



Understanding Queer Identity and Issues of Suicide in Amruta Patil's *Kari*

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Abstract

Kari a moving story of survival in the face of adversity explores the intertwining themes of queer identity mental health and social marginalization by Amruta Patil. The graphic novel examines *Kari's* psychological issues such as her internalized homophobia experiences of rejection and the ongoing pressures of heteronormative social norms. *Kari's* struggle with suicide thoughts is representative of the larger crisis LGBTQIA+ people face worldwide where feelings of loneliness and worthlessness are made worse by stigmatization emotional neglect and restricted access to resources for affirming mental health. By using symbolic elements like water and darkness which stand for suffocation loneliness and the overwhelming weight of depression, Patil uses the visual medium to evoke *Kari's* inner turmoil. Moments of color and light represent ephemeral hope and connection while the textured and fractured art style reflects *Kari's* shattered emotional state. These creative decisions deepen the story's emotional resonance by empathizing with readers *Kari's* experiences and emphasizing the psychological costs of social exclusion and invisibility. *Kari* contains moments of self-awareness intimacy and resiliency despite its somber tone implying that survival and recovery are possible. *Kari* reclaims her story via artistic expression employing creativity as a form of healing and resistance. In the end, the book goes beyond its personal story to offer a more comprehensive analysis of the mental health issues that marginalized queer people face. Intimately exploring identity and evocatively criticizing social norms Patil's work provides a nuanced portrayal of the relationship between surviving mental illness and queerness.

Keywords:

Graphic Novel, Queer Identity, Social Exclusion, Mental Health, Suicide

Introduction

Kari (2008) is a groundbreaking work of Indian graphic literature by Amruta Patil who occupies a special position in India's literary and graphic arts landscape. *Kari* one of the first Indian graphic novels to concentrate on LGBTQIA+ issues, representing a substantial shift from popular narratives that frequently downplay or ignore queer identities. Patil's approach combines the craft of graphic novels with in-depth literary analysis exploring intricate emotional and psychological terrain with striking illustrations and moving narratives. A crucial text for comprehending how these themes intersect in modern Indian society is her creation of *Kari* a young woman negotiating the maze of queer identity social rejection mental health issues and the terrible threat of suicide (Patil 2008). Even though comic books and graphic novels are well-known throughout the world *Kari* occupies a unique place in India where it questions the limitations of conventional Indian storytelling as well as the idea that graphic novels are primarily limited to fantasy or lighter subjects. In a country where societal and familial pressures frequently impose a strict framework for personal and sexual identity Patil offers a visceral examination of queer life in India through her art and storytelling. By doing this *Kari* adds to the larger discussion about mental health sexual identity and the effects of social rejection.

Kari's path involves more than just accepting her sexual identity it also entails realizing how closely identity and mental health are related. The concept of queer identity in a conformist society is one of *Kari's* main themes. *Kari's* identity is shaped and reshaped by her relationships how she views herself and her interactions with the outside world both as a woman and as a queer person. The work offers a distinctive perspective on the intricacies of queer people's lives especially in the Indian context. The novel addresses more general concerns of queer identity and mental health by emphasizing *Kari's* internal conflicts and the social familial and personal factors that influence her experiences. It emphasizes how people who experience social rejection and marginalization are more likely to experience psychological distress and suicidal thoughts (Budge et al. 2013). Specifically, *Kari* offers an important story for comprehending how people with queer identities deal with their own struggles against a society that does not acknowledge or validate their existence in addition to navigating their own experiences of love

desire and self-expression. This research article will explore how *Kari* addresses themes of depression the need for connection and the eventual hopelessness that many LGBTQIA+ people experience when they are faced with the constant internalized stigma and lack of social acceptance.

The novel's analysis of suicide looks at how wider social pressures can push marginalized people to the edge in addition to how personal suffering contributes to suicide (Gaur et al. 2022). *Kari* is an important text for this journal because of its critical importance in relation to Queer Theory and mental health. Insight into the intersections of mental health issues social marginalization and queer identity is offered by the book.

Theoretical Framework

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Queer Theory from the book *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) offers a critical framework for comprehending the fluidity of sexuality identity and the social structures that influence them. A key contributor to the growth of Queer Theory Sedgwick highlights the diversity and complexity of human desire and identity challenging dogmatic conceptions of gender and sexuality. Through her work heteronormative presumptions are dismantled and a queer lens that defies the limitations of binary oppositions like male/female hetero/homo and normal/abnormal is presented. The way that Amruta Patil's *Kari* addresses issues of queer identity social rejection mental health and suicide is examined using Queer Theory in this theoretical framework. Sedgwick's book *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) which examines the profound implications of sexual identity categories and the closet as a site of repression encapsulates her seminal work in Queer Theory. Sedgwick argues that the concept of the closet is a social and cultural construct that imposes conformity to normative sexual behaviors and identities rather than merely being a private place for hiding one's sexual identity (Sedgwick 1990).

This theory is extremely pertinent to the analysis of *Kari* as the main character *Kari* negotiates her queer identity in a society that penalizes deviation from social norms and demands conformity. Her inability to publicly express her sexuality is closely linked to *Kari*'s emotional and psychological distress mirroring the

ways queer people are frequently confined to a literal and figurative closet. Among Sedgwick's most important contributions to Queer Theory is the notion of performative identities which questions the fixed character of sexuality and gender. She contends that identities are created through repeated performances of gender and sexuality rather than being biologically determined or intrinsically stable (Butler 1990). This fits with Kari's journey in which the protagonist's identity is constantly changing due to her internal conflicts and interactions with others. Both desire and resistance—desire for love intimacy and connection as well as resistance to the limitations placed on her by a society that aims to label and repress her queerness—define *Kari's* changing identity throughout the book. Because it is both shaped and reshaped by these social and emotional interactions *Kari's* identity is performative highlighting the fragility and precariousness of sexual identity in the face of social rejection.

The significance of recognizing the inbetweenness of sexual identities—those that are neither fixed nor readily classified—is another point Sedgwick makes in his work (Sedgwick 1990). In *Kari* the protagonist's experience of gender and sexuality is presented as fluid and multifaceted defying binary classifications so this idea strikes a deep chord. Conventional definitions of sexual identity do not adequately capture *Kari's* queerness. She is portrayed in the book as an active albeit frequently conflicted agent in creating her identity rather than as a passive victim of her circumstances. According to Queer Theory, this active construction of identity highlights the conflict between social imposition and self-definition and challenges conventional binaries. In addition, Sedgwick criticizes the power dynamics that result from the imposition of labels like heterosexual and homosexual contending that these classifications uphold social norms and hierarchies. When examining the connection between Kari's queer identity and mental health issues this criticism is especially pertinent. Social rejection that aims to impose *Kari* into a heteronormative framework that prevents her from exploring her desires and establishing meaningful connections exacerbates her internal struggles. She traverses a society that labels her as other exposing the negative consequences of these imposed labels such as depression and suicidal thoughts.

The relationship between *Kari's* queer identity and suicide illustrates the wider social pressures queer people experience when they are unable to fit in with heteronormative norms. The policing of identity and social rejection can cause severe emotional and psychological suffering especially when people internalize their marginalization as Sedgwick's Queer Theory explains. *Kari's* battles with her own mental health serve as an example of how queer identity when not recognized or accepted can result in feelings of loneliness and hopelessness throughout the book. *Kari* can be examined through the lens of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Queer Theory. In order to reveal the many facets of *Kari's* identity and her battles with mental illness and suicide Queer Theory emphasizes the performativity of identity the rejection of binary classifications and the emotional fallout from social norms. Sedgwick's work critically examines and challenges the larger cultural forces at work which are reflected in the novels depiction of queer identity which goes beyond a personal journey.

Queer Identity in *Kari*

Amruta Patil's graphic novels title character *Kari* is a young queer woman who struggles with the complexities of her identity in a society that expects conformity. She is in her early twenties a time that is frequently associated with introspection confusion and the pursuit of meaning in life. The ambiguity of *Kari's* past in many respects reflects the fluidity of her experiences and character. As a city dweller she must balance the conflicting demands of a seemingly modern and cosmopolitan environment while also adhering to strict traditional family and social norms. *Kari's* internal conflict is apparent right from the start of the story. Her needs for self-expression her desires and the social norms that maintain heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of sexuality are all at odds with one another. Her internal conflict is emphasized by the ambiguity surrounding her background including her sexual orientation and family. Early on in *Kari's* development she is portrayed as someone who feels socially and emotionally alone. She is always looking for a sense of belonging which drives her to delve deeper into her queer identity. She struggles with internalized shame faces social rejection and comes to terms with her queerness throughout the course of the book.

The novel's examination of queer identity revolves around Kari's quest for self-awareness. In contrast to stories that show a straight line toward self-acceptance *Kari* depicts a more complicated and nuanced path that alternates between periods of self-rejection and epiphanies. *Kari's* journey of self-discovery is portrayed as a sequence of emotional upheavals, psychological challenges, and personal revelations rather than a straightforward process. These swings are a reflection of the larger emotional and social struggles that many queer people encounter, particularly in a place like India where being queer is still frowned upon and frequently suppressed or misinterpreted. Investigating the topics of queer identity, the novel deftly captures *Kari's* desires, relationships, and experiences as a queer woman in a heteronormative society where her sexuality is fundamental to who she is. She explores same-sex relationships and the emotional bonds she makes with women, which are central to her story because they give her a sense of closeness, understanding, and love that she rarely experiences with men. The social norms that dictate heterosexuality as the only acceptable expression of desire, however, make this connection to women tense. *Kari's* sexual experiences with women, particularly with her lover, a figure who stands for both pain and freedom, reveal her inability to balance her desires with the norms of her society. *Kari's* internalized queerness and the increasing conflict between her sexual identity and social acceptance are also highlighted in the book. The shame and guilt that result from both internalized homophobia and cultural repression serve as a backdrop for her desire to connect with other women.

The closet, as stated by Sedgwick (1990) in her work *Epistemology of the Closet*, is not only a private place of concealment but also a potent social structure that imposes expectations and norms, making it challenging for people to publicly declare who they are. Being 'other' in a culture that stigmatizes these kinds of relationships shapes *Kari's* experience of queer identity. Two types of social and familial rejection are experienced by Kari. Because *Kari's* parents uphold traditional values that see queerness as immoral or abnormal, the pressure from her family is especially strong. The wider social unease with non-normative sexual identities is reflected in her family's unwillingness to accept her sexuality. *Kari's* emotional distress stems from this rejection, which shows up as internalized homophobia, self-doubt, and alienation. A strong desire for familial acceptance, which she knows is improbable given the dominant social norms, intensifies

her internalized conflict. In a heteronormative society the complexities of queer identity are also demonstrated by *Kari's* romantic relationships. Her relationships are about finding emotional comfort in a society that rejects her desires as well as sexual exploration. *Kari* experiences intense loneliness as well as intimate moments with other women. These connections are in a way her acts of defiance her way of claiming her queerness in a society that demands she keep quiet. But they also serve as painful reminders of how little social space her identity is granted.

As she realizes that their love exists in seclusion away from the public eye *Kari's* internal monologue in one moving scene highlights the intense loneliness that endures even in her lover's presence. One aspect of her experience that stands out is the conflict between shame and desire. Self-rejection and internalized homophobia. *Kari's* internalized homophobia and self-rejection due to social norms are among the most significant elements of her journey. *Kari's* internalized views about her queerness and rejection from others are both contributing factors to her self-doubt. Her feelings of shame regarding her sexual orientation are a direct result of the heteronormative culture which perpetuates the notion that being queer is abnormal incorrect or abnormal. It is clear from *Kari's* interactions with her own body and emotions that she struggles with self-acceptance. She frequently displays discomfort with her desires as a result of internalizing the shame and guilt that come with being in a culture that considers her sexual identity to be abnormal. At one pivotal point in the story *Kari* is shown to be unable to balance her sense of self-worth with her sexual desires. Despite her embarrassment she is unable to control her attraction to women. Her fear of rejection from her friend's family and society at large exacerbates this internal conflict. In the book internalized homophobia appears in both covert and overt forms. The sense of alienation that results from not being accepted is reinforced by *Kari's* frequent physical and emotional isolation from other people. Her psychological and emotional seclusion is a reflection of the larger effects of social norms that force queer people into invisible and shameful roles. The psychological suffering that many queer people go through especially in cultures

that stigmatize their sexual identity is reflected in *Kari's* agonizing self-rejection (Budge et al. 2013).

India, a nation where religious customs and cultural norms have a significant impact on how people view sexuality provides the social context for *Kari*. India is still a heteronormative society where being queer is frequently linked to immorality sin or illness. Due to the deep-rootedness of these norms in society family dynamics and public life queer people are marginalized and silenced. A significant step forward for queer rights in India was the decriminalization of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in 2018 although societal attitudes still firmly hold that being queer is abnormal or unnatural (Pande 2019). This heteronormative social context makes *Kari's* inner conflicts worse. In addition to battling her queer identity she also has to deal with the more significant forces of social rejection. Her family's reaction to her queerness which was either avoidance silence or outright condemnation reflects the rejection of queer people in society at large. The pressure to fit in with society's expectations causes emotional isolation as *Kari* travels through her self-discovery journey which results in dejection and feelings of alienation. The social and familial rejection she experiences as a queer woman in India is a direct cause of her loneliness in addition to her internal conflicts. Social norms restrict personal freedom and expression particularly for marginalized identities as the broader social context in *Kari* illustrates. A society that does not accept *Kari's* sexual identity consistently blocks her attempts to fit in. A significant portion of her journey in the book is characterized by a profound sense of displacement brought on by her emotional isolation and social rejection.

Gender Stress Theory

The 2008 graphic novel *Kari* by Amruta Patil offers an engaging examination of gender nonconformity queer identity and mental health in an urban Indian setting. In a society where gendered expectations and heteronormativity impose heavy psychological burdens the protagonist *Kari* navigates life as a queer woman. Using the Gender Stress Theory (Pearlin et al. 2005) and Minority Stress Theory (Frost et al. 2016) this analysis looks at how *Kari's* identity mental health and social alienation are impacted by systemic marginalization and societal norms. Social expectations about gender roles and behaviors are the source of stress according to the gender stress theory. These pressures are especially

strong for people who defy social norms. *Kari* is positioned as an outsider due to her rejection of heteronormative relationships and her androgynous appearance which both defy conventional notions of femininity. She is not entirely integrating into the patriarchal framework that determines appropriate gender performance nor is she living up to the expectations placed on women. The inability of *Kari's* family and society to accept her queerness adds to her sense of loneliness. The novel quietly criticizes the ways in which gendered norms produce stressors that affect people's psychological well-being. *Kari's* internalization of social rejection and hesitancy to fully express her desires support Pearlin's (2005) contention that social policing causes stress because nonconformity breeds it. This is clear from the way she moves through urban areas that don't accept her identity and from the way she interacts with both men and women. Because of social exclusion stigma and discrimination marginalized groups endure chronic stress as explained by minority stress theory. This framework allows one to read *Kari's* struggles with loneliness mental health and a sense of displacement.

Frost and the others (2016) emphasizes how minority people face stressors like expectations of discrimination internalized homophobia rejection and prejudice all of which are present in *Kari's* journey. *Kari* is subjected to overt and covert forms of discrimination. Her personal relationships and professional life both reflect her estrangement from the majority. She feels excluded and rejected because the heteronormative structures in her environment do not accept her queerness. *Kari's* internal conflict shows up as depression and self-doubt in addition to outside difficulties. The novel's use of disjointed narration and gloomy moody imagery highlights her internalized distress which is a defining feature of minority stress. Her struggle to find a community and sporadic suicidal thoughts highlight the psychological costs of living in a culture that marginalizes queer identities. Despite these obstacles *Kari* makes an effort to establish a niche for herself. She manages to bear the stress of being a queer woman in a strongly gendered society through her friendship's artistic endeavors and reflective disposition. These tactics however highlight the structural aspect of minority stress and do not completely alleviate the systemic pressures she encounters.

By applying the theories of gender stress and minority stress to *Kari* one can gain a better understanding of the protagonist's emotional and psychological

challenges. Patil's story examines the larger social structures that cause and maintain *Kari's* distress rather than just showing her personal struggles. The experiences of queer people navigating environments that do not accept their identities are highlighted by *Kari's* resilience mental health issues and alienation. Thus, the book functions as a social critique as well as a profoundly personal tale highlighting the significance of addressing minority and gendered stress in conversations about identity and wellbeing.

Suicide as a Queer Crisis

A major theme in Amruta Patil's *Kari* is suicide which is entwined with the protagonists' emotional struggles. Intense psychological despair is a result of *Kari's* internal conflict which is exacerbated by her queer identity and the rejection she experiences from society. The book depicts the severity of *Kari's* emotional collapses including her struggles with suicidal thoughts and the nuanced interrelationships between identity pain and survival. Patil deftly handles the contrasts between these gloomy hopeless moments and the sporadic flashes of hope that offer momentary respite throughout the graphic novel.

The link between queer identity and suicide is a worldwide crisis especially in underprivileged groups where the stigma associated with being queer exacerbates feelings of worthlessness rejection and loneliness. Research has repeatedly demonstrated that in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts LGBTQIA+ people experience higher rates of mental health issues such as anxiety depression and suicidal thoughts (Budge et al. 2013). Due to social pressures queer people are frequently ostracized and compelled to conceal their true identities which worsens their mental health issues.

In addition to the stresses of living in a heteronormative society these people are also coping with a dearth of mental health services that are cognizant of their unique circumstances. She experiences suicidal thoughts which are made worse by her family's and society's lack of acceptance. Because queer people often face prejudice emotional neglect and outright hostility their mental health issues are frequently stigmatized disregarded or minimized. *Kari's* struggle to find acceptance and affirmation for her queer identity coupled with the constant

pressures of heteronormativity in society highlights the psychological challenges that many members of the queer community face. Queer lives psychological complexity. *Kari* examines the complex emotional landscape of being queer in a society that is repressive highlighting the psychological effects that invisibility and societal erasure can have on queer people.

The marginalization of *Kari's* identity, which is consistently denied by both her immediate social circle and the larger social structures in which she lives, is closely linked to her emotional complexity. The story reveals that her suicidal thoughts are the result of years of emotional neglect self-rejection and internalization of society's heteronormative expectations rather than isolated incidents. The broader societal dynamics at work are reflected in *Kari's* internalized homophobia intense self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy which go beyond her personal struggles. Patil's depiction of *Kari's* hardships offers a perceptive analysis of the negative consequences of societal conventions that uphold feelings of guilt and shame.

But as the storyline of the book makes clear these depressing thoughts are regularly broken up by brief epiphanies and moments of self-awareness offering a ray of hope in the midst of the gloom. The readers comprehension of the protagonist's mental anguish and suicidal thoughts is improved by the visual symbolism added by *Kari's* graphic novel format. Water appears frequently throughout the book making it one of the most moving symbols. A metaphor that encapsulates the sensation of being overwhelmed by hopelessness and powerlessness water is frequently used to represent the overwhelming sensation of drowning in one's emotions. Darkness is another important visual theme in the book. Particularly striking is the use of shadow and subdued dark tones in scenes of emotional breakdown.

Kari uses darkness to represent the loneliness and despair that come with her mental health issues the lack of light is a metaphor for the lack of hope during suicidal thoughts. The scenes showing *Kari's* moments of hope and connection contrast sharply with the darker settings she lives in highlighting the psychological changes that take place between hopelessness and recovery. By adding to *Kari's* psychological complexity Patil's artwork enables readers to feel

the protagonist's emotional turmoil on a visceral level. The graphic novel format uses visual metaphors to convey the intangible nature of suicidal thoughts which are frequently hard to express in words alone. Through the interaction of image and narrative readers are able to comprehend *Kari's* fierce psychological struggle in addition to sympathizing with her suffering. The artworks bleakness heightens the sense of emotional loneliness but the sporadic use of light and color offers a positive counterpoint by symbolizing the possibility of recovery and transformation.

The relationship between suicide and queer identity is poignantly explored by Amruta Patil in *Kari* which also depicts the protagonists' emotional struggles in a society that marginalizes her. The book explores the psychological nuances of being queer in a society that is repressive demonstrating how internalized homophobia social rejection and a lack of mental health resources all play a part in the high prevalence of suicidal thoughts among queer people. The narratives examination of suicide as a queer crisis is strengthened by Patil's symbolic use of darkness water and solitude to visually depict *Kari's* terrible emotional toll. In the end *Kari* provides a complex and incredibly sympathetic depiction of the emotional and psychological complexities of being queer in a heteronormative society acting as both a personal narrative and a larger commentary on the mental health issues encountered by marginalized queer people.

Artistic Representation of Suicide and Mental Health

The visual and textual elements of the graphic novel work together to enhance comprehension of the protagonist's mental condition. It would be challenging to convey feelings and mental states in prose but Patil uses the visual medium to do so. For instance, *Kari's* internal monologue and stark visual elements, dark spaces surreal depictions and fragmented layouts, both convey her feelings of loneliness depression and suicidal thoughts in a more direct and immediate manner. In order to convey psychological distress in traditional narrative forms, especially those that heavily rely on text, often require the use of introspection and verbal explanations.

However, in *Kari* the pictures themselves play a crucial role in illustrating the protagonist's battles with mental illness. A far more direct and concrete depiction

of Kari's emotional state is produced by the use of rough fragmented and sketchy art styles which mirror her jumbled thoughts and mental turmoil.

The particular visual techniques used by Patil in *Kari* make the graphic novel form especially effective in portraying the protagonist's psychological state. Readers are given a clear glimpse into the emotional and psychological complexity of Patil's characters through the use of color hazy art styles and disjointed layouts. Every one of these methods helps to depict mental anguish mirroring the internal turmoil and chaos *Kari* goes through. *Kari's* color scheme is crucial to conveying the protagonists' emotional states. Dark blues grays and blacks dominate the panels and the colors are subdued or monochromatic during times of emotional collapse hopelessness or suicidal thoughts. These hues mirror *Kari's* inner world as she battles with her queerness social rejection and feelings of worthlessness they stand for the emotional numbness and suffocating weight of depression. Her mental distress is visually represented by the artworks darkness which evokes a feeling of emotional suffocation that words cannot express.

Patil's artworks use of shaky incomplete lines mirrors *Kari's* psychological state which is unstable and fragmented. *Kari's* mental landscape is continuously shifting unstable and unformed as evidenced by these ragged lines and asymmetrical shapes that heighten the feeling of emotional chaos. Her shattered sense of self is reflected in this art form as she struggles with her queer identity social rejection and the weight of her emotions all the time. The story's main psychological tension is increased by the rough art which also heightens the feeling of uneasiness and discomfort.

In addition to these aesthetic decisions Patil conveys *Kari's* mental anguish through visual metaphors. Water is one of the novels most important visual metaphors. The crushing weight of the protagonist's emotions is frequently represented by water in *Kari* which is frequently portrayed as an overwhelming and suffocating force. Throughout the book, *Kari* is portrayed to be submerged in water at different points which symbolize that her sense of being consumed by her own misery. This drowning picture is a potent metaphor for the feelings of loneliness suffocation and emotional overload associated with suicidal thoughts. In one scene, *Kari's* entire face completely vanishes into the waves as she is

swallowed by the dark water. The feeling of being engulfed by one's mental health issues as if there is no way out of the emotional abyss is exquisitely captured by this imagery.

When the artwork in *Kari* emphasizes the seriousness of the protagonist's mental health issues the emotional impact of visual storytelling is particularly noticeable. By utilizing color layout and visual metaphor Patil enhances the narratives emotional resonance and gives the reader a more immersive experience of *Kari's* inner world than might be possible with traditional text-based storytelling. The scene where *Kari* considers committing suicide during one of her darkest moments, is the one which perfectly captures the emotional impact. The composition is stark, because *Kari* is surrounded by vast stretches of empty space and little background. Her vulnerability is also heightened by the emptiness surrounding her and the lack of specific background emphasizes her emotional isolation. This scenes use of shadows heightens the feeling of emptiness and hopelessness by implying that *Kari* is lost in a huge emotional void. These scenes lack of color heightens the feeling of numbness and despair by implying that her emotional landscape has grown lifeless and arid.

For instance, warmer tones that contrast sharply with the darker more oppressive colors associated with her depression and suicidal thoughts are interspersed throughout the artwork during her brief periods of reflection on a positive memory or her intimate moments with a lover. Even in her darkest hours *Kari's* hope is never completely dashed according to this use of color. In the midst of her emotional worlds gloom these flashes of color symbolize the fading of possible life and connection. Patil emphasizes the intricacy of *Kari's* emotional experience by employing color contrasts in this manner.

Hope and Survival

In *Kari*, the protagonist's experience revolves around the representation of mental health issues specifically depression and suicidal thoughts. But even in the direst situations there are glimmers of hope and survival interwoven throughout the gloom of these emotional struggles. Despite the crippling weight of internalized homophobia social rejection and self-doubt *Kari* occasionally experiences

fleeting moments of emotional intimacy clarity and connection that suggest she may be able to survive and recover. Not only are these emotional breaks plot devices but they also act as vital counterpoints to the narratives prevailing despair implying that despite its challenges survival is achievable.

Kari has moments of hope despite her continuous mental health issues mostly brought on by relationships with other people and the brief recognition of her own value. *Kari* has experienced rejection and loneliness throughout her life especially from her family and society at large but she does have some sources of comfort. Her emotional closeness and queer desire are among the most important of these sources. Though frequently accompanied by their own challenges *Kari*'s romantic and sexual relationships provide her with chances for self-expression and healing as Patil demonstrates. Even though they are occasionally fleeting these relationships give *Kari* the fleeting but essential sense of being seen and understood which is essential to her survival. For instance, she has brief but meaningful moments of emotional intimacy and connection with her lover in the book.

Kari (and the reader) is reminded that surviving is not just about bearing suffering but also about finding love connection and understanding by these examples which imply that queer desire and affection can be powerful sources of empowerment and healing even in a society that is repressive. Small private moments that gradually add up to give *Kari* emotional clarity are what these flashes of light are—not large gestures. She has minor epiphanies via her relationships that contradict her internalized rejection of herself. In these passages the story suggests that finding beauty and meaning in fleeting moments of emotional clarity is more important for survival than having constant happiness or certainty. Making art and expressing oneself is how people survive.

Another essential component of *Kari*'s survival is her artistic expression. She processes and articulates the emotional and psychological challenges she encounters throughout the book by using her art as a means of self-expression. For *Kari* creating serves as a form of resistance in addition to being a cathartic release. As she negotiates the challenging landscape of being a queer woman in a hostile heteronormative society her art turns into a means of taking back

control of her narrative. *Kari* expresses her suffering her desires and her challenges through her drawings in a way that words cannot. In order to maintain her identity, communicate her feelings and make sense of the world around her Kari turns to art as a means of survival. Since the act of creating the novel reflects Kari's own path to self-awareness and recovery it can be viewed as a kind of catharsis.

As a graphic novel *Kari* serves as a collective narrative of survival for other queer people who might be able to identify with her struggles much like how she uses art to process her feelings. Despite being extremely personal the story speaks to a wider queer experience and gives readers a chance to identify with the protagonist's journey. This cathartic process highlights the possibility of surviving through artistic expression which can be used as a means of expressing pain and a means of fending off forces that aim to marginalize or silence the queer experience for both Kari and the readers.

It is not *Kari* who sets out on her survival quest by herself. The significance of discovering a queer community is delicately discussed throughout the book even though the main focus is on her inner conflicts. *Kari's* lack of support networks makes her feel even more alone she is cut off from both her family and society at large and she frequently feels alienated. Nonetheless the novel implies that visibility understanding and love are the keys to survival through the fleeting moments in which she connects with others. *Kari* believes that despite social pressure to keep quiet or be invisible her ability to open up to others offers her the chance to heal. Even though her queer community isn't always represented directly her relationships with other marginalized people, especially during emotional moments, provide hints of support and solidarity. These scenes while not the main focus of the narrative imply that the healing process can be facilitated by the empathy and support of those who have gone through similar rejection and alienation. The significance of the queer community in *Kari* reflects the larger social need for places that are accepting of people who identify as queer and provide them with support and understanding. It implies that fostering environments in which queer people can be recognized understood and loved for who they really are is just as important to survival as developing personal

resiliency. By depicting these fleeting moments of connection Patil offers hope for a time when queer people won't have to endure their suffering in silence and suggests that healing may be possible through visibility and solidarity.

Conclusion

A complex representation of queer identity mental health and the relationship between social rejection and suicidal thoughts is provided by *Kari's* examination of her emotional challenges. The novel emphasizes the harsh realities that queer people must contend with in a heteronormative society such as internalized homophobia family rejection and the erasure of queer identities. But it also highlights that even in the most dire circumstances survival is achievable. *Kari* is able to persevere through her psychological challenges and give hope to those who might be experiencing similar things because of her artistic endeavors' moments of emotional connection and the potential to find a queer community. Finding meaning connection and healing via love understanding and artistic expression are all themes in the story which goes beyond simple survival in the face of hardship.

By highlighting the emotional and psychological challenges queer people face in a hostile society *Kari* makes a substantial contribution to the discussion on queer mental health. It is a narrative of survival that is both personal and collective providing insights into how queer people deal with mental health issues social rejection and internalized shame. The novel challenges readers to address the frequently disregarded problem of queer mental health and its relationship to societal perceptions of queerness by presenting the protagonists emotional turmoil with such rawness and vulnerability. *Kari* says that although surviving is difficult healing is achievable with the help of a queer community emotional closeness and self-expression.

Kari also emphasizes the need for queer mental health to be more widely recognized accepted and supported. In cultures which often marginalize LGBTQIA+ people, access to queer-affirming mental health care is necessary for the community. Given the novel's depiction of the characters' psychological struggles, queer-affirming settings and mental health resources that can help

people overcome these challenges are needed more and more. It should be made possible for the queer community to not just survive but also flourish in the world, by promoting acceptance and understanding. *Kari* is a call to action for meaningful dialogue on suicide prevention mental health and the value of queer-affirming spaces. Through its portrayal of the challenges and potential for survival the book gives queer people who still face hardship in an often-inhospitable world hope. By doing this *Kari* contributes significantly to the development of a more sympathetic accepting and encouraging future for queer communities around the globe.

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