Chapter VII

The Ultimate Destination: Seeking New Horizons

What is the fundamental nature of the Mind? This is the basic question asked in general. It appears in various guises throughout Zen literature, from "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?" to "The One hand clapping sound." The question penetrates into the heart of the matter and can only be answered in a flash of intimate intuition in which the truth of Mind is seen to be the substratum of existence.

As to the role of practice, or what the Chinese Zennists call cultivation, Zen is paradoxically the cultivation of non-cultivation, recognizing that we need only remove the illusion of non-enlightenment to become enlightened.

Fig. 16. The lotus flower, this species of the flower is said to have been used during the Flower Sermon. Picture from yeschinatour.com

Zen poetry, despite its brevity, says a lot by leaving a lot unsaid. Zen is said to be born out of the Flower Sermon. The wordless Flower sermon given by Buddha. The story goes like this, Buddha gathered his students as he often did
when he had some truth to share with them. This time, however, he was silent and simply held up a lotus flower, gazing into it. The students were perplexed, and many tried to interpret what their teacher was sharing with them. One disciple, however, silently gazed into the flower before breaking into a broad smile. This disciple was able to grasp the true meaning of the message. The disciple was Mahakasyapa.

So what was the meaning of this message? It cannot be described in words. For if it could be, then Buddha would have simply spoken the meaning to them. This message is not something that can be interpreted. There are no essays that can be written to explain why this one disciple smiled. To put it simply: the mind cannot grasp the truth that Buddha was sharing with his disciples.

Instead, the truth of this message comes from a much deeper source. It comes from the stillness. It is only when you remove the chaos of the mind that you allow the stillness to enter. And when you see the world through a place of stillness, you have no choice but to smile.

As mentioned in Wikipedia, the words of the Buddha addressed to Mahakasyapa was: I possess the true Dharma eye, the marvelous mind of Nirvana, the true form of the formless, the subtle dharma gate that does not rest on words or letters but is a special transmission outside of the scriptures. This I entrust to Mahakasyapa.

Thus, a way within Buddhism developed which concentrated on direct experience rather than on rational creeds or revealed scriptures.
Zen is a method of meditative religion which seeks to enlighten people in the manner that the Mahakasyapa experienced. The silent eloquence of the Buddha during 'the flower sermon', which only Mahakasyapa understood, carries in itself the secret of Zen.

The world of Zen—the unspeakable way is surely mystifying. At the surface, it is yet another way of life, a path to the Ultimate. What is Zen in reality? This is a question to which Masters have seldom given straightforward answers, if any at all. The reason—an explanation is simply impossible. It is like asking someone to give you a bucketful of light in a hall of darkness! Words and language are an ineffectual medium to convey the ineffable. And Zen is nothing if an ineffable experience.

In India, in Kabir's *dohas*, couplets, we find the same helplessness, about being unable to express the inexpressible:

Jo dekhe so kahe nahi, kahe so dekhe nahi,
Sune so samjhave nahi, rasna, drig, sravan kahi,
Had mein batha kathat hai, behad ki gam nahi, behad ki gam hoagi, tab kachu kathna kahi.

The above lines mean: Sitting within limits he speaks, knowing nothing of the limitless, When the limitless is known, then what will be there to speak?

Thus, language has no value in the world of Zen. Words are but signposts to another world. This is reflected in poetry from different times and different climes. When Walt Whitman says in *Leaves of Grass* to, ‘Stop this day and night with me, and you shall possess the origin of all poems;’ this is an invitation to the
world of Zen, where the true taste is perceived by your own experience.

Commenting on the relationship of Zen and poetry, R.H. Blyth states in his preface to *Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics*, “Wherever there is poetical action, a religious aspiration, a heroic thought, a union of the nature within a man and Nature without, there is Zen.”

The Haiku Experience can be denoted as –

Body + Senses + Mind + Spirit + Soul + Sensitivity = Direct Sensation + Perception + Detachment + Exaltation + Communion

Haikus are almost emblematic of the Zen philosophy. They are not didactic or lyrical talk of the mundane and very often they do not seem to make much sense.

Taneda writes:

Just as it is –

It rains, I get wet, I walk

Another one along the same lines:

Begging: I accept

The blazing sun. (33)

Tagore sings in the same tune. For him, Deliverance is not in renunciation. However when Tagore denounces the chanting and telling of beads, in *Gitanjali,*
“...there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust.”

If you fail to see Divinity in ordinary life, it is because you are not ripe, and your vision is not clear.

Taneda has a certain conception of what his haiku should sound like, what kind of mood they should evoke. Certain images recur in his haikus, the dragonfly, the crow, the bad tooth, the persimmon trees, the drizzly autumn rain – all these images, he was obliged to be a part of them, seeing them, being with them, experiencing them, tramping through them rather than merely contemplating them from a comfortably sheltered spot. Taneda’s haikus speak what is beyond words, colours and sounds. The words evoke the indefinable; the sounds evoke silence, and the colours evoke the formless void. Taneda uses all the material things to evoke the spiritual.

In Taneda’s writings, “walking” designates not only the mere fact of journeying on foot, but a kind of religious practice aimed at achieving a higher degree of understanding and acceptance. For all his endless walking, the poem suggests, that goal continues to elude the poet. The wandering journeys of his begging, walking Zen were part of his religious training as a Buddhist monk as well as literary inspiration for his memorable and often painfully moving poems. The works he wrote during this time comprise a record of his quest for spiritual enlightenment.
Taneda went his way, without concern for the future, without worrying about what the world had to offer. One of his friends, Oyama Sumita, described his life this way:

Santoka did not think of yesterday or of tomorrow, but lived each today as it came on him. In Zen every single breath is appreciated to the full. Santoka gave full justice to each breath, each moment, each day, as if it was his last. Each step, each movement, each haiku formed a consummate whole in his life.

The haiku of Taneda is nuanced and subtle, they are deceptively simple. It is rightly said that the small pleasures are sometimes the finest. In all likelihood Taneda will be misunderstood by those who are repelled by his way of life. His life and his work were extreme, excessive. He was a confirmed drunkard but he was often sober. He was a vagabond, who begged at every door, but he was rich in faith, thought, and sensitivity.

Free in style, free in wording, free of everything traditional, just as his life was free of bondage to society and convention, so were Taneda’s haikus. He was haunted by misery, but he may have been the happiest man: joy abided in his innermost self; joy of life and joy of haiku.

So truly says Howard Hibbett about Akutagawa:

Detachment was a key strategy to Akutagawa. As a narrator, he liked to be unseen, impersonal; he cultivated the oblique glance. When he did enter his stories, it was usually in the slight role of the observer or the suave self-effacing compiler. Old tales and legends,
historical settings of the remote Heian period or of the feudal ages which followed—these he used not to turn his elaborate erudition to account, but to enrich and extend the implications of his themes, and to maintain aesthetic distance.

The stories of Akutagawa have a timeless or universal appeal. The stories in his book *Rashomon and Other Stories*, reveal the human psyche, its dark desires, inhibitions, and cravings. Each story has a message conveyed through its characters, they speak of greed, survival, the portrayal of the society in which humans live to make their behaviour become acceptable. The short stories tell about moral principles, dilemmas, desires, egoism, hatred and mass belief in religious aphorisms; they also tells about simplicity and faith. Violence and greed seem to be part of all societies. Just as the destructive characteristics are part of human nature, we can understand that poverty and desperation could motivate a contemporary person to perform other distasteful or despicable actions.

Akutagawa chooses to write about life among the destitute and desperate, as he could very much feel their angst. In Akutagawa’s stories, the subjectivity of perception is often dramatized. His principal subjects—the gap between society and self; the conflict between tradition and modernity, religion and enlightenment—are transformed via various stories.

Michael Hoffman, writes in *Asahi Shimbun*; the newspaper in Japan, about Akutagawa:

Even if we didn't know the author's tragic circumstances, we would sense something of them in his work. Beauty is long ago and far
away, love is more than most of us can handle; the imagination is vibrant but, of course, imaginary, while reality is coarse, and life crushes the life out of us. Reading Akutagawa is not always a happy experience, but it is always a rich one.

Akutagawa’s protagonists feel even more alienated and encumbered by what they see as the impermeable unknown. A postmodern dilemma of sorts, the vast possibilities of knowledge and interpretation make the world only harder to decode. Though trained as pragmatists to match the new wave of Western thought, where multiple points of view signify modernity and cultural sophistication, Akutagawa’s characters spend their days in “spiritual twilight,” locked in the solitary confinement of their thoughts.

Akutagawa’s is the kind of writing that makes your heartbeat race fast as you read. And the kind that stops the heartbeat by some lately introduced complication. The grip on suspense is unyielding. The reader’s interest will be hard to waver for the stories, almost always period pieces, do not lose their contemporary feel. They are timeless and alive. They are like the sublimity of life, which culminates, as one of the stories proclaims, “in the most precious moment of inspiration.”

In Ryunosuke Akutagawa's short stories “In A Grove” and “Rashomon”, an epic conflict of appearance vs. reality is reinforced by the world-renowned movie Rashomon. Although the stories and the movies use different symbolism and have many distinct differences, they both support this theme.
In the movie *Rashomon*, the stories “In A Grove” and “Rashomon”, are combined to form a story within a story, which makes the story even harder to notice in reality. When the movie begins, anyone who has read the book expects that the movie will begin at the Woodcutter's recollection, like that of “In A Grove,” but it actually begins at the gate of Rashomon, which throws the reader off from the start. Then the movie leads into the story of “In A Grove,” but after the Policeman's statement, the reader is expecting to hear the confession of the Old Woman, however this portion is left out of the movie, further confusing the viewer.

In addition to the differences of character confessions, one element that was very odd and different from the short stories was that the movie added a larger perspective to the murder. Although changes were made, the plot of “In A Grove,” remains similar to that of the book, while *Rashomon* changes to a degree almost beyond recognition. For example, in the movie the man decides to steal the clothes from the old woman to survive, however the man in the movie decides whether or not to steal a necklace from an abandoned baby. Even though the situation is different, the eventual rise of evil to facilitate survival arises.

These changes differentiate the movie from the book, yet lead to a common theme. The book and the movie both create inconsistencies and contradictions that develop a theme of appearance vs. reality.

*Rashomon* is a term from psychology that refers to the subjectivity of perception and recall, by which observers are able to produce substantially different but equally compelling accounts of an event. It is named for the 1950s
Japanese film Rashomon directed by Akira Kurosawa, in which a crime witnessed by four individuals is described in four mutually contradictory ways.

In the film Rashomon, the multiple narratives have a purported function of exposing the blind spots inherent in human nature. Nominally, each narrator has an equal say in the story, and the fact that each narrator should offer an account favoring himself is used to demonstrate the subjective egoism of human nature. However, the rhetorical effect of equality and neutrality in Rashomon functions merely as a smokescreen, since the literary, philosophical and legal conventions that Rashomon invokes and presents as neutral operate in unison to discredit and incriminate the central woman, Masago.

In the story “Rashomon”, Akutagawa has tried to question the values of the society he personifies the complexities of human psychology and explores with a Zen taste for paradox, precariously balancing the illusion and reality.

The story “Yam Gruel” may seem a bit silly but it is deeper than it seems. The protagonist Goi, whose greatest ambition was to eat his fill of this aristocratic delicacy wanted to satisfy his craving of yam gruel which was the only objective he seemed to have in his simple, common life. He thought that by satisfying his deep desire for this delicacy he would become happy, but in reality this craving of his was like a longing to fill that emptiness he had within him. This made him miserable and tormented throughout his life. The simpler message conveyed is that having too much of a good thing can take the joy out of the experience.
“The Martyr” is a Christian tale of misunderstanding, deceit, betrayal, lies and death which inevitably leads to the reaffirming of faith amongst those that have sinned.

The story “Kesa and Morito” is told via two different monologues. It’s also fascinating how the story tests the very thin line between love and hate. The story is based on the plot of self-sacrifice as a traditional Japanese cultural ideal and as an act growing out of the complex emotional states of love, guilt, anger and vengeance.

Akutagawa's story “Kesa and Morito” is a dark, personal, disillusioned view of traditional ideals in 1918 Japan. It is obviously necessary to consider the factors of motives and consequences in making moral judgment toward other people’s actions.

“The Dragon” involves a priest who plans a trick against the priests of Nara because they are habitually making fun of his nose. He informs them that a dragon shall ascend to heaven. The story is silly but it also has underlining lessons involving gullibility and belief without question. “The Dragon” makes one wonder about the power of suggestion and belief in wanting the dragon to appear. It is very interesting, and perhaps unintentionally a psychological study of what a group can convince themselves to believe.

Akutagawa through his stories offers a moralistic viewpoint; the stories pose philosophical questions that encourage the reader to ponder the situations presented and reassess his or her own values. What one gets to learn from the stories of Akutagawa is that his writing style is never fixed. He could be infant
like, presenting his imagination of innocence with all that is make-belief; he could write with a passion and fire that become serious and hot tempered; with delicacy, touching on the most concerning issues for his nation, for his people and for himself; and opening his mind to other worlds and stories of hope and resolve.

Akutagawa Ryunosuke’s suicide in July 1927, coming little more than half a year after the beginning of the Showa period, seemed to many at the time to signify the end of an era. A number of writers and critics, for example, interpreted his death as marking the defeat of an intellectual or aestheticized literary practice disengaged from historical and social reality. Indeed, Akutagawa’s expression of “vague anxiety” as the cause of his suicide, coupled with the turbulent and transitional character of the 1920s, transformed his death from a personal, private catastrophe into a general historical allegory, an empty vessel into which various narrative interpretations could be projected. In this way, Akutagawa’s suicide achieved the status of a historical gesture.

Akutagawa had always used a variety of linguistic styles in his early works, but they had more or less obeyed the demands of the short story form. These late writings, however, blurred the boundaries of genre, dissolving into a multiplicity of forms. Rather than representing any simple sense of defeat Akutagawa’s output in the final months of his life was an active exploration of different avenues of literary expression and different modes of representation. In this sense, Akutagawa’s reference to himself toward the end of his life as a poet, a journalist was a historical reduction and dismantling of the category of the novel
into disparate genres. It tells of a talented author who can show flexibility and a
desire to explore different writing styles and approaches.

Akutagawa's concept of the plotless novel can be situated in the broad
context of modernism. The main technique Akutagawa uses in this work is a sort
of mosaic, a series of rapid shifts between seemingly random events, without
reference to any sense of logical or linear development. The material body of the
text—the graphic laceration of the work and the prominent blank spaces between
the scenes represents the complete breakdown of Akutagawa faith in the capacity
of fiction, and narrative in general, as a medium of self-expression.

For Akutagawa, literature organized a consciousness of modern culture
and framed his own relation to the West; literature provided access to a world of
universality. Caught in the marginal spaces between rationality and madness,
between universality and a native cultural image, Akutagawa’s late writings
defined the outlines of an intellectual crisis that would haunt Japanese writers and
thinkers over the coming years. Akutagawa address human dilemmas and
struggles of conscience tinged with gothic darkness, coercing the modern man to
think in terms of getting enlightened.

Following months of brooding and a detailed study of the mechanics of
dying, Akutagawa carefully chose death at home by a drug overdose as the least
disturbing to his family. He left a letter, entitled "A Note to a Certain Old Friend,"
describing his detachment from life, the product of "diseased nerves, lucid as ice."
In death, he anticipated peace and contentment.
For Akutagawa, overcoming the intellect could indicate only a kind of
madness, the shattering of consciousness and the disintegration of language as
well as the world that he had constructed through language. Akutagawa himself
offered no escape from this impasse; the only avenues available to him, he wrote
near the end of "A Fool's Life”, were madness or suicide.

Akutagawa’s work represents the fractured representations of reality.
Man’s condition in the ever shifting, elusive web of life in which he is caught,
longing for escape. This acts as a cathartic process leading humanity to the path of
inner awakening, the ultimate enlightenment.

Aptly said by Akutagawa, “A man sometimes devotes his life to a desire
which he is not sure will ever be fulfilled. Those who laugh at this folly are, after
all, no more than mere spectators of life.”

In the Zen world nothing is profane, all is light. It celebrates ordinary life.
Divinity does not need a special mode to cast itself into. Seeking the extraordinary
is the task of the Ego. When it moves in the world of activity, Divine
consciousness seeks to perform no miracles. You find this reflected in the
writings of modern poets too.

Nissim Ezekiel, for instance, in his short poems writes: You read wisdom
books in the spirit of the comics, and the comics in the spirit of the wisdom books.
He also says: Whatever you pursue, let it not be happiness. May you find it often
resounding in your normal pursuits.
Mystic and poet, Sri Aurobindo expresses in Divine Sense:

Surely I take no more an earthly food
But eat the fruits and plants of Paradise!
For Thou hast changed my senses, habitude
From mortal pleasure to divine surprise.
What change has occurred here?
Evidently not one in the world outside, but in the vision within.

It is like taking off dark glasses from one's consciousness, and finding a beautiful world. Or, as Shakespeare says, “Nothing is good or bad, but thinking makes it so.” In Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, the powers of the mind are extolled. The mind is seen as a magical instrument, one that can “make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven”. Likewise, in Zen whether it is poetry or prose there is no discrimination between the so-called ordinary or extraordinary.

R.H. Blyth explains this relationship between poetry about the ordinary things in life and deep religious experience. He says, “To the religious, all things are poetic – eating, drinking, sleeping, going to relieve oneself—not one more than another. To the poetical, all things are religious, every blade of grass, every stick and stone, the butterfly and the intestinal worms.”

Professor Robert Olson in his book *Existentialism* noted that:
Existentialism requires the active acceptance of our nature. We spend our lives wanting more and more. Once we realize the futility of worldly desire, we try to accept what we have. We turn to philosophy or religion to accept less. We want to detach from our worldly needs — but we cannot do so. It is the human condition to desire. To want. To seek more, even when that “more” is “more of less.” It is a desire to prove something to ourselves, as well as others.

The existentialists … mock the notion of a complete and fully satisfying life. The life of every man, whether he explicitly recognizes it or not, is marked by irreparable losses. Man cannot help aspiring toward the goods of this world, nor can he help aspiring toward the serene detachment from the things of this world which the traditional philosopher sought; but it is not within his power to achieve either of these ambitions, or having achieved them to find therein the satisfaction he had anticipated. (14)

Swami Krishnananda a direct disciple of His Holiness Swami Sivananda, founder of this Institution is a highly respected philosophical writer, especially on metaphysics, psychology and sociology. Swamiji’s books are known the world over as excellent presentations of answers to the daily questions that arise in the day-to-day confrontations of a human being. Swami Krishnananda was the General Secretary of The Divine Life Society from 1961 until 2001. In one of his presentation he preaches:
Thus, the whole pattern of our experience of life in the world seems to be a sort of metaphysical aberration of our own selves, a type of abnormality that has crept into consciousness, and at a special level we should say that the whole world is abnormal in the sense that it cannot know either its own self or the nature of that which it considers as worthwhile and real.

Philosophy is the capacity of a person to investigate into the deepest roots of nature and the in-depth constitution of existence itself. The ultimate cause, which is the determining factor of all effects and phenomena in life, has to be probed into. Philosophy is the search for the ultimate causes of everything, not the tentative causes.

The Wikipedia defines Perennial Philosophy as the eternal philosophy, which is the notion of the universal recurrence of philosophical insight independent of epoch or culture, including universal truths on the nature of reality, humanity or consciousness.

According to Aldous Huxley, The Perennial Philosophy is:

The metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent ground of all being; the thing is
immemorial and universal. Rudiments of the perennial philosophy may be found among the traditional lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions. (vii)

The Perennial Philosophy is expressed most succinctly in the Sanskrit formula, *tat tvam asi*, meaning That thou art; the Atman, or immanent eternal Self, is one with Brahman, the Absolute Principle of all existence; and the last end of every human being, is to discover the fact for himself, to find out who he really is.

Zen is paradoxical because Zen is not a philosophy. Zen is not concerned about what life is, Zen is concerned that whatsoever is should be reflected as it is. One should not choose, because the moment you choose it becomes untrue. Choice brings untruth. Don't choose, remain choiceless – and you remain true.

Swami Rajneesh Osho in book *Zen The Path of Paradox Vol 1* preaches:

Zen brings great health to humanity. It says you are both. Accept both. Don't deny, don't choose; accept both. In that acceptance there is a transcendence, in that very acceptance you are neither a saint nor a devil. That is what a holy man is -- neither good nor bad, or both. And when a person is both, knowingly both, those opposites cancel each other. Just try to understand this; it is one of the most fundamental keys. When you accept both the good and the bad and you don't choose, the bad and good cancel out each other, the
negative and the positive cancel out each other.

Suddenly there is silence, there is neither good nor bad; there is only existence, with no judgement. Zen is non-judgemental, it is non-condemning, it is non-evaluating. It gives you utter freedom to be. (67)

Zen is one of the purest spiritual experiences, uncontaminated by any thought, any theology, any speculation. It is non-argumentative, it simply is. So truly quoted by Swami Rajneesh Osho in his book, Walking in Zen, Sitting in Zen.

Taneda and Akutagawa were both existential in nature, and it can be conclusively said that their existentialism were of two totally different nature. Taneda was in awe of nature and liked being in nature. His Zen haikus symbolize nature in its vibrant, dull, joyful, gloomy and every aspect of it. Taneda haiku sing about nature, whereas the existentialism of Akutagawa is of the dark, gloomy category. His short stories always had only male protagonists, though he wrote about spiritualism and Buddhist philosophy in some of his works. But mostly, Akutagawa’s work epitomized despair, human frailties, and helplessness. Nature was never a part of his writings though he wrote about the weakness and desires of human nature in plenty.

Ivan Soll in his book World Book Multimedia Encyclopedia says about existentialists:

The existentialists conclude that human choice is subjective, because individuals finally must make their own choices without help from such external standards as laws, ethical
rules, or traditions. Because individuals make their own choices, they are free; but because they freely choose, they are completely responsible for their choices. The existentialists emphasize that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Furthermore, since individuals are forced to choose for themselves, they have their freedom — and therefore their responsibility — thrust upon them. They are “condemned to be free.”

For existentialism, responsibility is the dark side of freedom. When individuals realize that they are completely responsible for their decisions, actions, and beliefs, they are overcome by anxiety. They try to escape from this anxiety by ignoring or denying their freedom and their responsibility. But because this amounts to ignoring or denying their actual situation, they succeed only in deceiving themselves. The existentialists criticize this flight from freedom and responsibility into self-deception. They insist that individuals must accept full responsibility for their behavior, no matter how difficult. If an individual is to live meaningfully and authentically, he or she must become fully aware of the true character of the human situation and bravely accept it.

*Gesshin Myoko Prabhasa* Dharma says, “Zen means to realize yourself as a liberated being, so you can be happy and help others.” The obvious question one would ask is, “So, what is our reality really?” It is always a very limited view of what we are even actually experiencing around us and that, which we are aware
of, is only our own minute impression of the world itself. Our views are not actually true in the absolute sense of the world, but they are just our subjective impressions, based on an individual experience of what we perceive.

Zen says that we do not really experience existence, because we are too busy experiencing our own subjective, version of existence. In Zen we follow the Buddha way so we can realize the Buddha nature within ourselves. All Buddhist practices stem from the fact that nobody is born without Buddha nature. That is our common ground: in all of us lives the notion, the wisdom, that what we seek is already there, because it is not sufficient to know that Buddha nature is there, we have to practice to live Buddha nature. We have to practice to manifest Buddha nature, give it form in our lives.

The Buddha nature in Taneda and Akutagawa made them be in the world itself, facing hardships, personal anguish, social discriminations, and rise above it to introspect bringing forth spiritual enlightenment for themselves and to the world.

The Buddhist prayer: *Buddham Sharanam Gacchami*, relevantly shows the way of liberation. When we take refuge in the Buddha, we appreciate the qualities of Buddhahood and we take refuge in wisdom, in selfless, all pervading love and compassion, in being free from fear.

No matter how far people may have gone astray in their acts from Buddhahood, everybody still carries the seed of Buddhahood. That is our birthright. So this possibility of realizing peace and harmony is present in each one of us.
We can do lots of good things in a social, political or economical way, but peace in the world cannot be a fact unless we have realized peace within ourselves. The Buddha way is a way to transform hate and war into love and peace.

Taneda and Akutagawa strived to find peace within them and in their development found alternatives to find peace during their life time and also at the time of death, doing what they loved and dying in the way they wanted.

We always think that our anger, ignorance and greed are being caused by the so called outside world, by the other. Thus we seek liberation from our suffering in the outside world, in the other, if needed then resorting to violence. In short, we think liberation is possible only if some conditions are fulfilled.

The Buddha saw that liberation and being happy is not only dependent on external facts. He found out that it is possible to cope with unpleasant things without suffering, without having to react to it with fighting or fleeing.

Taneda understood this philosophy very well and he accepted whatever came his way, and with all his desires and vices, he could still remain detached from the materialistic world to create his illuminating Zen haikus. Akutagawa on the other hand, was comfortable with his personal angst and nurtured an inner self which was so hurt, that it came out clearly in all his writings. He sought this path to get illumined and to come to terms with his Buddha nature.

In Zen we consider ignorance or confusion as the main root of suffering. Therefore in Zen practice the development of wisdom and compassion is stressed.
Wisdom and compassion are like the two wings of a bird: you need both to fly.

Discontentment and violence do not disappear by taking away the momentary objects of our discontentment and violence. Fear does not dissolve if we take away that which we fear.

Any kind of attempt at understanding the problem of understanding our inner self is like a defeat. This was the condition in which Arjuna found himself—a great warrior, an indomitable, supreme commander in the army whom nobody could face. The Mahabharata, the sacred Sanskrit epic of ancient India, affirms about Arjuna that he could conquer the gods, but at the time of the final battle he was faced with his own self.

We can conquer the whole world, but when it comes to our own self, we will find that we are our own greatest enemy and an incomprehensible opponent of our own self. The term that Zen uses to express the idea of freedom is *jiyu* and it consists of two characters; *ji* meaning self on its own, while *yu* means out of.

When they are used together as a compound, the phrase as a whole designates an action arising **out of self on its own**. This action then carries a sense of *spontaneity*, much like the spontaneous creative act of living nature.

It does not mean that the Zen person has eliminated the demand of instincts or desires. If they are eliminated, the Zen person would turn into a living corpse. Such a person can perform no action, let alone a free action. Obviously then, the Zen person does not eliminate them, but rather transforms them into non-defilements, into a higher spiritual energy.
Taneda did it in his own way, for him his vice, his *sake* was his *koan* and out of his *sake* sprinkled out innumerable Zen haikus to illuminate everyone. Akutagawa also had his dark side and out of this was born stories like a window into his deep, grotesque inner self. This was his form of getting illumined.

To seek new horizons and to reach the ultimate destination one has to learn the art of thinking in a holistic manner. That is the first thing that one has to do. Man has to know how to think in a manner which is complete, not fractional. Holistic thinking is thinking of everything at the same time.

The art of thinking in a holistic manner means thinking in terms of the spirit of the cosmos. That is holistic thinking, which includes every aspect of life, because spirit includes all things. The total comprehensiveness of the structure of existence is the object of this holistic thinking.

All endeavours aim at the common ideal of the perpetual abolition of sorrow and the experience of unending bliss. Bliss is only in the Infinite and sorrow is only in the finite. There is no bliss in the finite, and no sorrow in the Infinite. Therefore, the attainment of the Infinite Life is the supreme purpose of finite life.

*Moksha* is the highest exaltation of the self in its pristine nature of supreme perfection. To realize the Absolute, knowledge and meditation are needed. It is the knowledge of eternal existence, the awareness of the essential nature of Pure Being. It is the Freedom attained by knowing that we are always free. Knowledge is not merely the cause for freedom it is itself freedom. Moksha
consists in *Jnana*, Knowledge and is not the effect or product of Jnana. Jnana is Existence itself, and hence it cannot be a means to attain knowledge of Existence, which is *Moksha* itself. So how can a thing attain itself?

Taneda and Santoka with the knowledge they imparted to the world with their elevating and intangible work, knew and understood that this knowledge was their *Moksha*. It is said that, because the individual is inseparable from its environment, the liberated soul has to work for the redemption of the other unliberated souls, if its own salvation is to be complete.

So indubitably said of the works of Taneda and Akutagawa! They were inseparable from their work; their writing was a part of them, their lives. They were not separate from their work, their environment. Through their work they sought to liberate themselves and in the process worked for the redemption of the other unliberated souls, and ultimately get salvation.

**Absolute Liberation is Transcendent Experience,** beyond conception and expression, free from the differentiations of knower, knowledge and known. It is the conscious experience of absolute emptiness, which is the great reality.

When man experiences peace beyond thought, words or description which is unanticipated, spontaneous, he can ultimately say that “All is one, and one is all”. This is what Zen calls the experience of Nirvana, or Enlightenment.

What we need to do is put aside all the conditioning that have entangled humans since ages. This will enable us to perceive the inner content of the great enlightenment that has been given to us since ancient times.
Zen is of vital relevance to the Modern Age. With so much of stress around, not knowing the exhaustive cause of it, one can hardly pin point that one particular thing which is missing in life. “The heart needs more room to breathe!” said simply by a fellow named Mike, in the reports of William C. McFadden.

What one seeks, which is the new horizon and what would be the ultimate destination – the answer for this is with the restless heart, which has been with man for a long time. The philosopher seeks some absolute; the mortal man yearns for immortality; the temporal man seeks to be grounded in the eternal; and the finite man longs for the infinite.

The restless heart can be pacified by the enigmas of Zen. What Zen does is just like the wordless Lotus Sutra, it does not try to communicate in words, but evoke feelings which help in broadening one’s mental horizon, this in turn will make room for the heart to breathe.

Santoka Taneda through his Haikus and Akutagawa Ryunosuke through his short stories have tried to achieve enlightenment not only for them, but in the process have shown the path to humanity. Their lives represent their soul filled search for something intangible, beyond their reach and against the thought process of the world. They have tried to show the way of peace through their creative process. The ultimate destination of man is the realization and acceptance of the self.