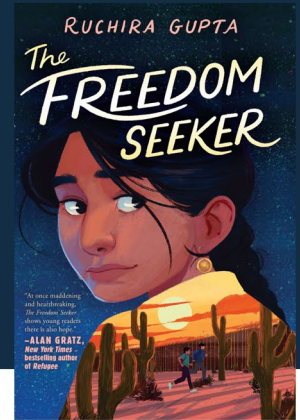


Ruchira Gupta

AUTHOR ARTIST ACTIVIST

Praise and Reviews The Freedom Seeker



Praise from Authors and Advocates

"Gupta turns a spotlight on the broken American immigration system and its devastating impact on children. At once maddening and heartbreaking, The Freedom Seekers shows young readers there is also hope--through awareness, activism, and community." - **Alan Gratz**, New York Times bestselling author of *Refugee*

"In The Freedom Seeker, Ruchira has created a girl who will create our future." – **Gloria Steinem**, author, *My journey on the road, Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions, Revolution from Within*

"This riveting, courageous, and nuanced story will break your heart right open and with it, give you a new understanding of justice. Told through the eyes of an Indian child, The Freedom Seeker sheds light on one of the darkest realities on U.S. soil in modern times -- the criminalization of migrants seeking political asylum and the separation of children from their parents, no matter the ethnicity. A necessary and important story that will help you see, act, and heal." – **Aida Salazar**, Pura Belpré Honor Award-winning author of *Ultraviolet* and *Land of the Cranes*.

"Now more than ever, we need books that tell the complicated and complex stories of our global migration crisis from new perspectives. The Freedom Seeker does just that. It is an important and moving tale about the difficulties of finding refuge in an increasingly inhospitable world. Told from the perspective of a child, this book gives a refreshing and unexpected take on what it means to migrate and what is lost along the way. This is a must-read for young people and adults alike." - **Jason De Leon**, National Book Award-winning author of *Soldiers and Kings* and *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*

"The Freedom Seeker is a must-read social justice adventure to understand the struggles of migrant families. Ruchira Gupta opens hearts and minds, inspiring young readers to find their own voice for change." - **Leymah Gbowee**, Nobel Peace Laureate

"Ruchira has captured the complexity of emotions and experiences surrounding immigration, through the eyes of brave and compassionate Simi. This moving story connects us deeply to one family through global themes like tribalism, migration and community. It's a compelling novel for all ages." - **Sayu Bhojwani**, New York City's first Commissioner of Immigrant Affairs

"Never has it been more critical for Americans to attach a face and a heart to all the stories we hear about the cruelties of immigration in this modern world. Ruchira Gupta has been able to do just that in a book that is as riveting as it is important." - **Abby Disney**, Filmmaker and activist

Reviews

★ PUBLISHER WEEKLY FULL REVIEW: May, 2025

Gupta (*I Kick and I Fly*) follows one immigrant child's experience attempting a dangerous border crossing to seek refuge in this wrenching family story. Twelve-year-old field hockey player Simi Singh and her Punjabi family have happily lived in Chandigarh, India, all her life. Then her father is badly beaten by members of a conservative group that's advocating to ban interfaith marriages, including that of Simi's Hindu Sikh abbu and Muslim ammi. After Abbu applies for—and is denied—a visa to the U.S., he instead opts to travel there via the Donkey Express, “chartered planes that smuggle Punjabis to America illegally.” Granted asylum in the U.S., Abbu works to send money back for Ammi and Simi's escape. But complications during her own journey to the U.S. find Simi separated from her mother in Mexico. Gupta powerfully exposes how othering occurs via frank prose that details the rapid escalation of prejudice rhetoric in Simi's neighborhood, the brutal conditions of the border crossing, and the cruel political bureaucracy Simi contends with during her travels. This sobering novel's optimistic and steadfast tone—highlighted through Simi's own self-determination, and in joyful instances of kindness and connection—rings true across grim depictions of loss. Ages 8–12. (*Aug.*)

<https://www.publishersweekly.com/9781339012421>



KIRKUS full REVIEW June 1, 2025

Fleeing bigotry in Chandigarh, India, a girl faces a perilous immigration journey to the United States.

Twelve-year-old Simran has a loving family and caring best friends, Ravi and Reena—and she's just been selected as the captain of her middle school field hockey team. But just as she's enjoying this happy news, Simi's family faces nasty threats of religious and racial hatred. After her Sikh father, Gurbeer Singh, is brutally beaten for being married to her Muslim mother, Henna Ali, the extended family decides that the three will seek asylum in America. Although Gurbeer, who was a farmer back home, is granted political asylum and starts driving a taxi in New York City, Simi and her mother are denied entry, propelling them to fly to Mexico via Spain and attempt the dangerous border crossing to reunite with Abbu. As coyotes take them on foot across the desert toward Arizona, Simi becomes separated from Ammi, and she endures nightmarish experiences in her attempt to rejoin her parents. Acts of kindness from strangers and her new friendship with Jose, a 12-year-old Honduran boy, sustain the brave and realistically drawn protagonist. The same leadership skills that made her a great field hockey captain come to Simi's aid as she navigates the bewildering and brutal immigration system. Through evocative and accessible writing, this gut-punch of a story illuminates the global rise of intolerance and the anguish faced by those who seek safety.

A riveting story of love, hope, and survival. (author's note, additional resources, glossary) (*Fiction. 8-13*)

Links: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/ruchira-gupta/the-freedom-seeker/>

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