

**Tribhuvan University**

**The Journey from Worldly Absurdism to Spirituality in Jack Kerouac**

***The Dharma Bums***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

**Master Arts in English**

**By**

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Letter of Recommendation

Dewaki KC has completed her thesis entitled “The Journey from Worldly Absurdism to Spirituality in Jack Kerouac *The Dharma Bums*” under my supervision. She carried out her thesis from June 2018 to April 2019. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Supervisor

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “The Journey from Worldly Absurdism to Spirituality in Jack Kerouac *The Dharma Bums*” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Dewaki KC, has been approved by the undersigned members of the thesis committee.

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## Abstract

This research examines the mode of a journey from worldly indulgence to spirituality in Jack Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*. This research explores the difficulty of selfhood as it affects individual identity and subjectivity in American culture and consciousness. The novel tells the story of Ray Smith and his adventures as a hitchhiker, mountaineer, and aspiring Buddha. The novel opens with Ray Smith meeting an old bum while traveling on a freight train in California. Inspired, he calls the man a Dharma Bum and then begins to recount a series of adventures that he has undergone with other such free-spirited people. Ray attends a rowdy poetry jam at "Gallery Six" in which a number of his friends perform, but he is more impressed by the forthright poetry of Japhy Ryder. This research uses the psychological effects of absurdist condition, search for alternative sexuality in relation to the oppression of human beings by technology. The novel *Dharma Bums* explore the influences of media, Spirituality and Buddhism on selfhood. The text presents a distinct model for addressing the possibility for self-transformation or inherent self-limitation as encouraged by these influences. The research explores the anxiety caused by the Second World War, capitalism and the growing consumerism in America during the 1940's and 1950's. Buddhism provided the Beats with an escape, the ascetic lifestyle providing a way out of the conformity and absurdity of a consumer society that Kerouac encountered.