Realisation of one’s self by oneself is the ultimate goal of Buddhism. This is expressed succinctly in one of the most famous of Buddhist scriptures, the “Mahaparinibbana Sutta.” In his last farewell address to Ananda, his most favourite disciple, the Buddha says:

O Ananda, take the self as a lamp; take the self as refuge. Betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Look not for refuge to anyone besides yourselves. Work out your own salvation with diligence. (Humphreys, *Buddhism* 93)

Commenting on this passage, Humphreys observes that “No louder clarion call to self-reliance has ever been given than is contained in these few words” (93). Here the Buddha calls upon his disciples of all time to rely upon themselves, and not upon any external help for their enlightenment. The Buddhist enlightenment embraces an insight into the nature of the seeker’s self. Kaiteu Nukariya, who was a professor at the So-To-Shu Buddhist college in Tokyo speaks about the Buddhist enlightenment as follows:

It is the divine light, the inner heaven, the key to all moral treasures, the source of all influence and power, the seat of
kindness, justice, sympathy, impartial love, humanity and mercy, the measure of all things. (qtd. in Suzuki 10)

The Buddhist idea of liberation is different from the Christian concept of salvation. In the words of Octavio Paz,

[The Buddhist] Liberation is not the salvation in the Christian sense. There is no person or soul to be saved: the liberated is liberated from the illusion of the ego, his being becomes Being. Liberation is not a rebirth in the kingdom of the heavens, but rather a dismantling of the double fatality that ties us to this world and its meaningless turning: moksha liberates us from the burden of karma that makes the wheel of samsara turn. (174-175)

The Buddhist enlightenment is a highly subjective experience; it does not come through another person; it comes through one’s own observation, one’s own understanding of one’s self. The Light of Asia says: “Within yourselves deliverance must be sought” (Arnold 208). According to Ananda Coomaraswamy, Walt Whitman is a Buddhist when he remarks that “Not I, not anyone else can travel that road for you. you must travel for yourself” (ix).

It is said that the Buddha wondered, when he had attained enlightenment, how he could teach a wisdom so difficult to grasp (Campbell 274). It indicates that Buddhism as a philosophy and religion cannot be taught. “Buddha do but point the way,” says
Humphreys (*Buddhism* 109). What are taught in Buddhism, according to Campbell, are simply the ways that lead to the Bodhi tree; and to know these things is not enough. Campbell continues:

To see the tree is not enough. Even to go and sit beneath the tree is not enough. Each has to find and sit beneath the tree himself, and then, in solitary thought, begin the passage into and to himself, who is nowhere at all. (274)

The Buddhist “Nirvana” or enlightenment is an experience that comes from within; in short, it is nothing but self-unfoldment. As is written in the “Bodhisattva Sila Sutra,” “Our essence of Mind is intrinsically pure, and if we know our mind and realise what our nature is, all of us would attain Buddhahood” (Humphreys, *The Middle Way* 121). To the Buddhists, the Buddha is a symbol of self-realisation, and he dwells within our minds. Says Humphreys:

Within our mind there is a Buddha, and that Buddha within is the real Buddha. If Buddha is not to be sought within our mind, where shall we find the real Buddha? Doubt not that a Buddha is within your mind, apart from which nothing can exist. (*The Wisdom of Buddhism* 38)

Humphreys puts forward some pre-requisites for self-realisation:

Avert thy face from world deceptions; mistrust thy senses they are false. But within thy body, the shrine of thy
sensations, seek in the impersonal for the ‘Eternal Man’ and having sought him out, look inward; thou art Buddha. (38)

In other words, when we purify our heart by ethical training and focus the total energy of our consciousness on the deepest in us, we awaken the inherent divine possibilities, and suddenly a new experience occurs with clarity of insight and freedom of joy. And that is self-realisation.

In Buddhism self-realisation means broadening of one’s knowledge of oneself and the expansion of one’s consciousness which ultimately transforms the individual’s life and outlook. Self-knowledge, in the wider sense, is the real, final and absolute knowledge which teaches that the universal self is one’s real self. Says Edmond Holmes:

[T]o know this truth, not as a theory, not as a conclusion, not as a poetic idea, not as a sudden revelation, but as the central fact of one’s own inmost life — to know this truth in the most ultimate sense of the word ‘know’ by living it, by being it — is the final end of all spiritual effort. The expansion of the self carries with it the expansion of consciousness; and when consciousness has become all-embracing, the fetter of ignorance has been finally broken and the delusion of self is dead. (Humphreys, Buddhism 122)

The expansion of consciousness becomes possible only through the destruction of ego. Then one enters into communion with the whole
universe, and becomes one with it. This is the moment of self-realisation. Rhys Davids points out that Emerson expressed the glory of self-realisation and its bliss as follows:

The day of days, the great day of the feast of life, is that in which the inward eye opens to the unity in things, to the omnipresence of law. If truth comes to our minds, we suddenly expand to its dimension, as we grow to worlds.

(105)

Now coming to Frost, most of his admirers regarded him primarily as a poet of insight and self-realisation. In his famous tribute to Frost, John F. Kennedy, the former American President and an admirer of the poet, describes him as “a man whose contribution was not to our size but to our spirit, not to our political beliefs but to our insight; not to our self-esteem, but to our self comprehension” (qtd. in Thompson, The Later Years 347). Frost is reported to have said that “A good poet must have an ‘insight’ into things – little bits of psychological understanding of mind” (qtd. in Smythe 63). He often exhorted his fellow poets to seek and find out this “insight” into things in their own way. “Go it your own way. you will be better for it,” he wrote in a letter (Smythe 28). Again, in a letter to Untermeyer Frost advises his friend: “You must take care of yourself spiritually” (Letters of Frost 348). Untermeyer comments that “[Frost] still believes that the only way to be saved is to save yourself” (378).
Therefore, it is no wonder that self-realisation becomes one of the major themes in Frost's poetry. In Frost the theme of self-realisation is linked with the poet's concept of spiritual salvation. Daniel Smythe points out that "Several times Mr. Frost mentioned the 'spiritual realms of poetry'." "It was his contention," continues the critic, "that he had more to do with that [spiritual realm] than with the material end of it" (74). Lawrance Thompson also reports that "When most confiding, [Frost] admitted that the primary goal of his experience — poetic and non-poetic — was the quest for psychological and spiritual salvation" (The Early Years xxii—xxiii). But Frost's concept of spiritual salvation was not associated with any orthodox religion or any philosophical school; his was an original and independent concept based on his own experience and self-realisation. Louis Mertins observes that "To Frost, religion was not a matter of some creed 'made to order,' but a vast, elemental possession of the human soul" (98). Manorama Trikha speaks about Frost's independent thinking as follows:

An intense wish to be himself caused in him a fear of belonging to any geographical boundaries or academic and philosophical school. It created in him a distress of any systematised line of thought except the revelations from his own mind and heart. (Poetry of Clarifications 54)
The man who influenced Frost in matters of philosophy and religion was none other than William James, and it was from James himself that Frost obtained the idea of self-realisation. Says Elaine Barry:

There were many things about James's philosophy that appealed to Frost. Frost was agnostic enough to need a philosophy that would justify itself in purely human terms and yet would satisfy the spiritual and intuitive in him; James's emphasis on self-realisation did that. *(Robert Frost 105)*

According to Robert M. Rechnitz, “Frost, no less demanding than Socrates, asks man to know himself” (144). The poet practised what he preached. Once he said, “I have to report having found the philosopher I was on the hunt for in myself” *(qtd. in Thompson, The Early Years 250)*. Ronald Bieganowski rightly observed that “the poet allows the enduring natural world to reveal himself to himself” (45), and in the same essay the critic states that to Frost “Every poem is a voyage of discovery” (144). Frost himself remarked that poetry is a “self discovery and discovery of self” *(qtd. in Stanlis 227)*. Again, according to the poet, “The poem itself might be the quiver of the transition from belief to realisation” *(qtd. in Thompson, The Early Years 293)*. This realisation is most probably that of spiritual self. The following observation of Trikha supports this argument:
Frost’s belief reveals the growth of the poet, in various stages, as an independent one-self, from one-self to social-self, from social-self to artistic-self, from artistic-self to spiritual self. (57)

Frost’s short poem, “The Pasture,” justifies his own remark that poetry is a “self discovery and discovery of self.” Ronald Bieganowski observes that the poem “conveys the movement toward an inner life” (31). The critic adds that the poet invites the readers repeatedly to “come too” as a “spiritual companion” (31). It is significant to note that Frost used “The Pasture” as introductory to his collected editions and to the “Complete Poems” (1949). One can, therefore, assume that Frost demands his readers to evaluate his poems as a spiritual voyage into the realm of self.

In his detailed study of “The Pasture,” Bieganowski points out that the poem “directs our attention to the moral dimensions of Frost’s poetry, to his religious consciousness” (31). Let us examine first the moral dimensions of Frost’s poetry as reflected in “The Pasture,” before coming to the poet’s religious consciousness. At the outset of the poem, the poet declares his intention to go out to clean the pasture spring. He will stop for a moment to rake the leaves away, and wait to watch the water clear. The raking of the leaves, it seems, is a precondition for seeing the “water clear”. These are most probably dead leaves, and to a Buddhist, they represent the transitoriness of life. The real truth lies
hidden below it. More than that, the decayed leaves suggest the
defilement of life which hide and obstruct the source of truth and
wisdom. The pasture, now covered with the fallen leaves, (where the
weeds also grow in abundance) then becomes the poet’s mind tainted
with evil thoughts and passions. The spring of “water clear” is beneath
the decayed leaves. It will rush out spontaneously from its inner depths,
once the leaves which cover it are swept away. Here the message is clear:
a spiritual awakening should be preceded by a moral purification of
mind. This is indeed a Buddhist idea of spiritual salvation.
Radhakrishnan observes in his introduction to The Dhammapada,

When we purify our heart by ethical training, when we focus
the total energy of our consciousness on the deepest in us,
we awaken the inherent divine possibilities, and suddenly a
new experience occurs with clarity of insight and freedom of
joy. (43)

Thus, according to the Buddhists, once the veils and fetters of
man’s ego-centric passions are removed, his mind becomes pure and
innocent, and attains eternal peace and tranquility, which is otherwise
called Nirvana or Enlightenment – the Buddhist salvation. The Buddhist
“Nirvana,” says Radhakrishnan, “means the blowing out of all passions,
reunion with the supreme spirit (‘brahma-nirvana). He adds: “It does
not mean complete extinction or annihilation, but the extinction of the
fire of passions and the bliss of union with the whole” (*The Dhammapada* 46-47).

Frank Lentricchia points out that the poem, “The Pasture,” deals with “a type of salvation,” and it would be interesting to compare this “a type of salvation” with the Buddhist idea of salvation. Lentricchia elaborates his argument:

And salvation means, in Frost’s world, that particular moment when “mature,” self-conscious, and complex awareness is suppressed, and when single, naïve vision—a return to the Edenic innocence of unself-consciousness within a physically soothing pastoral scene—is encouraged. In the redemptive moment—and in Frost it is often not much more than a moment—we transcend our isolation and the perplexities of our human condition, as we are released from the “siege of hateful contraries”. (25)

To put it briefly, in Frost’s world, salvation is a state of innocence or purity of mind when self-consciousness will be submerged; and in that blissful state of mind men soar above all the conflicts and enjoy perfect peace and harmony. The Buddhist idea of salvation, as we have already seen, also demands the subjugation of man’s self-consciousness, or the extinction of ego, through an ethical training, which will bring about a new experience of oneness and tranquility.
In his discussion of Frost’s “religious consciousness” Ronald Bieganowski maintains that “for such a questioning mind as that of Frost the term ‘religious consciousness’ is to be understood in a comprehensive way.” He continues:

[Frost’s] religious sense can be defined according to William James, whose thinking Frost admired. For James, personal religion, not institutional, means “the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their absolute solitude.” (32)

Thus, like William James, Frost also seems to have thought that solitude is essential for one’s religious experience. In “The Vantage Point,” for example, the poet removes himself from his fellow men, and goes apart to meditate on the large question of life and death. Lying on his back, the poet views a landscape as serene and passive as a painting. The homes of the living and the graves of the dead weld and merge; life and death thus become two aspects of the same reality. It is a moment of realisation for the poet, and it comes to him in his solitude. In “The Pasture” too it is in solitude that the poet starts his journey—most probably a spiritual journey in search of eternal truth and wisdom. The truth, which an individual searches for, is highly subjective, and therefore, it has to be realised by the individual alone. In other words, direct experience of the reality is the most important thing, and that is why, in “The pasture” the poet invites his readers to come and see for
themselves. The Buddhists can find that this attitude of Frost is similar to theirs. “The [Buddhist] doctrine,” says Paul Carus, “is not based upon hearsay, it means ‘come and see’” (52).

In his solitude the poet does not worship nature, but meditates upon himself. However, nature is a source from which the poet derives a “blessed mood.” His solitary meditations in the lap of nature give him an insight into himself. In that moment of self-revelation, the poet realises the harmony of life around him. The poet’s discovery of the spring of “water clear” can be seen as the discovery of his self, the purest of the pure thing. One remembers in this context what Frank Lentricchia observes about “A Brook in the City”:

In “A Brook in the City” what Frost saw reflected in the water was not simply the wreckage of the pastoral ideal but also, as I understand the meaning of his personification, a reflection of the open and unself-conscious self (which “forgot to go in fear”) now repressed and buried; .... (60-61)

One can assume that similar is the experience of the poet in this poem too. It does not escape the eyes of the readers that as soon as the poet sees the spring of “water clear,” his mind overflows with love and compassion even for the calf and its mother. “The little cow” is standing by its mother. “It’s so young.” “It totters when she licks it with her tongue” (1). Here is a marvellous picture of motherliness. It brings to a Buddhist’s mind a hymn of love in Sutta Nipata in which a mother’s love...
for her child is cited as the perfect model of self-less and all-embracing love. The verse is as follows:

E'en as a mother watcheth o'er her child,
Her only child, as long as life doth last
So let us, for all creatures, great and small,
Develop such a boundless heart and mind
Ay, let us practise love for all the world,
Upward and downward, yonder, thence,
Uncramped, free from ill-will and enmity. (Davids 219)

The poet's overwhelming love for the calf and its mother is evident from the diction he employs in portraying them. He becomes capable of such boundless love, as he succeeds in breaking himself free from the passions that produce disparity and disharmony. Love seems to permeate the whole atmosphere - love of the poet for the cow and its calf, and also love of the cow for its calf. There is again peace and tranquility in the atmosphere. Altogether, the poem reads like a prayer not to any God, of course; but to oneself. Stanley Burnshaw rightly observes that "Frost never worshipped nature, yet some of his finest poems are prayers" (298). Lawrance Thompson also expresses a similar view about Frost's poems. He points out that Frost would agree with Emerson who defines prayer thus: "Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul." Thompson adds that "Frost would be
embarrassed to speak out that frankly in an open meeting; but his poems obliquely imply his own assent to the notion" (Robert Frost 41).

At this point it would be appropriate to analyse the Buddhist concept of prayer or meditation. Originally in Buddhism, Dhyana or meditation was one of its three branches of discipline: ‘sila’ (moral precepts), ‘Dhyana’ (contemplation), and ‘Pranja’ (wisdom). The word ‘Dhyana’ comes from the root ‘dhi,’ meaning ‘to perceive,’ ‘to reflect upon,’ ‘to fix the mind upon’; while ‘dhi’ etymologically may have some connection with ‘dha’, ‘to hold’, ‘to keep’, ‘to maintain’. ‘Dhyana’ thus means to hold one’s thoughts collected, not to let thought wander away from its legitimate path. That is, it means to have the mind concentrated on a single subject of thought (Suzuki 100-101).

One can find a parallel between the Buddhist ‘Dhyana’ and Frost’s religious consciousness. Ronald Bieganowski speaks about Frost’s religious consciousness as follows:

Frost’s poems reveal a religious consciousness as the poet repeatedly expresses himself as one who ties together his experiences. (The meaning of religion stems from the Latin ‘religare,’ ‘to bind,’ ‘to tie’). He ties his life to the people and places around him; he attaches himself to the natural world. Paradoxically, in his bonds with the earth he finds endless inspiration for his spirit. (33)
Thus, both Frost's religious consciousness and the Buddhist 'Dhyana' aim at one thing in common – the unity and harmony of life and its experiences.

A discussion on Frost's religious consciousness will not be complete without a close examination of his views on religion. "Now religion always seems to me," says Frost "to come round to something beyond wisdom." He adds: "It is a straining of the spirit toward a wisdom beyond wisdom" (33). This "wisdom beyond wisdom" can be interpreted as self-knowledge which is beyond the reach of reason and intelligence. "Wisdom lies beyond," says Christmas Humphreys, "and the beyond lies within" (The Buddhist Way 153). According to Zen Buddhism, the self-knowledge is "knowledge which is not intellectual, which is non — alienated" and which "is full of experience in which knower and known become one" (Erich Fromm 76). Frost would perhaps agree with the view of the Zen Buddhists that religious experience is a supersensory one, and that it is an experience of the Self which blends all the opposites in life, both within and without. Such an experience awakens a feeling of oneness and harmony. In "The Pasture" Frost seems to have felt in his inner self a sense of synthesis with everything around him. His love and compassion for the cow and its calf illustrates it. This becomes possible for the poet as he realises within him "the wisdom beyond wisdom."
One feels that the poet reaches this height of “wisdom beyond wisdom” by descending into his self and subjecting it to rigorous ethical training: he discovers the spring of “water clear” by raking the dead and decayed leaves away. Thus in “The Pasture” Frost’s moral and religious consciousness blend together, the former complementing the latter. This is indeed a Buddhist idea. Says Radhakrishnan: “It is the substance of the highest life when ignorance and craving become extinct and insight and holiness take their place” (The Dhammapada 22).

“Going for water” is also a poem about spiritual journey in search of self. Here the quest is taken at night, and the dark woods are entered. The dark woods in this poem, however, are bathed in the spirit of freedom. The brook here is sought and approached as a sacred object of quest. The brooks belong personally to Frost. According to Frank Lentricchia, “by bathing [the woods] in his consciousness [Frost] has credited them as metaphors of self” (46). Lentricchia adds:

[A]s a cherished object of his consciousness the brook encourages a flowing of self, as it were, as it signals a desire for openness – a thrust of self toward the experience of integration with itself and others – a desire for the peace that follows upon the resolution of interior and exterior tensions. (45)

The discovery of the brook in this poem bears some resemblance to the discovery of the spring of “water clear” in “The Pasture”; in both the
poems this discovery is symbolic of the discovery of self. Further, in both the poems the physical journey beside the woods parallels a spiritual journey to the realm of self where freedom and psychic wholeness are regained.

"For Once, Then, Something," which Jean Gould describes as "one of [Frost's] profound poetic statements" (210), can also be read as a poem of self-realisation. Mario L. D'Avanzo rightly remarked that "While 'Birches' aspires upward, 'For Once, Then, Something' gazes downward to a mysterious essence" (89). The mysterious essence can be most probably the poet's own self, because the well, the central symbol in the poem is, according to Mario L. D'Avanzo, the mirror of man's mind (89). The well thus becomes a mirror into which the beholder, perhaps the poet himself, looks to gain a visionary insight of his own self.

This poem tells us an unusual experience of the poet. The poet was often taunted and ridiculed by people for kneeling on the boundary of the village well on the wrong side. The well was darkened, and he could see only up to the surface of water at the bottom of the well. He could only see a reflection of his own face, of his own "God-like image." However, one day as he looked into the well with his chin resting on the boundary of the well, his vision could pierce through the water surface, and he saw in the depths of the well something white. He was not sure what it was. He could see it only for a moment, and then it disappeared.
He could see it no more, for a ripple was formed in the water, probably by the falling of a drop of water from the ferns growing overhead. Since then he always wondered what that whiteness was. Was it a vision of truth he had, or it merely a piece of stone? One can only say, as Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant points out, that “Robert Frost glimpses something that brings his mature philosophic mind into play” (227).

The question, “What was that whiteness? Truth? A pebble of quartz?” (225), perplexes not only the poet, but the readers as well. A Buddhist study of the poem can perhaps throw light on the mystical experience of the poet. The only events of importance to the Buddhists are those which occur in the mind as illustrated by a passage in the “Sutra of Weilang”. Here it is:

It happened that one day, when a pennant was blown about by the wind, two Bhikkus [sic] entered into a dispute as to what was in motion, the wind or the pennant. As they could not settle their difference I submitted to them that it was neither, and that what actually moved was their mind (Humphreys, The Middle Way 122).

Just as the author of the above “sutra” pointed out to the “Bhikhus” that it was neither the wind nor the pennant that moved but their own mind, what the poet saw in the well, it seems, was neither whiteness, nor the “pebble of quarszt,” but a vision of his own self. Robert W. French’s analysis of the poem endorses this argument. He says:
Still, it is only human to seek revelation. In “For, once, Then, Something” Frost returns to the quest, and the poem teases us with the suggestion of discovery. The poet describes his practice of looking into wells, but all he ever sees is his own reflection, “Me myself in the summer heaven God like....” He finds no God, no ultimate revelation, nothing that is not himself; his search ends where it began. (160)

Frost’s mystical experience seems to have much in common with “Satori” in Zen Buddhism. According to Zen Buddhists, “Satori” is an experience which cannot be turned into a concept. All that we can do in Zen in the way of instruction is to indicate or to suggest, or to show the way so that one’s attention may be directed toward the goal. As to attaining the goal and taking hold of the thing itself, this must be done by one’s own hands, for nobody else can do it for one. As regards the indication, it lies every where. When a man’s mind is matured for “Satori,” it tumbles over one every where. An inarticulate sound, an unintelligible remark, a blooming flower, or a trivial incident such as tumbling is the condition or occasion that will open his mind to “Satori.” Apparently an insignificant event produces an effect which in importance is altogether out of proportion. The light touch of an igniting wire, and an explosion that follows, will shake the very foundation of the earth. All the causes and all the conditions of “Satori” are in the mind; they are merely waiting for the maturing. When the mind is ready, for some reason or other, a bird flies, or a bell rings and one at once returns to
one’s original home; that is, one discovers one’s real self. From the very beginning nothing is kept from one; all that one wished to see is there all the time before one; it was only oneself that closed the eye to the fact (Suzuki 92).

Victor E. Reichert reports that Frost had some such momentary revelations in his life. Here is an extract of the critic’s conversation with the poet:

“Did you ever have a revelation?” Robert asked once in walking about Bread Loaf.

“What about you?” I countered.

.................................

Then at last Frost said, “I’ve had insights that have come to me when I was riding high. Call them “nature favors.” An owl that banked as it turned its flight made me feel as if I’d been “spoken to — favored”. (424)

The two short poems — “Dust of Snow” and “A Passing Glimpse” — illustrate some of Frost’s momentary revelations brought about by seemingly silly incidents. In “Dust of Snow” the poet tells us how a crow, by shaking down on him the dust of snow from a hemlock tree, gave his heart a change of mood, and made some part of a day happy and cheerful. “A Passing Glimpse” is also about the poet’s sudden
revelation. He sees some flowers from a passing car. They disappear from his eyes before he could identify them properly. Though the poet is familiar with various kinds of flowers, the flowers he saw from a passing car are different from all other earthly flowers. They defy description. The poet concludes that such revelations are heavenly, and that they are beyond one's scientific observation and analysis: “Heaven gives its glimpses only to those / Not in a position to look close” (248).

Thinking in terms of “Satori,” one feels that Frost’s mind was matured, at least for a moment, to have a glimpse into his inner self. The flight of the bird, the crow shaking down the dust of snow and the flowers that the poet saw from the passing car – these are all, as the Zen Buddhists maintain, only certain conditions or occasions that unfolded his self. In “For Once, Then, Something” the poet’s looking into the well, though it is a trivial incident, leads him to self-realisation. Lawrance Thompson seems to support this view when he remarks:

One may find in [Frost’s] poetry several metaphysical records of moments in the poet’s life when mood and circumstance have conspired to give him those wished — for but momentary glimpses. Out of such moments grew such poems as “For Once, Then, Something,” “A Soldier,” “The Trial by Existence,” and “Sitting by a Bush in Broad Sunlight.” (Fire and Ice 202-203)
In the beginning of the poem “For Once, Then, Something” the poet admits that he could never see deeper down in the well, as he was kneeling at the well-curb “always wrong to the light.” One thing more obstructed his vision: he was “looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.” According to the Buddhists, one has to illuminate one’s own mind before one discovers one’s self. “I am the self,” says Humphreys, “in which the self is drowned” (The Middle Way 53). Further, as Radhakrishnan points out the self can be rescued by self alone. Self is the light; self is the path; and self is the goal. That is why, the Buddha asks us to have the self as our light (‘attadipa’) and the self as our refuge (‘attasarava’) (Radhakrishnan, The Dhammapada 45). There is nothing in the poem to suggest that the poet deliberately made an attempt to discover his self lying hidden in the bottom of his mind. However, in a flash he got a glimpse into his inner self, and “lost it” soon. He says:

Water came to rebuke the too clear water.
One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple
Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom
Blurred it, blotted it out. (225)

Now one question perplexes the readers: why did the poet fail to see the vision in the beginning, and why did the vision disappear so soon? A Buddhist reading of the poem can perhaps give a convincing answer to this intriguing question. Initially, as the poet himself says, it was “a wreath of fern and cloud puffs” which obstructed his vision; and later, it
was a drop of water that fell from a fern that spoilt the poet’s vision. In the Buddhist view, “a wreath of fern and cloud puffs” symbolise the poet’s ego-centric passions which conceal his vision of self. Mind, in Buddhist psychology, is “an aggregate of ‘skandhas,’ a complex of sensations, ideas, thoughts, emotions and volitions” (Humphreys, Buddhism 86-87). Hume, a modern psychologist, agrees with this Buddhist concept of mind when he writes: “What we call mind is nothing but a heap of perceptions united together by certain relations” (Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy 394). It is indeed a Herculean task to keep these diverse passions and perceptions in balance and under control, but the Buddhists believe that those who succeed in it can feel within them the power and glory of their self, and thus discover the source of joy. Says The Dhammapada: “Invisible and subtle is the mind, and it flies after fancies wherever it likes; but the wise man guard well his mind, for a mind well guarded is a source of great joy” (Mascaro 40).

In his introduction to The Dhammapada, Radhakrishnan also observes: “When we deny the clamour of emotions, stay the stream of the things, silence the appetites of the body, we feel the power of self within our being” (31).

It is impossible to believe that Frost restrained his passions like a ‘Bhikhu’ or a ‘Yogi,’ and that he had his self-revelation. However, as a poet and a visionary, he would have had his own moments of serenity
and calmness, when his sensations, thoughts and emotions were subdued in spite of himself; and then he would have obtained a glimpse into his self. But like a 'Yogi' he would not have succeeded in sustaining that blessed mood; the unbridled passions would have crept in and disturbed the tranquility of his mind. Thus would have gone the vision of his self. *The Dhammapada* says: "As rain breaks through an ill-thatched home, so passion makes its way into an unreflecting mind" (Radhakrishnan 62).

After the sudden disappearance of the vision, the poet stands perplexed; he finds it hard to explain his mystical experience: "What was that whiteness? / Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then something." A Buddhist scholar can easily understand the perplexity of the poet. The Buddhists maintain that the ultimate reality -- that is, the realisation of self which leads to the realisation of the mystery of life — is something infinite, unlimited, unconditioned and without attributes. We, on the other hand, are clearly finite, limited and conditioned by attributes. It follows that we can neither define, describe, nor usually discuss the nature of ultimate reality which is beyond the comprehension of our finite consciousness. Says Christmas Humphreys: "Whatever Reality may be, it is beyond the conception of the finite intellect; it follows that attempts at description are misleading, unprofitable and waste of time" (*Buddhism* 79).
It can be found that Frost too accepted the limitations of human knowledge and capacity. According to Elaine Barry, this is a part of the poet’s “tough, pragmatic acceptance of life” (*Robert Frost* 108). The critic cites three poems — “There are roughly Zones,” “Too Anxious for Rivers” and “Birches” — to prove his contention. The speaker of “There are roughly zones” recognises that “There are roughly zones whose laws must be obeyed.” He comments on the folly of bringing a peach tree too far north into New England for it to have a fair chance of survival. However, the speaker has a sneaking admiration for “this limitless trait in the hearts of men” that will gamble on defying the “zones.” Again, in “Too Anxious for Rivers” Frost picks up the theme of recognising that there are “roughly zones” beyond which the human imagination should not trespass. The prudent speaker of the poem notes, “No place to get lost like too far in the distance.” Perhaps, it is this realisation of human limitation that makes the “swinger of birches” land squarely back on earth again.

According to Lawrance Thompson, in the poem “For once, Then, Something” also Frost is “cautiously accepting and accentuating the limitations of human knowledge.” The critic elaborates this idea:

[The poem] may even recall an echo of that aphorism attributed to Democritus: “Of truth we know nothing, for truth lies at the bottom of a well.” With Frost, as with Democritus, the immediate emphasis is obviously on
ultimate truth. But the figurative overtones of the opening lines imply that the speaker has previously acknowledged to "others" (perhaps even to himself) his own limitations of perception, in regard to ultimate truth (Robert Frost 16).

Finally, "For Once, Then, Something" invites a comparison with haikus or Zen poems, which according to Nancy Wilson Ross, "represent a moment of intense perception" (124). Ross adds that in such moments one is aware of being alive in an unusually vivid way. A glimpse of sunlit pigeons against a dark thunder cloud, the sound of cowbells in a mountain silence on a hot afternoon, the noise of a distant waterfall in the dusk – these are some examples of such intense moments. The haiku poets do not elaborate upon such moments, for the feeling is so intense to the degree that they are not greedy with them, that they do not try to grasp them with memory for more than a second or two (125). Here is a famous haiku by Basho: “The old pond / A frog jumps in : / Plop!” (125). This haiku represents the moment when the mystery of life was solved to the poet in the plop of the falling frog. “For once, then, Something” also represents an intense moment when the poet sees the vision at the bottom of the well which, though perplexes him for a while, seems to resolve the mystery of himself and of the universe.

Man’s search for a vision of absolute Truth, and his restrictions in this pursuit is, once again, the theme of another of Frost’s poems "Neither Out Far Nor in Deep" which Lionel Trilling described at one
point as “the most perfect poem of our time” (qtd. in Gould 267). “A calmer search for vision,” says Mario L. D’Avanzo “seems to be the crux of the problematic ‘Neither Out Far Nor in Deep’” (101). According to Reginald Cook, “the vision is not exuberantly romantic, like Shelley’s in the last stanza of ‘Prometheus Unbound’ nor does it, at the other extreme negate human effort.” He remarks that “[The vision] represents in effect, a vision of human enlightenment.” He also points out that

In “Neither Out Far Nor in Deep” the pathos of the human situation stands out .... Evoked clearly, simply, and effectively is the continued image of human limitation – a truly searching one – but without despair, so what is seen is felt and what is felt is true. (289)

Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant also recognized in the poem the theme of human limitation. The critic observes:

In this later poem [“Neither Out Far Nor in Deep”], which Frost calls, “a California poem, derived from mixed memories” we get the sense of restriction, rather than the power of growth, of human knowledge. (300)

Even a casual reading of the poem reveals the theme of man’s relentless pursuit of absolute Truth and his failure due to the limitations of his knowledge. A number of people are standing on a sea shore, with their back to the land, and looking at the sea all day. Sometimes they see a ship raising its hull, or a sea gull reflected in the glass like surface of the sea, but on the whole the sea is unchanging, eternally the same. The
land has great variety, but still they keep looking at the sea. But their vision is limited. Neither can they look out far enough, nor have they penetration enough to look far into the deep. But this does not prevent them from continuing their eternal watch:

They cannot look out far
They cannot look out in deep
But when was that ever a bar
To any watch they keep? (301)

The theme of man’s refusal to be discouraged by his inability to see far or deeply and his determination to continue his search is repeated in “The Masque of Reason” which Frost wrote eleven years later. In the “Masque” Job continues his search for answers, for understanding, regardless of what God tells him. God’s intention from the very beginning seems to be to stifle all argument. He tells Job and Thyatira, his wife quite directly that “… the discipline man needed most
/ Was to learn his submission to unreason” (481). God is at last forced to give the reason that it was to discredit the Devil that God made Job suffer. Job is so unprepared for such an answer that he is stunned, but in the human fashion he immediately begins to rationalise about the answer: “I expected more / Than I could understand and what I get / Is almost less than I can understand” (485). Doyle observes thus about the end of the poem: “The poem ends, in part, as the ‘Book of Job’ ended
with the realisation that in a limited time of human time and space man’s finite mind cannot grasp the infinite...." (245).

The poem “Neither Out Far Nor in Deep” raises the following questions: Why do the people on the shore fail to see the vision of absolute Truth which they are looking for? Again, is there anything called Absolute Reality? The answer to the first question depends on the answer to the second. The second question about the existence of absolute Reality is a highly philosophical one, widely debated by eminent thinkers and religious men all through ages. Buddhism parts its ways from Hinduism mainly on the question of absolute Reality: while Hinduism professes the doctrine of eternal soul or “Paramatma,” Buddhism teaches the doctrine of “anatta” or non-soul. Buddhism is less concerned with eternal soul than with man’s salvation from suffering. The Buddha has made it clear in his sermon to Malunkyaputta, one of his favourite disciples:

The religious life, Malunkyaputta, does not depend on the dogma that the world is eternal; nor does the religious life, Malunkyaputta, depend on the dogma that the world is not eternal. Whether the dogma obtain Malunkyaputta, that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal, there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair. (Burtt, 5).
The Buddhists further maintain that even if there is an absolute Reality, a boundless light behind phenomena, it must be infinite, unlimited, unconditioned and without attributes; while we, the human beings, are clearly finite and limited and conditioned by innumerable attributes. Spirit is one of a hundred names for the indescribable. The Buddha called it “the Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed” (Humphreys, *The Buddhist Way* 44-45). Therefore, the Absolute Reality, if any, cannot be fully conceived and expressed by men. It is said that “The Tao that can be expressed is not the eternal Tao” (Humphreys, *Buddhism* 80).

Here lies, perhaps, the answer to the question why the people in Frost’s poem are not able to see the absolute Truth. They stand on the shore looking at the sea all day. Their search seems to end in stillness which marks the whole atmosphere of the poem. The image of the standing gull and the wetter ground that reflects the bird like a glass, the tranquility of the seashore, the ship that sails silently – everything adds to the still atmosphere of the poem. One remembers the following lines from Narayana Guru’s “Ten Verses on God” where the Guru speaks about man’s intellectual quest which ends inevitably in stillness:

Counting all things here,
Touching them one by one,
We come at last to where
There is no more left;
Then, lo, the quest stops
In stillness. (Nataraja Guru 29).

The seekers of truth including the artists and poets seem to reach this stage of stillness when they become conscious of the limitations of their intellectual pursuit. Jayanta Mahapatra points out that in his later life Rabindranath Tagore wrote some of the lyrics “as he moved toward a silence he could only conceive.” These lyrics were, according to Mahapatra, “pared and honed to a centre of consciousness as never before.” Mahapatra quotes a few lines from Tagore translated by the latter himself:

On the shore of the western sea
the day’s last sun
voiced its last question
in the stillness of dusk:
Who are you?
There was no answer. (9)

The seekers of truth in Frost’s poem also perhaps ask in the stillness of the seashore who they are, for which they do not get any answer. Mahapatra analyses the reason why Tagore adopted this enigmatic silence, and remarks:

A basic need to humble himself at a point of time when he is able to observe his own self in relation to his surroundings—something he has ignored so far in his desire to build himself as a significant writer of our time? (10)
The same can be said about the seekers of truth in “Neither Out Far Nor In Deep.” They would have lost themselves, like all other ordinary men, in the pursuit worldly wealth and fame, but now they would have accepted with humility the futility of such a pursuit, and come to the shore of life with an earnest urge to realise the ultimate truth about their existence which, in fact, lies hidden within themselves. One Buddhist scholar who reads the poem has reason to believe that the people here are on the right path to self-realisation. Says “Udayamanava Puccha”: “Insight comes with the abandoning of desire and lust, when one ceases to worry and be distracted, and when one ceases to be careless and to act unskilfully” (Allen, *Buddha’s Words* 79).

The impression that the people in the poem are on the right path to self-revelation is reinforced by the fact that they chose a right place for their pursuit. They stand on the shore, that is, in the middle of the two extremes - land and sea - where, according to Frost, lies the mystery of truth (“The Secret Sits” 362). A Buddhist scholar recalls that it was by avoiding the two extremes and adopting the Middle Path that the Buddha gained the enlightenment which produced in him insight and knowledge (Burtt 29). So the truth is where seekers in the poem stand and stare, and not in the vast land nor in the infinite sea. To be more precise, truth is in the mind of the seekers, but being unaware of it, they look outside, and therefore, they fail to realise it. The Buddhists hold that “the world without is only a manifestation of the world within”
(Humphreys, *The Middle Way* 122), and so they insist that a genuine seeker of truth should look within and not without.

"Neither Out Far Nor in Deep" leaves behind certain questions unanswered, and Sohn and Tyre sum up these questions as follows:

Why, then, do the people continue to contemplate the sea? What do they hope to discover, and what quality in men causes them to keep up their watch? Why are people more attracted to the mysterious than to the predictable? (45)

Manorama Trikha seems to provide us with a convincing answer to these complex questions. Here it is:

In his efforts to seek in himself too "far" or too "deep," Frost reached a conclusion in "Voice Ways" that "some things are never clear." Thus through the metaphor of Self he reconciles with the truth of human limitations without denying man the curiosity to know something about himself.

The critic quotes the last four lines of the poem, and then continues:

Under all circumstances his belief in self-exploration remains unshaken. The question mark at the end of the poem indicates two things, that there is much unknown and that man is free to find his place among the infinities. What matters is to take a direction, to see beyond boundaries – whether a wall, a field or a city, -- to unlearn others’ discoveries, to make fresh pursuits and to make new
attempts to find meanings independently for oneself .... Discontented with the high sounding philosophies, Frost prefers his own low-sounding realisations and revelations. (*Poetry of Clarifications* 59-60)

Above every thing else, Trikha’s views confirm that “Neither Out Far Nor Deep” is a poem about self-revelation. Dissatisfied with all other philosophies, the people in the poem are waiting for their own self-realisation, which is the absolute Reality to all the genuine seekers of truth. Nothing can daunt them in this pursuit, and they seem to represent “Effort, enquiry, search,” which, according to the Buddhists, “are tools of Revelation” (*Humphreys, The Buddhist Way* 128).

Those who miss the point that the truth, which the people in the poem are waiting for, is the realisation of their self, may argue that the poem is “elusive.” Peter D. Poland, for instance, maintains that the efforts of the people in the poem “are life-denying in the extreme.” He says:

.... how isolating and dehumanising such activity is. So absorbed are they in their quest for “truth” that they have become so oblivious of all else but their own solipsistic pursuit. They have cut themselves off from the land, world and all that it represents (struggles and suffering, compliments, obligations, responsibilities) and from one another as well. They have become isolates, like the solitary gull they resemble. (96)
Frost seems to be one among the people in the poem who distance themselves from the madding crowd, and come to seek their self in the solitude of the seashore. A number of critics noticed the impulse in Frost to withdraw himself from the society, and to delve deep into his inner self. Lawrance Thompson says that “his heart persisted in that irrational yearning which drove him outside self to discover self” (*Fire and Ice* 179). Manorama Trikha observes:

... Frost learned that to know oneself and to trust one’s knowledge about oneself, it is significant to have a momentary break from society. He recognised the real value of loneliness, which enables one to peep into oneself and to see one’s own image in “a slanting mirror,” (perhaps of the soul), to borrow a phrase from Frost’s letter to Miss. Ward, if at all one wishes to reach a self-definition. (59)

Richard Poirier points out that a large number of Frost’s poems are built around the pattern of going out from the domestic centre into the recesses of the natural world in order to win new insights into the self and its relationships (*Bagby* 4). The poem “Into My Own” proves these arguments right. The poet here declares his intention to steal away into the vastness of woods which is an ideal place for self-investigation. He does not want to be withheld by any forces of human bondage either of love or hatred. He does not find any reason to turn back from his set mission of life. He is so firm in his resolve that he does not like his friends to hinder him. If his friends meet him in his forest recluse, they
will not find him changed from his old faith; on the other hand, they will find him more convinced of his mission to go into his own, to discover and strengthen his own self.

The poet’s urge to withdraw into his self and his desire to escape into the woods are complementary. Judith Oster remarks that two things are explicit in the poem: one is the analogy between self and trees of woods, and the other the desire to escape. The critic adds: “If we put these ideas together we find that to escape into these woods is to escape into self, and consequently that escape means withdrawal into self (101-102).” Manorama Trikha also takes notice of the significance of the dark woods in the poem. She says: “In ‘Into my own’ entrance into the dark woods gives the poet an opportunity to examine his thoughts dispassionately and when he comes out he is more sure of himself” (59).

A Buddhist scholar finds here a comparison between Frost’s desire to escape to the forest and young Siddhartha’s decision to go to forest seeking salvation. After his Great Renunciation, Siddhartha set out to the forest in a chariot driven by Channa, his charioteer and drawn by Kantaka, his horse. Then leaving them also behind, he entered the forest alone. In the solitude of the forest Sidhartha strove hard and alone to unmake his body and discover his self. His was a voyage into himself, and such a journey was to be undertaken by himself and himself alone.

Not only that others, however intimate they were, could not help him in
this voyage into the self, but also that they would create many hurdles on the way. That must be the reason why Siddhartha left his palace alone at night even without informing his parents, wife and child. Thus in the Buddhist view, one can realise one’s self by oneself alone. Says *The Dhammapada*: “Rouse your self by your self, examine your self by your self. Thus guarded by your self and attentive you, mendicant, will live happy” (Radhakrishnan 176). Furthermore, the awakening of self is possible only in an atmosphere of solitude, and therefore, renunciation of all human bondage is a precondition for self-realisation. The Buddha told his disciples: “It is better to live alone; there is no companionship with a fool; let a man walk alone, let him commit no sin, having few wishes, like an elephant in the forest” (Burtt 68).

In “Into My Own” also Frost chooses the forest as an ideal place for his meditation upon himself. The dark trees do not scare him at all; instead they seem to invite him, and he is eager to steal away into their vastness. He is again, like Siddhartha, determined to avoid his dear and near, because he seems to fear that they will perhaps stop him from his self-chosen mission. “No, I had an insight against belonging to any of those crowds,” said Frost in an interview, and he added, “I have had friends, but very scattering, a scattering over there” (qtd. in Brooks 15). George F. Bagby observes that “the great majority of Frost’s most penetrating insights are won in isolation” (23). Bagby points out that Frost was worried about “the excessively social forces of twentieth
century American life,” and he quotes Frost’s own words from “Build soil”: “We’re too unseparate.” The critic is of the view that in Frost separation “is likely to heighten the mind’s alertness to natural revelation.” The flower nymphs of “In a vale,” for instance, speak to the youth precisely because “they wist, / One so lonely was fain to list.” Bagby concludes that “In what is called solitude, the individual may rediscover his ties not only with natural objects, but with the vital forces lying behind them” (23-24). In solitude one dwells near not to many men surely, but to the perennial source of one’s life.

It is a widely recognised fact that Buddhism encourages solitary pursuit of truth, but at the same time it opposes all forms of selfishness. The solitary pursuit of an individual does not mean working for one’s own personal gains and profits; on the other hand it aims at the common welfare of one and all in the universe. At the time of his departure to the forest, after his great Renunciation, Siddhartha tells Kantaka, his horse, that “the greatness of this deed “ would help the world. He continues: “For therefore ride I, not for men alone, / But for all things which, speechless, share our pain / And have no hope, nor wit to ask for hope" (Arnold 105). The Buddha passed through severe mental and physical torment for the sake of others of his time and of the time to come. Edwin Arnold says: “Here/Lord Buddha sate the scorching summer through/The driving rains, the chilly dawns and eves,/Wearing for all men’s sakes the yellow robe” (113)
A strong criticism against every solitary seeker of Truth is that he is an escapist. The Buddha’s life itself disproves this baseless argument. By renouncing his kingdom, palace, parents, wife and dear son, Siddhartha plunged deep into the problems that haunted and still haunts mankind. He did not run away from problems. His deep meditation in the thick forests even without food and rest was to realise and thus to strengthen his self so that he could show the world a path to peace and happiness. Siddhartha tells Channa, his charioteer, when he departs to the forest: “Since there is hope for man only in man / And none hath sought for this as I will seek / Who cast away my world to save my world” (Arnold 108).

It can be seen that in Frost too the urge to withdraw into his self is not born out of any selfish motive. In anticipation of an adverse criticism against himself that his desire to withdraw from the world is an anti-social attitude on his part, Frost said in an interview: “I think a person has to be withdrawn into himself to gather inspiration so that he is somebody when he comes out again among folks” (Kathryn Gibbs Harris 43). Knowing one’s self perhaps meant to the poet knowing the whole humanity. Says Trikha:

[Frost’s] “self-belief” assures him to treat his experiences as representative and symbolic of humanity’s experiences in general. He knows that he can stand now for the psyche of mankind. (61)
It is not again his cowardice that prompts the poet to go the forest, and it is evident from the poem itself. In the beginning the poet declares that he has no fear of the dark trees into the vastness of which he intends to escape; he is also not scared by the open land or highway where the slow wheel pours the sand. The poet further expresses his strong resolve to go to the dark forest without ever turning back. All the more, he is sure that he will not change his thoughts and ideas; he will adhere to them against all odds more vehemently than ever. In short, Frost is not an escapist. Once when he was asked whether poetry was an escape from the world's troubles, he said: “No. Poetry is a way to take life by the throat” (qtd. in Oster 103). In “Into My Own” Frost seems to escape, but in the words of Judith Oster, “To seem to escape can be to confront life and self in solitude, more agonisingly, more deeply” (103).

Frost would have learnt that in order to examine one's beliefs from an objective point of view, one must distance himself from the society for a while, and then it is easier to appreciate one's beliefs for what they are and orient them toward what they should be. “Earth's the right place for love,” Frost says in “The Birches.” He feels that it is hard to understand this love without “getting away from earth awhile.” Frost found the birch-tree metaphor of swinging away from earth so symbolic of his philosophy that he uses it again in “Wild Grapes,” with somewhat different significance. Here he decides that, although there is really no
need to let go of life with the heart, it is always possible and profitable to let go with the mind.

Various reasons can be thus attributed to Frost’s decision to leave the society behind and go to the forest, but it seems that the poet is mainly prompted by his urge for self-realisation. Self-realisation, according to the Buddhists, demands the renunciation of self. “Nirvana,” says Christmas Humphreys, “is the extinction of the Not-self in the completion of the Self” (Buddhism 128). Radhakrishnan puts it thus: “Through the destruction of all that is individual in us, we enter into communion with the whole universe, and become an integral part of the great purpose” (Indian Philosophy 448). In “Into My Own” Isadore Traschen traces this theme of the renunciation of self for the realisation of self. Says the critic:

You must give yourself, surrender yourself, fully to realise yourself. Curiously, this is the point of the first poem “Into My Own,” in Frost’s first volume; by going into the woods he will be “more sure of all I thought was true.” (175)

The theme of “Salvation in surrender,” according to Dorothy Judd Hall, is the focal point of the poem “The Gift Outright,” which is one of the best patriotic poems ever written in America as well as one of Frost’s best shorter poems. Newly arrived Englishmen in colonial America—
and, later, their descendants – had to relinquish their identity as strangers to this continent. Says the poet:

Something we were withholding made us weak -
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forth with found salvation in surrender. (348)

Dorothy Judd Hall points out that “in this act [of surrender of their self] they themselves were redeemed. They found self-realisation, ‘salvation’ ”(106). The critic adds that though the poem is political, it is “fundamentally religious” and it “celebrates an act of faith in things unseen” (107). The critic argues that the poem contains the Christian precept of losing one’s life in a material sense, to find it in a spiritual sense. A Buddhist scholar finds that surrendering one’s self for the realisation of self, otherwise known as salvation, is a favourite idea of the Buddhists as well.

For one who makes an investigation into the theme of self-realisation in Frost, the poem “All Revelation” has a special significance. Though the idea of revelation recurs in a number of poems, as we have already found, it is only in two poems—“Revelation” and “All Revelation” — that Frost uses it prominently in the titles. According to Dorothy Judd Hall, a definition of ‘revelation’ in Frost’s poetry eludes us. The critic raises some doubts like “What were the origins of truth, the paths
of knowledge by which [Frost] thought revelation came? What were the limits of such knowledge?" (Robert Frost 73). Dorothy Judd Hall's one remark about the poem is very suggestive. she says: "The poem makes no claim of clarification as either absolute or infallible, but it affirms a potential 'ray' of light" (80). This "potential 'ray of light' can be taken to mean the enlightenment of one's self, which is "Nirvana" in the Buddhist terminology. Frank Lentricchia seems to endorse this view when he observes: "'All revelation has been ours,' reads the last line. It is we who reveal the world - as we desire to see it revealed - and by so doing we reveal the revealing self" (6-7).

"All Revelation" is indeed Frost's vigorous answer to the larger question of what self-revelation is, and how it can be attained. The poet here expresses his strong view that intelligence, in fact, causes confusion and bewilderment, and so it cannot lead to self-knowledge. The mind is perplexed by the intelligent questions raised by head or brain. The source of intelligence, its range, purpose and also its capacity to understand things always causes perplexity. The mind fails to explain this perplexity and retreats. The mind itself appears to be illusory and unreal ("Strange apparition of the mind"). Man's scientific knowledge, therefore, cannot help him in the realisation of his self. Frost's apprehension about the loss of spirit with the growth of western science is the theme of his poem "Kitty Hawk". The poet himself speaks about its theme.
My theme is that the only ‘event’ in all history is science plunging deeper into matter. We have plunged into the smallness of particles and we are plunging into the hugeness of space – but not without fears that the spirit shall be lost .... In taking us deeper and deeper into matter, science has left all of us with this great misgiving, this fear that we won’t be able to substantiate spirit. (qtd. in Hall, *Robert Frost 64*)

The poem which celebrates the flight of the Wright’s biplane is about the “venture” of Western Civilisation which is based on modern science. In the words of Dorothy Judd Hall, “The poem is ambivalent toward human knowledge, observing its power and promise, its perils and limits” (*Robert Frost 66*).

In “All Revelation” Frost makes it abundantly clear that it is not scientific knowledge but only a steady and relentless mental pursuit that will unfold the mystery hidden in the remotest corners of the mind. George F. Bagby explains this point: “But that active human thrust must initiate the visionary process. It is only human “Eyes seeking the response of eyes” that can “Bring out the stars, bring out the flowers; ....” (21). The poet says:

> But the impervious geode  
> Was entered, and its inner crust  
> Of crystals with a ray cathode  
> At every point and facet glowed
In answer to the metal thrust. (332)

An inner eye, made quiet by meditation, seeking the inner truth, ("Eyes seeking the response of eyes") can unravel the mystery of the self. When the self reveals itself, it brings to light all the beauty and wonder of the universe, because self is the microcosm containing the infinite riches in a small room. So real wisdom is in self-revelation, and none can show that wisdom except ourselves: “All revelation has been ours” (333). Bagby elaborates the idea contained in this key line of the poem:

In the context of this poem, at least, “All revelation has been ours” means secondarily that all revelation has been given us; chiefly it means that all the vision we have has been and must be forged by our own imaginative efforts. (22)

Discussing this poem, Nina Bayam observes that the mind here “by probing discovering, learning nature, in a sense creates it.” In her view, Frost is consistently uncommitted on the teleological question of whether the existence of human mind implies purpose in the universe, whether the human mind stands in some relation to a divine mind, if there is a divine mind. “Frost seems to have decided,” says Bayam, “rather to have decided, seriously and sincerely, that questions about purpose cannot be answered, and that man must therefore make his way without at final causes” (147). This anti-intellectual as well as anti-metaphysical outlook of Frost approximates with the Buddhist doctrine.
of “anatta.” The Buddhists, as we have noticed earlier on many occasions, do not recognise a divine mind, and therefore, they do not waste their time and energy for the metaphysical pursuit of soul or “paramatma” as the Hindu philosophy terms it. The Buddhist “nirvana” then is not the realisation of the universal soul, but the realisation of one’s own self.

In “All Revelation” Frost implies that real knowledge is not intellectual; whereas it comes from within the mind, and it can be attained by one through one’s “mental thrust.” Interestingly, this view of Frost coincides with the Zen concept of knowledge which Erich Fromm sums up as follows:

Zen is aimed at the knowledge of one’s on nature. It searches to “know thyself.” But this knowledge is not the “scientific” knowledge of the modern psychologist, the knowledge of the knower-intellect who knows himself as object; knowledge of self in Zen is knowledge which is not intellectual, which is non-alienated, it is full experience in which knower and known become one. (76)

Zen gives more importance to the unconscious than to the conscious. The modern psychologists have fully approved it. In Jung’s thinking, for instance, the unconscious is essentially the seat of wisdom, while the conscious is only the intellectual part of the personality (Erich Fromm 43). So the unconscious is the whole man, while the conscious a
fragmented man. Frost was right when he said: “Most of the iceberg is under the water. Most of oneself should be within oneself” (qtd. in Oster 278).

Therefore, a seeker of Truth and Wisdom should strive to make the unconscious conscious, instead of straying outside for intellectual knowledge. This can be done by enlightening the unconscious, and the lamp to light the dark realms of the unconscious is the self of the seeker itself. This is the core and essence of Buddhist teaching which is reflected in the Buddha’s parting words to Ananda: “So Karohi dipam attano” (make the self a lamp) (Radhakrishnan, The Dhammapada 135). When Frost says that “All revelation has been ours,” he comes very close to this Buddhist idea of self-realisation.