

A Beginning to Existing: Understanding Colin Wilson's "Outsiderism" in 'Ritual In The Dark' - An Eastern Perspective

Sanjay Kumar

Department of Englis, Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India.

blissatshunya@gmail.com

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v3i4.706>

Received:

14/09/2021

Accepted:

26/10/2021

Keywords:

Atman,
consciousness,
existence, mysticism,
outsider, pure
consciousness,
sadhak, self-
realization,
transcendence .

Abstract

The phenomenon of "Outsiderism" found in the works of Colin Wilson has both individual and social implications which are intrinsically evolutionary. Wilson takes a stock of this 'evolutionary man' and concludes that 'outsider is a god in making. The 'Outsider' is a state of consciousness which recognizes both duality and non-duality, but strives to leave the former and hold the later. Like an Eastern Yogi, these 'outsiders' have a strong recognition that life in its 'ordinariness' generates ennui which is bereft of any meaning and purpose. They indulge in all such actions, though momentarily, with intent of bringing intensity to their consciousness. Wilson contends that human energy can manifest in all possible negative and positive forms, but in the outsider state, these energies begin to integrate which leads to the realization that mankind's freedom lies in religious attitude wherein a human being reconnects with its inner sources. It is interesting to understand the complex character of the "outsider" that Wilson has created in both his fiction and non-fiction and hold him as an alter ego to the eastern sannyasin, who having some glimpses of the other modes of being and torn by his own inner and outer conflicts is desperate to cast off the slough of his trivial worldly existence and metamorphose into a god. This paper is an attempt to understand the Wilsonian outsider with specific reference to the novel 'Ritual in the Dark.' The study will be carried out from the perspective of Eastern mysticism so as to find out, whether such outsiders are Western sannyasins engaged in a similar self-quest, and who having traversed through myriad realms of their physical and psychological beings are beginning to exist.

1. INTRODUCTION

In literature, the portraiture of *outsider* or its variant *stranger* is multifaceted. The factors like nationality, culture, social class, race, education, gender, religion and personality can give rise to the *outsiders*. The outsider problem has been depicted as a social problem or a psychological problem or a socio-psychological problem or an existential problem. These problems, however, are not mutually exclusive. One type of the problem may bring the others in its wake. As a social problem, 'Outsiderism,' may surface as a result of non-conformity to the established norms, a misfit or a rebel who like Camus's Meursault, does not fit society's expectations. Meursault is a stranger, an outsider, one who is at constant odds with the absurd society he inhabits (Salma, 2008). As a psychological problem, an outsider may get alienated from his own self. It is a state of self-division into conflicting parts which become alien to each other. This inner chaos may render the individual impotent and like Dostoevsky's underground man, the person may land in shame and self-loathing. "I am a sick man..... I am a wicked man." In the space of that pause Dostoevsky introduces the unifying idea of his tale" the instability, the perpetual "dialectic" of isolated consciousness (Dostoevsky,1864/1994). The characters of Harold Pinter's plays also reflect this self-division, where language fails to communicate

anything in human relationships and a bizarre alienation creep in human psyche which renders the characters silent or make them to utter non-sense. Dramatically, the playwright confronts us with sick, and perhaps desperate, characters. Their failure strongly mirrors a situation where identity is quite hard to be identified and inhumanity is certainly difficult to be humanized again (Marrouchi, 2019). As a socio-psychological problem, it can be caused by the 'displacement' of people from their native land to an alien place. Here an immigrant is an outsider, who uprooted from his homeland loses his sense of belongingness and faces alienation in the foreign land. The lack of natural peaceful surrounding mars the normal growth of the personality and the individual becomes an 'Erewhon Outsider.' Most of our post-colonial literature inscribes the plight of such outsiders. One's gender may also relegate a person to the margins and create 'outsiders,' away from the mainstream. Such 'outsiders' are the products of a patriarchal society and are the subjects of feminism and gender studies in literature. From a philosophical angle, 'Outsiderism' is an existential problem. The existential crisis of the mankind gave birth to the outsider, who regarded life as absurd and meaningless. Camus's Meursault remains disconnected to life, drifts and lives his life as a pointless way- station between life and death. This is evident from how detached and emotionless he remains in his transactions with the world, especially in relating to his wife or attending his mother's funeral and responding to the magistrate, who tried his best to acquit him. Towards his approaching death, Meursault finally realizes that, apart from one's own conscious being, all else is otherness, from which one is alienated. This realization also comes to Sartre's Roquentin in *Nausea*, the feeling that existence is banal and utterly empty. Samuel Becket sketches a deeply absurdist picture of the outsider. Becket believes that existence cannot be rationalized as life is intrinsically absurd. His *Waiting for Godot* is an absurdist par excellence piece of writing. The two tramps in the play, in a seemingly improvised dialogue arouse laughter in their audience, despite their alienation from the social norm and despite the total pessimism of their philosophy (Salma, 2008). Another creed of the outsiders is those of Romantics- the idealists. The romantic outsider is a 'dreamer of other worlds' (Wilson, 1956, p48). They experienced the rupture and ecstasy through imagination but ended in escapism and defeatism.

Colin Wilson's treatment of 'Outsiderism' is quite different from his predecessors. Wilsonian outsiders focus on purpose of human life, self-knowledge and consciousness. The futility and unreality of life around, pushes them to solitude and after achieving self-understanding, they move towards a religious view of the world.

Colin Wilson portrays his 'outsider' as an antidote to the nihilistic and absurdist tendencies of writers who delivered a bleak and pessimistic perspective of human existence. Wilsonian outsider is not interested in any abstraction or dogma but craves for the objective truth. Wilson asserts:

The Outsider tends to express himself in Existentialist terms. He is not very concerned with the distinction between body and spirit, or man and nature; these ideas produce theological thinking and philosophy; he rejects both. For him, the only important distinction is between being and nothingness. (*The Outsider*, p 27).

Colin Wilson has employed different genres like science fiction, detective fiction, crime, occult and fantasy to express his ideas about human freedom and meaning. Wilson who was catapulted to fame by his seminal work *The Outsider* published in 1956, explores different types of outsiders who are portrayed in a state of transition- caught between two worlds, one of boredom and despair and the other of affirmation and bliss. This study analyses Wilson's novel, *Ritual in the Dark*, to find out how the 'outsiders', through their experiences in life, come to the same recognition as the Eastern sannyasins. Both have the recognition that life

becomes meaningful when one transcends the trivial existence and begins to live in higher modes of being. The study focuses on different elements pertaining to the psychological and spiritual experiences of the ‘outsiders’ and their resemblance with those of the sannyasins. The study will also show how both come to the same realization about sexuality as a means to glimpse the higher states of consciousness. The experiences of these ‘outsiders’ will be interpreted from the perspective of Eastern mysticism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The phenomenon of ‘Outsiderism’ in *Ritual in the Dark* has been explored from different perspectives. Lachman (2016) remarks, “the intellect, the emotions, and the body, a tripartite arrangement that we’ve seen Wilson employ in *Ritual in the Dark*. Here begins the work of synthesis, of fusing together the disparate parts of the self, of harmonizing what Gurdjieff called our different “centres”—the moving, the emotional, and the intellectual parts of our being” (p.99). Walter Asa Winsett (1968) in his study, *Colin Wilson: The Religion of the Outside*, analyses how Sorme attains maturity after experiencing life in its different dimensions. Sorme’s ultimate realization that the world does not matter, that the man’s perception is all that matters, reveals a concept fundamental to Wilson’s ultimate phenomenological religion of the outsider (p.13). Nicholas Tredell observes that Wilson’s novels are in some measure *bildungsromane* which show the existential and evolutionary development of their protagonists as they encounter experiences. Tredell best describes *Ritual* as a realistic novel in the form of a murder thriller. it gives the novel form and direction, and symbolizes the dark, uncertain side of existence: the abyss apprehended by Sorme in his vastations (Tredell, 2015). Dorothy M Levin (1983) in her study, *Colin Wilson and the Sexual Mystique* analyses how Wilson understands human sexuality vis a vis eastern tantra and scientific studies, thus resolving the inconsistencies between science, mysticism and sexuality. Sexuality is a means for man to re-experience his godliness. In order to return to the freedom of godhead, Sorme seeks the sexual act (p. 30). Floreda Dianne Lux (1972) in her study analyses Sorme’s search for identity. *Ritual in the Dark*, is a fictional presentation of Wilson’s portrait of the Outsider, the alienated man who is searching for his identity (p.99). Sidney Champion considers *Ritual in the Dark* as a novel of ideas. All the "experimental" aspects have been ironed out; the novel reads so easily and smoothly that the reader is unaware that it is a novel of ideas.' But a novel of ideas it most *definitely* is and it is this extra dimension that elevates it above and beyond novels written purely for entertainment (Champion 2011). Bendau (1950) points out that, *Ritual in the Dark* chronicles the slow awakening consciousness of Gerard Sorme. This is a “novel of initiation” and, like any initiation rite, there is a painful encounter that leads to growth and an added dimension of insight (p.33). This study analyses the ‘outsider’ from a new dimension of eastern mysticism exploring different elements common to both the ‘outsider’ and the sannyasin.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Mysticism, though not a religion, constitutes an important element of every religion. The word “Mysticism” has Greek origins which means “to close.” (Smith 1930). Thus, it means closing the mind to everything that is external so as to receive divine illumination. ‘Mysticism’ is best thought of as a constellation of distinctive practices, discourses, texts, institutions, traditions, and experiences aimed at human transformation (Gellman & Jerome 2019). Besides its western manifestations, mysticism, is quite pronounced in the highly evolved doctrines of Vedic literature, Buddhism and Sufism. It is a quest for freedom from sensual or corporeal so as to attain to higher states of consciousness. It is an aspiration for unison with the Ultimate; the search of the individual soul to live harmoniously with the universal order. It is:

The expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order (Underhill, p XIV)

Mysticism does not believe in any organised or ritualistic religion but is a practical path to reach the divine. It directly apprehends the truth without any mediation of the senses or the reason. The individual *sadhu* or *sannyasin* who has withdrawn from society and whose focus is in the unity analysis, false, created by *avidya* (a knowledge of appearances which are unreal and illusory mediated through senses) but non-dual, timeless and real *para vidya* (transcendental knowledge) (Partridge & Gabriel, 2003). It stripes away all types of distortions and reaches the truth through intuition. It involves a discipline of purification so as to reveal the hidden nature of the soul. Purgation is an important element in all the mystic traditions which paves the path for higher consciousness to emerge. It is the most exalted form with which we are acquainted of that *catharsis*—that pruning and training of the human plant—which is the essence of all education, and a necessary stage in every kind of transcendence (Underhill, 1955). Mysticism teaches us how to overcome self-division and achieve unity of being. It is all about transcending our trivial existence and after journeying through different stages attaining to pure states of being. The ever-changing, ever-growing human spirit emerge from the cave of illusion, enter into consciousness of the transcendental world: the “pilgrim set towards Jerusalem” pass through its gates and attain his home in the bosom of Reality (Underhill, 1955; Ahmed, et al., 2021).

In Eastern mystical traditions, especially the Vedic and Shaivic, the individual takes the vow of *sannyasa* to set out for a journey to the “promised land” of bliss and fulfilment. The ‘triviality of everyday consciousness’ and the glimpse into the ‘other modes of being’ pushes him into the ‘divine discontent’ and he strives for the freedom or ‘*moksha*.’ When a person indulges in all types of worldly pleasures and suffers through different pains, a time comes when he clearly sees through the triviality and meaninglessness of all these engagements and eventually begins the search for truth by embarking on *sannyasa*.

On the basis of this theoretical framework, this paper explores the Wilsonian ‘Outsiders’ as western *sannyasins* engaged in a quest to bring freedom and meaning to their lives, with special reference to the novel, *Ritual in the Dark*.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The phenomenon of ‘Outsiderism’ found in the works of Colin Wilson has a marked resemblance with the different experiences of an individual, who is about to embark on the path of *sannyasa*. The novel, *Ritual in the Dark* portrays the outsider character, Gerard Sorme, who after going through different psychological and spiritual experiences strives for heightened states of consciousness and like an Eastern *sannyasin*, seeks discipline to attain to such states. The study has investigated and discussed the following issues.

4.1. Wilson and the ‘Outsider’

The individual begins that long effort as an Outsider; he may finish it as a saint.

(The Outsider, p281)

Right from the beginning, it has been observed that East and West take different attitudes in knowing the reality. If the Eastern way is spiritual and inner, the Western is material and outer. This is the reason that the west has made tremendous progress in Science and Technology and the east gained great heights in evolution of human consciousness. The West, however, given to the mechanicalness and boredom, materiality imparts to life, has once in a while awakened to the spiritual needs of man. One such person who came to this realization was Colin Wilson—the British Existentialist philosopher and novelist. Wilson states:

Real education means existentialism, and existentialism means exploring one’s inner world scientifically. This is why materialism and all its incarnations ... are

so deadly. They make imprisonment in time, consciousness and personality — to which human beings are only too prone — seem quite natural and inevitable.’ Moreover, he believed that civilizations begin to lose control as soon as they begin to think in materialist categories because, ultimately, he said, all power is spiritual power. (*The Outsider*, p.192)

It is believed that existentialism is a prelude to mysticism. The notions of existentialism also differ widely in the East and West. The West’s understanding of it is Sartrean and Heideggerian – *Dasein*, who is condemned to be free while the Eastern way, however, is Husserlian which follows the necessary reductions – *neti-neti*, so as to access the transcendental ego or the *Atman*. Wilson inclines to the eastern notion and in his *Religion and the Rebel*, defines the aim of existentialism as, “building of many insights into a total vision, an attempt to extend the consciousness, to extend the sphere of the living being into the unliving” (Wilson, 1957, p.54).

Wilson’s writings have a religious orientation with individualistic concerns, and he firmly believes that man is a microcosm and can expand his consciousness to highest flowering and ‘outsider consciousness’ is the way to achieve it. Wilson’s philosophy is concerned with religious questions of the meaning of human existence, freedom and the existence of God and because it represents a new way of life for the ‘dominant minority’ (Wilson, 1956, p. 299). The outsider has awakened to the presence of some subterranean forces and the possibilities of super consciousness. Regarding the ‘outsider,’ ‘Wilson’s biographer, Gary Lachman remarks, that “a person with pressing hunger for meaning and spiritual purpose in a world seemingly bent on denying him these” (Lachman, 2016). Maslow calls them ‘self-actualizers’ who are driven by an urge to evolve. In his *Colin Wilson, The Outsider and Beyond*, Bendau remarks about the ‘outsider’:

This individual is a true spiritual rebel, with a vision of life that transcends ordinary consciousness and searches like a beacon for “a deeper sense of purpose.” (Bendau, 1979, p.31)

Wilson has projected the outsider characters as seeds, which are potentially capable of becoming the supermen. Wilson takes into account the physical, intellectual and spiritual dilemmas of the ‘outsiders’ and concludes that their problems are quintessentially existential. Wilson is not a spectator but caught in the chaos of existence, he struggles to find out how life could and should be. It is all about an individual who is interested in living in the world not in a laboratory.

Wilson discusses different types of outsiders to unveil different states of mind and each of these states is somehow in disharmony with the environment (outer as well as inner) and every outsider desire to escape towards freedom. This freedom, often momentary can be had through positive ways as Von Gogh achieved through art or negative ways as Raskolnikov murdered the pawnbroker. It is a matter of self-expression and outsiders feel desperate to achieve this state of freedom. Wilson eventually advocates religious attitude to achieve this expression. He talks about a discipline which will force the mind to a direction which is foreign to its everyday activities. To bring home his point, Wilson quotes from Shurangama Sutra:

My Lord taught my brother and myself to concentrate our attention on the tip of the nose, and as I did this, I began to notice, after three weeks that my in and out breathing seemed like smoke coming out of a chimney. At the same time, my body and mind became bright internally, and I could see the whole world becoming clear and transparent like a crystal ball. . . . Then my mind became enlightened, and I attained to a state of non-intoxication.... (*The Outsider*, p233)

The 'outsider' is a man who knows that he is sick. Certain individuals with, presumably, sharper nightmares than the rest have been driven to an awareness of their misery (Henderson, 1957). An outsider is a man at the threshold of a higher form of life. Throwing light on the outsider's state of mind, Wilson (2005) in one of his interviews with Allan Morrison reveals that "some men develop a curious inner dissatisfaction, which may amount to a vague feeling of "Who am I?", or to the agony of Bunyan's "What must I do to be saved?" Gurdjieff came as close as anyone when he said we are all asleep, in which case, the question becomes: "What can I do to shake my mind awake?"

Wilson's non-fiction books are replete with these ideas and his fictional characters which he portrays as 'outsiders,' strive to find the meaning of their existence by establishing themselves in some transcendental realm. Gerard Sorme, the outsider character of 'Ritual in the Dark' indulges in different experiences which gives him some glimpses of the intense states of being. Like a sannyasin he recognises that he needs discipline to sustain these states.

4.2. Outsider – the Western Sannyasin

A great Indian mystic, Osho once said, that "God is energy and religion tells us how to deal with this energy" (Osho, 2004, p33) and Wilson's doctrine of "New Existentialism" talks about different ideas and ways to deal with human energy. Interestingly, Wilson analyses the different dimensions of *bhogi* (the worldling) and suggests his own methods to become a *yogi* (a disciplined consciousness). Wilson contends, human energy can take different directions and have many manifestations positive as well as negative. A person may turn into a maniac, a criminal or into a visionary or saint. In the 'outsider state,' the energies start to integrate and some moments of intenser consciousness are experienced.

Apparently, a murder mystery, the novel, *Ritual in the Dark* portrays Sorme as an 'outsider,' who through his relations with the other characters comes to the threshold of a higher form of being. Initially Sorme is depicted as a *bhogi*, who describes himself as "stagnant, sullen and sex starved" (Wilson, 1960 p139). Sorme befriends a Nijinsky lover, Austin Nunne, who later turns out to be a sex murderer. Sorme believes that Nunne's crimes are a way of self-expression against the futility and boredom and the resultant alienation that the life is beset with. Sorme is himself acutely aware of this futility and meaninglessness of life. But it's all falsifying. If we were honest, we'd accept that life is meaningless (Wilson, 1960, p54). Sorme makes a deep analysis of human nature and finds it too complex, ranging from its lower to higher forms. In responding to Glasp's compliment, Sorme points out, I've got a theory about people. You and I are completely different types. I think too much, you feel too much. I lay too much emphasis on the mind, and you lay too much on the heart. Now some people lay too much on the body. . . Austin, for instance. When he gets repressed, he needs a physical outlet (Wilson, 1960, p.195). Sorme has a recognition that some visionary moments transcend all human limitations. A vision of knowledge, of human achievement in imagination and courage.... freed from triviality and immediacy (Wilson, 1960, p82).

This could be understood in terms of lower and higher sides of Nature (*prakrti*). Ordinarily mankind remains subordinate to the lower side of *prakrti* (human all too human, to use the Nietzschean term (Morrison, 2010)). But in the 'outsider state,' it is realized that there is a higher side to it, which is a state of non-duality and non-self-division. Wilson points out:

.... This stocktaking of energy tends to jump the personality and 'all perplexities of intellect'; it is in other words a vision of pure Will, a pure power, a pure possibility. The personality temporarily disappears: this is the most important aspect of the vision. (*The Outsider*, p189)

In *Baghavat Gita*, Sri Krishna talks about these natures (*Prakrti*) in the following words:

('This is (My) lower (Prakrti) but different from it, know thou, O mighty armed, My higher Prakrti – the principle of intelligence, by which this universe is sustained.') (7. 4-6).

Wilson is interested in individuals who in eastern parlance suffer from divine discontent. A thirst to know the reality. In his attempt to make Nune understand the value of life, Sorme states:

You see, I see it this way. Supposing that at the end of your life you had a vision of everything -- everything in the universe, all at once. A sort of vision of God. It would justify everything. If you could have a vision like that it would make the world different. You'd live like a fiend, like a possessed man. Because you'd know it meant something, that it wasn't meaningless (*Ritual in the Dark*, p.8).

Wilsonian outsiders face this 'discontent' in the form of 'vastations.' Sorme had an awareness that his own existence was not capable of detaching itself from existence to question it. Existence faced him like a blank wall. There was an instinctive desire to penetrate the wall, to assert his reality beyond it, and a terror that came with the recognition that he was trapped in existence; that no detachment from it was possible (Wilson,1960, p23). Sorme wants to know his existential reality.

I... I can give you an example of what I mean. Sometimes I wake up in the night with a sort of foreboding. Then I feel arbitrary. I feel somehow absurd. I feel, who am I? And What am I doing here? (Wilson,1960, p.38).

An outsider is "a man who has awakened to chaos" (Wilson,1956, p.15). But the outsider must face and embrace this chaos, as it is only then he can kill the illusions and realize some immense aspect of himself. . . and then suddenly I felt real. I saw other people's illusions, and my own illusions disappeared, and I felt real inside. I stopped wondering whether the world's ultimately good or evil. I felt that the world didn't matter a damn. What mattered was me, whether I saw it as good or evil (Wilson, 1960, p196). Sorme was gradually realising the significance of a disciplined consciousness which would eventually pave the way for attainment of pure consciousness. Like an eastern yogi, Wilson advocates an intensive and exhaustive survey of individual's inner states so as to know the *maya* (i.e., being in false-consciousness) and reach the essence.

Sorme, asserts, "I am convinced that life can be lived at twenty times its present intensity . . . somehow. I spend all my life looking for the way to it" (Wilson,1960, p.8). Sorme, the outsider, like a sannyasin makes a mystical journey through "the dark night of the soul" who is in search of a unifying vision of God, man and the universe (Winsett, p9). Regarding a Wilsonian outsider, Steve Taylor echoes the same idea in the following words: ...is the developmental journey of the outsider, from self-division and alienation, through temporary transcendence to permanent spiritual awakening, or enlightenment. Or in philosophical terms, this is a journey from existentialism, through romanticism towards mysticism (Taylor, 2012, p.4).

The outsider wants to rid himself of the what Swami Vivekananda calls 'mind indecisiveness'(Vivekananda, 1960) and use his imagination and will properly to bring integration in his being. In this connection, The Gita asserts:

When the psycho-physical energy of the man is directed by enlightened intelligence or enlightened reason, something wonderful happens; every step of his life's journey is accompanied by a steady rise in the quantity of his life energy. (VI. 21)

A Beginning to Existing: Understanding Colin Wilson's "Outsiderism" in 'Ritual In The Dark' - An Eastern Perspective

Wilson firmly believes that we take consciousness for granted as deep down we have a concrete self or the transcendental ego from where all our intentions and will to perceive originate, thereby bringing us close to what in east is called as the *Atman*. In *Beyond the Outsider*, Wilson talks about the 'uncovering of the Atman' so as to bring the 'God within' to the surface (Wilson pp. 195-196). Wilson contends that human condition is a product of viewing life from natural standpoint, (*maya*), and outsider is one who once in a while comes out of this *maya* and tastes the *anand* which Wilson expresses both in Maslovian terms as peak experiences (Wilson, 2009, p.11) and in his own typical way as faculty X (Wilson, 2009, p.17). It is the Tao, the state of integrity and unity. In *Ritual*, a similar experience by Sorme has been expressed in the following words:

What he had achieved was only a certainty of his own existence, it was a recovery of subjectivity. He thought: the man who possesses his subjectivity possesses everything; and knew it to be true. But it was difficult to keep awake. The insight brought a sense of acceptance, of affirmation, that tempted him to lie down and close his eyes. (*Ritual in the Dark*, p.140)

Wilson like an eastern thinker talks about evolution of human consciousness into higher states. He is interested in bringing integration in human existence by synthesizing the energies of the human being and putting them in the right direction. In the 'outsider state,' human imagination, thought and will start to align in a new dimension, giving birth to a new consciousness. The mystic life, therefore, involves the emergence from deep levels of individual's transcendental self; its capture of the field of consciousness; and the "conversion" or rearrangement of his feeling, thought, and will—his character—about this new centre of life (Underhill, p56). Sorme asserts that a man becomes himself only by making a bonfire of his potentialities. In the light of action, he sees his reality as it disappears in a new persona (Wilson, 1960, p178). Wilson creates a vision to see life with new eyes and grasp the reality or *atman* which lurks beneath our existence.

An 'outsider' is a *sadhak* who has come to an acute realization that he needs some disciplines and practices to perpetuate his existence in transcendentality, which is a state free from instincts and desires. In this regard William James remarks:

At this point the mind enters the higher state of existence when knowledge beyond reasoning comes. The mind works free of desires and restlessness (James, p.391)

The word *sadhak* is derived from *sadhana*, which means discipline. The outsider in one way or the other is dissatisfied with the status quo. He is in search of "more abundant life." His energies need self-expression but ultimately, he doesn't want to be a worldling but wants to get rid of the triviality once and for all. In his seminal work, *The Outsider* Wilson points out that to know the psychology of the outsiders, one must possess a glorified common sense and some degree of sensitivity and all religious teaching is a plea for development of such sensitivity and perception (Wilson, 1956, p136). For an outsider the philosophic discussion is meaningless. Philosophizing cannot solve his/her problem because its concerns are existential and he/she wants to *exist*. It is not a question of metaphysics but a search for *Lebensfrage*. One significant thing about the outsider is that he has become aware of his self-division; many conflicting I's that tear him apart. His own 'thought riddled nature' (*Dwand*) torments him and keeps him in misery. So, he desperately needs freedom and to achieve it, he requires discipline in all his physical, intellectual and emotional faculties. A sannyasin needs to 'clean the doors of perception' (Blake, 1927), and raise consciousness to its highest level of purity, luminosity, and

universality. (Ranganathananda, 1983) to know the existential reality. And this is what Sorme advocates: you have to work on the assumption that there could be a vision of the total meaning of life. And if that is possible, everyone ought to live as if that was the aim (Wilson, 1960, p9). Wilson talks about the need of discipline to bring meaning to life. Referring to *Baghavat Gita*, Wilson states:

Its basic assertion was that the individual soul, the Atman, is identical to the ultimate reality, God or Brahman. All I had to do was to sit on the floor of my bedroom every morning and meditate on this, while focusing my mind intently on the identity of Atman with Brahman. And, to my delight, it worked. (*Superconsciousness* p 67)

For an outsider, who is acutely aware of the unreality of life, to *exist* is a matter of life and death. Having tasted the *anand* of reality, the unreality of existence pains him and he realizes its delusions. He “sees too deep and too much” (Wilson, 1956, p13) and unlike the masses wants to possess religion rather than profess. Sorme is irritated with the way Jehovah’s Witness like Gertrude Quincey understands religion. He finds it quite naive and purposeless. After his conversation with Miss Quincey, Sorme concludes that she can never understand. She knows only categories and chapters from the Book of Kings. She can never know real good or evil; the knowledge would wreck her (Wilson, 1960, p212). The common man glosses over and feigns civilized hiding the unnameable impulses which are savage, unorganized and irrational (*Daman*). Outsider however stands for truth and wants to face the chaos and bring order in it. Vastation is the experience common to all outsiders; it is sudden and inexplicable nature of the vision, a sort of spiritual purgation which leaves indelible impression on their psyche and renders them discontented. Sorme wondered vaguely, losing the struggle to keep awake, whether the insight was not some kind of guardian, a benevolence whose aspect was nothingness (Wilson, 1960, p23).

Outsider strives to get rid of his ‘thought riddled nature’ which can lead him to what Blake calls the “eternal delight of energy.” Wilson says that outsider is a man who has risen above the human stupidity and detests herd instinct and wants to create his own values and purpose in life. We need an “artist psychologist” or “intuitional thinker” to bring salvation. So, the basic question that confronts outsider is “who am I.”

And this question cannot be answered by any intellectualization or any personality development programme. In fact, they hinder the evolution of outsider and what is needed is the creation of a vision of pure will, a pure possibility which can lead to transcendence. In his “*Superconsciousness*,” Wilson remarks:

To ‘know’ something merely with the mind is hardly to know it at all. Our whole being is somehow involved in true knowing. And when this happens, knowledge has a ‘weight’ that is not found in merely intellectual knowing. (*Superconsciousness*, p63)

Sorme feels desperate in creating such a vision. I'd say all my life centres around an idea. An idea of a vision (Wilson, 1960, p38). Wilson is talking about a vision to transcend the triviality of routine life and bring intensity in consciousness which could be triggered voluntarily.

It is interesting to note that Wilsonian outsiders have a deep understanding of human sexuality which bear a marked resemblance with what mystics in east have been teaching all the time. Unless and until we succeed in bringing harmony to the act of sex, in imparting a spiritual syntax to sex, in coming to reverse sex as the gateway to samadhi, a better humanity cannot come into being (Osho, 2011, p63). Sorme in the *Ritual* has an acute realization that the desire to regain a god-like freedom manifests itself in the sexual impulse. We as worldlings remain

fettered in our personalities and take our consciousness for granted. In our ordinary life our consciousness gets intensified only in sexual orgasm. Regarding this, Sorme asserts:

It is a sudden longing for far more freedom than we possess. It's an insight into freedom – that's the reason it is so overpowering. What is more, it hasn't much to do with ordinary lust (*Ritual in the Dark*, p124).

Wilson is basically talking about the *tantric* vision of understanding the sexual mystique so as to bring transformation in the way we live our life. In his autobiography, *Voyage to a Beginning*, Wilson points out, 'I have never ceased to feel that sex is a key to man's deepest being' (Wilson, 1969, p230). Wilson emphasizes that ideas lead us nowhere; they are not real and how much systematizing a philosopher does they do not change our existential reality. But for the outsiders, reality is something else and Wilson believes it can be accessed only through a phenomenological investigation. In his postscript to *Outsider*, Wilson talks about phenomenological disciplines in the following words:

..... they are concerned with the creation of a new language, a new conceptology; for our problem is that we spend too much time looking at the external world to make any close acquaintance with the world of the inner mind. (*The Outsider*, p301)

Wilson's phenomenological disciplines are not much different from yogic disciplines. He uses his own terminology and approach to attain to God-consciousness.

Human beings keep on dreaming and never want to know who they are or what are they doing. It is only when their dream breaks that they get a glimpse of reality and experience some awakening. It is the 'outsider' who has the intuition that human beings are sunk in delusion and has no hope to ever know themselves. Human beings are caught in self-delusion and blind themselves in multiple ways and this state causes a great contempt in an outsider. Man must fuse instinct and rational faculties and find solution in the religious attitude. The outsider is interested in high speeds and great pressures; he prefers to consider the man who sets out to be very good or very wicked rather than the good citizen who advocates moderation in all things.

5. CONCLUSION

Wilson's portraiture of 'outsider' is quite different from his predecessors. He projects the outsider as a state of consciousness, which right from its primitive stages, has an inkling, that by living a life of discipline and understanding, man can metamorphose into a god. Some of these ideas have been well expressed by Wilson in his novel, *Ritual in the Dark*, wherein the 'outsider' like an eastern yogi, has some taste of the other modes of being and who engages in different yogic disciplines to leave his false-consciousness – the *maya* and enroot himself in some transcendental modes of existence; become a self-actualizer and by going up the ladder of selves attain to *Atman*. Human being as an 'outsider,' depicted by Wilson holds a great significance, especially in the contemporary times, when he/she is sinking more into ordinary and 'robotic' states of consciousness ever than before. The birth of 'outsider' basically occurred in the west and this birth is a boon, especially for the western man, as it is the seed which can lead to highest flowering. There is a striking resemblance between this 'outsider' and the eastern man who embarks on *sannyasa*. Both have an acute realization that ordinary states of consciousness generate ennui and meaninglessness. Both crave for 'more abundant life' (*jivan*) and are desperate to bring meaning to their existence.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, H. R., Mohammed, O., Shabanb, K.(2021). Literary Parody of Russian Communism Harmonizing to George Orwell's Two Novels" Animal Farm" and" Nineteen Eighty

Four". *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 3(2), 216-228.

<https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v3i2.554>

- Bendau, C. P. (1979). *Colin Wilson, The Outsider and Beyond*. Borgo Press.
- Campion, S. (2011). *The Sound Barrier: a study of the ideas of Colin Wilson*, Nottingham, Paupers' Press.
- Dostoyevsky, F. (1994). *Notes from underground* (Richard. P, & Larissa. V, Trans.) Everyman's Library (Original work published 1864)
- Gellman, Jerome. "Mysticism", *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2019 Edition Edward N. Zalta (ed), URL< <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2019/entries/mysticism>
- Henderson, Jr. A. (1957). The Outsider: Integrity or Integration? *Southwest Review*, 42(2), viii–165. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43464279>
- James, W. (1936). *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. The Modern Library.
- Lachman, G. (2016). *Beyond the Robot: The Life and Work of Colin Wilson*, Tarcher Perigree.
- Lewin, D. M. (1983) *Colin Wilson and the Sexual Mystique* (Master's Dissertation, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida) <http://fau.digital.flvc.org › datastream › OBJ>
- Marrouchi, M. (2019) Silence in Pinter's plays: Silence and The Dumb Waiter, *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 01(03), 112-125, <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v1i3.62>
- Morrison, I. (2010). Nietzsche's genealogy of morality in the human, all too human series, *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*. 11(4), 657-669, [DOI: 10.1080/0960878032000160271](https://doi.org/10.1080/0960878032000160271)
- Osho. (2004) *Kundalini Yoga: In Search of the Miraculous*. Sterling Publishers.
- Osho. (2011). *From Sex to Superconsciousness*. Osho International Foundation.
- Partridge, C. & Theodore, G. (Eds). (2003). *Mysticisms East and West: Studies in Mystical Experience*. Florida USA: Paternoster Press.
- Ranganathananda, S. (1983). The Science of Consciousness in the Light of Vedanta and Yoga, *NIMHANS Journal*. 01(01), 39-63, https://nimhans.ac.in/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/8.The-Science-of-Consciousness-in-the-Light-of-Vedanta-and-Yoga_39-63.pdf
- Salma, L. M. (2008). *Antiheroes in Modern Literature*. (Master's Thesis, BRAC University, Mohakhali, Dhaka, Bangladesh) <http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/>
- Smith, M. (1930). *An Introduction to the History of Mysticism*. London: The Macmillan & Co.
- Taylor, S. (2012). *The Outsider: From Existentialism to Enlightenment*. O Books.
- Tredell, N. (2015), *Novels to Some Purpose: The Fiction of Colin Wilson*, Nottingham, Paupers' Press.
- Underhill, E. (1955). *Mysticism: A study in the nature and development of man's spiritual consciousness*. New York: Meridian Books.

A Beginning to Existing: Understanding Colin Wilson's "Outsiderism" in 'Ritual In The Dark' - An Eastern Perspective

Vivekananda S. (1960). *The Complete Works*, 8th Edition, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta-14.

Wilson, C. "Interview with Colin Wilson" interview by Allan Morrison. *Philosophy Now*, Jan/Feb 2005, www.philosophynow.com/books/-2005/jan,feb/non-fiction.colinwilson

Wilson, C. (1956). *The Outsider*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Wilson, C. (1957). *Religion and the Rebel*. Houghton Mifflin.

Wilson, C. (1960). *Ritual in the Dark*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Wilson, C. (1965). *Beyond the Outsider: The Philosophy of the Future*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Wilson, C. (1969). *Voyage to a beginning*. London: Cecil & Amelia Woolf.

Wilson, C. (2009). *Super Consciousness: The Quest for the Peak Experience*. Watkins Publishing.

Winsett, W. A. (1968). *Colin Wilson: The Religion of the Outside*. (Master's Thesis, Texas Technological College, Texas, U.S.A) <https://ttu-ir.tdl.org/ttu-ir/>

AUTHOR'S BIO

Sanjay Kumar is a Research Scholar of the Department of English, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Punjab, India. He is interested in philosophical literature, especially literature related to existentialism and mysticism.