



**Disrupting the 'Peace' through Buddhist Doctrines: Silent Voices and Categorical
(Dis)agreement between 'No-Self' and 'Un -Self' in Pirandello's *Six Characters in
Search of an Author***

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Abstract

This paper examines the transformative power of silence in non-speaking characters within the 'outer' play in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, primarily using the Buddhist concepts of *Anattā*, *Nirvāṇa* and *Pratitya Samutpāda*. By applying Indian philosophical frameworks, it re-defines narrative authority and critiques hierarchical power structures in Western literary texts. The first section of this paper examines the representation of marginalized identities by focusing exclusively on the non-speaking figures: The Boy, The Little Girl, and the Author. Through their silence, these characters undergo a transformation from 'no-self' to 'un-self' to re-discover the sense of 'self' within them. By de-centering the dominant vocal characters, the study highlights how these silent figures have the power to disrupt the conventional narrative power structures within the play. The second section interrogates whether silence liberates these characters or renders them to be more dependent, which draws parallel to the concept of *Nirvāṇa* (liberation) and *Pratitya Samutpāda* (dependent origination). It further deepens the inquiry into whether their silence is a form of transcendence or subjugation, redefining the power dynamics through the lens of Indian epistemology. By applying Buddhist doctrines and removing it from its strictly religious context, this study reframes Indian knowledge systems as tools for deconstructing Western literary texts which simultaneously privileging marginalized silent ones and critiquing the authoritative vocal figures.

Keywords: *Anattā* ,¹Buddhist doctrines, Indian Epistemology, *Nirvāṇa* , *Pratitya Samutpāda*
Self, Silence

Introduction:

“I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object. What is realized in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming.” (Chandler).



“What effect does the acquisition of language have on these needs? All speech is demand; it presupposes the Other to whom it is addressed, whose very signifiers it takes over in its formulation.” (Lacan 278).

Standing as a paradoxical masterpiece, the absurdist meta-theatrical play gives birth to two segments- the ‘outer’ philosophical play and the ‘inner’ historical drama, where the ‘outer’ and the ‘inner’ has always been held ambiguous. What is considered to be the realist ‘outer’ play is the absurdist ‘inner’ and vice versa, which mirrors the typical Pirandellist philosophy of unknowability as the only absolute Truth. Pirandello’s literary engagement with World War I is situated in a discourse of transnational cultural identity, linking it to Risorgimentoⁱ philosophical thought. The pro-Mussolini sentiments distinguished Pirandellist Pirandello from the Humourist Pirandello but aligned him with figures like Shaw, Ibsen and Strindberg as his works extend the intellectual theatre of the grotesque to a theatre of spiraling display of contradictions. The engagement with the Renaissance humanism shifted from vertical to horizontal revision of theatrical design and unity created the base for the foundations of modern tragedy. As Manuela Gieri points out that Pirandello aimed to establish a modern “counter-tradition” which opposed the Futurists and also breaks away from Baudelaire’s idea of modernity, his scripts can be read as a “caricature of the Fascist party’s cultural failures, their blindness and deafness to the communication of higher truth in artistic form”ⁱⁱ. (Subialka 91).

Life is always a tragedy to a man who feels and a comedy who thinks. The disinterestedness and extinction of personality that shape the universal voice transform the silent characters into vessel for audience identification. Yet, this identification is fraught with paradox: the more they search for coherence, the more fragmented their selfhood becomes. The combination of philosophical inquiry and the tortured introspection invites to grapple with the impossibility of absolute identity and the tragicomic essence of existence of the age-long neglected non-speaking figures of the play. Pirandellismo in the sophisticated expression of Sicilian popular culture and the traces of Mediterranean society denote only half-philosophy about the mystery of Otherness. As Zola said, Pirandello ‘simply applied to two living bodies the analytical methods surgeons apply to corpses’, his focus on “the dissolution of the subject and its connection to the world, culminating in a “universe empty of meaning” brings up the essential need to make the reified subject regain its lost humanity through the artful reconstruction of the sense of selfhood.

The research on non-speaking characters in the play has often been overlooked or treated as a passing reference in prior scholarly works. A comprehensive, dedicated study focusing solely on these silent characters is notably absent. This particular play has not been analyzed through the lens of Buddhist philosophies, even though some of Pirandello’s other works hint at such ideas. Drawing from these scattered references and existing scholarship, an attempt is made to address these gaps. The study takes significant inspiration from Pirandello’s Preface, which provides foundational insights into identity, masks, silence, and the concepts of life and form. In Sogliuzzo’s (1966) essay on masks, masks have been critiqued to be just mere symbols and



instead their role as active theatrical devices has been emphasized. Mazzaro's (1996- 97) work on the use of absolute opposites in Pirandello's characterization and the concept of intercommunication has informed the analysis of silent characters as a medium of resistance and engagement. Fisch's (1990) critique of characters as primal disguises highlights the danger of conflating identity with character, aligning with the argument on the dialectic of supplementation and the complex role of masks in Pirandello's works. Petrucci's (1997) exploration of Heideggerian 'Dasein' provides insights into the authentic self, enriching the philosophical dimensions of the study. The Buddhist concept of *Pratitya Samutpāda* has also been a critical component of the analysis, with foundational ideas drawn from essays by Murakami and Chatterjee. Welbon's essay on *Nirvāṇa* further nuances this perspective by rejecting its reduction to annihilation or freedom, which parallels the treatment of silence and non-being in the play. Bakhtin's polyphonic approach, as outlined in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* has been extended to explore the multiplicity of voices in the play. The postmodern framework rejects singular truths or grand narratives, emphasizing dialogism, the autonomy of perspectives, and the resistance to definitive closure, including the voices of silent characters. Wolfgang Iser's concept of indeterminacy has proven invaluable in analyzing silence, framing it through *leerstellen* (gaps), implied listeners, and the idea of silence as a blueprint for constructing (in)definite meanings. Stanley B. Klein's distinction between the material and immaterial selves add depth to the exploration of identity in the play.

This qualitative research offers a cross-cultural critique of narrative and selfhood which further investigates the role of silence in non-speaking characters—specifically The Boy, The Little Girl, and the Author in the play—and their capability to disrupt traditional narrative authority and hierarchical power structures. By applying Buddhist concepts such as *Anattā* (no-self), *Nirvāṇa* (liberation), and *Pratitya Samutpāda* (dependent origination), the study examines whether their silence signifies liberation or entrenches their dependency within the narrative. Through close textual analysis and philosophical deconstruction, it critiques hegemonic narrative structures by juxtaposing Western literary conventions with Indian philosophical principles. By decoding their victimhood, whether intentional, coerced or imagined, the research interrogates how the transition from 'no-self' to 'un-self,' questions silence whether it is a medium to reclaim agency or just a perpetuator for their marginalization.

Section I

The Quiet Revolution: Silent figures and Selfhood in Pirandello's play



In *Phaedrus*, Socrates emphasizes that rhetoric is not only about pursuing truth but also about how truth is conveyed through ‘living speech’ⁱⁱⁱ. He cautions against assuming that written words are inherently reliable or permanent, arguing that writing transforms living speech into mere representations of reality. "The character of living speech does not change in its articulation; its character does not begin as an object, does not end as an object, and does not consist of any essential qualities of an object." (Petruzzi 51). The loss of agential voices objectified the human characters of *The Little Girl* and *The Boy* only as prop in the hands of the other vocal characters. The negation of their independent narrative makes them invalidated to even have a place in the theatrical script. The alienation of their stories didn't even get them a voice in the form of soliloquies.

The attire of *The Little Girl*, white coloured outfit, brings out the purity and the notion of innocence. Black silk sash around *The Little Girl*'s waist contrasting the white dress brightens up the whiteness of the essence of her character. The tinge of blackness highlights a number of aspects that acts as subtle premonition of her tragic fate like her death, the constraints imposed upon her by the tragic familial narrative and corruption of innocence by the shadow of suffering. It portrays the tension between appearance, reality of fractured lives and the sense of being bound to one another. The black sash symbolically refers to ‘binding’ her voice. While the sash is a visual accent, it metaphorically highlights her inability to speak or escape her fate just like any character with tragic passivity. *The Boy*'s entire black outfit marks him as a figure tied to the knots of despair, who is already grieving his life and undergoing emotional isolation. Unlike *The Little Girl*, the black outfit made him conspicuous on stage. As Pirandello brings up the feminine subjective figure of *Fantasia* who has a “humor to dress in black” and that “her solemn apparel is often extremely odd” (PIRANDELLO 36), he intended to juxtapose between *The Little Girl* and the *Fantasia* based on the outer attire but not on the indifference of their attitude.

The term ‘character’ in Greek referred to a mark or a token, but over time, it has come to represent human personality, psychological essence or even moral traits. As John Wilkins points out in *Essay Towards a Real Character* (1668) that symbols symbolizes the act of writing (écriture), yet the outward signs fail to imply the inner emotional depth in a way to express inwardness of the signified, which brings in the Saussure's concept that says that linguistic sign is a product of a system of differences. The play disrupts the “19th century postromantic individualism” (Fisch 595). by employing “neoplatonism and spasmodic elements spilled over to other characters, expressive, which sometimes exceeds the power of authorial voice”. Pirandello uses silence as a dramatic tool to convey the inexpressible. The comparison of *The Little Girl* to be “as bright as” (Pirandello 61) the audience by the Producer and the following dialogue of the Leading Actress, who says that it [brightness] makes it easier to create an illusion brings up a natural capacity of the play to suspend disbelief and engage with the illusion of the theatre without overanalyzing the artifice. The cooperative audience willing to engage with its constructed realities does not challenge the narrative or question its veracity. *The Little Girl* stands as a metaphor for the ideal audience in theatre who are incapable recipient of theatrical



illusion. Pirandello, in his meta-theatrical style challenges this kind of passivity and forces the audience to question the distinction between reality and illusion. The effectiveness of the illusion depends not just on the performers, but also in the receptiveness of the audience. The Little Girl, therefore, acts a blank slate just like the audience who was there to grasp the effectiveness of the play.

By fleshing out the 'human' out of the signs, "character studies formalized to give us a kind of langue, with the concreteness, the adventitiousness of parole almost totally absent." (Fisch 596). Sartrean 'la honte'^{iv} which means how one is perceived by the Other brings up the futility of the primal disguise created by masked entities which indicates a sign of anonymity. It would seem justifiable to negate the argument of the dialectic of presence and absence: the absence of the present, the presence of the absent and to rather support just the dialectic of supplement. There has never been an instance which indicates the absence of the present – the presence of the speaking characters were loud and vocal enough at every point whereas the physical presence only meant absence to the marginalized ones in a crude, clear-cut manner, either as a way to dominate over the non-speakers or to take away the agency to narrate the part of their tale by themselves. The non-speaking characters function just as a form of caricature with just an indelible "stamp for life".

The poststructuralist reading of the Father's words could be counted as the death of the authorial control with the birth of the characters because: "When the character is born... he assumes such an independence of his own author..." (Pirandello 65)^v. The autonomy of the characters has been provided to the characters by the absent Author figure. The Author has gifted them with an eternal reality, which is 'they-thou' rather than 'we-thou'. The Father figure often acts as the Author, for he gives words to the Mother and the Son. The Stepdaughter also acts as an Author, for she speaks for The Little Girl and The Boy. She has been the Author-cum-Creator who predicted the death of the two children. The Producer could be seen as the "Daemon of Experiment"^{vi} (Pirandello 19). For his vanity of seeing himself as an Author, as the leading actor said. The Producer's saying, "I could've done it better if I'd written it myself" shows the constant urge to put them in the script and produce them in act by act format.

Pirandello is obsessed of creating characters with masked personalities. His concept of *costruisci*—"constructing oneself"—emphasizes the fluidity of identity, where an individual perpetually dons masks to create and recreate themselves. He rejected the notion of a fixed, irreducible self, instead proposing that individuals embody multiple, shifting personalities. The contrast lies between the outer mask, which shaped by societal roles and expectations, and the inner mask, representing one's private, ever-changing essence. In the play it helped to differentiate between the characters and the actors as did the varied coloured lighting. The mystical theme of the masked characters brings about two major problems- we cannot view the changing emotions processed by the psychological turmoil with time as the mask is fixed and the mask prohibits the organic human interaction and makes the play a product of extended illusion, rather than creating artificial realities. The mother's mask epitomizes sorrow,



stepdaughter's revenge and father's remorse. Sogliuzzo keeps The Boy and The Little Girl only as a 'passing' reference while talking about the psychological and symbolic implications of masks. – They do not possess any dominant emotional attitude, and masks must be as unprepossessing as their roles. The technical simplicity of the mask is the major loophole in Pirandello's work which Sogliuzzo sees as an advantage. The argument of Sogliuzzo brings forth a major defect in Pirandello's use of mask as a theatrical device – The masks are eternally fixed as they are made of durable material and they do not correspond to the changing emotional temperament of the characters. The mask, according to the situations does not always result to the psychological conflict of the many masks of human personality but they often act as mirrors that fling back to "unrecognizable image"(Sogliuzzo 227). through the view of other's masks, instead of freezing a particular self-concerning image.

The notion of 'I sense myself, within myself' does not allow the inner thoughts to transmute the other thoughts. As the typical Pirandellist would say every life has a form and that form must die. All the three silent figures are given form but not life – a form that is living but only through the intercommunication between the vocal characters. "Each characters faces an – other subject always and only through its alterity." (Petruzzi 67). The concept of intercommunication removes the agency from the silent figures, particularly the two children. The communication dynamic is primarily one-way—between the stepdaughter and 'illegitimate' children—with the stepdaughter serving as a foil to The Little Girl. The Little Girl is portrayed as innocent, while the Stepdaughter is seen as her salvation, essentially predetermining the former's fate. Through The Little Girl she wishes to regain her state of innocence by taking her in her arms and calling her 'darling'. The mother declares, "These two children here, you've never heard them speak, have you? That's because they don't speak any more, not now. They just cling to me all the time: they help to keep my grief alive, but they really exist for themselves..." which reflects the complex relational dynamics. (Pirandello 57-58). Dasein's 'authentic Self' is not an inner state, a private or unified entity, nor a fixed or final condition. Instead, it is a way of being oriented toward the future, revealed through interactions with others in the ongoing process of dialogic engagement. It rejects representationalist views, as the self emerges dynamically, standing forth as a self-sustaining presence through its active, relational existence. (Petruzzi 64). Going against the view of Dasein, the play portrays intercommunication between the mother, father, son/stepdaughter, and the two silent children only as a means to bridge the communication gap whereby at the cost of their own power to narrate their tales.

Buddha's distinction between "who affirmed the existence of an eternal and imperishable soul or self-the "Eternalists"-and those who denied the existence of such an entity-the "Materialist" shows that the three silent figures could then be held as materialist because of their importance of tangible realities over linguistic symbolism and material presence over metaphysical constructs. (Anderson 190). The Boy has been seen as a prop in the hands of the Producer—he pulls him forward, makes him hold his head up, and does many more things, just as they did to the green sofa or the shop window.



“Abstract balanced opposites” (Mazzaro 519). as explored in Neoplatonism and Friedrich Schiller's philosophy, reflect the coexistence of two distinct principles within human nature—intellectual and sensory. These opposites manifest in fundamental relationships, such as those within a family, revealing a harmony between contrasting forces. It mirrors cubism's artistic approach of reducing natural forms to geometric structures, emphasizing on the aesthetic essence of duality. Thinkers like Plotinus and Schiller suggest that these principles coexist not as contradictions but as complementary forces shaping human existence and understanding. (Mazzaro 519).

By holding Kierkegaard's statement that a self is not true to itself^{vii}, the conclusion of the play does end up in aporia : Are the deaths real or are they created realities? The question should rather be: Are their lives real or just an illusion? The dichotomy between ‘being real’ and ‘being true’ raises the question: Do the two characters really embody the roles for the traces of their characterization to become (re)presentation. As Lacan points out death to be a signifier and “nothing but a signifier”, for it can be said that “there is a being-for-death”. (Lacan 257). The existential ontological status of these two characters has always been higher and static. The Stepdaughter, acting as a God-like figure, warns The Little Girl, stating, “It’s a game for others and not for you.” (Pirandello 70). The death of The Little Girl is symbolically created by drowning her anatomy in the fountain, which can be compared to drowning of the Stepdaughter’s characterological dirt in the amniotic fluid which purifies her identity, as her laughter at the end signifies her freedom from the shame. The Stepdaughter, in her attempt to address the conflicting identities within the family, prompts The Boy to shoot either the Son or the Father with his revolver. The Boy, as the only male member in Amalia's second family, represents a mixture of two identities: The Boy as an illegitimate male child as contrasted to the Son figure and a conflict with the Father as an authoritarian figure in the mother’s life, one whose authority overshadows The Boy’s identity as a patriarchal male hegemonic metonymic character. Perhaps, by killing himself he kept his sister's wish - he killed both of those identities.

The pull of the ‘philosophical reason’ pushes the silent characters toward Pirandello’s idea of distanced detachment. The transformation from the concept of no-self as the self to be an illusion to the concept of un-self which implies the negation of the self makes the silent characters to adopt not-self (*Anattā*). As in No-self which suggests that the self does not independently exist and that the ‘self’ as material construct is mostly temporal and impermanent. Unlike the un-self, there is no permanent self to negate as it denies unchanging essence within any being. The major focus, therefore, goes towards the process of realization – interpreting the ‘being’ and its assumed identification through the illusion of selfhood. The self is like a mirage, it might appear real in the first instance but when viewed in clear examination, it dissolves. It challenges the western metaphysical view of individualism, proposing a radical interdependence where the self is not an independent entity but transient phenomena. It, therefore, dismantles the mental scaffolding of “I” and “mine”, allowing individuals to recognize themselves to be a part of an interconnected web. Considered to be the end-point of spiritual realization, it aligns with



ultimate liberation (*Nirvāṇa*) by dissolving dualistic thinking and deconstructing identity into dynamic interplay of impermanent processes.

The ontological misconception of 'being' perpetuates suffering. The principle of *Anattā*^{viii} acts as a liberative strategy towards freedom that no permanent, unchanging self exists in any phenomenon. It can't be interpreted as denial of self but there could not be definitive claims about the ultimate existence of a fixed essence. Peter Harvey critiques equating *Anattā* with "ego-less" because it conflates the Buddhist concept with the Freudian notion of ego, which is distinctly unrelatable. Emerging around the 3rd century CE, *tathāgatagarbha*^{ix} doctrine suggests an "essential nature" in all beings. *Nāgārjuna*^x, in his *Madhyamaka* philosophy could be held against *Anattā*.

The un-self brings up the process by which the self is negated or surrendered often as an intentional act of self-transcendence or renunciation. There is an active process involved in rejecting the ego or self-identity and the negation in the context of mystical union with something greater. The self is like a mask - it is consciously removed to reveal something beyond to acknowledge self as functional while dissolving its supremacy simultaneously. The self is subordinated to a higher principle which forces the conscious de-centering of the ego. The Mother and The Little Girl holding hands followed by The Boy shows the visual progression of innocence and despair in the positioning. The Little Girl is a silent yet innocent and a visible figure of dependence whereas The Boy is the figure whose silence is one of detachment, internal turmoil. Father taking up the lead and helping the mother to get up the stairs seems obligatory rather than a compassionate desire to help. The children, one of four and another of fourteen years of age, moves like the shadow of their mother, who are unable to act independently which consequently resulted them to not being able to break free from their 'silent' roles in the narrative. The mother's visual representation of her burdened existence on The Father and her reluctance in carrying out her role as a single mother bind the children behind the fences of a freed identity.

The process of un-self leads to no-self. No-self is the 'truth' to be realized while un-self is a practice to be embodied. No-self deconstructs the illusion, and un-self aims to animate a life free from its grip. No-self projects the self like an image which has been existing conditionally but lacking any intrinsic entity.

Can an understanding of no-self lead to a sense of liberation, or does it eventually lead to a paradox of nothingness? And if no self reveals that identity is an illusion, how do we then navigate social constructs that rely on our sense of self? The curiousness to lead to a probable assumption shall be carried through the next segment of the paper.

Section II

Liberation versus Dependence: The Dance of Buddhist Doctrines in the floor of the play



During early colonial expansion, Western Europeans began exploring the ideas behind Buddhist practices, driven by a sense of Eastern cultural pride. Missionaries viewed Buddhists as religious opponents but noted similarities with Catholic rituals. The shift from the medieval era to the Enlightenment laid the groundwork for significant developments in Buddhist studies in the 19th and 20th centuries. The three silent figures each representing distinct stages of struggle against selfhood, trapped in cycles of *samsara* (the wheel of existence) used the ideal of *Nirvāṇa*.

Nirvāṇa as a metaphor implies the escape from the major 'Theatre of Life' which replicates the combination of the personal and sacred in an immersive philosophical stance. The Little Girl and The Boy cease to perform in the stage of the human drama. Their sudden exit from the stage of life embodies the fragile transient nature of life. The Little Girl, as residing in the lower rank of the *samsara* cycle, represents the pre-conscious state of existence. Her silence and passivity brings about no active role in act of her own fate. Her lack of agency gives birth to *avidya* (ignorance) that gradually perpetuates suffering. Her death by drowning is not therefore symbolic of release but of the inescapability of suffering when one seems to be blind to its causes. It shows a continuation of unresolved suffering rather than liberation. The usual implied meaning of *Nirvāṇa* to be 'profound calm' has lost its importance. The ignorance was unintentional; she neither had the awareness nor the opportunity to break free from her cyclical existence.

Just like *Nirvāṇa* means 'blowing out, extinction' as of a fire or flames of a candle, The Boy's shot with the revolver implies "not the utter annihilation of that flame but the subsidence into an unmanifest (*avyakta*)" (Welbon 322)., which is an unseen state. "The flame still exists though it is not perceived. Consequently to blow out a candle, according to a dominant classical Sanskrit view, is not to destroy the light merely; rather it is to transform the mode of existence from visible to invisible." (Welbon 322-23). The Boy's suicide might seem like an attempt to transcend suffering but it is actually just an attempt to cling on to the despair. He succumbs to a false sense of control over his suffering, which has got no terminal end that he seeks to break from. The Boy ends his life in a misguided attempt to escape pain, reflecting the connection with *dukkha* (suffering) rather than Enlightened detachment. Going against to the statement that "a condition of bliss which will inevitably-at his death-culminate in the real *Nirvāṇa*" (Welbon 312)., an alternative view can be held that the unfulfilled attainment of the desire of *Nirvāṇa* will recycle the suffering of his present life or even a new existence could be formed based on the actions.

The Author is a paradoxical figure. As an 'assumed' creator, he might have the potential to resolve the characters' stories, which parallels to the idea of achieving *Nirvāṇa*. Unfortunately, his indecision and detachment reflect the notion of surrendering control and an inseparable attachment to his ego. The Author's refusal or reluctance to complete the stories or to bring it in written form highlights his failure to relinquish his ego and the ability to force the characters to



embrace the impermanence of artistic creation. He is not the 'Enlightened' figure who is leading others to *Nirvāṇa* but the one who is trapped by self-imposed limitations. *Nirvāṇa* is thus neither annihilation nor the "absorption into some indeterminate ultimate essence". (Welbon 311). The Author, however, enters to the path of *Nirvāṇa* through intentional self-annihilation and a supreme bliss of annihilating others of their sinful human identity. It can be said that the Author's act of the granting extinction of individuality is not necessarily negative.

The major question thus emerges – If the characters themselves are not fully existing (existing in a liminal space between idea and embodiment), can they ever attain *Nirvāṇa*? *Nirvāṇa* imperatively call for the dissolution of the self in the first place and the characters in the play exist only as fragments of their Creator's imagination. It poses a paradoxical question – How can one dissolve what is already incomplete? The futility of this quest becomes a metaphor for human condition that is constantly seeking *Nirvāṇa* and is yet trapped in the layers of *samsara*.

Chatterjee claims that *Pratitya Samutpāda*, as a metaphysical term, stands as an antithesis to *Adhiccāsammuppāda*. It conditions our life, its sufferings based on what we called to be 'karma' in our former life and that our future life is dependent on the deeds of the present. Our future rebirth or the continuation of the restless cycle of *samsara* is dependent on "affirming volitions". (Chatterjee 314). Dr. Nalinkasa Dutta in his *Aspects of Mahayana Buddhism* has claimed that "Pratitya Samutpāda is not meant to be an explanation of the origin of the world but just a chain of instances to illustrate the law of *īdappaccayata* (dependent origination)". (Chatterjee 16).

As the Father says "We all, you see, think of ourselves as one single person: but it's not true: each of us is several different people, and all these people live inside us." (Pirandello 29)., the buddhist principle of *Pratitya Samutpāda* too suggests that all phenomena arise in dependence on other phenomena. It brings up the importance of interdependence and impermanence of existence. The silent figures of the Little Boy and The Little Girl are embodiments of incomplete narratives who exist only for their ties to the other 'characters' in the play. For their shared quest of completion, they lack individual agency and hence their identities depend on the dramatic structure envisioned by the absent author. They are just the products of a narrative framework, unable to act or speak unless defined by external forces like the Author's pen, the Characters' memories or even the Stage Manager's directions.

The Boy and The Little Girl remain 'silent' because their identities are unidentified and their spectral presence haunts the stage with their muteness. Their existence, just as *Shunyata* lack inherent meaning or selfhood until situated within a relational context, The Little Boy and The Little Girl and even the Author could be considered as fictional constructs and so they can be called the 'real actors' of the play. Much like the concept of *Shunyata*, the author's absence makes the creation a co-arising phenomenon and not a unilateral act. The characters cannot attain completion without the Author and yet the author's identity is incomplete without them. The



interdependence between the notions of authorship and the creations of his mind suggests that no creator exists independently of what is created by him.

Pirandello collapses the distinction between fiction and reality suggesting that all existence is relational and dependent. The silent figures are not fixed beings but ephemeral impressions that vanish as the narrative framework around them collapses. They are the metaphors for forgotten karma as well as they act as the shadows of potential being. The Author's abandoning of characters turns the characters into karmic echoes, haunting the theatrical space in search of resolution. (Karma is the actions that set in motion a chain of dependent events. The unresolved nature of their story perpetuates suffering (*dukkha*) much like the cycle of samsara, where incomplete actions lead to further unrest). A creative thing originates not by itself alone (*ekato*^{xi}) nor without any definite reason (*napi ahetuto*^{xii}), it originates on certain other factors (*paccayasamaggim paticca*^{xiii}) and a fruition (*phalavoharena*^{xiv}). *Samutpada* leads to a cause and an effect inseparable to each other and which are mutually dependent.

Murakami writes, "The contemplation of dependent origination consists of two phases i.e. origination (*samudaya*^{xv}) and cessation (*nirodha*^{xvi}) of all the sufferings of decrepitude and death, etc. together with life itself." (Murakami 287). As a doctrine of universal momentariness, Indian Buddhism holds a series or a chain or a stream of momentary mental temperaments and temporal consciousness instead of an eternal soul. But the eternal soul is the impermanent combination of causal relation and conditional relation that declares that there is no necessity of a soul (atman). The momentary consciousness of mind stands for individual soul and Buddhism accepts the momentary consciousness as the self – not as independent but relatively co-dependent. The silent voices are neither free nor interdependent, but latently co-dependent on four varied levels – physical, psychological, emotional and cognitional. The *Pratitya Samutpāda* never led them to experience *Nirvāṇa* where they are free from the sense of their permanent self. They are rather forced to take up the journey from their identity of un-self to no-self, both intentionally and also as puppeteers in the hands of circumstances and hegemonic control of vocal character. Hence the silence's transformative power is context dependent and henceforth woven between the threads of self-realization and external power dynamics.

Conclusion

The interplay between silence and voiced throats reshapes the narratorial authority with a focus on marginalized, non-speaking figures like The Boy, The Little Girl and the Author. Drawing from Bakhtin's polyphonic approach in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, he deliberately positioned silence as a vehicle for liberation through multiplicity, resisting monolithic truth and hierarchical closures. Creating a space where even the silent characters destabilize dominant power structures and resist the imposition of a single Truth, Iser's concept of indeterminacy frames silence as a space of possibility. Iser's idea of gaps (*leerstellen*) emphasizes the way of how unwritten aspects of a text stimulate the reader into filling the blank with projections to employ silence to serve as an active agent of meaning-making. The implied

postmodern audience of this time is expected to transform silence from absence to potential, which will eventually empower marginalized figures to disrupt the assumed authority of vocal characters. Silence is a dialogic force, as Bakhtin observes that the word in living conversation is directly oriented toward a future answer-word. (Bakhtin 25-36).

As Klein describes the idea of self that consists of two segregated parts – the first one is material which he describes as “the neuro-cognitive self” (Klein xiii). and which is objectifiable and amendable to scientific scrutiny and the second one is immaterial which he calls to be “the self of first person subjectivity” (Klein xiii). and not easily captured by the materialistic dogma of modern science. The immaterial aspects of reality draw on the principles of quantum indeterminacy and relativity theory. Pirandello ceased to represent man, woman or child for the mere pleasure (re)presentation as the epistemological self-consciousness is always in doubt when the ontological being works free. He paid no heed to the striking individualization of a character, henceforth did not prefer to give the authorial voice to many. Characters could not defend themselves as Pirandello promised to establish a mutual understanding on the empty abstractions of words as the non-speakers deliberately attempted to find themselves in an image rather than trying to become an image. Buddha’s strong stand that if he had to admit the notion of self, it must be ‘eternal’, “because of the widespread (Parmenidean)^{xvii} belief in his time that “what exists cannot cease to exist.” (Anderson 190). strengthen the ground of the claim that silence speaks louder than the existential corporal identity of a vocal character or even the playwright himself. Nonetheless, it prompts the question if the silent figures in the play are an essential part embodying the Parmenidean philosophy of the ever-existing entities or an oscillation between the eastern philosophy of impermanence and western philosophy of ‘stagnant yet temporal’ existential crisis.

END NOTES

ⁱ The Risorgimento was a 19th century movement that unified Italy, transforming its fragmented states under foreign control into a sovereign nation by 1871. Rooted in ideals of nationalism, freedom and unity, it sought to liberate Italy and create a cohesive identity. Key figures like Giuseppe Mazzini, Giuseppe Garibaldi and Count Cavour played vital roles in the movement.

ⁱⁱ The modern mechanized industry in Pirandello’s time often aimed to strip life out of its artistic form by over imposition of masks and diverse caricatures as a part to present a life out of its originality.

ⁱⁱⁱ For Socrates, living speech reflects self-understanding and exists in a dialogic context, while writing, detached from this context, becomes “dead discourse.” Despite this, Socrates acknowledges that writing can remind us of what we already know, offering a way to explore how written discourse preserves meaning. Heidegger builds on this idea, seeing written discourse as commemorative, preserving the memory of events while remaining distinct from the dynamic, non-objective nature of living speech.

^{iv} It is an existentialist philosophy discussed by Sartre in his work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943). It is a tool for self-awareness and moral reflection. Shame is not just a

negative emotion but a consequence of gaze and a revelation of self.

^v Pirandello's essay *On Humor* (1908) says that "a character, once born, takes on such a degree of independence from his author that no one imagines all sorts of situations from him that have never occurred to the author."

^{vi} The term is borrowed from the speech of Decadent poet, Gabriele D'Annunzio. Based on the Greek concept of *daimon*, it refers to a familiar spirit of driving men to risk for the badge of heroism. Here, the self-referential nature of the Producer brings to be the Author forth the risk of being incapable in creating finished creators out of his imagination.

^{vii} When a self is not true to itself, it could mean that the individual is living inauthentically – conforming to societal expectations, evading responsibility or neglecting their inner spiritual development. In essence, being true to oneself is a dynamic process, not a static state as the self continually strives to reconcile its finite existence with the infinite calling.

^{viii} *Anattā* translates to "not-self" or "no-self" and conveys the idea that no enduring or immutable self can be found within beings or phenomena. This doctrine is one of Buddhism's three fundamental characteristics of existence, along with *dukkha* (suffering) and *anicca* (impermanence). In Vedic traditions, the term *ātman* refers to a permanent soul or essence, which Buddhism rejects as a delusion that perpetuates suffering. Translating *Anattā* as "not-self" can be misleading; "no-self" is a more precise rendering, as it negates the existence of a self in any form.

^{ix} Many scholars interpret this as akin to the concept of self, which seems to conflict with the *Anattā* doctrine in most Buddhist texts. These texts may have been crafted to appeal to non-Buddhist audiences. For instance, a 6th-century Chinese translation of the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine describes the Buddha as possessing a "true self" (*shiwo*) that transcends dualities like being and non-being.

^x It has been argued that belief in selfhood fosters pride, selfishness, and an attachment to identity, all of which lead to bondage. Embracing *Anattā* dissolves such notions, eliminating possessiveness and pride.

^{xi} It refers to a harmonious state of mind free from mental fragmentation. It arises through practices like mindfulness and *Samadhi* (deep concentration).

^{xii} It translates to 'not without cause'. The concept denies randomness or creation without a cause.

^{xiii} It translates to 'dependent on the coming together of conditions'. The concept says that when the necessary conditions align, an effect arises and when those conditions cease, so does the phenomenon.

^{xiv} It refers to the transformative fruits of practice, such as peace, wisdom and freedom from suffering which can be achieved through Buddha's teachings.

^{xv} It refers to the origin of suffering. It is the second of the Four Noble Truths which guide towards liberation. The main cause of suffering is *tanha* or craving.

^{xvi} *Nirodha* means the cessation of suffering. According to the Four Noble Truths, when craving stops, the cycle of birth, death and rebirth also ends, leading to a state of peace called *Nirvana*.

^{xvii} What exists cannot cease to exist means that what exists will exist and also will have the

potential to change itself. Buddha's doctrines goes against the Parmenidean philosophy of what truly exists is unchanging and eternal.

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