

Kumari, S. (2015). *Without a goodbye*. Mumbai, India: Frog Books.

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Reviewed by Chris G. Caulkins, Strub Caulkins Center for Suicide Research

Without a Goodbye explores the phenomenon and fallout of suicide from the perspective of a woman whose mother died by suicide, as well as giving voice to the victim through her own words via her diary. The book is a cultural foray into gender roles in India and their impact on suicidality. The work is classified as fiction; however, it is a blend of non-fiction and fiction with the chronicle of the death of the mother and the mother's diary being a true account. The book becomes fictional as the story evolves into an alternative explanation of the fate of the mother. This is undoubtedly something many survivors wish they could do in reality—write a better ending to a tragic event. The author, Swati Kumari, was born and raised in India, where she is active in suicide prevention initiatives. A year after the release of the book, Kumari publicly revealed that the characters, Danica and Swati, are one in the same and that Aarti is her mother. Kumari says she felt the need to identify herself in the story and disclose that she is the survivor of her mother's death by suicide to encourage others to share their stories (S. Kumari, personal communication, July 30, 2017). Kumari wrote a second book (fiction) with a narrative on suicide—*Amayra: The Essence of Life*.

This book arrives as the topic of suicide with an origin rooted in predominantly cultural factors, rather than mental illness, becomes a topic of discussion at an international level (Hjemeland, 2017; Manoranjitham, 2017), as well as the importance of qualitative—non-numeric and context driven—research into suicidality (Hjemeland, 2017; Pompili, 2017). Additionally, the importance of the voice of those with lived experience—having experienced suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, or the suicide of someone close—has been held out as a critical part of any suicide prevention effort (Arensman, 2017; Covington, 2017). As such, Kumari's book hits on all of these elements and is consistent with the thoughts of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP).

Another reason this book is of importance, is that it draws attention to suicide among females in India and raises important social justice issues. In a 2014 report, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that suicides in India were 60% due to mental illness and 40% due to other factors, which is in contrast to the US with 80% and 20% due to mental illness and other factors respectively (p. 40). It is known that suicide is more prevalent in already marginalized groups (p. 3), that 71% of female violent deaths worldwide are due to suicide as compared to 50% among males (p.7), and that the female to male suicide ratio in India is 1-1.9 in contrast to 3-3.9 in the US (p. 20).

Readers with an interest in the phenomenon of suicide, grief, and social justice issues, in both a global and culturally specific context, will find this book of value. From a research and academic perspective, this work is a qualitative collection of insights. Readers are cautioned not to discount the value of the fictional aspect, as it reveals an important glimpse into the psyche of a loss survivor. As a loss survivor myself, I identified with the fiction as much as with the non-

fiction components. Kumari allowed us access to her private thoughts and feelings, which is a major strength of the book.

It is important to know there is a definitional list of Hindi words appearing at the very end of the book. Had the list been in the beginning of the book, I would have not had to work as hard to follow the dialogue. For this reason, I highly recommend reading the definitional list before reading the first chapter. There are also some grammatical differences reflective of non-US English and sentence structure that readers may have to adjust to—this is not bad or overly distracting, just different and something you will get used to quickly. On the back cover, the last sentence reads, “You choose to live or die.” While I respect Kumari’s viewpoints, as a suicidologist, I am having difficulty agreeing with that statement for a variety of reasons too lengthy to go into in a book review. I do, however, wholeheartedly agree with Kumari’s assertions that her mother’s suicide was not for a single reason, that her mother could see no other way out of her situation, and that suicide requires an increased ability to harm oneself that is far from cowardly. An important note for survivors of loss or those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), is the description of the suicide does get a bit graphic and could be something that triggers strong emotions or exacerbates PTSD.

In conclusion, I believe this book is remarkably insightful and important for a variety of reasons, including suicide prevention, grief support, and social change. Whether you are a suicidologist, social sciences academic, survivor of suicide loss (with cautionary caveat above), or healthcare practitioner—I intentionally do not separate out mental health separately from healthcare, I recommend this book. I read the 196 pages in one sitting and found it engaging and thought provoking enough to keep turning the pages.

If you have found this review helpful, please consider donating to the Strub Caulkins Center for Suicide Research at www.suicidresearch.org or simply support our cause by purchasing a copy of this book through Amazon Smile at <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/47-5040101>. Specify our charity as the recipient of the donation and Amazon will do the rest. It costs you nothing and helps us tremendously.

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