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The Gendered Self in Conflict: A Theoretical Reading of Tara through Bem's Androgyny Framework

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Abstract:

Mahesh Dattani is the most prominent Indian English playwright to win the Sahitya Akademi award in 1998. Mahesh Dattani was born on August 7, 1958. He questions the problems that develop in an Indian society. Mahesh Dattani, the pioneering feature in the Indian dramatic world, is known for centring the marginalized voice—particularly those of women, minorities, and the LGBTQ+ community. In the present paper a study is made on Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* through the lens of Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory to explore the intersection of gender identity, societal exceptions and psychological conflict in the contemporary Indian society. *Tara* is one of the most poignant plays, centres on the female child protagonist from the affluent, educated family in Bangalore which dramatizes the division of conjoined twins—a boy and a girl—as a symbolic act underscoring gender bias, parental partiality, and the emotional ramifications of male favouritism. Using a qualitative interpretive methodology, this study employs close textual analysis to trace the psychological and societal tensions within the play. Sandra Bem's theoretical framework provides a critical lens to understand how

psychological androgyny could serve as a counter-narrative to the restrictive gender roles that perpetuate inequality and emotional dissonance.

Keywords: Empowerment, Mahesh Dattani, psychological androgyny, psychological conflict, Social System, Tara.

Introduction

1.1 Background and Rationale

Literature has historically functioned as a critical mirror to society, reflecting dominant ideologies while also providing alternative frameworks for understanding gender and power, across temporal and cultural boundaries. Literary texts have not only challenged patriarchal structures but also illuminated the personal and collective struggles against gender-based discrimination. In the current socio-political climate, which has been marked by persistent gender inequality, the recent revival of feminist discourses, and international calls for inclusion, literature's capacity to foster gender fluidity has become increasingly significant. Literary text, therefore, become more than aesthetic compositions; they function as transformative tools that interrogate the social-cultural architecture of gender. Through thematic exploration of empowerment, intersectionality, resistance and fluidity, literature cultivates empathy and encourages readers to examine their own internalised gender constructs. By disrupting essential portrayals and offering nuanced representation of gender experience, literature fosters critical engagement with the self and the structure that shape it.

The three genders: male, female, and the third have long been the cultural framework within which cultures function. Due to the patriarchal framework of most civilizations, the first gender male, has historically maintained positions of privileged, power, and control. The second gender female, often exists within a limited sphere of agency and autonomy. Meanwhile, the third gender—including individuals identifying as gay, lesbian, hijra, eunuch, transgender, or

otherwise non-binary— is subjected to overt marginalisation and systemic erasure. These rigid classifications not only stratify social existence but also fracture the psychological unity of individuals who do not fit neatly into such predefined roles. At the core of this issue lies the conflict within the gendered self, which has been shaped, constrained, and often silenced by hegemonic discourses. A valuable psychological framework that aids in deconstructing this inner conflict is psychological androgyny, a concept introduced by Sandra Bem. Psychological androgyny refers to the integration of traditionally "masculine" and "feminine" traits within an individual, promoting a more fluid, adaptable, and authentic sense of self. It challenges binary thinking and offers a more expansive understanding of identity, when in strength and sensitivity, logic and emotion, coexist without contradiction.

The concept of gender complementarity is a reflection of a deeper metaphysical reality in many philosophical and cultural traditions. Neither male nor female are complete in isolation. In Hindu philosophy, the figure of Ardhanarishvara—a composite deity who combines Shiva (man) and Parvati (female) into one cohesive form, vividly represents this. In addition to being a mythological character, Ardhanarishvara serves as a profound metaphor for the interdependence of feminine and male values. While the left half of the god symbolises vitality, inventiveness, and compassion, the right half represents the masculine and is associated with power, asceticism, and consciousness. This marriage demonstrates how only when both energies are in balance can creation, sustenance, and transformation occur in the universe. Greek mythology also introduces Hermaphroditus, the son of Aphrodite and Hermes, whose androgynous features represent the fusion of desire and reason. The character of Loki, a shapeshifter who changes gender and even gives birth, depicts adaptability and fluidity as qualities rather than effects in Norse mythology. From a psychological perspective, this idea is reflected in the androgyny theory, especially as put out by psychologist Sandra Bem.

Androgyny proposes that a psychologically sound individual possesses a balance that allows for increased emotional intelligence and adaptability.

Lack of this equilibrium, whether in people or in civilizations, can result in inflexibility, miscommunication, and stagnation. This fusion of male and female forces within the human mind is symbolized by psychological androgyny, just as Ardhanarishvara depicts the indivisibility of male and female energies in the cosmic order. To put it simply, being whole—spiritually, emotionally, and socially—means accepting a wider range of human potential and overcoming binary conceptions of gender.

Psychological androgyny becomes a powerful interpretive lens in literary narratives. The Characters who exhibit androgyny traits often transcend the limitations of gender norms, modelling a more integrated self. Thus, literature not only critiques the social mechanism that produce gender conflict but also envision alternatives wherein identity is defined by complexity rather than conformity. Literature serves as a power medium to portray the inner turmoil of the characters that often grapple with question of selfhood, conformity, resistance, and authenticity. Such representations help readers to move beyond dichotomous frameworks and consider the spectrum of human experience.

This study investigates the concept of the gendered self in conflict in Mahesh Dattani's play Tara. Mahesh Dattani's Tara, which was originally staged as "Twinkle Tara" in Bangalore on October 23, 1990, and later directed by Aluque Padamsee in Bombay in 1991, is a powerful two-act play that interrogates the constructs of gender and identity within Indian society. The play earned the Sahitya Kerala Akademie Award the same year, and centres on conjoined twins—Chandan and Tara—who were surgically separated at birth in a procedure skewed by gender bias. Biologically, the third leg was better suited to Tara, whose body supplied most of the blood to the shared limb. yet, it was given to Chandan due to the family's preference for

the male child, a decision influenced by their mother and grandfather. This pivotal act of bodily and emotional dismemberment not only defines the twins' physical identities but also initiates their psychological divergence.

The play shows the internal dissonance individual experience as they navigate rigid gender roles imposed by society norms. This conflict emerges when personal identity, expression and psychological traits do not align with culturally sanctioned gender expectations. Bems Androgyny Theory reveals how the play critique rigid gender roles and illuminates the damaging consequences of societal insistence on binary identity formation. In Tara, the denial of Tara's agency and bodily autonomy reflects the repression of feminine traits in favour of masculine dominance, illustrating how cultural scripts dictate gendered behaviour and value systems. Chandan, who later grapples with guilt and a fractured sense of self, symbolically embodies the internal conflicts of the enforced separation and the privileging of masculinity.

Thus, Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara* offers a compelling exploration of gender identity, which caught within the constraints of cultural and psychological binaries. The play exposes how rigid patriarchal norms distort the process of identity formation, particularly through the unequal valuation of masculine and feminine traits. Viewed through Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory, *Tara* critiques the societal privileging of masculinity while highlighting the suppression of feminine agency. This imbalance results not in a cohesive self, but in psychological fragmentation. This emotional and physical separation of Tara and Chandan becomes a powerful symbol of a society's failure to accept gender fluidity and achieve balance. Ultimately, the play positions literature as a transformative space—one that not only critiques gendered limitations but also imagines more inclusive and integrated forms of identity. In challenging binary thinking, *Tara* points toward a vision of authenticity and wholeness, offering new possibilities for both personal and collective liberation.

1.2 Research Problem

In literary studies, the development of gender identity remains a complicated and contentious topic, especially where social, psychological and cultural norms converge. In Indian literature, gender experiences are often shaped and restricted by patriarchal norms that enforce rigid binaries between masculinity and femininity. An important place to look at the psychological and societal effects of such binary frameworks on the development of personal identity is Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*. While the play has garnered critical attention for its portrayal of gender and disability, there remains a notable gap in academic discourse: the internal psychological conflict of the gendered self has yet to be thoroughly examined through the lens of psychological gender theories. This study seeks to address that gap.

The Androgyny Theory developed by Sandra Bem offers a convincing framework for analysing how people absorb and react to gender social expectations. As a more flexible and well-round method of identity development, Bem promotes psychological androgyny by contesting conventional binary gender paradigms. This theoretical viewpoint has not received much attention in Indian theatrical literature, despite its importance, especially when it comes to Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*.

By analysing how *Tara* dramatizes the psychological fragmentation brought about by strictly imposed gender roles and criticizing the cultural preference brought about by strictly imposed gender roles and criticizing the cultural preference for masculine over feminine agency, the present paper seeks to fill the gap in the literature. The research depicts the struggle of the gendered self in a patriarchal and binary societal system, and how can Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory shed light on the psychological and cultural ramification of this struggle? This study aims to broaden the use of psychological framework in literary analysis and enhance

our comprehension of gender identity in postcolonial Indian play by examining the relationship between psychological gender theory and literary representation.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* depict the internal and external challenges faced by the characters within a patriarchal cultural framework?
2. How may Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory be used to examine the characters' identity conflicts and psychological turmoil in *Tara*, especially in light of cultural gender norms?
3. To what extent does *Tara* critique binary constructions of gender, and how does it gesture toward more fluid, androgynous models of identity as a form of resistance and psychological integration?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To critically examine how Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* portrays the formation and fragmentation of gender identity within a patriarchal and culturally rigid social structure.
2. To explore how Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory as a conceptual framework examines the psychological and emotional struggles that the play's main characters go through, especially in light of internalised gender norms.
3. To explore how the play challenges binary gender constructs and highlights the consequences of privileging masculine traits over feminine ones in the process of identity development.
4. To investigate how *Tara*, as a literary text, functions as a space for reimagining more inclusive, fluid, and androgynous models of identity, offering alternative possibilities for self-realisation and psychological integration.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

Using Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory as a framework, this study theoretically analyses Mahesh Dattani's Tara in order to investigate how gendered identity is constructed and contested within a patriarchal Indian sociocultural context, with a primary focus on the psychological and emotional growth of Tara and Chandan, the study explores how identity fragmentation is caused by inflexible gender binary classifications and the institutionalised preference for masculinity over feminine. Through close textual analysis, the paper situates Tara within broader conversations on feminist psychology, gender performativity, and postcolonial literature, offering a gender-theoretical reading that foregrounds androgynous identity as an alternative to binary norms. Applying Bem's psychological paradigm, which is currently underappreciated in Indian dramatic literature, the study advances gender studies and literary studies by highlighting the transformational power of literature in reinventing gender identities. However, the study's scope is constrained because it only focuses on Tara, which could limit how broadly its conclusions can be applied to other Dattani works or Indian plays in general.

Furthermore, it adopts Bem's theory as the sole analytical lens, omitting other relevant theoretical frameworks such as Judith Butler's theory of performativity or Lacanian psychoanalysis. While the socio-cultural background of the characters is considered, the research does not extend to empirical studies of real-world gender identities in India, nor does it engage with audience reception or performance elements, focusing instead on symbolic and textual representation.

2. Literature Review

Sreevarsha (2023) emphasizes literature's role in gender sensitization, advocating its integration into education to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive identities. Drawing from literary and visual narratives, the study underscores how interpretive media shape gender perceptions.

Kumar (2014), Mandal and Yadav (2023), and Biswal (2019) critique Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*, exposing how patriarchal values in Indian society marginalise female identity, particularly within family and medical contexts. These analyses reveal the psychological impact of systemic gender bias.

Marhenke and Imhoff (2019) explore psychological androgyny through Bem's theory, finding limited correlation between internal identity and facial appearance, highlighting the complexity of gender perception.

Spence and Helmreich (1981) challenge Bem's Gender Schema Theory, calling for more precise definitions in gender research. Together, these studies advance feminist discourse, linking narrative, psychology, and social critique in the examination of gender.

3. Overview of Bem's Androgyny Theory

Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory, which was first presented in the 1970s, questions the conventional binary paradigm of gender by arguing that psychologically sound people can exhibit both feminine and masculine characteristics; this condition she refers to as androgyny. Central to this theory is the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), a psychological tool designed to measure how strongly an individual identifies with stereotypically masculine, feminine, or androgynous characteristics. Sandra Bem also introduced the concept of gender schemas, which are cognitive frameworks shaped by cultural and societal norms that influence how

people interpret and internalise gender-related information. These schemas often reinforce rigid gender roles, limiting the behaviours considered acceptable for each gender and contributing to psychological imbalance. By critiquing the societal overvaluation of masculinity and the suppression of femininity, Bem advocates for cognitive flexibility and emotional adaptability, encouraging a redefinition of gender as a fluid spectrum rather than a fixed binary. Her theory provides a valuable lens for examining identity conflicts and the constraints imposed by traditional gender expectations.

3.1 Relevance to Literary Analysis

Bem's Androgyny theory provides a fertile ground for literary analysis, although originally situated within psychological research. It is mainly used in works that engage deeply with gender identity, performance, and conflict. Literature often mirrors societal structures and ideologies, making it an ideal medium through which to explore the internalisation and contestation of gender norms.

In the context of Tara, the theory provides a compelling lens through which one can examine characters' psychological fragmentation and identity struggles. It reveals how unequal treatment of male and female can lead to internal conflicts in the characters. By employing Bem's psychological constructs, with the development of literary characters, the analysis exposes how this figure reflects broader socio-cultural anxieties surrounding gender norms and deviations. Specifically, the sibling relationship between Tara and Chandan serves as a potent metaphor for the harm caused by a strict gender system that upholds binary boundaries and opposes integration. In the end, Bem's framework strengthens our comprehension of identity creation within the text by bridging the gap between literary story and psychological theory.

3.2 Intersection with Feminist and Queer Theories

Bem's Androgyny Theory was born out of psychological research, but its implications are relevant to queer and feminist theoretical frameworks. Feminist theorists have long criticised the patriarchal marginalisation of femininity and the exaltation of masculinity, which are issues at the heart of Bem's critique. By promoting the inclusion and affirmation of feminine qualities in all people, Bem's theory supports feminist objectives of tearing down hierarchical gender binary systems.

Sandra Bem's focus on gender flexibility and non-conformity, as seen through a queer theoretical lens, challenges conventional wisdom and makes room for more flexible, non-binary conceptions of identity. Although Bem's conception of androgyny still functions within a very stable framework of gender characteristics, it aligns with important concepts in queer theory, particularly as expressed by scholars such as Judith Butler, who challenge the stability and coherence of gender categories themselves. This theoretical convergence places Bem's work in line with more general criticisms of conventional gender structures by highlighting a significant point of strict binaries. This meeting point between Bem's framework and queer theory allows for a more complex and multidimensional assessment of Tara's character. It makes it possible to read the play not just from the perspective of Indian socio-cultural dynamics but also from a broader global debate on identity politics and gender multiplicity. By integrating feminist and queer theoretical insight with Bem's ideas, this analysis adopts an inclusive and intersectional critical approach, one that captures the complexities and contradictions inherent in the construction of gendered identities. This approach emphasises the conflicts faced by individual like Tara, whose experiences reflect the tensions between societal expectations and personal identity. Ultimately, such a synthesis enables a richer

reading of gender as dynamic and performative, shaped by both cultural specificity and transnational dialogues about selfhood and expression.

4. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research design to interpret and explore how gender identity and psychological conflict are constructed and represented in Mahesh Dattani's *Tara*. Employing Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory as a guiding framework, the research delves into the ideological, psychological, and sociocultural tensions embedded in the narrative, making a qualitative approach particularly apt for uncovering the nuanced emotional and identity-related struggles of the characters.

Close reading of the text is done to understand how cultural ideologies and internalised gender schemas are dramatized. The study employs the theoretical framework of Sandra Bem's psychological androgyny, gender schema theory and the influence of gender role stereotyping as assessed through Bem's Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Bem's theory will help us to understand and explore characters behaviour, emotional dynamics and thematical elements within the play. Particular attention is given to scenes that expose identity conflict, emotional fragmentation, and gendered decisions, all of which serve as key points of engagement with Bem's theory. This method facilitates a nuanced, interdisciplinary analysis that merges psychological insight with cultural critique.

5. Analysis and Discussion

Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* (1990) is a play that shows the social and psychological conflict of a girl child Tara Patel and her bother Chandan Patel who are born as a Siamese twin. Tara is a play that questions the society that treats the children of the same womb as different based on their gender. The play interrogates the social constructed binaries of gender and challenges the

predetermined roles which are assigned to male and female by the society. The play powerfully explores how disability and gender intersect to compound the marginalisation of the protagonist, Tara. Tara becomes a symbol of how societal bias and gender expectations influence critical life decisions. The plot of Tara is arranged between a familiar theme where each character in his own way suffers from the burden of social values and their efforts to go beyond them which bring helplessness in their life. During their separation surgery, a choice is made which was guided by deep-rooted patriarchal norms, that Chandan would receive the stronger pair of legs, leaving Tara with permanent mobility impairments. As Chandan grows up able-bodied and relatively free, Tara faces both physical limitations and the emotional burden of being less valued, not only as a disabled person but also as a girl. Tara becomes a tragic symbol of gendered injustice, a victim of parental preference influenced by social conditioning rather than fate. The play shows how systematic inequality is maintained by both men and women. One particularly illuminating lens through which *Tara* can be analysed is the psychological concept of androgyny, as proposed by Sandra Bem in the 1970s.

The play shows how each character embodies psychological androgyny in their traits which challenge the traditional gender roles. Chandan, the male twin and storyteller, represents a complex kind of psychological androgyny. His reflective monologues, emotional sensitivity, and disjointed sense of self challenges strict notions of masculinity. At the end of the play his contemplative monolog conveys his emotional sensitivity and profound sense of remorse over the loss of his sister, a trait generally associated to feminine: "I will continue with the play, within the confines of my room... with the doors shut... and the windows close Tara, I will share your laughter. Tara, I will weep with you." (Dattani 331)

His fragility is consistent with characteristics that are typically classified as feminine, as evidenced by his intense remorse over Tara's passing, emotional detachment, retreat into writing, and self-imposed exile. However, Chandan also has characteristics that are typically

associated with men, such as independence and logical thought, especially in his choice to leave India and start over in London. His resolve to write a play in order to process his trauma intellectually and demonstrates a self-directed analytical style that is frequently connected to men. He states,

"I have decided to write... not just about her, but for her," which makes this clear. I can only quit criticising myself in this way (Dattani 329).

Chandan demonstrates a kind of masculine autonomy by deciding to externalise his guilt through artistic expression and take charge of his story, separating himself from his history and the emotional ties he has to his family.

While Tara who was also bound by gender standards, demonstrates androgynous traits that go against patriarchal expectation. A failure to adhere to passive femininity is shown by her aggressiveness, intellectual drive, and rejection to maternal authority. Her devotion to Chandan, love of sports, and spirit of competition all demonstrate a mixture of gender traits. when she talks about her anger at not being given the same opportunities as her brother, she directly challenges her mother's choices and social convention, she says,

"If I had shown an interest in politics or science, I would have made something of myself," (Dattani 327)

Her yearning for civic participation and intellectual engagement, are the qualities which are frequently linked to masculinity, in the patriarchal society. She rebels against the passive, submissive image of the feminine by being forceful in expressing her dissatisfaction and challenging her constrained function within the family structure. Tara's interest in sports and other activities further challenges the conventional gender binary by demonstrating her conformity to conduct that is labelled as masculine. However, she is routinely denied the opportunity to fully develop this androgynous personality.

Sandra Bem's idea of psychological androgyny, which maintains that individual who display both traditionally feminine and traditionally masculine features are more likely to be resilient, adaptable, and psychologically well-adjustable, is very well portrayed by Mahesh Dattani through his characters, Chandan and Tara. The word "psychological androgyny," coined by psychologist Sandra Bem, refers to the idea that a person can exhibit both feminine and male characteristics to differing degrees, which can improve their flexibility in behaviour. Additionally, it promotes their well-being and personal development. It helps in providing a broader range in their personality, regardless of their gender, and that the strict correlation between gender behaviour and biological sex is constraining.

According to Bem, androgyny encourages a more adaptable mindset by allowing people to respond to a range of situations without being constrained by rigid gender stereotypes. However, the play, Tara still struggles to achieve this ideal balance, particularly with regard to Chandan, whose identity is imprisoned in an emotional coma. His struggle to strike a balance between his deep emotional devotion to Tara and the expectations of manly stoicism reveals a shattered ego that has been shaped by unresolved pain and patriarchal beliefs.

In addition to being deeply personal, Chandan's sorrow over Tara's sad destiny is representative of a larger, structural repression of men's emotional expression. He is unable to manage his emotions in a healthy manner because of his ingrained notion that weakness is synonymous with vulnerability. As an alternative, he suppresses his emotions, causing a division within himself between his emotive impulses and his socially formed identity. Such ideals can be made inaccessible in cultures that penalize men for being emotionally open, as seen by Chandan's deliberate resistance to Bem's paradigm of psychological androgyny.

Tara, on the other hand, is a symbol of the intricate relationship between vulnerability and strength. Her agency, emotional intelligence, and refusal to be reduced to a helpless victim defy

conventional ideals of femininity, even as she complies with them. It is possible to interpret her moral bravery and emotional expressiveness as exhibiting traits of psychological androgyny, particularly in contrast to Chandan's emotional suppression. This interpretation feeds off division—emotional, communal, and gendered.

The delicate possibility of psychological integration with a cultural framework that opposes such harmony is demonstrated by Chandan and Tara together. The play *Tara* exposes the social constraints that prevent balance, even though Bem's theory provides a model for it. The personal costs of failing to see beyond strict dichotomies are shown in Tara's death and Chandan's psychiatric breakdown. In the end, their entwined destinies offer a sobering critique of the social norms that stifle genuine emotional expression and shatter identity.

6. Conclusion

Mahesh Dattani's *Tara* offers a poignant analysis of the psychological social difficulties people face in a patriarchal culture. In addition to being externally imposed through family decisions and societal expectations, Dattani illustrates through Tara's character how gender-based discrimination is internalized and can manifest as emotional agony and identity disintegration. In situations like medical ethics and familial loyalty, where female lives are frequently discounted, Tara's decreased agency and terrible fate highlight the deeply ingrained gender biases in Indian society.

An interesting framework for analysing the character's psychological issues is Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory. *Tara* exposes the social problems that restrict the integration of both male and female features, which is how Bem defines androgyny. Both the characters, Tara and Chandan, defy conventional gender standards, struggle with identity dissonance and inner distress. Chandan's decision to rebrand himself as Dan serves as a coping mechanism,

reflecting a psychological distancing from unresolved guilt and repressed emotional complexity. This transformation also subtly gestures toward an androgynous ideal.

Tara also questions the inflexibility of binary gender concepts by highlighting the ways in which gender roles are constructed and their negative consequences. Despite its realistic depiction of patriarchal oppression, the play makes subtle allusions to the potential for more inclusive, flexible identities. This is particularly evident in Chandan's reflective psychological oneness and healing. Thus, Dattani's dramaturgy not only draws attention to gendered sorrow but also invites audiences to envision alternative, non-binary identities.

In line with broader feminist and psychological discourses on identity, trauma, and resistance, Tara is a critique of patriarchal oppression and a call to rethink gender beyond restrictive binaries. This is accomplished by combining gender theory and literary study.

This study uses Mahesh Dattani's Tara as a focal point to highlight the importance of applying psychological gender theory, especially Sandra Bem's Androgyny Theory, in the analysis of Indian play. Examining the psychological aspects of gender identity, the study shows how societal expectation and internalized gender norms fuel emotional upheaval, identity fragmentation, and narrative conflict. This approach goes beyond conventional feminist criticisms and offers a more nuanced and interdisciplinary understanding of gender in literature by focusing on both the external patriarchal structures and the internal psychological struggles of characters. This method goes beyond feminist criticism by looking at both the exterior forces of patriarchal structures and the internal psychological struggles of characters, providing a more complex and multidisciplinary view of gender in literature. By incorporating these ideas, literary analysis is enhanced and the potential of Indian drama as a formidable medium for examining intricate gender discourse is confirmed. This approach, which focuses on both the outward patriarchal structure and the inside psychological struggles of characters, goes beyond

conventional feminist criticism and offers a more nuanced and interdisciplinary understanding of gender in literature. Such concepts are used to improve literary interpretation and legitimize Indian dramas potential as a forum for complex gender discourse. This framework can be extended to incorporate more Indian plays, including Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*, for more research. Integrating different psychological theories, such as Judith Butler's theory of performativity, Erikson's phases of psychosocial development, or Lacanian psychoanalysis, can also yield additional insights into character psychology and identity formation. Research based on comparison and audience analysis may help clarify how gendered narratives are seen and comprehended in diverse cultural contexts, broadening our knowledge of how literature both reflects and subverts gender norms. And finally make us understand that, male and female are not opposing forces but complementary ones, each incomplete without the other, unified both in divinity and in the depths of human consciousness.

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