to write about young immigrants. Despite being a full-time professor, serving on committees, advising MFA students, and raising her children, she managed to produce works.

However, she describes her writing as fragile, given the challenges of dealing with family illness, death, and mourning. Her works focus on immigrant and undocumented teenagers, surveillance, mixed-race girls during school integration, and coming of age, often infused with philosophy and folklore. She has been a vocal advocate for asylum and sanctuary, as well as for shedding light on the actual and imagined lives of immigrants.

Budhos is an award-winning author of fiction and non-fiction, which she has written for both teenagers and adults. Her novels include *House of Waiting* (1995), *The Professor of Light* (1999), *Ask Me No Questions* (2006), *Tell Us We're Home* (2010), *Watched* (2016), *The Long Ride* (2019), and *We Are All We Have* (2022). Her non-fiction works include *Remix: Conversation with Immigrant Teenagers* (2007) and *Sugar Changed the World: a story of Magi, Spice, Slavery, Freedom, and Science* (2010). Her recent work *Eyes of the World: Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and the Invention of Modern Photojournalism* (2017) is a collaboration with her husband, Marc Aronson. She also contributed to the literature by writing short stories, articles, and essays that appeared in many publications.

Marina Budhos as an immigrant writer, in her first novel, *House of Waiting*, portrays “the experience of love, struggle and exile against the past to forge a new home” (Faraj 114). She makes an effort to address the issue of cultural diversity and the union of two people from various ethnic communities in American society. It is the tale of Sarah, a Jewish woman from New York, falling in love with Roland Singh, an Indo-Caribbean from Guyana. It describes their shared experience of a sense of loss and exile: “living nowhere as an outsider” (Budhos, *House of Waiting*), and it describes how Sarah managed her life after Roland left for his country.

The issues of immigrants of being “in-betweenness or dualities”, displacement and search for identity are also the main concern in *The Professor of Light*, a biography of Professor Warren Singh and his daughter Meggie, who are descended from Indian laborers who arrived in British Guiana. It describes their experiences of living in New York. The importance of the light that it casts as “a metaphor for identity: both as something fixed and as something fluid” (Budhos, “In Search of Her Roots”).

Her novel *Ask Me No Questions*, brings out the experience of two Bangladeshi immigrant teenagers in New York after the 9/11 attack and their struggles when their father is arrested and detained at the US-Canadian border, due to their illegal stay. Nadira and her older sister, Aisha, are told to continue as if everything is the same, but Aisha falls apart, where nothing matters to her anymore- not even college. It is up to Nadira to be strong and bring her family back together again. The next novel, *Watched* is a companion book to *Ask Me No Questions*, which talks about a Bangladeshi teen boy, Naeem. It explores what it is like to grow up under surveillance, a situation that many immigrants encounter. The vivid story of Naeem takes beyond today’s headlines with his coming-of-age journey.

*Tell Us We’re Home* offers a fresh perspective on the lives of immigrants in American suburbs. The story is about the struggles of Jaya, Lola, and Maria – daughters of housemaids and nannies who want to live a simple life like other native peers. Accordingly, the works of their mothers as maids affect their lives, where the friends become outsiders and strangers, and they are subjected to racism and marginalization in their white class. However, despite their hardship, lack of belonging, and feeling of

dislocation, they keenly establish and maintain a strong friendship in their journey of self-discovery.

As per publishers weekly, Budhos's newest novel, *The Long Ride*, is an autobiographical novel that closely examines how seventh graders from a predominantly white area are affected by the integration attempts in Queens in 1971 when they are bussed nearly an hour to a junior high in an impoverished neighborhood. It is the story of Jamila, Josie and Francesca, mixed-race girls, depicting what it is like to transition from the age of twelve to adolescence and attempt to carry the dreams of adults in the racial surrounding.

Her latest novel, *We Are All We Have*, explores the story of seventeen years old Rania, along with her younger brother, Kamal, bursting with dreams, navigating secrets, love and the lure of the open road when her single mother is taken by ICE. Everything changes, including her hope and future aspiration, have been overtaken by a focus on survival. It is a fascinating portrayal of what happens when the nation one has placed their dreams in is rapidly disintegrating.

Budhos's first non-fiction book, *Remix: Conversation with Immigrant Teenagers*, is an interview with fourteen teens from various regions like Asia, Europe, Africa, and central and south America, which explores what it really means to be an immigrant teen in the United States. In particular, this book examines the invisible world of young immigrants, who were caught between their parents' traditional customs and the regular American life that they encountered outside their homes.

Budhos's collaboration with her husband, Marc Aronson, has produced the work-  
*Sugar Changed the World: A Story of Magi, Spice, Slavery, Freedom and Science*, which

traces the history of the essence of sugar's sweetness and its relationship with the history of humankind. As per the book's title, it accurately describes less about sugar and more about slavery, indenture, and freedom. The central theme of this book is the sugar trade and how sugar has significantly altered the sugar trade itself. It is also about the impact of sugar on world history, the Atlantic slave trade and the industrial revolution.

Another collaboration with her husband is *Eyes of the World: Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and the Invention of Modern Photojournalism*, which is a story of Robert Capa and Gerda Taro- two young Jewish refugees who fall in love. They set out as photographers to document the struggle against fascism, which they see as the most significant struggle of their day. Capa and Taro capture the Spanish Civil War in striking images that went straight from the carnage to news magazines, making them some of the first to represent modern conflict. By doing this, they contribute to the idea of using technology, bringing tragedies from around the world.

Budhos is the recipient of so many awards and prizes like the EMMA, Rona Jaffe award for women writers and NEA in literature and Walter award, the Writers Room, Yaddo, MacDowell, Millay Colony and Virginia center for Arts and Fellowship from the New Jersey State Arts Council. She has been significantly influenced by her father and living in a multi-racial society, where she befriends many Indians and Indo-Caribbean. In an interview with pen parentis, Budhos revealed that travelling with her children, house exchange experiences, sense of adventure brought curiosity about the world that influenced for writing. Apart from writing, Budhos has become a public speaker, reporter and keen observer of immigrants in the United States.

Budhos's novels mostly cover the experience of immigrant characters; especially she focuses on children immigrants, their cultural identity, and their struggles within family, school and society as major themes. As she was born in Queens, New York, to an immigrant parents, most of her novels' settings takes place in American cities or towns like Queens, New York city, New Jersey, etc. Her writings are simple and elegant, as *Literary Journal* contributor David A. Berona remarks that Budhos "exhibits a rich style and skillful insight into her character that will enchant readers" (117).

Although there is limited research on Marina Budhos, the existing scholarly articles on her work are of great significance. These articles explore the themes that Budhos portrays extensively in her writing, providing valuable insights into her work. Despite the scarcity of research on her, the available articles contribute to a deeper understanding of Budhos's writing and its significance in contemporary literature.

Reviewing *Pew Research Centre*, a fact tank related to immigration, historically represents, where immigrants in the United States have come from, how they entered illegally, the growth of international migrants, their experiences navigating language barriers and recent trends in global migration. Frances Augusta, in the thesis *Representation of Immigration in Young Adult Literature*, discusses the portrayal of children and young adults in migration fiction. It deals with current immigration trends, how the children character came to America to escape violence in their country, experience different challenges, embrace new culture and identity, and how they are subjected to racism.

The article "Migrant school and children of migration" by Ekaterina Demintseva deals with ethnic separation at the school level in Russia and the symbolic boundaries

established around schools attended by immigrant children and young adults. It also criticizes how local residents have to perceive certain institutions as ‘migrant schools’, in which they have students of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Mainly it shows how the children of migrants and native children distinguish themselves as ‘us’ and ‘them’, resulting in the conflict situation’s breakdown.

The article “Mexican Migration to the United States” debates the number of people migrating between Mexico and America. It undertakes the critical review of research carried out in the United States and Mexico. Thus, this article deals with two major issues- the number of Mexican immigrants in the United States and the number of monetary remittances to Mexico.

“The Integration of Immigrant Families in the United States” examines the theme of assimilation of the immigrant family that settled in the United States. It thoroughly examines the issues of immigration policies, the changing political climate, policy targets, and population dispersion. Further, it examines issues such as the increasing number of immigrants, especially Mexican immigrants, the predominance of mixed immigrant families, cultural changes across generations, etc.

“Medical and social issues of child refugees in Europe” estimate the count of refugees worldwide and bring out the rights related to refugee and asylum-seeking children. It assesses how the children should be aware of nutritional deficiencies, infectious diseases and mental health disorder and bring awareness of the national and international health guidance available for support.

In the article “Immigrant Workers in the United States”, Linda McCauley describes the rapid growth of the immigrant worker population and legal issues related to

them. She briefly describes the injuries, illnesses and health issues that occur in immigrant work along with occupational health services discussed in this article. She also discusses the immigration law for documented and undocumented immigrants.

“The Undocumented: Educating the Children of Migrant Workers in America” discusses the social, political, and educational problems faced by undocumented or migrant children in an American school. Paul E. Green talks about the hindrance of education for immigrant children due to several factors, including mobility, children as immigrant workers, poverty and gaps in the previous school.

Anneka kindler’s “Education of Migrant Children in the United States” brings out the demographic characteristic of migrant students and their educational needs. She also exhibits the strategies for improving the performance of migrant students that include effective schooling, extracurricular activities, parent outreach, classroom buddies and so on.

Budhos, in an interview with *Pen Parent Organization*, discusses the issues she faced as a parent writer, the importance of time, and how her children influenced her for her writing. Being a parent writer, marina Budhos advises parent writers on the importance of children, family, and friends. *National Endowment for the Arts*, shows Budhos’s personal statement on her excitement regarding the invitation from NLA. She notes how an old immigrant’s pain motivated her to begin the YA career.

*Project Muse* gives a critical view on *Tell Us We’re Home*, exploring the current issue of immigrants and problems of immigrants such as anti-immigrant sentiment, parental depression, and the impact of the recessing on household workers. *Kirkus Review of Tell Us We’re Home* shows how the characters want to be part of America and

describes the artistic personality of the character with a remark, “full of heart . . . keenly necessary”. In Marina Budhos’s YouTube channel, Budhos talks about the life of immigrant parents and their struggles to raise their children. The development of their friendship and their comfort with each other is described.

Angshuman kar’s article, “Post 9/11 Indian English Diaspora Fiction: Context and Concerns”, refers *Ask Me No Questions* and brings out the traumas faced by immigrants during the post-9/11 era. It gives the problem of acculturation, serious racial and ethnic problems, and intra-community class and caste tensions and conflicts. It also deals with police brutality and its impact on children.

Mansour Faraj, in his article “Ask Me No Question: A Facet of American Fascism”, deals with the portrayal of America from a third-world immigrants’ perspective. It examines immigrants’ notions about America before migrating and the positive images of America being the most significant goal to achieve. It explores the vision of America through immigrants, investigating whether the USA is dark or bright as portrayed and seen through the eyes of undocumented immigrants.

Mary Amanda Stewart’s “Juxtaposing Immigrants and Adolescent Girl Experience: Literature for All Readers” explores different themes in literature that connect to the experience of young female immigrants. She brings out the stereotypical representation and cultural relevance, relevant literature for adolescent immigrant girls and explores immigrant and adolescent girl themes. The article also builds up a meaningful connection for all children through literature.

The book *Theorizing and Critiquing Indian Diaspora* analyses the success and failure of Indian immigrants in different countries. An essay titled “Migration and

Relational Balancing Between the Cultures” by Harsha Patagia, explores the development of multiculturalism as an impact of immigration. The essay analyses how Indian immigrants undergo racism, discrimination and struggles to survive in New Zealand.

*Migrant Voices in Literature in English*, is a book that endeavors to mock the tangled yarn of diaspora and migrancy and deeply question various formulations emerging from migrant creativity and consciousness. “Migrancy in Literature”, by Nirmal Selvamony, deals with different types of migration that include political migrants, economic migrants, religious migrants, and literary migrancy and details the four essential aspects of human migration.

The blog, *Authors Unbound* gives a detailed account of marina Budhos, her book, talks, videos, feedback, recent news, etc. Book club guides' “Q & A answer with Marina Budhos” shows Budhos’s reason behind writing the novel *Tell Us We’re Home*. She gives a vivid explanation of her meetings and interviews with nannies and housekeepers, which helped her write down immigrant workers’ struggles. She gives the reason and inspiration behind choosing the intertwined perspectives in this book.

*Project Muse* reviews on *Ask Me No Questions* gives a detailed account of how many people live In the US illegally with their tourist visas. It describes the sisters’ conflicts with their father’s imprisonment and Aisha’s self-destruction. It also describes the psychological perspective and behavioral changes undergone by the characters.

*Internet Public Library* reviews *Ask Me No Questions* by describing the importance of the right things regarding the Hossain family. It explains the character development of Nadira and her growing loyalty towards her family. “Bartley” gives a

detailed explanation of the attack on the twin towers and its effects as well as the deportation of illegal immigrants are discussed in this article.

There is a gap in the literature on Marina Budhos's work and its relevance to the contemporary theme of education for immigrant children. While contributions to the psychoanalytic approach on immigration have significantly improved our understanding of psychological processes during and after migration, less attention has been directed towards the intersectionality approach. Coined by Kimberle Crenshaw, intersectionality and its associated theories focus on how multiple oppressive dimensions are interconnected and mutually constitutive, with issues of inequality as a primary concern. In the case of immigration, individuals face both opportunities and challenges in creating a visible sense of self that reflects their authentic experiences of the pre- and post-migration context.

Daiva Stasiulis notes that "the connection between migration and intersectionality was often implicit in much of the early intersectionality scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s" (13). Intersectionality relates to the interpersonal and intrapsychic experiences of immigrants and their children, focusing on individual experiences as they face aspects of stigma, discrimination, prejudice, and inequitable outcomes for specific groups. This approach identifies immigrants as intersectionally-defined groups differentiated along other dimensions.

The traditional notion that men are the primary economic migrants and that women are "assisting partners" has long ignored the gender viewpoint in migration studies. Through intersectionality, migration studies have brought the experiences of individuals, especially women immigrants, to the forefront. Presently, intersectionality

addresses justice and injustice concerns of migrants throughout the migration process by simultaneously engaging with multiple power relationships that exclude and silence the most marginalized. For example, intersectionality theorists debate whether Islamophobia is a form of racism or whether religious identities, differences, symbols, and clothing have been racialized in the global rise of discrimination and hostility against Muslim immigrants.

Given the contemporary and socially relevant issue of education for immigrant children who face unique challenges in the United States due to their documented or undocumented status, this study hypothesizes that an examination of Marina Budhos's novels *Tell Us We Are Home* and *Ask Me No Questions* will provide insight into the obstacles and implications that these children encounter in their education and growth. The findings of this research can contribute to the development of strategies and policies that aim to better support and empower these immigrant children in their pursuit of education and future success.

This study aims to underscore the challenges faced by the children of documented or undocumented immigrants who come to the United States in search of a better future for their offspring due to socio-economic and political conditions in their home countries. Intersectionality provides a useful framework to understand the complex experiences of these immigrant children as they face various forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, and xenophobia. Despite the undeniable importance of education, the growth and education of these immigrant children encounter numerous obstacles due to the intersection of these oppressive dimensions. Through an analysis of Marina Budhos's novels *Tell Us We're Home* and *Ask Me No Questions*, this research endeavors to shed

light on these challenges and their implications, providing insights into the ways in which immigration policies and educational systems can better support and empower these intersectionally-defined groups.

To examine how the intersection of socio-economic and political conditions in the home countries of documented and undocumented immigrants leads them to migrate to the United States in search of a better future for their children, and to identify the ways in which these conditions intersect with other dimensions of oppression, such as race, gender, and ethnicity.

To explore the intersectional obstacles faced by immigrant children in their pursuit of education in the United States, including but not limited to language barriers, discrimination, and legal restrictions, and to analyze the ways in which these obstacles impact their academic and personal growth.

To critically analyze the intersectional themes and characters in Marina Budhos's novels *Tell Us We're Home* and *Ask Me No Questions* and evaluate their representation of the challenges faced by immigrant children in the United States, particularly in relation to the intersection of different forms of oppression.

To propose intersectional and culturally-responsive potential solutions and recommendations that can help address the challenges faced by immigrant children in the United States, taking into account their unique and intersectional experiences, and ensure that they receive equitable access to education and other opportunities.

In this qualitative phenomenological study, the portrayal of immigrant children in the United States is analyzed through a literary lens. An interdisciplinary approach to the study is essential because it allows for a comprehensive understanding from various

perspectives and dimensions, including literature, history, culture studies, society, law, political sciences, religion, and education. Further, this approach is employed to deal with a complex and broad topic that is interdisciplinary in nature, and to integrate information, historical data, concepts, and perspectives from different disciplines of knowledge to reach an essential understanding of the experience of immigrant children in the US.

Literature plays a significant role in this study, as the researcher will conduct a thorough analysis of Marina Budhos's novels *Tell Us We're Home* and *Ask Me No Questions*, and evaluate their representation of the challenges faced by immigrant children in the United States. In addition, literature reviews related to the barriers faced by immigrant children in the United States will be conducted, drawing upon a range of literary works, both fiction and non-fiction, to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the experiences of immigrant children. Overall, this study falls within the emergent interdisciplinary fields of American studies and literary studies, and seeks to shed light on the intersectional dimensions of the immigrant experience in the United States.

The present study for the purpose of convenience will be broadly divided into four chapters, including introduction and conclusion with two core chapters in between. The basic elements of this study are: introduction, review of literature, research methodology, discussion from the selected novels and conclusion which provides solutions and recommendations.

Chapter 1 entitled "Introduction" presents the general overview of current data on immigration in America, followed by a brief note on children or young adult immigrant novels, major themes, major writers, short note on Marina Budhos, her works and style of

writing. It also provides literature review, with objectives of the study, methodology and finally the chapter order is described.

Chapter 2 titled “The Weight of Two Worlds” will deal with socio-cultural and political as well as historical barriers faced by immigrant children within their family and society. It will clearly explain the issues like difficulty in coping with new environment, social invisibility, assimilation, intergenerational conflicts, detention and deportation, sense of belonging, health and mental issues, effects of false accusation, difficulty in friendship and coming of age. Finally, the chapter ends with a note will explain the realization experienced by immigrant characters and acceptance of their identity.

Chapter 3 titled “Analysing the Intersectionality of Immigration and Education” will deal with challenges that solely occur in school and educational system in the US. The impact of war and illegality, poverty, alienation and humiliations in academic failure will be described. Other barriers like, bully, availability of menial jobs, psychological traumas which affects the educational success will be explained in this chapter.

Chapter 4 entitled “Conclusion” will be dealing with similarities in the selected novels, and how Budhos has illustrated the issues of immigrant children in her novels. It will be summing up the main findings from the core chapters, and also presents the scope for the further studies.

## Chapter II

### The Weight of Two Worlds

**“In America, you don’t get to decide what race you are. It is decided for you.”-**

**Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*.**

Analyzing contemporary and historical evidence yields several insights regarding immigration in American states. According to a CATO Policy Analysis, more than 86 million immigrants have migrated to America legally between the 18th and 21st centuries. The rate of displacement on such a large scale and speed turned it into a movement. Literature is nothing but a reflection of people’s actions. Thus, literature has a close relationship with migration, paving the way for migrant literature. The impact created by migration is not only seen in literature but also in cultural changes and evolution.

The literature of migration speaks about multiculturalism and the adaptation undergone by migrants in a new environment. The conflicts faced by such immigrants are often termed as ‘migrant crises’. The displacement process, especially for children and teenagers that involves violence or direct threats, is often traumatic. Settling down in a new place or country may feel astounding for adolescents, but their struggles are often overlooked. The intense challenges young adults face are due to differences in cultural backgrounds, language barriers, racism and discrimination, and conflicts between parents and children.

Budhos’s passionate interest in immigration and its issues can be seen in her famous novels *Ask Me No Question* and *Tell Us We’re Home*. In these novels, she portrays the issues of an illegal immigrant family and the difficulties of immigrant

workers, respectively. She also explores the sense of displacement, both socio-cultural and geographical, through the teenage characters of each novel. This chapter aims to assess the challenges faced by teenage characters within their family and society. It explains the difficulties of overcoming hardship due to cultural differences and intergenerational conflicts between parents and children.

Through *Ask Me No Questions*, Budhos brings out the suffering of an immigrant family who live on expired visas in the United States after the terrorist attack on the New York twin towers on 9/11. The family consists of Abba (father), Ma (mother), and their daughters Aisha and Nadira, who encounter brutality, pain, loss, and hardship of life in New York City. By presenting their issues, Budhos vividly portrays post-9/11 life in the United States. Through the character of Nadira, a 14-year-old Bangladeshi girl of an illegal migrant family, the novel brings out the impact of war and terrorism. Every young adult character, especially Aisha, Nadira, and Taslima, undergoes various conflicts within their family and society.

*Ask Me No Questions* not only takes readers into the world of peril and the pursuit of happiness but also reveals the notions of American ideals of opportunity, liberty, humanity, and justice by providing an excellent representation of the difficulties faced by a Bangladeshi Muslim family in pre and post 9/11 America. As per Huey Long's quote, "fascism will come to America in the name of anti-fascism", this novel portrays the vision of America as a country that victimizes the lives of immigrants, especially those who are illegal.

Through the eyes of Nadira, readers can observe the unpredictable and frightening events that happen to the family. They are treated like criminals when their only crime is

thinking that they could find a new life in the United States. Budhos does not offer just a tale but a “historical documentation” of the tragedy of the 9/11 attack and its effects on the lives of Muslim immigrants. They become victims of both the terrorists and American policies. Though this book is written for young adults, the consequences and influential events are taken from a historical context.

From a historical perspective, new immigration policies were created as a step to prevent terrorism or any other attack, with the claim that the attackers were all immigrants, and that most of them had overstayed their visas or entered the US illegally. However, the truth is that the hijackers had used fake passports to enter, but this information was not shared with immigration officials (Faraj 119, 120). For this reason, immigrants were linked with terrorism and considered a security threat. Prior to 9/11, America was more concerned about economic status than security. However, after the 9/11 attacks, national security became the primary concern of the American government. As a result, new measures and policies were designed specifically towards Muslim immigrants and residents.

Settling in the United States illegally is never easy for immigrants. They live in constant fear of being exposed and of changing government policies. The Hossain family enters the US and overstays with expired visas. Most of the people from Bangladesh are undocumented, and this is clear when Nadira says, “A lot of Bangladeshis here are illegal” (AMNQ 7). Their struggles begin when they arrive at the New York airport and a uniformed man opens their suitcase and plunges his hands into Nadira’s mother’s underwear and saris. Even after settling, they continue to live in fear due to the new

environment, culture, and people around them. Furthermore, they are afraid because they know that they have stayed past the dates on their tourist visas, which is illegal.

Immigrants and refugees with insecure visas experience significantly higher traumatic stress than their children. This is because undocumented immigrants hold temporary visas and live in fear of being exposed by officials. While Aisha and Nadira find the new place great and liberal, it seems complicated for Abba and Ma to settle in the new environment. However, their circumstances get worse when all they hear in the news is, “Homeland Security. Patriot Act. Code Orange. Special Registration” (AMNQ 9). Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, Muslim immigrants in the United States came under the surveillance of the SBI. Most Muslims were wrongfully suspected, resulting in the disappearance of their friends. Hundreds of Iranians were deported due to the effects of war. Nadira clarifies to the readers how Americans started to see them as “dark, flitting shadows, grenades blooming in our fists. Dangerous” (AMNQ 9).

Social invisibility is a significant issue that affects immigrants. Due to their class, race, and ethnicity, they are socially and politically invisible to others. Moreover, some immigrants live in isolation, making them unseen by others. The Hossain family, like other immigrants, goes unnoticed because they were never privileged for proper jobs. Instead, they did all sorts of low-paid jobs for survival, which Americans themselves could not accept. Aisha, in her graduation speech, brilliantly describes illegal immigrants as “The people you do not always see, flashing our polite smiles, trimming hedges, parking your cars in the lots, doing the night shift” (AMNQ 151).

As Aisha mentions, “A war started. Overnight, we, the invisible people, became visible . . .” (AMNQ 151), the Hossain family and other immigrants like them are not just

unseen because they are immigrants, but also because they do not want to be seen. However, as Nadira observes, they are tired of hiding, and it hurts them. They live in hiding until the terrorist attack, which made their lives more challenging. After the attack, every Islamic community in the United States became suspected of terrorism, and immigrants became the most wanted. As a result, they began to isolate themselves from those around them. Despite the teachers being friendly towards Aisha, Nadira, and other illegal students, they preferred to remain silent, unseen, and unapproachable. They adopted the policy of “Ask Me No Questions,” in which students do not want to be questioned about their personal life, address, identity, or family background. As Nadira notes, they became “invisible, the people who swam in between other people’s lives, bussing dishes, delivering groceries” (AMNQ 57-58).

While the whole family suffers from Invisibility, Nadira is unseen within the family. It is because her family believes “she (Aisha) always knows what she wanted . . .” (AMNQ 3). Nadira is invisible because she is the ‘slow-wit second born’, while her father treats Aisha ‘like a firstborn son’. From the novel’s beginning, Nadira says that she must trail her sister, whom she hates but feels secure. This is because her sister Aisha is said to be an intelligent and witty girl who makes her father listen to whatever she says. It is for Aisha’s dream; the family travels to the US to start their dream career. When their Abba (father) could not make the special registration, the family ultimately decides to seek asylum in Canada, taking Aisha’s advice.

“Parental Favoritism is just what it sounds like — one child is given preference over their siblings”, which can adversely affect the relationship between siblings and even with their parents (Setia 24). Nadira finds it challenging to have an elder sister who

is a perfectionist. Aisha is given priority most of the time, and Nadira feels invisible within the family. Nadira is also unnoticed by her peers and some teachers because she is considered an “average-average kid,” while her sister is viewed as the most brilliant student who always says the “right things.” Nadira resents being invisible to her family and is envious of her sister’s popularity. However, she also feels secure in not being visible or popular like her sister, who is always in the spotlight at school and home. This is because Nadira does not have to worry about what others think of her, and it is easier for her to express her opinions without having to consider other people’s ideas.

Favouritism often leads to discrimination based on appearance, skills, expectations, and so on. Nadira suffers discrimination from her family for her body weight. They shame her body by commenting that she is a little big for her age. The doctor advised her to cut back on candy and milk sweets and get more exercise, but sadly she is bullied by Black girls pushing her around and laughing at her in gym class. She feels inferior to others, calling herself “kind of clumsy” (AMNQ 27). Whenever she tries to fight against discrimination, the words of her uncle, “What about you, Nadira? Fat and lazy? What will you do?” (AMNQ 46), keep haunting her.

Apurva Setia further explains, “Discrimination within the family is an act of judgmental treatment of children based on age, gender, appearance, and behavior” (24). Taslima, the cousin sister of Aisha and Nadira, suffers from discrimination within her family. Her own family prejudices her for her behaviour and appearance. Despite her love, care, and respect towards her parents and family, she is always seen as spoiled. Her parents do not consider her opinions, even though she speaks the right and lawful things. She falls in love with an American named Tim, her law supervisor. Although Tim is

good-natured and helps the family with the new law, they always hate him. Taslima fights back whenever her parents dominate or disrespect her, unlike Aisha and Nadira. In order to escape the difficulties and restrictions her parents put on her, Taslima sneaks out of her bedroom window to hang out with her friends.

Assimilation is a highly debated concept that involves encouraging immigrants to adopt the cultural behaviors of the host nation to obtain full citizenship status. According to the Cambridge dictionary, assimilation is defined as “the process of becoming a part, or making someone become a part, of a group, country, and society”. By depicting the assimilation experiences of young immigrants to American culture, Budhos skillfully illustrates the fallacy of such a vague notion of assimilating Muslim immigrants into American culture. To prove this, she creates characters such as Taslima, Aisha, Tareq, and Nadira, as well as Abba and Ma, who are capable of establishing a new identity for themselves in the foreign land. Culturally, they never isolated or marginalized themselves from American culture. Instead, they break cultural boundaries, embrace the new culture, and identify themselves with the new cultural identity that results from interacting with Americans, which is a sign of assimilation into the dominant culture. They adjust to a new cultural identity to feel secure and a sense of belonging, as Nadira states, “they have always lived floating, not sure where we belong” (AMNQ 8).

Children of immigrants are often torn between two cultures, but this novel clearly explains how the characters embrace their new culture. After realizing the limitations of living within her cultural community, Aisha begins to embrace her new life in her dream country with its new culture. In this journey, “She began to study the others, kids - especially the American ones. She figured out how they walked and the slang they used”

(AMNQ 24). Sometimes she practiced phrases like ‘my mom’ or ‘awesome’ and imitated the way American kids behaved in front of the mirror. She studied the behavior and appearances of American kids, like what they wore, and begged her mother to buy the exact same things. Indeed, her parents are supportive of her changes because they believe Aisha will succeed in the US. Aisha’s attempts to acculturate to the host land foreground the intergenerational conflicts among the immigrants.

Intergenerational conflict, or role reversals, occurs when children acculturate more quickly than their parents (Challenges and Risks Facing Immigrant Youth 1). This conflict is evident in the relationship between Taslima, who embraces American culture, and her parents, who are strict traditionalists. Although not born in America, Taslima behaves like an American adult, which angers her parents. As a law student at Queens College, Taslima has shed her parents’ culture and fully embraced Americanization, with her dress and attitude indistinguishable from those of American adults. She pays little attention to the customs, rituals, and traditions of her own community. In addition to her attitude and dress, she has distanced herself from her parents and no longer spends time with them or talks to them.

Due to the influence of Americanization, immigrants get the opportunity to enjoy American values of privacy and independence. According to Nadira, Taslima created her own identity by spending time and interacting with white people. She cut her hair short, dressed in “low-low hip-hugger jeans and tight black t-shirts,” and even had the courage to bring her white boyfriend Tim home. Eventually, she marries him at the end of the novel to avoid moving with her parents to Bangladesh. Moreover, she marries Tim to exist on paper in the country, to be visible among Americans, and to experience life to the

fullest. She could “sit on buses and take classes and get a job and never again feel that churning in her stomach if someone asks for ID” (AMNQ 149).

The theme of assimilation can be seen in a minor character, Tareq. Called a ‘low-life’ by Aisha, Tareq is a dropout young adult who works in some low-key jobs. Like Aisha and Nadira, the impact of Americanization is seen in him, in which he wears baggy jeans, flopped over his Timberland boots, and a black comb hiking out of the back pocket. Being illegal, he worked on construction crews, drove for a car service, and went for deals at a gas station. He is rumored to work in a gang that always breaks up parties at music clubs. Forgetting he is a visitor to the country, he lives a reckless life, as Ali-uncle says, “boys like Tareq, they don’t think. They just do. They’re not good for our community. They’re vultures feeding off of our fears” (AMNQ 36).

An invisible child is obedient and rarely does anything to seek attention. Unlike Taslima and Aisha, Nadira did not initially undergo any changes in her cultural identity. She lived in her own world, completely unaware of her sister’s world of Americanization. Later, she became aware of her voice and position outside the American mainstream, and then began to change herself, creating a new position for herself. Not only the children characters but also Abba and Ma bridged their cultural gaps and obtained a new identity while maintaining some unique cultural features as Muslims.

As Angshuman Kar notes, “The atmosphere of racial hatred permeates the entire novel” (48). Taslima’s father laments the fact that due to the registration act, Bangladeshis are treated as Pakistanis. Taslima points out that “all brown people are the same to them” (AMNQ 40). In one scene, Nadira is reminded of an incident in which Pakistani children were harassed while walking down a northern boulevard by cars

swerving towards them, and some guys called them “dirty Arabs.” Despite these terrible incidents, Budhos also portrays differences among the natives. For example, Tim, a human rights activist, works against the government’s brutal acts. Mr. Friedlander, a white teacher of Aisha, helps her in every way possible to get into a better college. Even in the detention center, Nadira’s mother receives financial and moral support from other white women.

As the novel progresses, readers can see the trauma that Nadira’s family must undergo to remain in the US as illegal immigrants. Nadira, a keen observer of situations, psychologically describes the post-9/11 situation: “we began as if the air had frozen around us, trapping us between two jagged ice floes” (AMNQ 9). They experience psychological dilemmas because they live in fear of ‘being detained and deported’ since they must register with the INS. They are aware that they will either be kicked out or imprisoned if they go to registration with their expired visas. At the same time, they cannot make it there without registration. Due to this dilemma, they are all broken inside.

It is well known that immigrants migrate to other countries for a better life. Despite living a low-key life, the Hossain family is happy and content with their new life until the war breaks them apart. Since their attempt to seek asylum in Canada is rejected, Abba is taken into a detention and deportation cell, and Ma stays at the shelter. Aisha and Nadira are sent to their aunt’s home to continue their studies. Initially, they are told that their father can be released on a five-thousand-dollar bond. However, he is further investigated for lying about their residence and donating money for political affiliation through the mosque. If the charges are proven, he will be deported. He is detained in the shelter, and there is a possibility that he may never be released.

Separation from family members is common during the immigration process, and it often creates feelings of instability and increases stress levels. Due to these issues, Aisha and Nadira undergo changes in their personalities. At the beginning of the novel, Aisha is strong and confident, but she becomes miserable, doubtful, and anguished as the story progresses. Nothing seems to satisfy her anymore, and she begins to lie to her friends in order to hide her personal issues. She feels humiliated because despite sending numerous letters to officials, nothing seems to work. The news of her father being questioned for his political affiliations further weakens her. Initially, Aisha is portrayed as a great debater and a fighter, but later her psychological state takes a toll on her talents.

On the other hand, Nadira, who is initially depicted as powerless within her family, also experiences depression and a lack of hope for the future. Like Aisha, she is also afraid of being discovered for her illegal status, but she does not fall apart despite all the difficulties. Watching her sister give up on all her hopes and dreams motivates Nadira to rise up and do something that really matters. She becomes the voice and leader in her family, taking care of her traumatized sister, trying to figure out how to release her father and save the family, and finding a way to reunite the family together.

As in typical traditional young adult novels, the separation from their parents robs Aisha and Nadira of their innocent childhood. Once the Hossain sisters become aware of their father's condition, they are forced to face all the inevitable hardships on their own. Together, they go straight to their family lawyer, Mr. Rashid, who could find a way to save their father from detention. Unfortunately, Rashid looks at them as just one of the folders, "a not very important one" (AMNQ 64). Although Aisha speaks with great confidence and hope, she finds it challenging to handle the situation. When they leave

Mr. Rashid's office, Aisha trembles, whispering, "I'm scared for Abba" (AMNQ 66). Such a shift in Aisha is noticed not only by Nadira but also by her teacher and friends.

Separation from their family leaves Aisha and Nadira feeling forlorn, disconcerted, and disconnected. The actual psychological trauma begins for the sisters when their father is falsely accused of providing money to terrorist organizations. It is Aisha who comes up with new ideas, but sometimes she gets overexcited, which leads to stress. She sometimes loses track of what she is trying to say due to the pressure she is under. All they have are letters from the people they know and a little hope that they can save their father. She becomes obsessed with mailboxes from Homeland Security and calls from lawyers. They receive no mail or calls and no information from their mother's side. This makes Aisha grow more frantic, and Nadira feels she could stop Aisha from worrying her heart. This is the natural outcome of a child's sudden separation from their parents.

After her father is imprisoned, Nadira's mental trauma is heightened as she constantly fears that someone will take her away at any minute. Nadira envisions police officials showing up at school and taking her away while other kids laugh at her situation. She and her family were never allowed to disclose their condition or status to others and were taught to keep it private. Thus, Nadira comments, "Ma and Abba, even though they're not like some parents . . . never tell anyone anything private about the family. Never air your troubles. That would spoil our honor. . . ." (AMNQ 68, 69). Both Nadira and Aisha are overwhelmed with shame, guilt, helplessness, and the feeling of being different from others. They become hopeless and isolate themselves by gingerly making their way to school.

Another time, the sisters begin to gather information by calling the detention center and Tim's organization, getting a lawyer on the phone, and finally speaking to an INS officer. They begin to search for and gather clues and evidence in possible directions to prove their father's innocence. Instead of creating a fake ID, they decide to follow the right path. Later, through Ali-uncle, they learn about the association in the mosque where every Bangladeshi has an account. They come to understand that their father's political affiliation is a misunderstanding and that he saved money for their education. Thus, they decide to write a letter to the new director of immigration and the congressman, pleading for exceptional circumstances, and collect letters from Ali-uncle, Abba's boss, and anyone they know, along with their educational records as proof.

Meanwhile, Taslima begins her protest against the new immigration law with the help of Tim. She carries a flyer that reads, "PROTEST THE PROSECUTION OF IMMIGRANTS! NO SPECIAL REGISTRATION. NO DEPORTATION. RIGHTS FOR IMMIGRANT WORKERS" (AMNQ 75). She disagrees with Aisha's idea of posting a letter to officials and argues, "This is political. And the only way to fight a political situation is to be political" (AMNQ 75). On the other hand, neither Aisha nor Nadira wants to fight against the law because they admit to breaking several laws. When the sisters get busy collecting and including letters from different people, Taslima calls them "stupid bureaucrats."

According to Britannica, Police brutality in the United States is the "unwarranted or excessive, and often illegal use of force against civilians by U.S. police officers" (Moore). In this novel, Budhos does not present police violence directly, but it is revealed through Nadira's words. The sisters' situation becomes more demanding when their uncle

Ahmed Rahman is arrested. It is clear that both Aisha and Taslima fail to save Mr. Rahman despite making calls for a lawyer. Aisha struggles to speak, knowing that they are undocumented and have no right to speak about violating civil liberties when their papers are improper. The woman supervisor of the station house pays no consideration to them when Aisha tries to persuade them. The immigration officers show no sympathy towards the family; they verbally abuse them and behave cruelly, refusing to listen to their demands. Thus, Taslima accosted them as “fascists who did not give a damn about listening to anyone” (AMNQ 87). Despite their arguments, things do not work out, and Aisha blames herself for not saving her uncle and father. They are treated impolitely and rudely, and Nadira, the youngest girl in the family, has to go through such violence at her young age.

After hearing the stories of the detainees and how they are treated in their cells, Aisha can imagine what is happening to her father in prison. The worst part is that Nadira sees the police brutality in the form of bruises and stains on the skin of her father as well as her uncle. When her uncle is released without any charges, Nadira notices the bruises and cuts on his forearms. Nadira says, “he looks different: his wrists jut out, and his skin is ashy and yellow” (AMNQ 101). In the courthouse, she encounters her father with shock, “Ragged yellow stains show under his arms, and there’s a little tear at the elbow” (AMNQ 131). She is unable to recognize her father and finds him totally different.

Children immigrants experience hardships, including the difficulty of coping with psychological stress caused by their parents’ imprisonment and uncertainty over whether their parent will be released or not. Day after day, Nadira and Aisha work to write letters to Homeland Security and other officials, signing up for computer time at the library and

waiting for an hour to get their turn. Then they have to work for a long time due to the improper printers. Aisha searches for official addresses, and together they slip the letters into an envelope and post them as certified mail at the post office. Once they finish, they celebrate their small steps, only to later find that they did not receive any replies from the officials.

Gradually, the relationship between Aisha and Nadira changes. Initially, Aisha looks down on Nadira and thinks less of her, but when their situation worsens, their bond grows stronger. It's as if Aisha opens the door of her little private world and lets Nadira into it because Aisha feels left out on her own. Aisha feels safe only with Nadira, who knows what is happening to them. Despite initially envying her sister, Nadira begins to enjoy Aisha's company and admire her for her brevity and wit. She also feels sorry for Aisha whenever she has to go through difficulties in her studies and with her friends.

Longing is a pervasive feeling in much of immigration literature, as immigrants often yearn for their homeland and the people they left behind. Despite escaping the difficult environment of Bangladesh for the United States, the Hossain family still experiences a small undercurrent of longing. As undocumented immigrants, Aisha and Nadira are unable to visit their native country or see their grandparents. They speak to their grandparents on the phone once a month, but even then, "their voices sound far away as if they could fade into the wire" (AMNQ 90).

Budhos skillfully illustrates the stark contrast between the two parallel worlds of legal and illegal immigrants. This difference is apparent in the scene where Aisha's friends plan and chat about their summer vacation while Aisha and Nadira constantly think and plan to bring their father and uncle out of hiding. Aisha's friends, including

Rose Chu, Kavita Menon, Risa Sharansky, and Nadira's best friend, Lily Yee, have all been legal residents for many years. In contrast, Aisha and Nadira remain undocumented with expired visas. Like their friends, Aisha and Nadira long for legal status and the freedom it brings.

Similar to those with post-traumatic stress disorder, Aisha and Nadira constantly suffer from sleeplessness and fear. Aisha worries about what her friends will think if they learn about her family's situation. She begins to murmur to herself about the night they spent at the police station and blames herself for not being able to save her uncle. She suffers from insomnia, and scary nightmares haunt her whenever she tries to sleep. Nadira is the only one who truly understands Aisha's struggles and feels sorry for her mental state. The violence that happened to her family has drastically changed Aisha's behavior and appearance. Once only concerned about her education and appearance, both of those concerns are now secondary to the ongoing challenges of being undocumented.

The traumatic experiences Aisha and Nadira go through leave them feeling frightened and disconnected. Through Nadira's narration, it becomes clear that everything has become a burden for Aisha. She suffers silently, and only Nadira notices her mental anguish. Aisha stops caring about her appearance, stares out the window, and attends school but hardly stays in classes. Nadira lies to Mr. Friedlander (Aisha's teacher), their friends, and their parents to keep up appearances, but it becomes tiring for her. Both sisters start to distance themselves from their friends because Nadira is scared that their situation may cause problems. Meanwhile, Aisha is scared of being unable to save her family. Nadira does her best to console her sister as much as possible. Taslima continues with her activism, staying out late and not apologizing to her mother when she

sneaks back. She prefers to protest instead of going to classes because she knows she may be deported for being undocumented. This makes Nadira feel helpless because she cannot figure out any possible way to save her family. At one point, she gets angry with her father for putting them through all the hardships. She questions, “Why did he even bring us to America without the right papers?” (AMNQ 97).

Taslima’s father is released on the condition that he resolves his immigration status within thirty days, or else the deportation process will begin. Nadira becomes the secret holder and feels like the elder one in the family who wants to protect everyone because she is the one who knows everyone’s secret. Aisha takes everything so hard that it makes her fragile. She has nightmares that every time she goes on stage, policemen tell her, “You don’t belong here,” and imprison her. She becomes physically, mentally, and emotionally unstable, which makes her run away from her important interview at Barnard. Aisha comes up with a bunch of lies when Mr. Friedlander questions her. She concludes that they will not stay in America, and her education will not continue. Whenever she tries to work hard, she realizes that she cannot do anything anymore. She bursts out to Nadira that she is tired of working hard when there are no results except for pain. The struggles from both the family and society have caused them to lie hard and give up instead of making an effort.

Illegal immigrants are continually accused of being the cause of terrorism and violent acts. The concept of false accusation and mistaken accusation is vividly presented in this story in the courtroom scene. Budhos highlights how immigrants are maltreated, not giving them chances to prove their points. This occurs not only here but everywhere, and immigrants undergo humiliation, oppression, and agony. Abba is treated brutally in

the cell the way their uncle is treated. Though he never expressed what happened in the detention cell, it is through the emotional description by Nadira while seeing her father in court. Illegal immigrants are considered inferior because they have no support or association to help them.

During the hearing of her father, Nadira, with her strong evidence, proves that her father is mistakenly accused of another person. She reveals the evidence to the judge and saves her father from the case. The girl who was treated lesser than her sister, whom they pinned their future on, becomes a star and a hero to her family. She becomes visible to her family and neighbours, who praise her for saving her father like a “hero-lawyer”. Things return to normal except for Aisha, who struggles to escape past happenings. She cannot do anything except sit in the dark and not move anywhere. Slowly, Nadira saves her sister Aisha from the traumas she underwent. Nadira motivates Aisha to accept who they are.

As per the quote by Wallace Stegner, “Wisdom . . . is knowing what you have to accept” (Angle of Repose). With the help of Nadira, Aisha begins to accept herself. Thus, in the graduation, Aisha reveals herself as an illegal alien and gives a brief speech on the struggles they faced. In the end, Abba is granted permission to file a new application for residency, in which his papers will be accepted and processed. With this news, the whole family explodes with lights and silent tears. They move to their home with great hope and a future.

The young adult characters, such as Aisha, Nadira, and Taslima, along with their family members, were subjected to discrimination, racism, harassment, and anti-Muslim hate crimes. These undocumented immigrants became victims of “xenophobic violence,”

as Faraj says, which has become an everyday struggle in every state in America. As Budhos depicts in this novel, Americans' xenophobic response opposing Muslims was due to the biased role of the media in stimulating such feelings and hatred towards the Islam community in the wake of 9/11.

Like *Ask Me No Questions, Tell Us We're Home* presents the story of immigrant families who work as housekeepers and nannies. Through the intertwined plot, Budhos portrays the issues of three different teenage immigrants - Jaya, Lola, and Maria. Each with a unique artistic personality, they are concerned with everyday American adolescent angst and overcoming race and class privilege. Even though Jaya, Maria, and Lola come from different parts of the world and have different values, they easily mingle because they are poor daughters of house cleaners, cooks, and babysitters of wealthy families in the American suburb. Each central character has their own story and struggles within their family, and together they face society's challenges.

Overt strictness is considered a "hallmark of most immigrant families", which is the primary cause of discordance with young adults just looking for a small amount of pleasure or joy (D'souza). Jaya Lal is the daughter of Mrs. Lal, who works as a housekeeper at Mrs. Harmon's, as well as several other places. Jaya's point of view is filled with flashbacks of her days in Trinidad, Canada, and reality in Meadowbrook, New Jersey. Mrs. Lal, a typical Indian woman, would never allow Jaya to go on ski trips or overnight trips to Washington, D.C. or to the spring dance. She will not allow Jaya to pursue her interests in art and will not get her art supplies or markers because her mother wants her to concentrate on school. As the decision-maker, her mother decides where and what Jaya will be doing, such as "the College of New Jersey, where they have a very

good nursing program” (TUWH 138). Mrs. Lal is portrayed as a dictator, in which Jaya should always listen to her. Jaya is forced to help her mother with household chores whenever she is free. She imagines herself incomplete, just like her mother, who could not complete her education due to her father’s death.

Lola Svetloski is portrayed as a dreamer of revolution, who is often seen as ‘just a bigmouth history freak’. She tends to ignore her parents’ messages and is always speaking out her opinions. Having grown up in a village in Slovakia, Lola has a keen interest in history and loves everything that feels like magic dust of history. Like Jaya, Lola also faces domestic struggles, as her father does not go to work after settling in New Jersey and her mother works as a housekeeper. Lola’s father, who was once a great engineer, migrated to America but found it difficult due to the language barrier. As a result, Lola has to take care of all the household chores since her mother works as a housekeeper for Vital’s family.

Maria Alvarez is an innocent schoolgirl who lives with her mother in a basement apartment with her maternal uncle and his family. She is a Mexican immigrant who came to America with her uncle’s help after her father’s death. In return for his help, Maria is expected to come home right after school to start making dinner or supper, put everyone’s dirty clothes into the washing machine, vacuum, and then put her little cousin’s toys in the right place. Like Jaya and Lola, she also suffers from financial risks and they cannot afford anything in the new city. It is uncertain whether they are living legally or illegally, but they experience trouble from police officials who have visited them twice for violating rules. Despite such traumas, Maria finds spending time at the grove field, watching white boys playing frisbee, to be her only peaceful moment.

Like all families, immigrant families also deal with conflicts between parents and children, especially with teenagers. Each immigrant parent has their own notion of American teenagers and does not want their children to acculturate their behavior. According to Mrs. Svetloski, America spoiled Lola. She says, “You (Lola) sound like rotting fish, nothing good, just flopping around with stinking words. Big waste” (TUWH 20). Mr. Svetloski thinks that American kids dress and behave like overgrown adults. Mrs. Lal believes that American kids are so spoiled, wasteful, “Designer clothes and doing drugs and bad things”.

Young immigrants can find themselves stuck between their native culture and host culture. They are neither wholly American nor the complete part of their native culture. When parents want their children to follow their own cultural values and customs, children want to be like their American peers, which leads to conflicts. Here, immigrant parents do not force their kids to follow their customs nor allow them to follow American culture. Thus, Jaya, Lola and Maria have difficulty participating in the usual American adolescent angst.

As Budhos points out, “Three daughters of maids and nannies!” (TUWH 53), Jaya, Lola, and Maria unexpectedly meet each other. Jaya meets Lola during one of the Lola-Anthony arguments. Once Lola befriends Jaya, they develop a strange and different connection, realizing that they belong to the same world. Lola can see the Indianness in Jaya, like her formality, and realizes that Jaya, like herself, is sullen and exhausted. Their connection makes Jaya feel secure, and she reveals any secrets to Lola. Lola can relate to Jaya because she struggles to accept that her mother works for “the families of kids she went to school with” (TUWH 46).

Sheila Garcia highlights how the lives of immigrants become even more challenging when their children face health issues. They are unable to afford medical costs and often have to forgo necessary medical attention. Maria also experiences this struggle, rushing home to help her mother despite her own illness, which eventually drops her to her knees. In this scene, Maria meets two girls who help her reach her mother's workplace. Maria finds everything around her difficult, including her accent, dress, and the inability to make her voice heard. While American kids go to music and ballet lessons, Maria rushes home to help her mother or prepare supper. Her family cannot afford health insurance or medical check-ups for her. With the help of Lola and Jaya, Maria lies on a worn-out sofa on Prospect Avenue. "Milagro" (TUWH 53) is the only word that Maria utters, signifying a miracle to the two girls and a sense of destiny bringing them together.

The feeling of belonging often accompanies the experiences of migrants as they shift and settle (Fathi 980). One can live in any place, but it is hard to truly dwell in a place. Thus, immigrants are burdened with a foundational lack – "a lack of dwelling" (Sadan and Pushendra). This lack of dwelling makes immigrants feel that they belong to something other than the host land. The three girls unexpectedly meet and become "outsiders" together. Budhos highlights the theme of invisibility through the label of "outsider". Jaya, Lola, and Maria feel like they do not belong in the new city because they are not treated as equals among the natives.

The novel title, *Tell Us We're Home*, indicates that immigrant children do not feel that the new place is their home. They want a place to belong to, not just a place to live. Jaya and Maria, in particular, struggle with feeling alienated from both their ethnic

heritage and American culture. Only after meeting each other do they feel that they are not alone. Jaya forgets about her doubts, fears, and terrible feelings of the “tender bubble of air that surrounds her.” The air always made her feel scared and brought hatred towards the city. Eventually, the fear-inducing air vanishes the moment she befriends Lola and Maria.

The importance of friendships is a ubiquitous quality in YA fiction. Typically, YA fiction takes place outside the family sphere, where young adults get to interact with others. Literature usually discusses friendship by analyzing the relationship between two or more friends. However, as Agnaldo Garcia says, international or intercultural friendship could be defined as a “friendship between people from different countries, or national origin, born in different nation” (3). *Budhos* beautifully presents the theme of international friendship between the three child characters by describing their moments together. Jaya, Lola, and Maria meet every Tuesday (sometimes other days too), sitting on the bench that they found in the park. They discuss their stories and hurts, with little advice that they give to each other. Their friendship becomes so strong that they comfort each other in their difficulties and give each other the strength to forget that they are outsiders.

Poor immigrants are often falsely accused due to their destitution. Natives believe that allowing more immigrants will lead to an increase in crime in their country. The gray air, which disappeared with the help of Jaya’s friends, begins to envelop her again when her mother is falsely accused of theft. This is a common occurrence for housekeepers, as they have no human rights department, supervisor, principal, association, or authorities to protect them. Jaya’s mother is accused of stealing valuables from Mrs. Harmon’s home,

which leads to her being fired from her job and forced to do extra work for the Siler family.

Shame plays a role in traumatic experiences that cause the victim to be powerless, fearful, helpless and unable to act morally. Jaya, Lola and Maria even feel ashamed of their mothers' occupation as nannies and house cleaners. To an extent, Jaya suspects her mother of stealing the valuables. Mrs. Harmon's work was considered the main work for Mrs. Lal, but she was fired for a mistake she did not commit. The below quotation shows the question raised for Jaya suspecting her mother.

“What if Andrew Cramer was right? What if her mother had stolen the earrings and brooch? . . . what about all those times when her mother gave herself a few extras, like that scratched coffeepot from the Silers? The way her pupils glittered when she hung up an employer's new silk dress, freshly sheathed in dry-cleaning plastic? . . .” (TUWH 76).

After Mrs. Lal and Renaldo, Jaya also falls under the trauma of being falsely accused. When Jaya tries to sketch some curving leaf design that she admired in a book during her art class, she is accused by Rachel Meisner of copying a jeweller's design in Meisner's shop.

Immigrants are often viewed as inferior, invisible, and treated poorly. As a result, their struggles go unseen, and they are often given low-paid jobs. Horrible stories of immigrant experiences are shared through Renaldo's character. They were not allowed to play on the ground, were under pressure to not lose their jobs, and had to fight for the right to play. In a fight with high school players, a group of boys injured Renaldo's friend Lorenzo, and Renaldo was charged and lost his job. According to Americans, they pay

taxes, so the land belongs to them, which is why Renaldo and his friends were not allowed to play on the ground.

Accusations and their impacts do not stop with the person who is accused. They also cause trauma to their children, affecting them mentally. Jaya must rush to Siler's house after school to help her mother. When she finally has time to do her homework, work keeps her engaged. For instance, when she decides to do her homework, she is distracted by the sound of toddlers fighting over a toy and does what her mother is supposed to do. She becomes frustrated and yearns for her mother to pull her into her arms, but instead, with a horrible burning in her chest, she decides to run away from the place where she does not belong.

Most immigrants are silenced or forced to silence themselves due to their inferior state. Lola, who is said to be a revolutionary, is the only one among her friends who fights for justice. She wants to prove Mrs. Lal's innocence, but neither Jaya nor Maria is ready for the protest, as Lola perceives. Finally, she comes up with the idea of meeting Mrs. Harmon, who is hospitalized, and getting a statement to prove that Mrs. Lal is not a thief. Despite Jaya's anguish, there is no result from her attempt in Mrs. Harmon's room. They returned with disappointment, and fear filled their atmosphere, so nobody could speak. The bond between them begins to shatter the moment they face failure. When Rachel accuses Jaya, Lola tries to defend Jaya, but then Rachel makes them leave the shop. Jaya, trembling, did not know if it is the accusation or Lola's defense that made her upset.

Conflicts between friends are a common concept in YA fiction. Young adults often experience heartbreak from their friends due to misunderstandings or oversights.

When Lola tries to defend Jaya from Rachel's accusation, Jaya and Maria develop resentment towards Lola for always picking fights. This leads to a quarrel between them that ends with Lola bullying Maria for her interest in Tash. On the other hand, Jaya cannot support who is right because she is the one in trouble. This makes her run away from her friends, yelling at them, "don't do anything for me. Just leave me alone" (TUWH 108). As an immigrant, Lola would always be closer to achieving privilege simply because she is white.

Coping with the many challenges that young immigrants face can lead to mental illness or mental health issues, with each individual experiencing different psychological traumas in their own way. Jaya's mother is accused and forced to work part-time to support them financially, which causes Jaya to suffer. Lola's main concern is that her father could get up and start working, but even after her mother was diagnosed with diabetes, it only made him sink further into self-pity. Maria appears to be depressed due to her friend's abuse and silence, and she faces physical abuse from her cousin for not doing household chores and teaching a "white guy." This makes her hate everything around her, as everything seems to be difficult for her. In light of these struggles, Budhos notes that immigrants face significant challenges, "This country was full of hard stuff and hard people. A place where maids could lose their jobs over stupid earrings. Where high school boys beat up Mexicans. Where you didn't have good friends. And the angles were no more than hollow plasters" (TUWH 114).

All three characters suffer from pain when they are separated, and Jaya, in particular, begins to feel that her life is not her own. She searches her entire closet for fear that her mother has stolen the brooches and earrings. Jaya remains silent wherever

she goes, except with her friends, fearing that her own voice may betray her by revealing her harsh past. Ultimately, she is unable to do anything except to meet Mrs. Harmon again, but this time without her friends. Sketching is the only thing that makes Jaya feel good after her fight with her friend, and she isolates herself once again, exploring the world of art and paintings.

Unlike Maria and Jaya, Lola's major issues stem from her own family rather than society. Fortunately, her father, who never leaves the vinyl TV lounge or their 200-square-foot courtyard, gets an interview for a sales job. Despite his family working for him, he dominates them. Lola spends most of her time at Vitale's, partly to help her mother and partly because she has nowhere else to go.

Budhos is excellent at showing the parallel worlds of immigrants and natives. Here, she brings out this dichotomy through Maria and Tash. Maria is a poor immigrant, living with the help of her uncle's family, whereas Tash is a rich Native American who lives in a magical world. He has an unbelievably busy schedule and is treated as an adult by his parents, who let him attend all kinds of events. His parents have given him everything, while Maria has to live a life she feels is not hers. It gives her a sore pain, and she wants to be saved and adopted by his family to perch in the house, "above trees, above all" (TUWH 135). Another parallel situation can be seen between Lola and Anthony, who were enemies in the beginning and ended up working for his father's company as a team. Anthony's parents fight and support his learning defiance, Lola's mother works for financial stability, and her father neither cares nor fights for the family.

Again, for Lola, the parallelism occurs with Rachel Meisner. Rachel Meisner, one of the best students in Lola's class, has been a competitor for Lola. Rachel would pick on

the three girls and dominate them, especially Jaya, because her mother works at Rachel's home. Lola is the only one who fights back, saving the other two from her. Lola, who seems to be an attention seeker, wants more attention than Rachel, who is considered to be mean and cruel. Lola also works hard and is pretty intelligent, but it does not work for her. She realizes Rachel has something that Lola does not, and it is the fact that Rachel belongs to a wealthy and privileged family, which gives her an advantage over Lola.

Budhos portrays how wrong can be committed without malice instead of portraying the character as evil. The stressors that pressure young characters to change their behavior lead to conduct problems, antisocial behavior, anxiety, and depression. At one point, Lola becomes jealous of Rachel, who is encroaching on her territory, taking over Lola's private passion, and even getting Mr. Cohen's admiration. This makes Lola angry because Rachel, her enemy, gets the appreciation that Lola should have received. As a result, Lola sets fire to Rachel's paper. The gym master notices and requests a meeting with Lola's parents at the guidance counselor's office. Later, Lola breaks into Mrs. Harmon's house to 'discover something' to save Jaya's mother.

The mental health of young immigrants is often overlooked by adults, including their parents. Mental illness affects emotional, social, and psychological well-being. If left unnoticed, it can impact one's ability to think, feel, and act appropriately. Fortunately, Lola receives counseling for her behavior and anger issues and realizes that instead of just being angry, she desires to live a life like Rachel's. This makes her feel ashamed of herself because even her friends never cared about Rachel. Lola feels humiliated when her father goes missing, and she goes in search of him with Anthony and Vitale. She finds him struggling with his own life and unable to help his family, and

learns that he has decided to give up his life in America and return to Atko. Lola could say nothing to her father except to accept his words. All she can feel while walking home is a sense of relief.

Adolescence is a period when teenagers become attracted to the opposite gender. Maria is attracted to Tash and wants to get closer to him by teaching him Spanish. However, she soon realizes that Tash is nothing but a politically correct kid who acts morally superior and is just beefing up his resume for college. Immigrant civil rights in Meadowbrook are under threat, so Maria seeks Tash's help. Renaldo has been beaten up and charged for using the playground. Tash's team prepares for a rally to support immigrants, but Maria wants to do something different because she does not want her family to become a social cause. Her family does not usually stand out or make a fuss, especially when there are troubles. As Lola comments, Maria has lost her uniqueness by acculturating to Americans.

The situation worsens when Jaya's mother loses another job for no reason and decides to leave the place due to the fear of being exposed. She joins her cousins who live in Queens, while Jaya does not want to leave. Mrs. Lal begins to pack to leave Meadowbrook without Jaya's consent. Mrs. Lal has been treated as if she cannot do anything after the death of her husband, but she remained strong to lead her own life and not a widow's life. Jaya could not stop thinking about whether she is ready to leave the place and her friends Maria and Lola.

Sometimes, it is easy to walk away from a friendship, but working on conflicts and making amends is vital to maintain a worthwhile relationship. Conflicts do not necessarily mean the friendship is over. It is a platform that allows for change, growth,

and resolution. The friendship between Jaya, Lola, and Maria goes through many changes where they learn to recognize their mistakes and take heed of warnings. With no pre-plans, the girls meet in their regular place. They do not gossip or share their hurts this time, but the air around them is filled with silence.

Once the girls are reunited, Jaya reveals that she will be leaving Meadowbrook, and Maria reveals that her situation at home has worsened due to her cousin's fight with the whole family. In order to escape from their reality, the three decide to attend the 'spring Fever Dance'. They also want to spend time with each other one last time before Jaya leaves Meadowbrook. Despite opposition, the three girls convince their families to allow them to attend the spring dance. As Lola had hoped, the dance brings back their bond, laughter, and good vibes.

Immigrant children not only face outright bullying but often face constant micro-aggressions related to their choice of clothing, food, status, and religion. At the spring dance, when the girls are enjoying each other's company, Rachel Meisner attacks them. She reveals that the cloth Jaya's mother used to make her dress was actually Rachel's and was given to Mrs. Lal to give to Jaya without Rachel's permission. Feeling betrayed and humiliated by her mother, Jaya runs out of the party with Lola and Maria, and while they are outside, they find a diamond earring that was stolen from Mrs. Harmon's house. They search for the matching earring and find out that it belongs to Rachel Meisner.

Immigrants often live their lives in the shadows, either being invisible or running away from their problems. Jaya's experience of suspecting her own mother of theft and then proving her innocence with solid evidence is a testament to this. With the help of her friends, Jaya saves her mother from the black mark and convinces her not to run away

from Meadowbrook. This experience also empowers Jaya and Maria to find their voices and speak up. Jaya proves Mr. Cramer wrong about her mother, Maria breaks her friendship with Tash and makes him feel guilty for his actions, and Lola stops Mr. Vitale from destroying the house and begins to correct her own behavior. Through their hardships, the girls learn to appreciate their identities, personalities, and friendship. They also learn to appreciate the hard work their mothers do, despite feeling ashamed of their occupations.

*Ask Me No Questions* and *Tell Us We're Home* both deal with the experiences of immigrant children and their families in the United States. The novels explore themes of discrimination, cultural identity, family relationships, and the challenges of assimilation. The characters in both books face hardships and prejudice as they try to navigate their new lives in a foreign country. However, through their struggles, they learn to appreciate their own unique cultural identities and the importance of standing up for themselves and their families. Both novels emphasize the resilience and strength of immigrant families and the power of friendship and community in overcoming obstacles.

## Chapter III

### Analyzing the Intersectionality of Immigration and Education

**“In education, once more, the chief things are equality and freedom” – Leo Tolstoy**

Nowadays, migration to the United States occurs for two main reasons. Firstly, the United States is known as the country of opportunity, liberty, and the land of immigrants. Every year, thousands of migrants from different countries settle in the United States to access these opportunities, which are famously referred to as “the American dream” by James Truslow Adams (Barone). Secondly, America is considered to have the best education system, so immigrants and their families often migrate to the US for better educational opportunities for their children. Despite their poverty, they migrate to America in the hope of giving their children the best education and quality of life. This same concept is portrayed in Budhos’s *Ask Me No Questions and Tell Us We’re Home*. The main aim of this chapter is to highlight the challenges immigrant children face in school.

The United States, known for its education system and employment opportunities, offers a wide range of diverse programs that attract students from all over the world. Especially students from underdeveloped or developing countries migrate to America to seize the opportunity to improve their quality of life and gain international experiences. Moreover, as Swathi discusses, the US universities also offer different funding options in order to encourage international applications, thus filling their quota and raising their international and domestic recognition. Therefore, the US education system is highly regarded worldwide.

When eight-year-old Aisha says, “we may be one of the poorest countries in the world...but we're the richest in brains” (AMNQ 3), her father immediately decides to migrate to America for her education. Aisha, the elder daughter of the Hossain family, wants to go to Harvard Medical School to become a doctor. As per her desire, her father, Abba, enrolls her in the best school, and Aisha never fails to impress her parents. Unlike her sister Nadira, who is described as “fat and dreamy,” Aisha excels in her studies, becoming one of the best students with an A grade, a star of the math team, and a great debater, “Like nothing could shake her up” (AMNQ 23). Unfortunately, Aisha’s dream collapses when they learn about a specific registration law and decide to seek asylum in Canada. Nevertheless, their attempt is rejected, and Abba is taken into detention and deportation cell, while Ma stays at the shelter. Aisha and Nadira are sent back to their aunt’s home to continue their education.

According to Edward Drachman, “neither federal nor state law forbids undocumented students from attending college, but in effect many are turned away for financial reasons” (92). Financial issues are one of the most apparent problems faced by immigrant workers and their families. Immigrants often receive low-paid jobs with no employment benefits and limited access to economic, social, educational, and health services. In addition to this, they also face residential issues, language barriers, and unfamiliarity with available local resources. As a result, finances can significantly hinder young immigrants from pursuing their education.

Despite their low income, Abba never neglected his daughters’ educational fees or college application costs because he wanted to provide them with a better education. Abba had saved a certain amount for his daughters’ education in an association that

falsely accused him of having political affiliations with terrorists. Furthermore, the instability in their financial situation made Aisha and Nadira lose hope in continuing their education.

In this patriarchal world, women are often considered second-class citizens compared to men, and their fundamental right to education is often hindered. South Asian women, in particular, are often not prioritized when it comes to education. According to societal norms, women are expected to stay at home and avoid going out, among other restrictions. In order to attain education and fight for their rights, many women must either fight against these norms or flee their country.

The Hossain family is an example of breaking these norms and fleeing to America for a better life and education. Despite societal pressures, Abba never prevented his daughters from pursuing education, and even disregarded the opinions of those who believed that “Aisha would be too educated to find a husband” (AMNQ 2). He invested a lot of money into their education, even though it went against the values of not allowing women to have the freedom to do as they wished.

Separation plays a significant role in the mental health issues faced by migrants. Immigrants are separated from their homeland, families, friends, and memories that they have gained from them. The Hossain family bid goodbye to their home country, migrated to several places, and eventually settled in the United States. They lived their lives facing the issues that immigrants often encounter, until war broke their family apart. Abba and Ma were forced to stay in a detention center, while Aisha and Nadira were sent to their aunt’s home to continue their education. This brought the risk of increased depression, difficulty with social functioning, and attachment issues for the Hossain sisters. As a

result, they underwent a change in personality, which affected their grades and reputation in school.

In the challenging environment of poverty that many immigrants face, education is often seen as a luxury that they cannot afford for their children. When the Hossain family arrived in New York City, Abba took on a variety of jobs, including selling candied nuts, working on construction crews, bussing tables in a restaurant, mopping factory floors, delivering pizzas, and being a waiter in a restaurant. He worked hard and earned several dollars, which Ma saved. Additionally, he saved money in their Muslim association, managed by Ali uncle, to use for Aisha and Nadira's higher education. However, because of this, Abba was further scrutinized and falsely accused of having ties with a terrorist association.

Family members play a crucial role in students' academic success. According to Leisy Janet Abrego, students often develop their aspirations based on the educational level achieved by their parents or siblings. Nadira, despite being envious of her older sister Aisha, aspires to be like her - brave, confident, and intelligent. Seeing her sister struggle mentally motivates Nadira to take action to save their father. Instead of following their father's instructions to focus on their studies, Aisha and Nadira concentrate on finding a way to prove their father's innocence and bring their family back together. They skip school and cut themselves off from their friends to dedicate themselves to this task.

According to Cornell Law School, the terms "documented" and "undocumented" refer to "whether an arriving alien has the proper records and identification for the admission into the U.S." From the day the Hossain family settled in New York City, the

word “documentation” brought fear to them. Aisha feared not being accepted by colleges due to her undocumented status. Undocumented students have very limited opportunities available to them in colleges. Even if undocumented students want to achieve their goals, they need to spend thousands of dollars on education. Moreover, their undocumented status limits their access to economic, educational, and future opportunities.

Undocumented status leads to a decline in academic motivation as it negatively affects high school graduation rates, and the students must struggle economically to attend community colleges.

Children of immigrant parents who are deported experience both internal and external problems, such as anxiety and depression, including psychological stress caused by their parent’s imprisonment and the uncertainty of whether the imprisoned parent will be released or not. Instead of attending school, Nadira and Aisha spend their days typing letters to Homeland Security and other officials by signing up at the library computer. For the sisters, school is not as important as proving their father’s innocence. Their goal is to resolve their issues so that their mother does not have to live in a shelter, Aisha can attend college, and they can move on with their lives. They skip their classes to meet with their family lawyer, Mr. Rashid, only to find that their illegal status makes it impossible to save their father.

Aisha’s friends discuss their plans for higher education, while Aisha and Nadira focus on trying to free their father. Aisha’s friends, including Rose Chu, Kavita Menon, and Risa Sharansky, and Nadira’s best friend, Lily Yee, are all legal and able to pursue their education. However, Aisha and Nadira are undocumented with expired visas and are fighting to have their status cleared to continue their education and have access to

opportunities. Like their friends, Aisha and Nadira desire legal status, equality, and freedom. Aisha decides to leave the US once her father is released, recognizing the difficulties of living as an undocumented person. She feels ashamed and lies to her friends, saying that her father may get a job in Canada and that they plan to continue their education at McGill University, despite financial struggles.

With the initiation of new immigration laws, Muslim immigrants are no longer seen as the backbone of the development or growth of the United States but rather as terrorists and criminals who intend to terrorize the American people. The challenges that the Hossain sisters face bring about a tremendous shift in their personalities. Aisha is no longer able to accept her valedictorian and begins to jeopardize her nomination. She neither participates in debates nor attends city-wide finals, lying to get out of the debate team and Saturday practices. Furthermore, she does not bother to lie to her teacher, Mr. Friedlander, about her irregular attendance, thinking that they are probably not even staying in the country.

New immigration laws and policies, in their extreme conditions, always impact immigrant education by affecting the “number, nature and quality of services offered to immigrant children and their parents . . . it affects the physical and economic well-being of children and their parents” (Roberts and Willis 22). In addition to Aisha and Nadira, Taslima, a cousin of Aisha and Nadira, and Tareq, an immigrant teenager, are also affected by the new immigration policy. Taslima, a law school student, stops attending her school when the law is introduced. Her father wants to leave America for their native place, but Taslima wants to stay and complete her university. Thus, she begins to spend most of her time with Tim, her boyfriend, and protest against the government, skipping

her schooling. When Aisha and Nadira question her about her schooling, she states that protesting and advocating for illegal immigrants is her education. She further says, “This is political. And the only way to fight a political situation is to be political” (AMNQ 75). On the other hand, Tareq lives a low-key life, dropping out of school due to the new law. He has been working on a construction crew, pretending to be a man who drives a car service, working at a gas station, and currently rumored to work for a gang that disrupts parties at music clubs. He made himself legal in an illegal way with the help of his gang.

Asians are well known for their academic skills, as Aisha remarks that Asians are the best at academics despite poverty. Budhos provides excellent examples of academically excelling Asian immigrants like Aisha, Nadira, Kavita Menon, Rose Chu, and Risha Sharansky, who all migrated from different Asian countries and have topped their classes every time. Through Nadira, it is clear that Aisha, together with her friends, has achieved academic success by “climbing up all the honors and AP classes together, swapping notes, doing study sessions” (AMNQ 91). There have been competitive moments among the girls, and Aisha would always come out on top, becoming favorites of teachers, and finally nominated as the valedictorian with the votes from Mr. Friedlander and Mrs. Rosen. Being lovers of mathematics, Nadira and Aisha are the wittiest in their respective grades.

Aisha is a standout on Mr. Friedlander’s math team and can solve math problems so quickly that people sometimes accuse her of cheating with calculators. Upon learning of Aisha’s dream of becoming a doctor, Mr. Friedlander recommended her for the debate team, where Aisha’s skill as a mimic and debater shines. She has a unique ability to understand the perspectives of her opponents, craft effective rebuttals, and turn the

argument in her favor. Nadira, on the other hand, has a love for geometry. Though she does not consistently achieve grades as high as Aisha's, her math teacher, Mr. Chin, recognizes her talent for visualization and assigns her extra homework involving three-dimensional problems.

Immigrant students may face complex situations in their families due to separation, reunification, and changing immigration policies. If a family member is detained or deported, the safety of those who remain in volatile, chaotic, or war-torn areas may concern the students. In the case of Abba and Ma's detainment, Aisha and Nadira experience post-traumatic stress disorder, including insomnia and social emotions such as increased fear, depression, and anxiety. Aisha, in particular, lacks motivation and interest in school, despite Nadira's support. She is uncertain about her family's future in the United States, including where they will live and where she will go for higher education.

The status of being undocumented or illegal shapes the lives of immigrant children by affecting their mobility and integration, identity, health, education, and sense of belonging. When Abba is arrested for their status, Aisha and Nadira, who thought of this country as their home, could not feel that they belonged there. Due to depression, Aisha takes on a form of self-destructiveness that knows no bounds. The consequences of depression in migrant children and youth exacerbate issues of poverty and illiteracy. Therefore, providing good education for undocumented children is essential. Aisha becomes responsible for caring for Nadira, but Nadira becomes the elder one, holding her family's and her friend's secrets. Once an education-obsessed Aisha, who wept for

missing a test due to her health condition, now begins to skip classes and weeps for not being able to save her father.

The situation worsens when immigration officials arrest their uncle, Mr. Rahman. Despite calling lawyers and Tim's organization, Aisha and Taslima fail to save him. Aisha, in particular, struggles to speak up, knowing they are undocumented and have no right to advocate for civil liberties when their papers are improper. The same hearts that once loved and trusted this country for a better life begin to shatter into pieces as they experience mistreatment. Since then, the Hossain sisters live in fear that they will be deported if anyone discovers their undocumented status. Aisha blames herself for the situation and begins to isolate herself from everyone around her. The fear of being discovered affects their academic performance, making it difficult for them to concentrate on lessons, tests, and activities.

Teachers can act as therapists who understand the struggles of immigrant students and help them manage the stress that arises from cultural conflicts between their peer group, school, home, and society. These conflicts have affected Aisha both physically and emotionally, causing her to skip classes and even run away from her Barnard appointment due to her fear of being deported. The change in her personality is noticed by her teacher, Mr. Friedlander, who considers Aisha to be the best student he has ever seen. He observes that she has "been acting strange, skipping classes" (AMNQ 111). Aisha feels hopeless and immobilized, but Mr. Friedlander doesn't give up on her and continues to support her. Despite her struggles, he still votes for Aisha to become a valedictorian.

Two teenagers believed that they could argue their way into the immigration department by calling Tim's organization, the detention center, lawyers, and INS officers. They focused more on getting their father out than on achieving good grades, which was their parents' wish. They wrote letters to the new director of immigration and congress, pleading for special permission. They skipped classes to call Mr. Rashid and stood outside the detention center in Manhattan until they were turned away, with no further help offered to them.

Immigrant parents who had poor childhoods or suffered from poverty often want their children to study well in order to escape poverty themselves. Despite facing poverty, Abba worked hard to ensure that his daughters received an education, and in return, Aisha excelled academically. She learned how to be innovative, use the right words, act on stage, and handle bullies. When Nadira took her test, Aisha did better than Nadira expected. However, the war spoiled her family's desire, hope, and future by damaging her education and causing her grades to fall to a C (in the American system). As a result, Nadira comments, "she's not the same as they are; she's falling away into a corner" (AMNQ 91). Aisha gets worse, blaming herself for being unable to save her father and uncle from detention.

The realization that undocumented students may be unable to continue their education usually occurs during high school. They also begin to realize the problems they will encounter in society as an undocumented adult. The reason for Aisha's despair and depression is that she realizes her dreams are drifting away. Her academic life begins to suffer since she is sure that either they will be deported or never be in America long enough to achieve her dreams. As she states, "We don't have a future here. That's why I

tore up those letters. I couldn't be valedictorian" (AMNQ 146). Everything becomes difficult for Aisha, and she becomes a hopeless girl who has lost faith in the future. Therefore, she stops herself from dreaming about the future, as she puts it, "It's all the same. How could I get up there in public and act like I'm some representation of the class? I can't even go to college like the rest of them. I don't even know where I'm going to live. That's not right. That's not who the valedictorian is" (AMNQ 146).

Aisha being hopeless, begins to think that the country will take everything from her if she tries hard to achieve her dream. Thus, she says,

"And then I realized. I can't do this anymore. It's too hard. Too big. Nothing's working. Not the letters. Nothing. Maybe if I just stop wanting so much, they can't hurt me. I don't want to stand out anymore, Nadira. It hurts too much. I don't want to stand out. Not anymore" (AMNQ 113).

Due to the war, many immigrants, especially Muslim immigrants, were forced to be deported from the United States with their children, affecting their education. Illegal immigrants who remain in the United States live under constant fear that they might be deported anytime, so they stop going to school. Taslima is one of the young adults who stopped going to school and kept protesting against the government. It is evident through her conversation with Nadira that education became the least important as they focused more on bringing back their family and surviving.

"Promise me, Nadira, that you won't let Ma know I'm not going to classes."

"But what if you get kicked out?"

She looked at me, hard. “I could get thrown out of this country any day now” (AMNQ 95).

Education is considered the key to future success, but the feelings of alienation, disdain, and inferiority among undocumented immigrant children can hinder their educational pursuits. Nadira’s sense of guilt for not being able to save her father from detention and the fear of facing her peers and friend Lily lead her to skip school and avoid people. She even takes different routes to school to avoid being seen. She often seeks solitude to find answers to her problems and wanders around her neighborhood, watching people, eating junk food, and listening to Hindi film music. As she says, “I don’t know what I’m trying to find out, but it’s inside me, somewhere” (AMNQ 96).

When immigrant parents are arrested, their children may feel guilty and ashamed because they cannot save their parents nor have proper documentation. Even after Mr. Rahman was released from the cell, Aisha could not escape the guilt and personal trauma and she could not share with anyone. With her interview the next day, she lies rigid with bright eyes and flushed cheeks. She has a nightmare where she is thrown into a cell with no light by police officers whenever she enters a stage. When Nadira consoles her, Aisha is faced with a dilemma about attending her interview. When she says, “I’m so tired . . . so very tired” (AMNQ 103) and gives up, Nadira forces her to attend the interview.

In Bernard, Nadira observes many students playing, girls walking past carrying books, and going to important classes “as if it’s the most normal thing in the world” (AMNQ 106). She wonders if college is the place for stars like Aisha, who ideally does everything her teachers expect from her. Later, she comes across Aisha vomiting on the grass; her eyes are yellow and bloodshot. When Nadira asks about Aisha’s interview, she

says, “nothing important”. Later, Nadira learns from Mr. Friedlander that Aisha did not attend her interview. Nonetheless, Nadira manages to protect Aisha by giving a few excuses. Fortunately, Nadira discovers the false accusation against her father, saves him, and becomes a star in her family.

For some immigrants, returning to their homeland is “politically feasible and emotionally desirable; for others particularly refugees and undocumented, it simply is not an option” (Salamone 63). When Mr. Rahman is released with a few conditions, he and his family leave the country for Bangladesh, which is impossible for the Hossain family. Taslima ultimately leaves the house to continue her life as an American with Tim, and her parents leave the country, leaving their possessions to the Hossain family. Gradually, Abba and Ma learn that Aisha has stopped attending school, dropped out of her extra classes, and ruined her Bernard interview. However, this does not upset them because they clearly understand the traumas faced by Aisha and Nadira. Moreover, they stand together as pillars to motivate Aisha to return to her everyday life.

Relationships at school are essential for encouraging academic engagement, achievement, and socially intelligent behavior in the classroom. As Chelsea Connery states, “Undocumented students who are able to maintain strong friendships and have caring adults (teachers, counselors, or other adult mentors) with whom they can talk openly their struggles describe less emotional distress and are more likely to remain in school”. When the college counselor, Mrs. Roble, says, “You know, I’ve seen this happen before with the Muslim kids. I push those girls—they’re so bright. Then one day they come in with a headscarf, and they say their marriage has been arranged, and they’re

not going to college after all” (AMNQ 112), it is Mr. Friedlander who strongly believes in Aisha and knows that she can succeed again.

It is difficult for undocumented immigrant children to receive an education while facing the challenges of war, deportation, and detainment. Even though Aisha stops responding to Mr. Friedlander, he continues to send her notes for the final examination. Nadira convinces Aisha to speak to Mr. Friedlander, and they explain their situation and the truth to him. After hearing their struggles, Mr. Friedlander, with the help of his reporter friend Cassie David, shares their story as news. He also helps Aisha improve her grades and makes her graduation possible. Aisha, who once thought she would never attend her graduation or be able to continue her education, finally stands on stage as the valedictorian. She is now able to pursue higher education in the same country where she had previously been considered an outsider.

As Judge Sonia Sotomayor states, “Until we get equality in education, we won’t have an equal society” (Pandey), every individual should receive an equal and suitable opportunity to cultivate their talents and in return should receive education according to their needs, aptitudes and abilities. Aisha, in her graduation, calls herself an illegal alien and describes the struggles Hossain family to attain their legality. She describes her father’s work to make his two daughters’ study, the right things they did to get papers and their traumas when her father was arrested. Explaining their troubles, she asks her audience to see her the way she is and further says, “I live with you. I live near you. I go to your school; I eat in your cafeteria; I take the same classes. Now I am your valedictorian. I want what you want. I want a future” (AMNQ 152).

For many low-income immigrant workers, lack of time and stability makes it difficult to access financial products or seek advice. They often lack familiarity with the language and trust in the financial and welfare systems of their host country. Thus, Abba saved his money in the Muslim Community Association for his daughters' education, which wrongly framed him as a criminal. Aisha thinks they cannot afford her higher education and thus does not want to attend school. When her father's court appearance is scheduled, Aisha raises her stack of envelopes to rip them. She thinks her father may be arrested at the upcoming hearing and wants to leave. Fortunately, the court permitted them to reapply for their documents, and they finally return to the place they could now call home.

Immigrant children face several challenges in educational achievement compared to native students. Recent estimation shows that around eight lakhs migrant children and young adults live in the United States, with or without family (*Migrant Education State Performance Reports*, 1997-98). If with family, most parents of migrant children are given low-paid jobs, which is insufficient for their living as well as for the education of their children. Education matters because it is a driver of societal development and economic growth.

Given the significant role of education in developing human capital, the United States' education system attracts international immigrants and simultaneously provides better educational outcomes. It is education, as Patricia Anne DiCerbo says, the "pursuit of learning", which encourages individuals to aspire to a better life, become respected members of society, and find meaning in life (1). Thus, immigrants generally migrate to America with the hope of providing their children with the best education and quality of

life. However, entering a new environment with people who may not accept them can make immigrants feel unwell. They must undergo several challenges caused by the environment and the native people. Migrant children, in particular, face difficulties in coping with family, society, and schooling. These aspects are brilliantly explained with a beautiful plotline by the American author Marina Budhos.

*Tell Us We're Home*, a 2017 Essex County YA pick, depicts the cultural conflicts that arise between immigrant children and their parents who work as housekeepers and nannies, as well as the effects of economic status and class on their relationship. Through an intertwined plot, Marina Budhos portrays the struggles of three teenage immigrants in eighth grade: Jaya, Lola, and Maria, who hail from Canada, Russia, and Mexico, respectively. Each of them possesses a unique artistic personality and faces challenges in feeling at “home” in suburban America. The novel also highlights the concerns of immigrant children, as they navigate through everyday American adolescent angst and overcome hardships in their homes, schools, and society.

Jaya Lal, the daughter of an Indian mother and Afro-Caribbean father, is an introvert who is used to being on her own and loves to sketch, despite her mother’s disapproval of her paintings and markers. Whenever Jaya’s mother finds her sketching instead of studying, she would say, “Keep your eye on your science . . . That’s what will get you a job” (TUWH 5). Jaya’s mother was unable to complete her nursing school due to her father’s death and therefore wants Jaya to pursue a career in nursing. They move to New Jersey to start a new life and provide Jaya with better education opportunities. Mrs. Lal works in Mrs. Harmon’s home, where Jaya helps her mother with her work and completes her schoolwork.

Lola Svetloski is a bigmouth history fanatic, a bright and confident girl who is passionate about the American Revolution. However, change and revolution are hard for Lola as she struggles with her family as immigrants. Lola grew up in a village in Slovakia and has a deep understanding of history and the crumbling old walls of her homeland. She spends most of her time at the local history room at the county library, where she is enchanted by the “magic dust of history, of real Americans buried in cemeteries with slanted stones, the ones whose blood and skin and genes gave them a right to be here” (TUWH 17). Lola lives in a residence with other immigrants from Ghana, Ecuador, and other countries.

Maria is an innocent schoolgirl with a sweet heart-shaped face, who is often perceived as dumpy and babyish. Her family migrated from Mexico, and they are frequently accused of entering the country illegally, as many undocumented immigrants are from Mexico. Maria is drawn to Tash, a native boy, after he saves her cousin Renaldo from a fight over the right to play in Grove Field. Maria’s family cannot afford much in their new town, but they settled there because it has good schools. They make the best of their situation, with “the women painting the kitchen avocado green and planting peppers and roses; the men fixing their old cars in the driveway” (TUWH 28).

During the immigration process, immigrants reconstruct and reorganize their social relationships, which is considerably complex. Adolescent migrants are more likely to befriend their peers who share their immigrant status on a larger scale than their native peers. According to research, such bonds are beneficial to immigrant children to adjust socioculturally and psychologically in society. Jaya, Lola, and Maria unexpectedly became friends and hold a connection that they did not find since settling in

Meadowbrook. They are the daughters of poor nannies and housekeepers, which immediately and firmly connects them.

The United States struggles with mass migration, cultural diversity, and integration. The effects can be seen in young immigrants, who are caught between their native and host cultures. This paves the way for assimilation or acculturation, in which children immigrants assimilate to their American peers. Despite assimilating, immigrant children are often avoided by American peers, which lead them to only mingle with other immigrant peers. Even though Jaya, Maria, and Lola come from different parts of the world and have different values, they easily bond as they are poor daughters of house cleaners, cooks, and babysitters of wealthy families in an American suburb. They are neither entirely American nor fully part of their native culture.

In the “New World”, America, as a free country, did not follow the practice of requiring school uniforms to grant students more freedom to express themselves. Nevertheless, this idea became a barrier for immigrants who are used to wearing school uniforms in their native countries. Adding to immigrant children’s challenges, students in America do not wear school uniforms. So, finding suitable clothing for school becomes another stressor for them, and they are often forced to buy cheap clothes or hand-me-downs from wealthy kids. On Maria’s first day of the new school, she is teased by her classmates for her inexpensive dress, which makes every morning an agony, figuring out what to wear, especially since some girls never wear the same outfit more than once. With Jaya and Lola, Maria goes to the 99-cent store on Haley Avenue to buy inexpensive items like plastic hoop earrings and imitation leather belts. Together they fantasize about getting the perfect look for high school.

According to Rosemary C. Salomone, “Schooling and language, and cultural associations, separately and collectively play in shaping individual, group, and particularly national identity” (5). Jaya and Maria struggle with alienation from both their ethnic heritage and American culture. Unlike Lola, who is strong, confident, and witty, Jaya and Maria remain average, innocent, and shy students. However, they have a sense of not belonging to their new place and become a trio of immigrants. Despite trying hard to use American slang like “awesome” and “no way,” the effects are never the same for them. Their friendship is so fitting that they become outsiders together. The three are meant to be with each other, and their friendship makes them forget that they are outsiders.

In today’s technical vernacular, language is considered the “cultural software” through which group members attach meaning and give shape to their practices (Salomone 71). Language difference is considered the most significant barrier for immigrants to overcome. The language barrier occurs mainly for Maria, whose native language is Spanish. Initially, she is put into an ELL (English language learning) class to improve her language and accent. For her, everything in Meadowbrook seems complicated due to her dress, her accent that is not understood by teachers or peers, and her inability to make her voice heard by others. To her dismay, she is mainly assigned to the mean girls’ group, who avoid speaking to Maria. Whenever she tries to express herself and share her ideas, they immediately ignore or dismiss her words.

The participatory learning approach is where students are given opportunities to play active roles in the learning process. The American schooling system is well known for its participatory classes and values students who participate actively. Unfortunately,

in such classes, Maria is often overlooked by her classmates, who do not call on her. Mrs. Lansky teaches her not to wait for other students to call on her and to take opportunities for herself. With Mrs. Lansky's help, Maria is taken out of the ELL class despite her average accent. Later, she works with a speech therapist to improve her accent, but feels like she is their ongoing project. To further improve her English, she teaches Spanish to others, especially Tash.

Mexicans who have migrated to the United States, like other immigrants who enter the country voluntarily, understand that they must overcome linguistic and cultural barriers to achieve success. Mrs. Alvarez, Maria's mother, does not know much about America and does not speak English well. Maria gives her mother a dictionary with simple words and phrases. However, Maria still has to accompany her mother for interviews if her mother needs help understanding a few things. Maria wants her mother to learn English because she does not want her to suffer the way she does at school, struggling to understand or to make herself understood by others. Fortunately, with the help of her friends Lola and Jaya, Maria learns to speak English, which enables her to communicate more effectively.

Similarly, Lola's father, a once-great engineer, migrated to America but found it difficult due to his poor English skills. During their first year in Meadowbrook, he worked with a Russian construction company, but his license needed improvement and his accent made communication difficult. The whole family struggled, as Lola's mother worked as a housekeeper and her sister Nadia helped to support their finances. In contrast, Jaya had no language issues, having been born and raised in Canada.

Children who are immigrants often face humiliation from their American peers due to their status. They are subjected to violent bullying or insults for their accent, appearance, behavior, and other factors. Jaya, Lola, and Maria all face different forms of insults. For example, Rachel Meisner often targets Jaya because her mother works for the Meisner family. Rachel even falsely accuses Jaya of stealing a design from her jewelry shop, despite the truth being that Jaya was inspired by one of the designs and created her own design. Maria is often left out during group activities, leading to low grades, and she is made fun of for her accent, clothing, and innocence. To avoid bullies and embarrassment, the three girls even lie about their mother's occupation. However, Lola is the only character who fights against the bullies and stands up for Jaya and Maria when they are being bullied.

Education is crucial for immigrants who leave their country in search of a successful future. However, they face additional challenges to achieve educational success. Immigrant children are required to put in twice the effort of native students because they must learn a new language and culture in addition to the subject matter taught to native students. Lola earns straight A's in her classes but must work much harder than her peers to prove her brilliance. Budhos draws a parallel between Rachel, a native and brilliant but mean student, and Lola, an immigrant who struggles to be as good as Rachel. Thus, Budhos observes about native children, "There was something different about kids like Rachel. It was an air they carried, a casual, I-don't-care-and-besides-you-know-I'm-smart-enough attitude that the teachers just ate up" (TUWH 15).

Another example is Anthony Vitale, who is a frenemy of Lola. Anthony and Lola usually argue about random things, and when it comes to education, Anthony finds the

schooling system to be dumb. This is because his father never completed high school but managed to build his own company. So, for American kids like Anthony, there is no need to study when they can quickly get a job in their own parent's company or take over their parent's company itself. If anything happened to such children, or if teachers were rude towards them, or if these children did not perform well academically, their parents would come marching through the doors and stand up for them. Anthony's parents fight and support his learning defiance, while Lola's mother works for financial stability, and her father does not care or fight for the family. For Lola, the message from her parents is to go to school without making any trouble.

Immigrant parents often have to give up their education due to their immigration, and therefore, they aspire to provide better education to their children than what they themselves received in their native land. This is one of the reasons why immigrant parents often end up with low-paying jobs and humble lifestyles. For instance, Mrs. Lal had to abandon her dream of becoming a nurse due to her husband's death and her subsequent migration to the United States. Similarly, Mr. Svetloski was a brilliant engineer in his native land of Russia and was the only boy from his village to become a civil engineer, building bridges and roads and managing hundreds of workers. However, when he migrated to the United States, he struggled to find a decent job due to his poor English skills.

New Jersey is a small state in the United States with a good quality of education, "ranking at the top of all fifty US states" (WalletHub). This is a major reason why immigrants settle in New Jersey, seeking better education for their children. All three immigrant families of Jaya, Lola, and Maria could not afford to live in the town, but it is

where the good schools are located. Mrs. Lal remarks, “Jaya, you know the school system here? It’s one of the best. A brand-new biology lab. So much better than what your cousins have in Queens. There’s possibilities here, darlin’” (TUWH 190). Initially, Jaya, Lola, and Maria disliked the place but later learned to fit in once they befriended each other. They feel ashamed of their mothers and hate going to their mothers’ workplaces to help them and watch them work for the families of the kids they go to school with. Despite their illnesses and academic work, they are forced to help their mothers.

The difficult part of being an immigrant worker is that they do not have a company, supervisor, principal, human resources department, or higher authority to protect them. As a result, they are easily fired or accused of a mistake they did not commit. When such an accusation occurs, it not only affects the immigrant workers but also their children’s mental health. Jaya’s mother is accused of stealing valuables from Mrs. Harmon’s home, fired from her job, and forced to do extra work for the Siler family. In order to prove her innocence, Jaya, Lola, and Maria try their best by making posters, talking to Mr. Cramer, and gathering letters from the places she worked at before. Because of this situation, they are unable to focus on their studies, and instead of going to school, they try to save Mrs. Lal. To some extent, Mrs. Lal asks Jaya to take up a part-time job to support the family financially.

Lola’s only concern is that her father could get up and do some work. Even after her mother was diagnosed with diabetes, Lola thought this could make her father wake up and work. Nevertheless, it “made him sink further into his own self-pity” (TUWH 86). She hated self-pity and people who quickly gave up and slumped against life. She wonders, “What about second chances . . . Isn’t this why we came here? You haven’t

even tried!” (TUWH 72). Nobody listens to her voice, neither her father nor Jaya, who does not agree with Lola’s protest. This is why Lola loved holing up in her bedroom and reading about the American Revolution. She admires revolutions and rebels because they are loud and pushy, and they could create something completely new.

On the other hand, Maria teaches Spanish to Tash because it helps her improve her language skills. She is also depressed because Renaldo does not allow her to teach Spanish to Tash. In such a situation, she is assaulted by him for not doing household chores and teaching a ‘white guy.’ Everything becomes a burden to them, even the friendship that made them “outsiders” together. Thus, Budhos states, “This country was full of hard stuff and hard people. A place where maids could lose their jobs over stupid earrings. Where high school boys beat up Mexicans. Where you didn’t have good friends. And the angels were no more than hollow plasters” (TUWH 114).

Each character survives their “schooling, language, arts and social studies and that god-awful chemistry quiz” (TUWH 149) with great struggles. After her mother is fired from Mrs. Harmon’s home, Jaya is made to assist her in the Silers family. She will go to Silers’, do her academic work, and help her mother whenever possible. Jaya can do her work in the mud room, where she sets up her work at the tiny table in the corner. And then, she goes through her social studies or math homework until she is called to look after the children, which is “the part of her mother’s job she did like” (TUWH 97). Despite her mother’s assurances that they have come to this new city for her education and future, she senses that it is not real.

Each of them struggled to concentrate on their work after their group fell apart. Lola, being a revolutionary, could not stop thinking about Mrs. Lal’s accusation and

wanted to do something to prove her innocence. She couldn't stop thinking or getting irritated about the issue, and the fire in her eyes did not stop with just pasting posters in a few places. So, she decides to break into Mrs. Harmon's home to get evidence proving Mrs. Lal's innocence. Unfortunately, this act of breaking in leads to a miserable situation for Mrs. Lal, as she loses another job without any reason.

Immigrant children long for a life that is wealthy, secure, and free, just like native children. No matter where they come from, all immigrant children deserve safety. When Maria is invited to Tash's house, she yearns for such a life. She can see that Tash and his friends are the most brilliant kids, judging from what he has said to her - AP classes stacking up for the semester ahead, and their summer internships. According to Maria, smart kids stay in the library all night, but Tash's friends are different - they do not seem to have any anxious thoughts about academics. Thus, Budhos says, "Maybe, she reflected, when you were high-level - what she sweated so hard to achieve with her number-2 pencil bubble tests - you could just lie around on the grass and bask in your inborn greatness" (TUWH 160).

The victimization of immigrant children is often unnoticed by teachers and parents. It is difficult for these children to hide their weaknesses, such as a lack of cultural understanding and language skills. Despite Lola's sassiness and upbeat nature, she is still unable to impress Rachel. In one fell swoop, Rachel can demolish Lola's hope of doing better academically. Lola feels like a "pathetic trying-too-hard outsider who didn't know the moves" (TUWH 165). As a result, she enjoys being at the library, where most of Meadowbrook disappears, allowing her to escape from the pressure of social interactions.

For native-born children like Rachel, everything seems to work out as they want it to. They can be mean and cruel towards immigrants, and everyone would think that's what intelligent girls do. For the first time, Lola understands that she is jealous of Rachel because Rachel can be spoiled, yet still go to college, excel academically, and achieve educational success. Lola, on the other hand, no matter what she does, has to fight for everything, including simple attention from her teachers. Thus, she feels that Meadowbrook is unjust and unfair, despite being supposed to be a meritocracy. Lola expects to be at the top of her class simply because she works harder than Rachel and is quite intelligent, but it doesn't work out that way. Children like Rachel hold something that immigrants like Lola don't have, and that is belonging.

The impact of mental health caused by family issues, academic and societal barriers leads to feelings of alienation, disdain, and inferiority. Lola, who suffers from anger issues due to her unfair life, is affected mentally to the next level when she commits a terrible mistake. Besides insulting her friend and breaking into Mrs. Harmon's home, she burns Rachel's social project. As a member of Women of Revolution, Lola lectures on "how the America of today had betrayed the ideals of the revolution," discussing how Mrs. Lal is assumed to be guilty before her innocence, how historical houses like Mrs. Harmon's home are torn down for cheap condos, how the country is against immigrants, and how students are unaware of such injustices happening in the sweet Meadowbrook. She brings out Meadowbrook's living history that others do not appreciate. However, when Rachel presents her imaginary diary of a historian, Lola feels inferior, contemptuous, and so shaken that she does not realize she is destroying Rachel's presentation.

Some studies show that the mental health status of young immigrants is worse than that of natives, due to the physical and social stressors of the immigration process itself. Already suffering from traumas related to her father, friends, and her own behavior, Lola finds it hard to cope with her daily life. She struggles to eat, sleep, or stay still, often wandering the empty and dark streets of Meadowbrook. Lola seeks counseling for her anger issues, and when Ruth Dinerstein questions her about her problems, Lola responds, “Issues. Issues were *Brown v. Board of Education*” (TUWH 199).

During this time, immigrants are facing threats to their civil liberties. Maria is tired of her immigrant status and the news that suggests banning immigrants from cities and eliminating ELL classes in schools. She does not share her troubles with Lola or Jaya as their sufferings differ from hers. Neither Jaya nor Lola has neighbors who keep sending police over complaints. Despite Lola’s advice that Tash and his team would use her for their academic profit, Maria permits Genine to interview her cousin. She joins the protest with Tash’s team only to find out that no one appeared on the day of the protest, and the whole thing was only for beefing up their resumes for college.

Social support is crucial for immigrant children and adolescents to cope with transitory situations. Friends can act as pillars of support and provide models for behavior. Moreover, friendship can have a significant impact on how kids behave. When a misunderstanding occurs between friends, there can be a shift in their personalities. Jaya further isolates herself, immersing herself in her world of art and sketches. Due to Mrs. Lal’s false accusation, she decides to leave Meadowbrook. Lola struggles in counseling, realizing her behavior and coping with her father’s mental illness. Maria understands the real motive of Tash and his friends and realizes her friends were correct.

Individually, they come to understand the worth of their friendship and their mothers' sacrifices for their education.

Friendship, an enduring state of affection, intimacy, and trust, gives children a sense of belonging, increases self-esteem, and develops social skills. The girls' friendship brings them back together and gives them a sense of belonging. Their friendship increases their self-esteem, motivating them to dig deep to find the mystery behind the theft. Jaya, Lola, and Maria convince Mrs. Lal to stay in Meadowbrook since the false accusation has been cleared. Together, they almost reach the end of middle school. Through all their individual and collective struggles, they've had each other, and they realize that "The only thing pinning them to the earth was their superheavy packs bulging on their backs" (TUWH 293).

Immigrants often live in the shadows, trying to avoid their problems. However, Jaya disproves her mother's false accusation of theft and saves her from being falsely labeled as a thief. Maria breaks off her friendship with Tash and makes him feel guilty for his actions, while Lola works on correcting her behavior and anger issues. Jaya and Maria, who were once quiet, learn to speak up for themselves and appreciate their mothers' hard work and sacrifices despite being ashamed of their occupations. Through their struggles, they learn to appreciate their identities, personalities, and friendship, ultimately overcoming the challenges they faced.

In conclusion, both the novels *Ask Me No Questions* and *Tell Us We're Home* highlight the numerous challenges that immigrant young students face while attaining an education in the United States. The books bring out various issues such as discrimination, prejudice, legal barriers, financial hardships, and mental health problems, that immigrant

students have to face, and how these challenges can significantly impact their education and mental health. The novels emphasize the critical role of family support, friendship, and community support in helping immigrant students navigate their way through the educational system and overcome obstacles. The books effectively challenge readers to consider the difficult issues and choices that immigrant families face, and ultimately, the value of empathy and understanding in building a more inclusive and equitable society.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Conclusion**

#### **“Migration has been politicized before it has been analyzed” - Paul Collier**

Adolescent as well as adult immigrant and refugee students encounter numerous challenges as they start their education in a new environment. While some students find these challenges overwhelming and drop out of school, others cope with them resiliently and achieve success (Brooker and Lawrence). The obstacles that new immigrants face include issues related to assimilation into a new culture and issues directly related to their educational experiences. In a multicultural country like the United States, cultural challenges often revolve around personal identity and finding a place to call ‘home’. On the other hand, educational challenges often revolve around difficulties in learning a new language and other necessary learning skills for adult education. Every international, refugee, and immigrant student faces these challenges.

The image of an immigrant, contrast to the native born, is generally related to lower power and status, although immigrants have various social roles that affect their status. The factors include reasons for migration (voluntary or forced), legal status (documented or undocumented), and membership in social categories such as race, ethnic, religion, gender and sexual orientation. Such differences in the context of stereotypes, attitudes towards specific groups, result not only to categorize them as “immigrants” but also to intersection them as privileged and marginalized category. The adoption of intersectionality frameworks in migration status, implicitly and explicitly, is a result of the realization that migrants are not homogeneous groups with a single point of

difference, and the movements of migrants cannot be defined solely in terms of that difference.

Yet, little is known about how these recently arrived adult students manage their difficulties, and even less is known about how their cultural and academic challenges are connected. Marina Budhos is regarded as a flag-bearer of her community, as her works display her devotion to her ancestors and homes in both Guyana and India. As an immigrant writer, she has dedicated her time to observing the lives of Caribbean eastern Indian Guyanese immigrants in the United States. She has not only become their spokesperson but also their reporter and keen observer. In most of her novels, she attempts to portray the experiences of her community, especially young adult girls, and the challenges they face, such as expulsion, racism, identity, a lack of belonging, and displacement in the United States. As Faraj remarks, Budhos's novels are a series of windows describing what it means to be an immigrant in America and what America means.

Despite having different plots and background settings, both novels focus on the challenges faced by young immigrants, especially teenage girls ranging from ages 13 to 17. Yet, there are a few similar themes, characters, and issues. One of the common themes seen in both novels is false accusations. In *Ask Me No Questions*, Mr. Hossain is falsely accused of supporting a terrorist group and treated poorly in the detention center. Whereas, in *Tell Us We're Home*, Mrs. Lal is falsely accused of the loss of a jewel, fired from her job without reason, and Jaya Lal is accused of stealing a design. Through these instances, Budhos brings out the mistreatment given to poor immigrants by natives, solely based on their status.

Moreover, both novels have at least one strong character who fights against their oppressors. In *Ask Me No Questions*, Taslima protests against the government policies with Tim and his organization. She stands up for her family and protests against the immigration officials. On the other hand, in *Tell Us We're Home*, Lola fights against the bullies and Mrs. Lal's false accusation. She protects Maria and Jaya from Rachel Meisner and other bullies who oppress innocent immigrants. Both are strong, open, and powerful revolutionaries fighting for their rights to have a peaceful life.

The theme of belonging as one of the major issues can be seen in both novels. "Ready to go home?" (AMNQ 159) asks Abba when he is released from the detention centre, and the accusation against him is cleared, which Nadira says to the readers, "We push forward, into the unknown. Go" (AMNQ 159). Until the end of the novel, the whole family has a sense of not belonging to the place and cannot call it home. Likewise, in *Tell Us We're Home*, all three major characters feel that they want a home to dwell in, not just to live. Thus, the novel ends with the line "While they learned to put the rice pot on the stove, phone the electric company, feel these walls, these streets, as their own. To call this place home" (TUWH 297).

The thesis has been divided into four chapters focusing on Marina Budhos's two famous novels - *Ask Me No Questions* and *Tell Us We're Home*. The introduction chapter explains the literature's relationship with immigration, its themes, and migration to the United States, which is the land of immigrants. It further explains statistics on immigrants migrating to the United States and the struggles faced by immigrants, especially children and adolescent immigrants. Further explanations are given on different immigrant writers

in America, their works, and Marina Budhos, who is one among them. It also explains her biography, works, and contributions towards the immigrant community.

The second chapter delves into the challenges faced by immigrant children and teenagers, both within their families and in society. The challenges faced by immigrant characters in each novel are explored separately. In *Ask Me No Questions*, the challenges faced during the post-9/11 era are discussed, including difficulties in adapting to the new environment, immigrant status, social invisibility, assimilation, intergenerational conflict between parents and children, detention and deportation, sense of belonging, and psychological traumas due to separation. In *Tell Us We're Home*, the challenges include parental strictness, health and mental issues, difficulty in making friends, effects of false accusations, the shame of immigrant and class status, and the realization experienced by immigrant characters as they come to accept themselves.

The third chapter discusses challenges faced by immigrant children and teenagers within the American educational system. In *Ask Me No Questions*, the impact of new immigration laws on the education of the main characters is highlighted, including separation, poverty, alienation, and post-traumatic stress disorder. In *Tell Us We're Home*, the three girls are outcasted, bullied, and humiliated due to their immigration status, which affects their education. The chapter also explores the issues faced by immigrant parents working in menial jobs, which results in their children having to help at home instead of focusing on academics. It delves into the topics of schooling, language, and cultural associations that shape individuals' experiences within the educational system.

The final chapter briefly discusses the similarities between the novels and how Marina Budhos highlights the challenges faced by immigrant children in achieving educational success. It provides a summary of the findings throughout the project and suggests possible avenues for further research with the selected novels.

The discussion reveals that immigrants encounter economic challenges as they are mostly offered menial or low-paid jobs. As discussed in both chapters, immigrant parents are often employed in jobs such as construction, restaurants, or as doormen, while mothers are offered jobs such as housekeepers, nannies, and cashiers. The reason for this is that immigrant parents are not qualified for high-paying jobs, either because they could not afford education in their home country or because their education was disrupted due to the immigration process.

As Donald F. Hones says, education is the way to future success, and the only way immigrants might settle down is with good education and a good job. Since immigrant parents couldn't continue their education, they wished for their children to fulfil their dreams. Unfortunately, immigrant children struggle in new environments, new schooling systems, and with new students who treat them as aliens. They are harshly discriminated against by their peers based on their immigrant status, race, colour, class, behaviour, and appearance.

The new immigration policy plays a significant role in the lives of immigrants. School teachers, educators, and administrators may not be aware of how immigration-related problems are affecting their students or co-workers (Kdeckert). Immigrants facing separation, reunification, and the effects of shifting may face complicated circumstances in their families. All of these outcomes have long-lasting practical and emotional effects

on students and their families. In both novels, new immigration policies have significantly impacted immigrant children. Nadira and Aisha suffer from family separation, as their father is arrested in a detention centre, and they live under constant pressure of being deported.

Quality education is the only hope for immigrant parents, as it provides low-income immigrants with a path out of poverty. For DACA students, undocumented, foreign, and other immigrant students, the United States sets policies at the federal level that affect higher education access, degree completion, and post-graduate job prospects. This becomes a nightmare for immigrant children to pursue their education, especially for undocumented immigrants. Educators must look after how immigrant children are welcomed into the classroom to understand how to support and encourage these students, to advance them and foster their achievement.

In light of the challenges faced by immigrant children in the United States, it is crucial to identify potential solutions and recommendations that can help address these issues. One potential solution is to provide more resources and support to immigrant families, particularly those who are undocumented. This can include access to legal assistance, financial aid, and counselling services, among others.

Another potential solution is to provide more opportunities for immigrant children to learn about and connect with their heritage and culture. This can help them develop a sense of identity and pride in their background, which can be particularly beneficial for those who may feel marginalized or disconnected from their communities.

Additionally, it is essential to advocate for policies that promote equity and inclusivity in education. This can include increasing funding for schools in low-income

areas, providing English language learners with additional support, and implementing anti-discrimination policies that protect immigrant children from bullying and harassment.

**Strengthening partnerships between schools and community organizations:** Schools can work with community organizations to provide additional resources and support to immigrant children and their families. Community organizations can offer programs and services such as after-school tutoring, mentorship programs, and cultural enrichment activities. By partnering with community organizations, schools can provide more comprehensive support to immigrant children and help bridge the gap between schools and immigrant communities.

**Providing professional development for teachers and school staff:** Teachers and school staff need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively support immigrant children and their families. Professional development can help teachers and staff understand the challenges faced by immigrant children, develop cultural competence, and learn strategies for effectively supporting English language learners and immigrant families. Providing ongoing professional development can also help ensure that teachers and staff are up-to-date on best practices and can provide the best possible support to immigrant children.

The challenges faced by immigrant children in the United States can also include the fear and uncertainty associated with immigration status and the threat of deportation. To address these challenges, one potential solution is to provide immigration relief and support to immigrant families. This can include providing a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, protecting the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

(DACA) program, and implementing policies that provide a pathway to legal residency for immigrant families.

Another potential solution is to provide mental health support and counseling services to immigrant children and their families. Fear and uncertainty associated with immigration status can have a significant impact on mental health, and it is essential to provide resources and support to help children and families cope with these challenges. Mental health services can include counseling, therapy, and support groups, among others, and can help immigrant children and families address trauma and build resilience. Providing mental health support can also help prevent long-term negative effects on mental health and well-being.

The novels examined in this study focus on the struggles of girl children, such as Aisha, Nadira, Taslima, Jaya, Lola, and Maria, within the new education system of the United States, which presents a promising avenue for further studies in gender studies. Racism is another area that merits further investigation, as Muslim immigrants are often subjected to derogatory labeling and mistreatment, as depicted in *Ask Me No Questions*, while *Tell Us We're Home* portrays the exclusion of Renaldo and his team from using the playground based on their race. Examining government policies towards immigrants with empirical data and statistics could offer insights into the factors that affect immigrant experiences. Additionally, exploring the concept of the sense of belonging among immigrants who may feel disconnected from their new environment is another potential area for future research. The impact of menial jobs available to immigrant workers and the history of migration are also topics that could benefit from further investigation.

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