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A Countercultural Study on Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*

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This thesis entitled "A Countercultural Study on Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Madhu Sudan Sigdel, has been approved by the undersigned members of the research committee.

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Abstract

The present research work is a study to see Jack Kerouac's novel *The Dharma Bums* as counterculture manifesto. The study focuses on the aspects of the novel that directly oppose the contemporary American capitalistic norms and values of the 1950s. The people that the novel talks about are the beatniks who involve themselves in the practice of excessive wanderings, Zen Buddhism, jazz music, haiku, sexual indulgences, drug use and stealing to subvert the values of the mainstream culture. It celebrates unchecked self-expression and serves a heavy blow to the values of decency and decorum of the polite society. So, the present study opens the door to see the text as a countercultural one. The researcher's sole intention is to show how its author is challenging the established culture for the eternal freedom.

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I. Introduction

Kerouac and his Beatnik Stand

Born in 1922 in Lowell Massachusetts, to working class immigrant parents of mixed (Breton) French Canadian and possibly Iroquois stock, and died in 1961 Jean-Louis Kerouac grew up speaking a largely unwritten French Canadian dialect called joul. He didn't learn English until he was forced to use it in school. By his own admission, he was not comfortable with it until his late teens; and which he continued to speak for the rest of his life with his mother, Gabrielle; and he felt himself that he was a member of the marginal class beset by that horrible homelessness all French Canadians in America have. Later, he became able to handle English easily precisely, as he explained in a letter in 1950, "[...] it is not my own language. I refashion it to fit French images" (Douglas 57) and got chance to secure a scholarly name by his distinct narrative style while he countered the contemporary capitalistic American culture of his time i.e.1950s. What he showed in his works went against the ideas of the contemporary society and its mainstream culture. His brilliant ideas of his more than ten novels, essays and poems made him stand as a brilliant literary figure in American literature.

His books, like his life, would be set largely in four locales: Lowell, a town of immigrants; New York and San Francisco, the capitals of miscegenation; and Mexico City, the home of the Native Americans whom Kerouac romanticized as the "fellaheen", the ancient, dark-skinned peoples

displaced by modern civilization who would witness and survive its collapse. Affluence had virtually no interest for him; again and again in his fiction he excavates Depression America from its postwar carapace of ill-gotten prosperity. A harsh dissatisfaction to the social norms and values and boundless quest for the deluge of ecstasy are the subject matters of his works. Among his best works, *The Dharma Bums*, on which the present research is going to be made, could not necessarily be an exception.

While enjoying popular but little critical success during his own lifetime, Kerouac is now considered one of America's most important authors. His spontaneous, confessional prose style inspired many writers. His best known works are *On the Road*, *The Dharma Bums*, *Big Sur* and *Visions of Cody*.

He spent most of his adult life roaming the vast American landscape and living with his mother. Faced with a changing country, Kerouac sought to find his place, eventually rejecting the values of the fifties. His writing often reflects a desire to break free from society's structure and to find meaning in life. This search led him to experiment with drugs and to embark on trips around the world. His books are often credited as the catalyst for the upcoming counterculture. Kerouac died in St. Petersburg, Florida, at the age of forty-seven from an internal hemorrhage caused by his chronic alcoholism.

About the Text

Published in 1958 *The Dharma Bums* is a story of two West Coast wanderers and their quest for truth. Their search begins with a passionate exploration of wine, weekend girls and oriental mysticism. But it comes to climax on a lonely mountain top in the intimate solitudes of Sierras.

Published just a year after *On the Road*, which put the Beat Generation on the literary map, *The Dharma Bums* helped launch the countercultural ethos to the contemporary capitalistic American mainstream culture. It's a rebellion against the traditional norms and values of the society. Emerged in the culturally repressed country, *The Dharma Bums* reflects profound dissatisfaction with the mores of the society through its characters' unconventional lifestyle. The characters criticise American materialism in a bitter, harsh and often in an abusive language. They mock at its conformity and morality, and set out to discover American true spirit. The experience of extreme joy and freedom is the true spirit of America and to gain it, the novel and its characters go beyond the social, cultural and legal boundary of the so called rational society. The characters experience freedom and pleasure by crisscrossing the American subcontinents; involving in the sexual indulgences, practising jazz music, using drugs, exploring Eastern religion and Zen Buddhism and so on. Jack Kerouac in *The Dharma Bums* tries to explore the potential ecstatic areas of the self to go counter to the prevailing Western culture of America of that time.

The writers of counterculture in the 1950s perceived America as a prosperous conservative, communist-chasing, cold warring and imperial country. The nation was, in their view, morally visionless and constructive. Their dissatisfaction was in the war in Vietnam, the atom-bomb, and ecological pollutions; it was also related with the pervasive features of the social and economic orders, such as bureaucratic impersonality, huge populations, material glut and waste, the feeling of being manipulated by advertising and publicity, alienation from work, rootlessness, existential aimlessness and the

sense of powerlessness in relation to the large organizations within which a person typically works, plays, votes and shops. To many writers it seemed that Western civilization and its cultural ideals were spiritually bankrupt.

Corporate truth became the standard truth and corporations cast the shadow. Kerouac tried to prove that human beings are free creative and hopeful beings by nature. The natural and healthy human tendencies proved to be fatal for American society. One function of corporate culture and propaganda was to control the thinking of free minds.

As *On the Road* defined the 'Beat Generation', *The Dharma Bums* came to define as well as explore the mastermind behind it. This short novel which serves as one of Kerouac's many strokes of genius is a semi auto-biographical novel. The characters are barely fictionalized version of Kerouac's friends. Written in a two-week spurt, Kerouac's characters go for the search of meaning of life, death and love through the study of Buddhism and the Dharma. Like all Kerouac ventures, *The Dharma Bums* is only a small chapter divided in thirty four different divisions. However, it serves as one of the most aspiring and most beautifully written tales to come from the mind of Jack Kerouac.

The novel includes the account of different trips across America, and each of the continental crisscrossings undertaken between 1947 and 1950. Here, Raymond Smith is a guise for Jack Kerouac himself, Alvah Goldbook for Allen Ginsberg, Japhy Ryder for Gary Snyder, Rheinhold Cacoethes for Kenneth Rexroth, Cody Pomery for Neal Cassady, Warren Coughlin for Philip Whalen, Ike O'shay for Michael McClure, Francis DaPavia for Philip Lamantia and Henry Morley for John Montgomery. All these people grew up during the great

depression, war time, and they even served in the armed forces. And, they encountered the appalled narrow-minded bourgeois, the persistent nuclear threat and the devastating ecological disorders. They professed the disjunction from the society and its depraved values and tried to replace the spiritual mysticism. Just like the militant groups in 1950s, the characters of *The Dharma Bums* identify themselves with the hobos, the skid row bums, the psychopath, and seek out their gathering places to counter the norms and values of the society. It becomes clear when Ray describes, "I prayed that god, or tathagata, would give me enough time and enough sense and strength to be able to tell people what I knew (as I can't even do properly now) so they'd know what I know and not despair so much" (Kerouac 30).

The present study centers on how Kerouac's countercultural attitude is reflected in *The Dharma Bums* which is evident in his semi-autobiographical characters' activities and their representation in the novel, his new style of writing i.e. spontaneous prose and turn to nature. These are also countercultural attitudes in the novel. Writing the novel, he rejects to assimilate himself in the mainstream culture. He proves himself as a non-conformist, quintessential Beat. He condemns law and order of the society displaying the dehumanizing tendency of material interest.

The present work has been divided into four chapters. The first part gives a bird's eye view. It presents a short introduction to the author in relation to the fact of beat generation and countering the mainstream, a brief introduction to *The Dharma Bums*, and an introductory outline of the present study and a short review.

The second part of the study treats with the issues of theoretical modality. To this end, the research turns to different critics to help in developing the modality that has been proposed to apply to analyze the text as a piece of counterculture. It attempts to trace the vision and practice and of the terms counterculture in relation to the project of the Beat Generation. It also deals with the terms culture, capitalistic society, bureaucracy and the hippies in light of the definition of counterculture. It will use Beat Movement as a major support for the countercultural reading of *The Dharma Bums*.

The third part of research engages with the text to the greatest extent possible for conducting textual analysis of the novel at a considerable length on the basis of the theoretical modality outlined in the second chapter. The text will be the primary source for textual analysis. It sorts out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove how Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* is a countercultural text in the post war American society. This part serves as the core of this study. Excessive alcoholism, wanderings, drug use, sexual indulgences, practice of jazz and haiku, violations of the forms, techniques and style of the academic writing; turning to nature, economic and ecological disorders and violation of the mechanical lifestyles of the people of the cotemporary society are the materials of the textual analysis which will be developed in the light of counterculture.

The last part is a conclusion of the research. On the basis of the textual analysis it sums up the explanation and the arguments put forward in the preceding chapter and shows Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* as the practice, representation and treatment of the theme of counterculture.

The text can have multiple meanings and interpretations. A single research cannot be sufficient for uncovering the richness of meaning and interpretation of the text. This research attempts to understand the text *The Dharma Bums* as a representative countercultural piece of literature trying to revolt against the mainstream capitalistic American society, which broadly stands for authority and materialistic bourgeois culture.

II. The Countercultures

Culture

Culture, rooted in the ancient Latin word 'cultura', meaning cultivation or tending to grow, entered in English language in 1430 A.D. Then, it came to mean training, development and refinement of mind, tastes and manners. The term by now has acquired an aura of vagueness in social and anthropological circles because of the multiplicity of its referents. Anyway, here it refers to neither multiple referents nor any unusual ambiguity. But, here, it comes to denote to the historically transmitted pattern of meaning codified in symbols. This system of inherited conceptions is expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge and attitude towards life. *Oxford Dictionary* defines culture as the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group; art, music, literature, etc., thought of as a group and the beliefs and attitudes about something that people in a particular group or organization share.

Culture, thus, is the natural phenomenon in social structure; it establishes in society because of the social structure of the people; and their knowledge, experiences, attitudes, relations and ways of life. It becomes a tool to the people to intercept their life and guide their actions in the society. The social structure exists because of such social actions and their relations. Thus, culture, social structure and social relations come to refer to the same phenomena. It varies as per the social dignity, as social norms and values any culture depends upon.

Since every society has its own purpose and meaning, cultures vary because there is no single history, religion, society and geography. So, literature as the reflection of the society also varies.

Culture is the people's whole way of life. It is society's reservoir of the best that has been thought for Mathew Arnold in the late 1860s. In line with Arnold, E.B. Tyler comes to define culture in an ethnographic way. Tyler seems more original in his definition of culture. For him, "Culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tyler1).

After the Second World War the cultural critic Raymond Williams comes to define culture going beyond the anthropological idea of culture as people's whole way of life. Putting forward his normative meaning of culture Williams says that culture still claims to represent the organic voice of people. Again, because of the conflict between these concepts about culture in the anthropological sense and culture in the normative sense there emerged a third way of using the term, "One that refers neither to the people's organic way of life nor to the normative values preached by leading intellectuals but to a battleground of social conflicts and contradictions" (Graff and Bruce 421). From the theoretical perspective one cannot assume a single, central culture that renders individual experience coherent and meaningful for it is inescapably different, divisive and dissonant. Later, culture happens to capture different fields of criticism. The emergence of postcolonial criticism and the postcolonial theory of discourse, made culture borrow different terminologies. Consequently, Foucauldian notion of 'Power and Discourse' and Gramsci's

concept of 'Hegemony' come in the field of cultural study. In postcolonial era we happen to engage with culture as an uneven incomplete production of meaning and value often composed of incommensurable demands and practices, produced in the act of survival. Culture reaches out to create a symbolic textuality to give the alienating everyday an aura of selfhood, a promise of pleasure involving in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order.

However, describing about culture Stephan Greenblalt says, "The ensemble of beliefs and practices that form a given culture function as a pervasive technology of control, a set of limits within which social behavior must be contained, a repertoire of models to which individuals most conform" (225). He also sees culture "close to its earlier sense "cultivation"-the internalization and practice of a code of manners"(227). Well, this sense of cultivation extends beyond the limits of satire and panegyric up to the time when manners are considered to be the crucial signs of status. Arnold uses the word this way: "Culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world."(1882)

In anthropology, culture is the integrated system of socially acquired values, beliefs and rules of conduct, which delimit the range of accepted behaviours in any given society. The cultural differences distinguish societies from one another.

In practice, culture refers to elite activities such as haute cuisine, high fashion or haute couture, museum- caliber art and classical music, and the word

cultured describes people who know about and take part in these activities. So, someone who uses "culture" in the sense of cultivation might argue that classical music is more refined than music produced by working class people such as punk rock or than the indigenous music traditions of aboriginal peoples of Australia.

The Beat Generation

The Beat Generation, in literature, is known as a 1950s and 1960s movement, which rejected contemporary social norms, valued self-expression, and loved jazz. The generations which brought the movement were young writers, intellectuals, poets and scholars who developed disgust with the middle class material prosperity of the American society and supported spiritual transcendentalism involving in the excessive drinking, drugs, sex, wanderings, Eastern religion and jazz music. For Michael Davidson, Beat Generation is "a community of writers who began their careers in the 1940s and who achieved national attention in the 1950s" (62). It is a heterogeneous mix of young writers, artists and intellectuals in the 1950s. The movement whose unconventional work and lifestyle reflected profound dissatisfaction with the contemporary society "went farther challenging the assumptions of American society than any of the radical movements which preceded it in the thirties" (Spiller 1413).

Writing about Beat Generation, Davidson further says, "The phrase also evokes the bohemian lifestyle represented in works like Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* (1956) and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), in which the social and

psychological repression of the post war period are decried and an alternative participatory ethos is celebrated" (Davidson 62).

The term "beat" was first used by John Clellon Holmes in his 1952 novel, *Go*, the first literary description of the people of the Beat movement and their milieu. Talking about the Beat Generation Davidson opines:

The origins of the term beat have been debated by many of the movement's participants, but it is clear that its use as a cultural marker began in conversations among William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac, Herbert Huncke and Carl Solomon in New York during the late 1940s. Jack Kerouac is usually described as being if not the term's inventor, at least its most subtle genealogist. (62)

John Clellon Holme's celebrated article entitled "This is the Beat Generation" in late 1952 in the *New York Time Magazine* caught the public eye. Then, Kerouac anonymously published a fragment of *On the Road* called *Jazz of the Beat Generation* and that reinforced the phrase. Writing in *Esquire* of March 1958 Kerouac stated that "beat" referred to world weariness, being down and out but full of intense conviction. Many in the urban underclass were "beaten down"(24) by circumstance, yet capable of a kind of mystical "beatitude"(24). His models for beatitude were the "fellaheen people"(24)- hobos, black jazz musicians, religious mystics, petty criminals- whom he "encountered first around New York's 42nd street bars and cafeterias and later on his cross country trips with Neal Cassady"(24).

After the World War II the feelings of rootlessness, meaninglessness and alienation were developing in the minds of people but that yet had not been expressed. The explosion of atom bomb over Japan, the revelations about the prison camps of the Soviet gulag, the new corporate mentality of the suburban life contributed to that kind of feelings. The Beat writers responded to this malaise by living at the margins of American life, satirizing middle class conformism by refusing its institutions and social mores. Although the contemporary media under Eisenhower tried to ridicule the lifestyles of beats, their enthusiasm for the quest of self never died. Talking about the Beat writers, M.H. Abrams adds:

Beat Writers identifies a loose-knit group of poets and novelists, writing in the second half of the 1950s, who shared a set of social attitudes- antiestablishment, anti-political, anti-intellectual, opposed to reigning cultural and moral values, and in favor of unfettered self-realization and self- expression. (14)

The term Beat was used to signify both 'beaten down' that is by the oppressive culture of the contemporary society and "beatific" that is cultivating ecstatic state by involving in the practice of Buddhism, Jewish and Christian mysticism and drugs that induce visionary experiences.

Beat writers tended to express their alternative values through the form of their writing which has a very loose structure and uses a great deal of slang in comparison to more conventional modern works.

The Beat Movement of the 1950s had considerable influence on the 1960s and 1970s idea of countercultures. In the later era, the concept of Beat

expanded to include not only oppression and ecstasy but also the rebellious rhythms of rock 'n' roll (The Beatles). Talking about the Beat writers M.H. Abrams further says, "The group included such diverse figures as the poet Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Lawrence Ferlinghetti and the novelists William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac" (14).

These writers confronted with the conventional society with the sense of disgust. They practiced the activities like drug addiction, open sex, social misfits and compulsive wanderings to go against the commercial mechanized society. They also represented the derangement of the intellect and the senses affected by a combination of sexual abandon, drugged hallucination and religious ecstasies.

Their attraction to drugs and Eastern philosophy represented a search for transcendental values and expressed their rejection of commercial culture. These writers were experimental. Ferlinghetti used the rhythms of jazz in his poetry whereas Ginsberg revived Walt Whitman's poetic line with an expansive poetic voice to express a kind of eccentric populism. Kerouac exploited the spontaneous, episodic quality of life and also captured the restless troubadour quality of the Beats. For these writers, Buddhism became a form of psychic ballast, which helped them as a means of deconditioning themselves from western habits of mind and feeling to bring balance in the Beat's condemnation of American materialism. John Tytell writes:

Buddhism became a reinforcement of Einsteinian relativity stressing man's insignificance as a dot in space. Buddhist scholars saw the changeability of a universe that moved like a whirlwind.

Instead of the western view of separate identity, they were uninterested in ego or soul, claiming that nothing was stationary or permanent, with everything analogous to the dream state. Emphasizing intuition (or "buddhi", to know where one only knows about), discouraging rational exposition, the Buddhists ... believed that all distinctions were falsely imagined. (25-26)

The movement was against the so-called rational society. The artists and writers of the generation expressed their ideas against the elitist and hierarchical society. They were concerned with removing artificial barriers between their lives and art. So, they naturally were ready to accept an ethic without orthodoxy, and without dogma. The Beatniks performed a practical accommodation of Buddhist tenets to their existence and as a result their use of Buddhism was eccentric, inconsistent, and most of all eclectic. Mahayana Buddhism reduced ethical absolutes to relatives. Free and open sexual companionship was highly encouraged because of their strong belief in tantric practices. Beat writers are also found to have embraced the view of balanced ecological condition of the world.

The Beat Generation was characterized for going against the authority and materialistic bourgeois society, which had reigning cultural values in the 1950s America. The writers of the generation were provisional and spontaneous authors. They openly adopted free sex, marijuana smoking, drug use and alcoholism. The people of the mainstream society regarded them obscene and life denying.

The Beat writers communicated their profound dissatisfaction with contemporary society through their unconventional writings and lifestyles. They followed a kind of alternative set of values to that of mainstream society of contemporary America. Excessive wanderings were one of the pastimes of the Beats to get the real experience of the world. The Beat writers established a territory for writing that was anti-established and was radically different from that of the narrow and exhausted mode of expression of the literary establishment. Especially Ginsberg and Kerouac tried to validate a literary possibility that went beyond the prevalent positions on form, style and subject.

The Beat writers also implied the native tradition of Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville and Walt Whitman to give a blow against the conformist material bourgeois society of that time. We can find the events of disobedience in Kerouac's writings as that of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* (1949). As Kerouac's characters go wandering across America to find its true spirit, Melville's characters make journey to search the truth between good and evil, God and Satan and head and heart. In the same way Whitman's poetry of open road influenced the beats to use new spontaneous style and to disobey the conformity. These writers rejected the censor. First thought was the best thought for them. They didn't use the reason and rational mind to select the best words and ideas. Kerouac always rejected to revise the writing and selectivity of traditional ideas asserting that "the writer could give his reader the actual working of the mind during the writing itself " (Tytell 44).

Involving in the practice of jazz bebop, drug, communal living, frenetic travel, anarchistic dropout politics, religious experimentation, anti-materialistic ascetic lifestyle and criminality the Beats explored the most extreme,

potentially ecstatic areas of the self to counter the philistine and inhibitive society of culturally repressive America of the cold war era. They attributed superior value to the individual rather than the collective, subjective rather than the objective, the irrational rather than the rational, innocence rather than experience. For them, children, blacks, bums and drug addicts were the respected friends because they preferred art for the heart heather than the head.

Regarding the beats, John Osborn opines:

To be beat is to be defeated, beaten, dead beat, exhausted by the demands of the straight society. It is to be hopped up, to have a quickened heartbeat, in a high risk, go for broke, and shoot the works, all or nothing attitude such as the writers associated with the best jazz music of the day and it is to be hungry for beatitude, that epiphanous breakthrough from quotidian norms to an area of ecstatic consciousness in which the self feels itself to have been momentarily externalized. (186)

Searching for the truth, beauty and mystical experience the Beats focused on the discovery of the erotic, artistic and spiritual self through the use of drugs, casual sex, music and the mysticism of Zen Buddhism. The Beat writers discovered Asian literature exploring the ideas of Zen Buddhism. Although, most of them did not practice Buddhism in any strict form, they borrowed certain Asian literary forms like haiku, a Japanese verse form. They also included satori, the experience of sudden enlightenment and other aspects of Buddhism in their writing. Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* is an example that celebrates direct sensory experience, freedom from conventional

responsibilities, emotional intensity of life of hiking, casual sex, drug use and enlightening processes of Buddhism.

The products of the beat generation writers easily caught the attention of the contemporary media that never gave them the literary value but instead focused on their offensive behaviours, drug use and sex in a very negative way. There are the critics like Arthur M. Saltzman who defend the Beat activities. He opines:

Critics of the movement accused the "beatniks" of embracing anarchy, incoherence, and obscenity for their own sake. However, the movement did capture a generation's dissatisfaction with what it saw as the dull conformity and false values of "square" society. The Beat movement also advocated peace and civil rights, which set the stage for the radical protests of the 1960s. (189)

However, some critics are seemed to mock at the Beats for their social disaffiliation. The Beat Generation, according to these critics, was a bohemianism that lacked a critique, a spirituality that lacked doctrinal authority, a politics that lacked a party. Certain figures particularly, Kerouac had difficulty separating public and private lives in the society. The critic Paul O'Neil, writing for a journal *Life*, noted that many of the beats were, talkers, loafers, passive little conmen, lonely eccentrics, mom-haters, cop-haters, exhibitionists with abused smiles and second mortgages on a bongo drum. For the cultural critic, Irving Howe, the Beats were the pale reflections of their bohemian forebears. Writing in the *Partison Review*, he asserts, in their contempt for mind they are at one with the middle class suburban they think

they scorn. Going in line with them Norman Podhoretz regarded Kerouac's celebration of spontaneity and primitivism as arising from a pathetic poverty of feeling. Mocking at the Beats in very harsh words, he further says, "Beat ideology is hostile to civilizations; it worships primitivism, instinct, energy, blood and leads to the notion that sordid acts of violence are justifiable so long as they are committed in the name of instinct" (Davidson 63). Many of these criticisms come from members of the Old Left who regarded the younger generation's rejection of traditional Marxism and its elevation of lifestyle politics as an oedipal challenge to stable parental authority. In this view, the Beats were regarded as an extension of the antisocial behaviour and juvenile delinquency as being mythologized in some Hollywood films.

After the World War II, American artists of all kinds began to produce works of political and social criticism. The earliest social upheavals and artistic declarations of the Great Depression years changed with the prosperity and turmoil brought by the Second World War (1935-45). And that there was a new generation of American authors, known as Beat Generation which appeared writing in the skeptical, ironic tradition of the earlier realists and naturalists.

The Beat writers used a prose style modeled on the works of Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald, narrative techniques derived from William Faulkner, and psychological insights taken from the writing of Sigmund Freud and his followers. They portrayed the war as a meaningless sacrifice directed by restless martinets and filled with physical and spiritual obscenities. Although the beats went on identifying themselves with those marginalized communities untouched by the post war economic boom and idealized their cultural

products, the energy of the Beat generation died out by the early 1960s. It lived on in many of the countercultural values of the next generation.

Counterculture

The term counterculture refers to an American culture that began as a movement in the 1960s giving emphasis on the idea of personal freedom rejecting the ethics of capitalism, conformity and repressive sexual mores of the contemporary society. Social critics applied the term attempting to characterize the widespread rebellion of many western youths, known as hippies, against the values and behaviours espoused by their parents.

The counterculture's deepest roots lay in the Beat generation sensibilities of the late 1940s and 1950s that chafed under the rigid orthodoxy of the era. Just as New York's Greenwich Village became identified with the beatniks, the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco developed into a Mecca for the counterculture. Regarding counterculture *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History* comments:

The black counterculturalists argued that to overcome the psychic, social and cultural effects of centuries of enforced subordination American Blacks, like their African brothers and sisters, would have to construct and maintain an opposition to the norms and practices of white society that would be as forceful as it was absolute. (252)

In sociology, counterculture is a term used to describe a cultural group whose values and norms of behaviour run counter to those of the contemporary mainstream society. Although distinct countercultural undercurrents exist in all

societies, here the term refers to a more significant, visible phenomenon that reaches critical and persists for a period of time. Specifically, here, it refers to the young rebellious writers and their attitude towards American society after the Second World War. This is a shifted form of Beat Generation of 1950s in America. So it refers to the tendency of going towards the opposite value of the society, which fully occurred in American society in the time of 1960s. Just borrowing the ideas from the Beat Generation movement, counterculture came as a movement in the 1960s. Generally, counterculture enjoys a theological, cultural, attitudinal or material position that does not conform to the accepted social norms. The idea of counterculture began in America as a reaction against the conservative social mores of the 1950s. Various factors came to nurture growing idea of counterculture in the 1960s such as the postwar growth of the American middle class whose materialism the counterculture distained, wide availability of 'the pill' for reliable contraception that reduced the risk of sexual experimentation, the increasing popularity of hallucinogenic drugs like LSD which encouraged introspection and alienation from straight culture, and the Vietnam War which convinced the youths that America had lost its soul.

San Francisco's Flower children, also called "hippies" adopted new styles of dress, experimented with psychedelic drugs, lived communally and developed a vibrant music scene. These styles and behaviours spread quickly from San Francisco and Berkeley to all major American cities and European cities. A countercultural movement gained momentum in which the younger generation began to define itself as a class that aimed to create a new kind of society.

The term counterculture was first introduced into cultural debate by Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1971). Regarding this, the cultural critic Peter Brooker opines counterculture as:

A term associated with the 1960s and early 1970s....It refers to the closely related organizations, networks, communes, music and drug scenes which arose in this period, primarily in the United States, in opposition to the Vietnam War, the power of the 'military-industrial complex' and more generally to the conservative morality of post-war middle America. (42)

The concept of Counterculture is based on the ideas of the beat movement of the earlier decade and on a new generation of cultural theorists, political activists, and gurus as different as Herbert Marcuse, Marshall McLuhan, Susan Sontag, Mao Zedong, Che Guevara, Eldridge Cleaver and Timothy Leary. The groups like women's liberation and civil rights movements were loosely affiliated to the political wing of the counterculture though they were concerned only with sexual and racial oppression.

Everywhere there is the discourse of counterculture, which is informed by the assumption that the dominant society and its conventions are entirely distinct from the true self they degrade and repress. The true self requires to be loosened from and out of the track of the imprisoning grip of dominant society. For white counter culturalists, free speech advocates, antiwar activists, white feminists and hippie freaks such assumption ran very deep. These people were in favor of celebrating the excluded subjectivities. For them that American culture was imbalanced because it only focused on instrumental and showed

insufficient concern for the values of community, expressiveness, caring and with the domain of the sacred.

Counterculture is a culture that goes against the prevailing culture of the society and takes the marginal and oppressed sides of the society. It celebrates the language of the street rather than the so called standard language. It speaks against the strict standard norms of the morality and speaks for the sexual experience and drug use to take them into practice in the public areas. Thus, the concept is an anti-established and anti-traditional literary movement that goes against the conformity and complacency of the capitalist culture. Moreover, the concept of counterculture embraces the idea of heroism and focuses that self-created ideas should not be controlled, denied and exploited in the name of morality and tradition; rather they are to be acknowledged, respected and responded. Thus, counterculture praises the idea of leaderless because it shatters formal structure and formal leadership into pieces.

The physicist Ilya Prigogine in *Counterculture Through the Ages* defines counterculture in a scientific manner as "the cultural equivalent of the third thermodynamic state, the non linear region where equilibrium and symmetry have given way to a complicity so intense as to appear to the eyes as chaos" (2). In this way, counterculture is another culture in the society developed by true self that comes with chaos and uncertainty.

Counterculture and subculture are more or less of the same kind. Both are against the mainstream culture in the society. However, there is difference between counterculture and subculture: subculture arises from the working class whereas counterculture is the product of the middle class. Making the idea

more clear, Phil Cohen says, "I do not think the middle class proceeds subculture, for subcultures are produced not by a dominant culture but by a dominated culture" (85)

Again, we can differentiate counterculture and subculture on the bases of social class and the model they take. Counterculture always resists the dominating culture but subculture takes part in the ideological battle in the society. The British scholars in 1970s found that subcultures are concerned with the class related ideological struggle and are at least integrated affinitive whereas countercultures resist to the dominating institutions and ideologies are concerned with the elite culture. Johan Formas in *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity* differentiates subcultures from countercultures in this way:

The subcultures of the subordinate classes dealt with problems within their parental class culture and did not formulate any general critique of the dominant cultures. Middle class counter cultures on the other hand confronted the crisis of their hegemonic parent culture, provoking them to attack central institution that went beyond the leisure sphere. (119)

Subcultures resist the other cultures being in line with their parent cultures where as countercultures resist with their parent cultures.

Thus, counterculture is going against the dominant culture in the society, and it believes on the extremity of personal freedom, shared possessions, experimentation in drug use, sex and lifestyle, and the balanced condition of ecological system of the world.

The Hippies

The most visible radical element of this counterculture is the "hippies". The hippies were the countercultural youths of the then American society of the 1960s and the mid 1970s, who avoided the cultural values of the mainstream society and lived life going beyond the territory of the strict materialistic conformity of the capitalistic society supporting peace and free love. They adopted hippy alternatives that "included freedom, shared possessions, experimentation in drugs, sexuality, lifestyle, and a return to nature" (Mc Donogh 345). They were also called the freaks or the flower children. These youths rejected materialism, conservative sexual mores and corporate life.

Some hippies formed communes to live as far as outside of the established system as possible. This is one aspect of counterculture which rejected active political engagement with the mainstream and, following the dictate of Timothy Leary to turn on, tune in, and drop out, hoped to change society by dropping out of it. For Leary, "hippies" can be interpreted as to have been that of an anonymous institutional employee who drove to work each morning in a long line of computer cars and drove home each night and drank martinis like several middle-class, liberal, intellectual robots. So they liked to break this monotonous and mechanical life.

As a part of counterculture the hippies were against Vietnam War. They wanted to escape from that suffocating atmosphere of dominant American culture. Writing about the hippies Prof. Dr. Abhi Narayan Subedi in his review entitled "Hippies in the Nepal Mandala" states:

The youths of America who were looking for some mythopoetic space found it in Katmandu. In that sense their visit to the Nepal Mandala was not just accident; it was presaged by many tests and the possibilities of various perceptions meeting together. They carefully avoided becoming part of the new text of American history that is to say the Vietnam War. That is why when the American hippies came to Katmandu they brought with them not only their desire to create a new text of America that they imagined would be ideal but also the necessary accoutrements for it like the dreams and the protest that they sang in Woodstock in 1969, the poems of Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gray Snyder, the prose of Jack Kerouac, the songs of Bob Dylan and Jaan Baez, the rock music of Jimi Hendrix and so on. (163)

Thus, the hippies counterculturelists went countering the mainstream American culture. They managed to popularize the iconoclastic legacy of the Beat writers through the practice of different forms of lifestyles. These youths were playing the drama of politics of subversion.

The hippies practiced the cultural movement of rejection. They celebrated the drug- induced state of existence that blurred the line of reality and dream. The cultural norms and values of the mainstream culture were broken violently. Dr. Subedi reasserts:

The hippies drew heavily on American pop culture especially, acid music and protest. Those who were poets, musicians and

thinkers came to Nepal Mandala and even those who didn't come here had one problematic. They believed in the power of the body, of the physical sensations. Transforming sex into discourse through focusing on sensations and the bodily capacity for pleasure was an interesting part of their philosophy. (168)

Hence, the hippies as an important part of countercultural consciousness rejected the traditional behaviours of the contemporary society. They loved peace and free love. Avoiding the rationalistic thinking and material sophistication they favoured the practice of sensational pleasure, spiritualism and individualism.

Zen Buddhism

Zen Buddhism is a sect of Buddhism known by Japanese name Zen that bases itself on a discipline of meditation. Zen places a great importance on moment-by-moment awareness and seeing deeply into the nature of things by direct experience and considered as one of the products of the Chinese mind after its contact with Indian thought, which was introduced into China in the first century A.D. through the medium of Buddhist teachings. The word Zen is 'Dhyan' in Sanskrit and 'Chan' in Chinese. And, Zen is the Japanese pronunciation of Ch'an. *The Encyclopedia Americana* defines Zen as:

Zen essentially is a search for the Buddha nature within oneself, and its discovery is called satori, or "enlightenment". One must carry out this search with intuitive understanding; intellectually or rational thinking is a detriment, for such thinking only helps us understand the finite. (694)

Zen Buddhism is characterised with its advocacy of a homeless life, its transcendentalism or world-fleeing and life-denying tendency and so on. Rooted in the Chinese and Japanese life of practicality Zen focuses on the earthly and natural materials.

The religious philosopher Thomas Merton compares Zen monks as pilgrims and monastic life as the life of pilgrimage. The Zen monk is the pilgrim who wanders around the world with visits in the monastery. Describing about the Zen monk and how he comes to the monastery, Merton further says:

He comes on foot as a "homeless one", a wanderer, wearing the traditional bamboo hat and straw sandals carrying all his belongings in a small paper-mache box slung round his neck. All he has are his clothes, his razor, his begging bowl, and a couple of books perhaps. There is a small sum of money in his box, enough to pay for his burial if he is found dead by the roadside. On his way to his chosen monastery, the pilgrim will spend the nights sleeping in temples or in roadside shrines, if not in the open fields. (399)

So, for Zen monk, his whole monastic life is a pilgrimage and his stay in the monastery is only one of the incidents in his journey. In the monastery, the monks spend several hours a day sitting for meditation in a full lotus position occupying a small space.

The practice of meditation is the most important thing in Zen Buddhism, which is also called zazen or soto or sitting in meditation. This method focuses on the gradual approach to enlightenment or satori. There is, however, another method called Rinzai that emphasizes the suddenness of the enlightenment experience. Rinzai

focuses on the use of the surprise methods of koan, a type of irrational tale, the meaning of which must be perceived intuitively rather than intellectually, and katsu, the sudden shout or a blow administered with a stick, all attempt to surprise and shock the practitioner out of his ordinary, finite state of mind into intuitive, infinite comprehensive whereby one is at one with the universe.

Besides meditation, in the monastery, the Zen monks used to involve themselves in some practical performances. The monastery was on the principle of complete democracy. All were naturally respected and under the guidance of their master were collectively to engage in some manual labour and in some menial discussing about their content. As Suzuki argues:

What the Zen monks did, besides attending to various practical affairs, both manual and menial, was to listen to the master's occasional sermons, which were short and cryptic, and to ask questions and get answers. The answers, however, were bizarre and full of incomprehensibles, and they were quite frequently accompanied by direct actions. (4)

Enlightenment is freedom of emancipation that can be achieved through Buddhism. As Zen is a school of Buddhism, it is solely based upon the teachings about enlightenment. Zen opens ways to enlightenment through verbal and actional.

Zen insists on the living use of the words not on the dead ones because they believe on handling the thing itself and not an empty abstraction. Zen verbalism focuses on the words that are detached from any kinds of past reminiscences and future illusions. Instead, living words tell about the present conditions attached with

the thing in itself. Zen verbalism concerns with the expression of the most concrete experiences by the use of living words.

The second approach to the enlightenment is actional. So, enlightenment finds meaning in our concrete experiences like eating, drinking, playing and business of all kinds. It also focuses on the teaching by action, or learning by doing. It does not bother to rely on the others and tells us stand on our own. This approach sees futility in the verbal instruction and conceptual presentation. That is why for Suzuki, enlightenment "must be the outgrowth of one's inner life and not verbal implantation brought from the outside" (10). Sometimes, only action enlightens one whereas verbal hardly does.

Zen does how the birds cast their shadows on the water below without any ideas of doing so, while the water reflects the birds just as naturally and unintentionally. Suzuki finds no importance of philosophy and intellect in Zen Buddhism. Making it clear he further says: "Life as we live it is not concerned with generalization. If it were, the intellect would be everything, and the philosopher would be the wisest man" (11). Giving no place for predication and reminiscences Zen Buddhism owes much from Taoism that focuses on the everyday life activities or the actualities of life. The way of enlightenment opens only when one faces the deadlock of intellectualization. So, momentum is important in Zen. It focuses on the idea of immediacy. "Nowness" and "isness" are the times for the Zen.

The idea of tea ceremony is important in Zen Buddhism while elimination of unnecessary is achieved by Zen in its intuitive grasp of final reality, tea advocates the idea of simplicity. The art of tea is the aestheticism of primitive simplicity. The concept of tea was first introduced in Zen literature by the Zen master Eisai (1141-

1215). Eisai, also known as the Father of Tea, brought tea seeds from China and had them cultivated in his friend's monastery grounds. Then, it became an influencing component in Zen Buddhism as wine is in Christianity.

The tea ceremony is also connected with the simplicity of tearoom. Comparing the ideal of tea and Zen, Suzuki states:

Its ideal, to come closer to nature, is realized by sheltering oneself under thatched roof in a room which is hardly ten feet square but which must be artistically constructed and furnished. Whereas Zen also aims at stripping off all the artificial wrappings humanity has devised, supposedly for its own solemnization. (72)

Tea is very much closer to Zen's idea of spiritual satisfaction; however, it praises the simplicity of primitivism. Tea is a simple beverage that helps to keep one's mind fresh and vigilant without any intoxication. Zen keeps one in harmony and gentleness inwardly. Tea is directly connected with the teacup of primitive type, hand made and irregularly shaped. This envisions the scene of soft meditative and restful mode of the Zen monk usually in a shack where soft air and light are admitted through its windows to create the intuitive mode.

The drinking-tea is not just drinking tea but it is the art of cultivation of one's psychosphere or the inner field of consciousness. Multiple meanings are hideous in it. It "is the realization of the spirit of poverty devoid of dichotomy: subject and object, good and evil, right and wrong, honor and disgrace, body and soul, gain and loss and so on" (Suzuki 95).

Thus the concept of tea is similar with the Zen that also talks about poverty that permits no room for anything that is known as Emptiness. The principle of the tea

ceremony is based on the same for no other than the aesthetic appreciation of absolute poverty. The philosophy of tea is the philosophy of poverty or of Sunyata or Emptiness.

Haiku, the shortest form of poem in literature, is another influencing factor in Zen Buddhism. Zen idea of simplicity and avoidance of unnecessary is clearly expressed through haiku. "It consists of seventeen syllabus into which have been cast some of the highest feelings human beings are capable" (Suzuki 227). Like Zen Buddhism, haiku abhors egoism in any form of assertion. It comes through the heavenly connection of the artist who is in a sort of automation with no human interference. Unconscious works here, which is the realm of the artistic impulses and where they are kept securely away from our superficial utilitarian life. Zen also comes out of there. So, it is heavenly. Haiku is an expression of one's inner feeling altogether devoid of the sense of ego one has in his mind. There is sincerity in haiku. In that sense, haiku is a zenman, who, with whole heartedness and much concentration, creates the super reality. With no mind Zen has no thought but has finite treasure in his realm of Unconscious, also called the Cosmic Unconscious.

Haiku truly communicates the author's genuine inner feeling and that there is no artificiality and intellectually calculated scheme for any kind of effect. It is a very much short string of words but is a deep stirring of mind. Suzuki records the quotation of Baso, the founder of modern school of haiku, this way:

The old pond!

A frog jumps in:

The water's sound! (227)

We find many similarities in Beat Zen and Zen Buddhism or any other specific school of Buddhism, such as the meditation, simplicity, spiritual happiness and others.

However, there are some differences between them. The Beats practiced meditation largely without any formal training and guidebooks to Zen meditation. In Buddhism, there's also the chanting of Amitabha's name and extensive use of mandalas. So, Beat Zen practice is very much close to Zen Buddhism. Zen Buddhism is more formal than Beat Zen. And, Beat Zen, developed by American writers, is the Americanization of Zen. It also is a useful term to determine how Zen Buddhism is changing as it is being received into American Society.

III. The Rising of New Culture in *The Dharma Bums*

Introduction

The Dharma Bums presents an idea of searching for the spiritual prosperity in the spiritually bankrupt American society of the 1950s. A section of the society was unheard, not recognized and neglected by the materialist mainstream society and they were rebelling against it from the margin for the fulfillment of their spiritual quest and social recognition. This book is counter to the conformity of the capitalistic society. The whole text is a travelogue in which the first person narrator narrates the story in its spontaneous prose form. The characters in it show the sense of dissatisfaction to the contemporary society through their activities that go against the social mores and values. Various aspects have been dealt with, here, to see *The Dharma Bums* as a countercultural novel.

The Dharma Bums: A Journey to Spiritual Quest

As the title itself suggests *The Dharma Bums* presents a world where people of the high modern time go in search for the spiritual prosperity. They hike and hitchhike in some mischievous efforts for not any specific purposes calling themselves the dharma, the name that is rarely found in America but very common in Asian subcontinents. The characters in the novel stand themselves opposite to the American way of thinking and conformity.

As the novel begins the narrator Ray (Raymond) Smith is introduced as a wanderer coming about wandering through different places. Even before the time the novel makes its start, Ray (Kerouac himself) is noticed to have once been in "Mexico City before the long cheap bus trip across Zacatecas and

Durango and Chihuahua two thousand long miles to the border at El Paso" (Kerouac 6). He goes traveling on and on throughout the novel, it is all not for the commercial business but for the attainment of the eternal freedom in the mind. In his mission of spiritual quest all of his journey can be divided in to three parts: journey towards the Sierra top Matterhorn, that attains him a special kind of spiritual comfort; a homeward journey that makes him enlighten and heighten more in his quest; and finally a journey to the peak of Desolation that makes him a matured and perfect Buddha or the Dharma Bum.

Most of the characters are more or less of the same kind. They are from marginal and are born to be wanderer. "The number one Dharma Bum of them all" (10) Japhy Ryder whom the narrator first meets "walking down the streets in San Francisco" (10) befriends himself with Ray in his mission of spiritual quest to go against the prevailing culture. It is their interest to go away from the big city and the world like the ancient poet Han Shan to be relieved from the sickness caused by the mechanic life of the dense cities of America. Japhy and Ray talk:

"Ray what you got to do is go climb a mountain with me soon.

How would you like to climb Matterhorn?"

"Great! Where's that?"

"Up in the high Sierras." (19)

The prevailing society was boring for the free minds of the beat generation. So, they wanted to escape from the so-called rational and civilized society to get freedom. Their traveling is to quest for the freedom, "to go prowling in the wilderness to hear the voice crying in the wilderness, to find the ecstasy of

stars, to find the dark mysterious secret of the origin of faceless wonderless
crapulous civilization" (33). To give them company to their journey to
Matterhorn Henry Morley, "a bespectacled fellow of great learning but an
eccentric himself, more eccentric and outré than Japhy on the campus, a
librarian, with few friends, but a mountain climber, " (33) also comes as their
partner The suppressed ideas are now found to be outpouring through different
kinds of activities of these beat generation people. The character Henry is one
of them, who talks too much to express his hidden ideas. He is talkative as is
found to be "talking and talking as though to himself "(34). For Japhy, "he is
just an interesting tape recorder" (35). This shows their idea of spontaneity to
counter the prevailing culture of refined language.

Beat Generation mind is heightened to counter the prevailing
mainstream society, which is very much constrained and materially prosperous.
Talking about Kerouac Daniel J. Vargas says: "His excellent novel *The Dharma
Bums* describes a joyous mountain climbing trip he and Snyder went on in
Yosemite in 1955, and captures the tentative, sometimes comic steps he and his
friends were talking towards spiritual realization" (48).

Ray's Journey along with his model Dharma bums Japhy and Henry, to
the high Sierra top is a quest for spiritual prosperity against the prevailing
culture. As the height of the mountain goes up and up, their strength of power
to go against the social norms and values goes up accordingly. In spite of their
sufferings to climb up the mountain, they become able to achieve prime source
of spiritual happiness. Ray describes the journey as:

At one point I had to scramble, like the others, on a narrow ledge, around butt of rock, and it really scared me: the fall was a hundred feet, enough to break your neck, with another little ledge letting you bounce a minute preparatory to a nice good-bye one-thousand-foot drop. (64)

Intellectuals are suffering in the American culture though there is material prosperity. Physical sophistication doesn't give mental satisfaction. But unlike American culture, these beat generation minds are searching for mental happiness out of physical sufferings. Mountains and Rocks are the symbols for the pains and sufferings given by American mainstream culture. Japhy thinks: "Oh! What a life this is, why do we have our poor gentle flesh laid out to such impossible horrors as, huge mountains and rock and empty space?"(67)

Kerouac shows how spiritual pleasure is achieved when one gets to the top of the mountain. That is a mystical feeling of happiness achieved by Japhy who is the only person to get to the top of the Matterhorn. Kerouac records the quotation from Ray, Japhy's mountain climbing companion, as:

Suddenly I heard a beautiful broken yodel of a strange musical and mystical intensity in the wind and looked up, and it was Japhy standing on top of Materhorn peak letting out his triumphant mountain-conquering Buddha Mountain Smashing song of joy. It was beautiful. It was funny, too, up here on the not-so-funny top of California and in all that rushing fog. (67)

Beat generation people wandered and wandered in search of freedom of eternity. Exploring the knowledge about everything they tried to define the

world in their own ways as a world where there is a completely perfect freedom.

The contemporary American society was rushing to meet the goal of its bourgeois policy of capitalism. People's minds and hands were mechanized. No free minds were thinking about themselves. There was no way out to escape from the chain of work, produce and consume. The characters, here, represent the beat generation writers of the time, who felt bored and suffered a lot in the painful situation. They revolted against the social system and yelled against the society. Japhy speaks in a breathless speaking:

[...] see the whole thing is a world full of rucksack wanderers, Dharma bums refusing to subscribe to the general demand that they consume production and therefore have to work for the privilege of consuming, all that crap they didn't really want anyway such as refrigerators, TV sets, cars, at least new fancy cars, certain hair oils and deodorant and general junk you finally always see a week later in the garbage, anyway, all of them imprisoned in a system of work, produce, consume, work, produce, consume, I see a vision of a great rucksack revolution thousands or even millions of young Americans wandering around with rucksacks going up to mountains to pray, making children laugh, and old men glad, making young girls happy and old girls happier, all of 'em Zen Lunatics who go about writing poems that happen to appear in their heads for no reason and also by being kind and also by strange unexpected acts keep giving visions of eternal freedom to everybody and to all living

creatures, that's what I like about you Goldbook and Smith you
two guys from the East Coast which I thought was dead. (77-78)

The beatniks were dying of traveling from place to place not for any specific purposes but only for their complacency to escape from the social system, which was so mechanical and boring. Kerouac's purpose is the same in his profound work *On the Road* where Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise talk:

"[...] Sal, we gotta go and never stop going till we get there"

"Where we going, man?"

"I don't know but gotta go." (238)

As Dean is pathfinder for Sal, the narrator, in *On the Road*, Japhy is the source of inspiration for Ray in *The Dharma Bums*. It is Japhy who inspires Ray to climb up the Desolation Peak where "it wasn't going to be a pleasant day's horseback riding in all the downpour" (*Dharma* 197). It is his final trip in the novel, which in a sense symbolizes struggling against the American mainstream culture of the contemporary time and rising of the freedom of free minds. His success to reach to the top of the peak is his success to escape from the corruptible and culturally degraded society. It is what that symbolizes a new territory of his mind, undisturbed and unbothered by others. He describes his pleasant feeling of mind as:

By and by we were up above timberline particularly the meadow gave way to grim rocks and suddenly there was snow on the ground to the right and to the left, the horses were sloshing in a sleety foot of it, you could see the water holes their hoofs left, we were really way up there now. (181)

Considering himself "a religious wanderer" (6), Ray becomes successful in his mission of searching for personal happiness and expresses his gratitude for Japhy: "Thank you forever for guiding me to the place where I learned all" (191). Thus beat generation activities were defying the norms of the so-called rational society of the 1950s. Their wandering in search for eternal freedom works as a part of counterculture in *The Dharma Bums*.

Zen Buddhism as a Counterculture

The practice of Buddhist religion worked as a counterculture in American Christian orthodoxy in the 1950s American society. We cannot find the beat generation writers practicing traditional kind of Buddhism. In the novel *The Dharma Bums* and *On the Road* as well, the characters are from high modern time; they try to practice the Buddhism but that cannot be the traditional Buddhism; they are the Zen Lunatics; "their Church was Church of Buddha" (*Dharma* 91). Zen school of Buddhism focuses on the direct experience of the nature of things and believes on making every moment an extraordinary one. Sexuality, drug use, drinking alcohol, jazz music, acts of stealing and haiku are what that makes Beat Zen different from Zen Buddhism however, Beat Zen owes much to the Zen Buddhism.

According to Zen, word cannot express everything. Action can be the appropriate means for expressing the ideas of nothingness i. e. beyond the limit. So, opposite to the philosophical method of teaching, Kerouac has been able to exemplify the method of teaching by action and learning by doing. Kerouac does this when Japhy teaches Ray what 'Yabyum' is. Ray is taught about 'Yabyam' perfectly with Japhy's sexual indulgences with Princess. Here he

perfectly teaches with action. Ray also acquires some enlightening experiences through his direct involvement in the action. Kerouac, here, artistically draws the observatory quotes from Japhy as:

"Here's what 'Yabyam' is, Smith, said Japhy, and he sat crosslegged on the pillow on the floor and motioned to Princess, who came over and sat down on him facing that saying nothing for a while. Japhy wasn't at all nervous and embarrassed and just sat there in perfect form just as he was supposed to do. "This is what they do in the temples of Tibet. It's a holy ceremony, it's done just like this in front of chanting priests. People pray and recite Om Mani Pahdme Hum, which means Amen the Thunderbolt in the Dark Void. I'm the thunderbolt and Princess is the dark void, you see." (25)

The American society was sophisticated with the postmodern technologies and high bungalow but spiritually sterile. Buddhism became a fierce blow to the contemporary society. For the beat generation people it became a useful solution for the mechanical and spiritually corrupted social systems. Kerouac "found enlightenment through the Buddhist religion and tried to follow Snyder's lead in communing with nature" (Vargas 48).

Kerouac, here, skillfully shows the attitude of rejection towards the reservoir of thoughts and memories of any thing. Thinking, reminiscences and predications have no place in Zen Buddhism. Beat Zen follows that. Rosie is such a character who keeps predictions in her mind and becomes worried about

the future. Kerouac presents a discussion about for or against the authority through Rosie and Ray this way:

"Now they know everything about you"

" Who?"

"You".

"Me?"

"You, and Alvah, and Cody, and that Japhy Ryder, all of you, and me, everybody that hangs around the place. We're all going to be arrested tomorrow if not sooner". (87)

Rosie is a failure character in the novel because she is in line with the prevailing cultural attitude. Her thinking and reminiscences make her worried, and she loses and is defeated. Philosophy and intellect which people of high modern time support are nothing to gain the enlightenment. Buddhism reflects that kind of phenomenon of civilized society. Kerouac projects Rosie's pathetic and horrible situation here. She cuts to bleeding herself and is killed when "The young Irish cop made a flying tackle and first got a hold of her bathrobe but she fell out of it and fell naked to the sidewalk six flights below"(89). Cops are the thoughts in her mind, which come as representative of the authority that kills her life. The intellect and the philosophy are what modern so-called civilized mainstream culture is based upon. Young generations, like Rosie, are destined to be victimized by the mainstream culture.

In the same way one should free themselves from any kind of worldly senses. Escaping from the senses is going beyond the limit. That is

emancipation and that is no less than the freedom. All the senses define something, but in the absence of the senses where is the existence of something? So there is nothing. So in nothing there is everything. Beat Zen is following the principle. So they are opposite to the present way of defining the things. Psyche symbolizes all the worldly senses which Japhy is ready to escape from and becomes the Buddha disciple. Kerouac describes:

Japhy and Psyche presumably, made love in the cabin and then she began to cry and insist she wanted to go to Japan too and the captain ordered everybody off but she wouldn't get off and the last thing was: the boat was pulling away from the pier and Japhy came out on deck with Psyche in his arms and threw her clean off the boat, he was strong enough to throw a girl ten feet, right on the pier, where Sean helped catch her. (169)

Becoming Buddhist is an act of authenticizing their activities: hiking and hitchhiking, climbing the mountains, involving in drugs, sex and stealing. The contemporary society was regarding them immoral and unsociable. But the beatniks went against the prevailing social system taking support from the Buddhism. Japhy hikes from Frisco to Seattle shaving his head bared "To be like a bhikku" (132). While Zen Buddhists traditionally follow the teachings and adaptations of their Zen masters who, in turn, relay on the teachings of their particular sects of Zen Buddhism, where did Kerouac and the Beats get their authority to create Beat Zen on their own and follow it. Since, Kerouac did not seek out a Zen master, who could have guided his study of Zen, aided in meditative practice, and illustrated teachings with examples from the legends of the Zen patriarchs; he was left to find his own authority to create Beat Zen. In

his *Beat Zen, Square Zen, and Zen*, Watts presents his ideas on how the Beat generation derived its authority as:

The cool, fake-intellectual hipster searching for kicks, name-dropping bits of Zen and jar jargon to justify a disaffiliation from society which is in fact just ordinary, callous exploitation of other people... . They are the shadow of a substance, the low-level caricature which always attends spiritual and cultural movements, carrying them to extremes which their authors never intended.

(18)

Similarly, Kerouac, in adapting and 'Beatifying' Zen Buddhism studied the Buddhist texts available to him in the 1950s, paraphrased and elaborated on these texts and followed the examples of Buddhist figures who typified Kerouac's idea of the fellaheen hero. It is Kerouac's interest to show Ray, very much influenced with the prayer of Saint Teresa in *The Dharma Bums* and the poet Han Shan, "a Chinese scholar who got sick of the big city and the world and took off to hide in the mountains" (18) a thousand years ago. Because Han San "was a poet, mountain man, a Buddhist dedicated to the principle of meditation on the essence of all things, a vegetarian too" (20), his poem "Cold Mountain" written in Chinese signs describes about the vivid picture of mountain paths, creeks, grass, trees and clouds of ancient China. Thus, the influence of Han Shan shows the love of ancient tradition of Oriental society and the love of nature as well in postmodern time. That Han Shan is the most influential figure for Beat Zen, Kerouac introduces him here through Snyder's "Cold Mountain" (18) poem. The hermit poet is the model of Beat Zen philosophy and behaviour.

Kerouac's interpretation of Zen Buddhism according to his own meditations can be seen as an echo of the Buddha's initial enlightenment when Gautama, without benefit of a teacher or doctrine, is said to have discovered the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Kerouac's own interpretations of Zen Buddhism can be seen in this light as his own struggle for enlightenment without extraneous aid of a Zen master.

The practice of meditation, also called zazen, is very much important in Zen Buddhism in which there is gradual process to enlightenment. In *The Dharma Bums*, Ray is found meditating in the beach sitting "crosslegged in the sand and contemplated" (8) about his life because he is "a great mysterious Bodhisattva" (12). Gradual change to Ray's enlightenment is seen throughout the novel. Ray's inability to be on top of the Matterhorn brings him a kind of revelation as he realizes himself that, "it's impossible to fall off mountains you fool" (68) about which Morley reacts as, "Ah a little satori for Smith today" (69). Here, Kerouac emphasizes on the practice of Zen Buddhism showing the gradual change towards the perfection but not necessarily towards the sudden enlightenment.

Kerouac has been able to put himself in the Buddhist stand to give the beat activities an authenticity. Buddhism, which in itself is the ancient religion of about six century B.C., worships primitivism as its motto and supports a full-fledged freedom. Talking about real human values Kerouac brings Ray to state:

[...] when I discovered Buddhism and all I suddenly felt that I had lived in a previous lifetime innumerable ages ago and now because of faults and sins in that life-time I was being degraded to

a more grievous domain of assistance and my karma was to be born in America where nobody has any fun or believes in anything, especially freedom. (27)

Kerouac's support of Buddhism is his desire for freedom through the practice of primitive human activities which modern society thinks immoral and inhumanity. Kerouac's characters are inspired by the Buddha teaching that makes them safe from the misinterpretation of the society. Ray "was just interested in the First of Sakyamuni's four noble truths: "All life is suffering. And to an extent interested in the third, The suppression of suffering can be achieved" (12). This inspires him to go ahead in his mission of struggling against the prevailing culture. The idea of trikaya or the Three Bodies is important which refers to the dharma-kaya, body of essence; sambhog kaya, the body of communal enjoyment as it appears to bodhisattvas. They can see it as a symphony of sound and light that radiates from every pore it illuminates the entire universe. The third one is the nirvana kaya, the body of transformation that explains historical penances. The characters Ray, Japhy, Alvah and Morley represent the different bodies of the trikaya.

Kerouac skillfully relates Buddhism in the service of real human life. Buddhism concerns only the life serving things, which are the mere trivial matter for the so called rational people. Kerouac describes Japhy's performance as:

[...] With the banging of the big frying pan on it and chanting "Buddham saranam gochhami... Dhammam saranam gochhami... Sangham saranam gochhami" and yelling "Come on,

boy, your pancakes are ready! Come and get it! Bang bang
bang..." (135)

This way, Kerouac takes Buddhism to go against the prevailing social norms and values.

Breaking the Order

Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* goes breaking the laws of the contemporary bourgeois society as in *On the Road*, his another influencing work, beat manifesto. In various respects, the Beats were a continuation of Bohemian movement that has an extended history outside the mainstream culture. Generally, bohemians are living an unconventional life in the society. Because the established rules and regulations were irritating the free minds of the young generation of the time, they went on breaking the systems to find freedom. The minority group rejected the mainstream authority by involving in the acts of stealing, drugs, jazz, purposeless wanderings and sexual promiscuity.

America was gaining its power in the world by the use of its deadly weapons to kill the people. The writers like Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg were writing against such American policy. Instead, they focused on the food and then life-serving things. As Ray Smith (Jack Kerouac) is serious about Japhy who "was always so dead serious about food instead of silly rockets and machines and explosives using everybody's food money to blow their heads off anyway" (*Dharma* 170), the novel shows a great disapproval towards the American capitalistic tendency of corruption using weapon power.

In the time when the world was competing for war and weapons Kerouac's intention was to break that notion and give emphasis on livelihood. The reference of

the president Harry Truman is important, here, who was displaying weapons and military materials to prove America as the superpower of the world, but at the same time her own citizens were very sad about them and showing hatred towards the capitalist systems. In Kerouac's next novel *On the Road* Sal and his friends express their disgrace towards the exhibition of the weapons in Washington. As Sal narrates:

We arrived in Washington at dawn. It was the day of Harry Truman's inauguration for his second terms. Great displays of war might were lined along Pennsylvania Avenue as we rolled by in our battered boat. There were B-29s, PT boats, artillery, all kinds of war materials that looked murderous in the snowy grass; the last thing was a regular small ordinary lifeboat that looked pitiful and foolish. Dean slowed down to look at it. He kept shaking his head in awe. "What are these people up to? Harry's sleeping somewhere in this town...." (135)

Kerouac represents the marginalized people who were wandering through the streets protesting the cruelty and inhumanity of the mainstream culture.

Kerouac brings an assembly of characters who represent marginality to identify a subculture itself. The subculture was the Beat in which the central character Japhy who, "was a kid from eastern Oregon brought up in a log cabin deep in the woods... from the beginning a woods boy, an axman, farmer, interested in animals and Indian lore" (*Dharma* 10). Ray Smith, the narrator and Kerouac himself, is introduced himself as a single parent boy in the novel. Kerouac gives a detail account of most of his characters. The bum, Ray meets in L.A., is "an ex-Marine from Paterson New Jersey" (93) whom he finds as "a great voluble bum, and a bum who didn't drink and he was an idealistic hobo" (93). Contemporary ways of life used to

make people suffer. Human being is not only intelligent but also an animal in reality. But the authority liked to suppress the animalistic behaviour of the people in the society. The beat generation movement turned out to be the reaction against it with the solution for the diseases and sufferings of human beings. The prototype of Ray, that ex-Marine bum says: "That's all there is to it, that's what I like to do. I'd rather hop frights around the country and cook my food out of tin cans over wood fires, than be rich and have a home or work. I'm satisfied" (93).

Kerouac strikes against the medicinal system of the contemporary society. Modern medical treatment uses the highly electrical technologies and instruments, which, in the name of healing one disease, leaves others unhealed. For Kerouac, the only healing method is beatitude that emphasizes on nature and natural things. Kerouac gives examples of dangerous diseases like phlebitis and thrombophlebitis which make people suffer not only in one part of the body but in many parts. It is symbolic to the American capitalist system that was making many young generation minds like birds out of wings. There was no way out to find the solution in such a mechanized bourgeois society except going counter to its culture. The bum's solution, "Just stand up on your head three minutes a day or mebbe five minutes"(94), gives emphasis to the nature. Only natural things can be the solution for any diseases. In addition to that the bum further suggests:

"Just do that every day and your phlebitis will go away like my arthritis did. ... Also, before you go to bed at night, have hot milk and honey. I always have a little jar of honey... and I put the milk in a can and the honey, and heat it over the fire, and drink it. Just those two things." (94)

Ray's friend in L.A. is nameless but a bum. That signifies numerous people in America are suffering from American bourgeois culture. It is the teaching from the Buddha to counter that culture. For that they go to the hand of nature where there is the way to escape from the constraining society.

Rejecting the contemporary healing system Kerouac brings a powerful imagery through Ray's way of treatment to his mother in a very mystic and natural way. It is "a brandy bottle" (117) of medicine he finds in his magic visions through his meditation that completely heals his mother's dead serious coughing. That he makes out of some petals of some herb around his house. The pain of his mother is what mother America is suffering in that time. The only solution of all suffering Kerouac sees is going to nature and using it with Buddhist philosophy. And also it suggests that by curing the sickness of his mother Ray violates the way of medical practices in the high modern time.

The Beatniks were bringing social unrest violating the social rules and regulations. Most of their activities broke rules of the so called rationalized American society as the characters do in *The Dharma Bums*. Their activities start from family to the society and personal to the public. Ray's activities in his house bring unrest in his family. The images of sleeping outside his home "on the back porch with its six windows looking out on the winter barren cotton field and the pine woods beyond, leaving all the windows open" (105) and his walking along "the wrong side of the road" (171) all suggest the breakdown of the existing social rules to find freedom. He counters the rational norms and values when he is in his "swim shirts, barefooted, wild-haired, in the red fire dark, singing, swigging wine, spitting, jumping, running" (8). Even the way of drinking water violates the conventional way. Explaining it as Ray says: "belly down and dunked our heads down, hair wet, and drank deep as the

water splashed in our faces, like sticking your head by the jet of a dam" (49) suggests us a direct violation of the so called human civilization. Ray's relieving of water in the dirty ground of construction is a severe fault for the "Mexican watchman with an official uniform" (99) who threatens to take action as the state police. Here the watchman is an agent of the authority of bourgeois society and the dirty ground is suggestive of decadence of the capitalistic system.

The members of the beat generation can't help involving themselves in stealing the things, drug use, sexual activities and jazz. The citizen used to earn money and always liked to be rich people. But the beats never dreamed of becoming millionaire instead left their jobs and run their lives stealing the things. While going to California at El Paso there is a bar where Ray encounters the gay child like Mexicans one of whom, as Ray says, "stole a few things from my bag of purchases but I didn't care" (123). It seems stealing is a normal thing among the beatniks. Thefts are a dismal anticipation of the youth culture, an absolute disregard for property, especially when institutionally owned, and the noncommittant argument that property rights are invalid because entire economic system is based on exploitation. Kerouac presents this kind of tendency in a very precise way in his next novel *On the Road* in which central character Dean Moriarty is said to have stolen "five hundred cars" (223) in his life time. He shows his special talent in stealing the cop's cars. Sal Paradise narrates:

Dean stood right in back of him, listening and saying, "Ah yass, ah yass." The cops went off to check. Dean came in the bar and rocked back and forth with the poor spastic kid... And he rushed out.

Simultaneously a cop rushed in and said a car stolen from downtown Denver was parked in the driveway. People discussed it in knots. From the window I saw Dean jump into the nearest car and roar off, and not

a soul noticed him. A few minutes later he was back in an entirely different car, a brand-new convertible. "This one is a beaut!" he whispered in my ear. The other one coughed too much—I left it at the crossroads, saw that lovely parked in front of a farmhouse. Took a spin in Denver. Come on, man, let's all go riding. (221)

The marginal people were the subject of the negligence in the highly commercialized society. Kerouac has successfully dismantled that kind of tendency of superiority feeling through this novel. That is why his characters do not compromise in any things for their freedom.

Today's people are disregarding about ecology. Kerouac's intention is for the balanced ecosystem in the world. He tries to break the disturbances caused by the imbalanced ecosystem. The author seems very worried about the global changing and bringing of its disorders in the living being of the world. He not only breaks the notion of literary tradition but also gives the message of improvement in the global environment through his writing. Here, Kerouac brings Japhy to speak:

Know what I'm gonna do? I'll do a new long poem called 'Rivers and Mountains Without End' and just write it on and on on a scroll and unfold on and on with new surprises and always what went before forgotten, see, like a river, or like one of them real long Chinese silk paintings that show two little men hiking in an endless landscape of gnarled old trees and mountains so high they merge with the fog in the upper silk void. I'll spend three thousand years writing it, it'll be packed full of information on soil conservation, the Tennessee Valley

Authority, astronomy, geology, Hsuan Tsung's travels, Chinese painting theory, reforestation, Oceanic ecology and food chains. (157)

Kerouac is tired of the modern civilization and its use of high technology but is tireless to talk about the ecologically perfect world full of boundless images. He seems to be surrealistic in his writing because he goes beyond the reality that is super reality. The idea of writing the endless poem like river and mountain for three thousand years is his enthusiastic vision of the perfect world.

Calling the so-called civilized people spiritually bankrupt Japhy says to Ray: "The closer you get to real matter, rock air fire and wood, boy, the more spiritual the world is. All these people thinking they're hardheaded materialistic practical types, they don't know shit about matter, their heads are full of dreamy ideas and notions" (162).

Breaking the idea of whole way of thinking Kerouac proposes the idea of transcendentalism for the freedom and spiritual prosperity. The sense organs are not sufficient for the complete whole of knowledge. As Ray thinks the material world is nothing but "belongs to the same emptiness" (109). People are habitual to see the things in relation with the perception of the sense organs. It is Kerouac's tactfulness to make us believe in the spiritual things. Ray's realization of "Everything is empty but awake! Things are empty in time and space and mind" (114) is important for understanding the things going beyond this material notion of seeing the things. Here, Ray and his brother-in-law converse about the emptiness of the things this way:

"Look ... if the things were empty how could I feel this orange, in fact taste it and swallow it, answer me that one."

"Your mind makes out the orange by seeing it, hearing it, touching it, smelling it, tasting it and thinking about it but without this mind, you call it, the orange would not be seen or heard or smelled or tasted or even mentally noticed, it's actually, that orange, depending on your mind to exist! Don't you see that? By itself it's a no-thing, it's really mental, it's seen only of your mind. In other words it's empty and awake." (114-15)

Thus, Kerouac is able to break the traditional thinking about the existence of the thing. He gives us a new way to see how the thing exists.

In Kerouac's writing we find celebration of every event taking place in every moment. Every moment necessarily takes care of itself as it occurs. The faith in the moment is based on the knowledge that past and future are not separate frames of reference, but are, instead, part of the present itself. There are not separate times, but one time, and that time is now.

Kerouac's characters do not fix in a territory of time, space and mind. They violate the routine life and mechanistic way of life of high modern age. Kerouac, in *The Dharma Bums*, has shattered the routine life which is described as: "Sharpen your pencils, straighten your ties, shine your shoes and button your flies, brush your teeth, comb your hair, sweep the floor, eat blueberry pies, open your eyes..."(82). Kerouac's persona Ray breaks the conventional way of life in his home involving himself in different activities. As he describes:

I got so mad I stomped off into the woods, it was a Sunday afternoon, and resolved to sit there without food till midnight and come back and

pack my things in the night and leave. But in a few hours my mother was calling me from the back porch to supper, I wouldn't come. (113)

Thus, Kerouac seems to demolish the established culture and traditions and start a new kind of culture where people are free to make their rule by themselves. They can run their lives as per their wishes and desires. The beatniks are busy in the night and sleep in day time. While Ray is hiking on the way to California, he is not concerned about the time because he "just kept walking along the mainline track for a few miles... It was now about one a.m."(121). Mostly, they work out in midnights. Ray describes, "[...] about midnight, Coughlin and I and Alvah got together and decided to buy a big gallon jug of Burgundy and go bust in on Japhy in his shack"(22).

Kerouac uses spontaneity as an asset to counter the mainstream literary writing tradition. Here, he uses spontaneous prosaic style rejecting the established style of refinement and decoration. We find actual working of mind, here. Rejecting revision and selection process we find him writing in his spontaneous prosaic style. He does not hesitate to include even minor and trivial matters as he goes on writing the novel. The continuous wandering is also symbolical to his writing. Bringing the references from the traditional writers and their works, he establishes his own tradition in prose writing. *The Dharma Bums* cannot be an exception to that; as Kerouac quotes Ray: "Trails are like that: you're floating along in a Shakespearean Arden paradise and expect to see nymphs and fluteboys, then suddenly you're struggling in a hot broiling sun of hell in dust and nettles and poison oak... just like life" (166). Trails are the tradition, which the writers have followed. But the beat generation writers, denying following the tradition, struggle to make their own tradition establishing their own styles.

Kerouac had a close relation with jazz culture, which was different from American white culture. Jazz music originated from black culture helped some white writers to associate forms for their expressions, which were more vital, alive and honest than the mainstream literature. The novel is also a violation of the academic prose and its styles, which resembles the quality of jazz music, which was revolutionary and represented as the freedom of expression. Highlighting and involving in the jazz culture is a way to counter the mainstream culture. Kerouac observes the celebration of some marginal literary groups in *The Dharma Bums*. He quotes Ray as:

It was a great night, a historic night in more ways than one. He and some other poets (he also wrote poetry and translated Chinese and Japanese poetry into English) were scheduled to give a poetry reading at the Gallery Six in town. They were all meeting in the bar and getting high. But as they stood and sat around I saw that he was the only one who didn't look like a poet, though poet he was indeed. The other poets were either hornrimmed intellectual hepcats with wild black hair like Alvah Goldbook, or delicate pale handsome poets like Ike O'shay (in a suit), or out-of-this-world genteel-looking Renaissance Italians like Francis DaPavia (who looks like a young priest), or bow-tied wild-haired old anarchist fuds like Rheinhold Cacoethes, or big fat bespectacled quiet booboos like Warren Coughlin. And all the other hopeful poets were standing around, in various costumes, worn-at-the-sleeves corduroy jackets scuffly shoes, books sticking out of their pockets. But Japhy was in rough workingman's clothes he'd bought secondhand in Goodwill stores to serve him on mountain climbs and

hikes and for sitting in the open at night, for campfires, for hitchhiking up and down the Coast. (11)

The novel deals with different subcultures of jazz music and other poetry, which are closely related with the black culture. The greater emphasis is on expressions of creativity, spontaneity and originality. Jazz is the advocacy of freedom. Here, the singer is free to cry loudly and widely. Kerouac portrays jazz party involving his characters and other real literary figures of the contemporary time.

The characters are prominent contemporary literary figures of America where Allen Ginsberg (Alvah Goldbook) was writing his rebellious poem Howl (Wail). Kenneth Rexroth (Rheinhold Cacoethes) was working as a critic as well as exploring the San Francisco Poetry, Gary Snyder (Japhy Ryder) was a scholar and translator of Chinese and Japanese poetry in to English and Jack Kerouac (Ray Smith) being the author himself. They were the leaders of the beat generation writers who brought revolution in American literature.

Kerouac is an iconoclastic prose writer. Instead of following the traditional way of writing he explored ideas from the margin in his own styles. The exploration of Asian literature is an asset to measure him as an iconoclastic writer. Kerouac showing his preference in haiku rejects the lyrical and sugarcoated quality of academic poetry. Instead, traditional poetry was lofty of abstract ideas like love, politics and philosophy. Haiku is the shortest poem in the world literature with full of imagery and concrete ideas that we find in our environment. Haiku rejects any unnecessary decoration in its form. Introduced through Asian literature haiku rejected the American mainstream literature. That is why Kerouac shows his interest in haiku. He quotes Japhy:

A real haiku's gotta be as simple as porridge and yet make you see the real thing, like the greatest haiku of them all probably is the one that goes 'The sparrow hops along the veranda, with wet feet.' By Shiki. You see the wet footprints like a vision in your mind and yet in those few words you also see all the rain that's been falling that day and almost smell the wet pine needles. (48)

As jazz focuses on the freedom of spontaneity haiku, without any literary devices or fancies, gives emphasis on the super reality of our life. Both are the subjects of interest for Kerouac to demolish the notion of prevailing literary tradition.

Kerouac's characters are homeless and are sheltering in old shakes and cottages, which are established under old trees. By this Kerouac likes to show his interest in the simplicity of primitivism. To describe Japhy's cottage, he quotes Ray:

[...] Japhy lived in this own shack which was infinitely smaller than ours, about twelve by twelve, with nothing in it but typical Japhy appurtenances that showed his belief in the simple monastic life—no chairs, at all, not even one sentimental rocking chair, but just straw mats. In the corner was his famous rucksack with cleaned up pots and pans... .(16)

Ray is received with a cup of tea in Japhy's peaceful shack where he himself is found to be with "a peaceful cup of tea at his side" (17). The idea if tea is important, as it helps one keep his mind away from illusion and drowsiness. It helps them to keep always fresh and vigilant with out any intoxication. Tea is habitual with them. Even on the way to mountaintop they quench their thirst with tea. Japhy and Ray enjoy the tea party. Ray describes: "[...] stuck a long stick tight down under a few big rocks and

made himself something to hang the tea pot on and pretty soon the water was boiling and he poured it out steaming into the tin pot and had cups of tea with our tin cups" (54). Tea is a solution for the tiredness and burden of our mind. It soothes our mind as herb cures the diereases. The shack is related with the tea room which is peaceful and meditative and filled with the simplicity of primitivism.

Thus, here, Kerouac's job is praise worthy for its profound attempts to break the established order of the bourgeois culture. Diverting the system of the traditional society that rejects freedom, Kerouac has been able to make the mainstream culture fall down and shatter into pieces.

The Perfection of Charity

People were suffering from inhumanity, insensitivity, cruelty and domination of highly commercialized society of the post war era, which focused on money, commerce and material accumulation. America was gaining its material prosperity in the world but culturally and morally it was very much degraded and devoid of humanity and spirituality. Development in industries and technologies provided people ample opportunities for job. The society was highly competitive and its people and their activities were like a machine. Financial viability turned people into complacency that brought them selfishness, helplessness and uncaring about others. The society was like a monster trying to devour the innocent and imaginative people of delicate sensibilities. Those who were the members of the beat generation brought a lifestyle practicing the works of charity, which was against the conventional values of the society.

Kerouac's characters who are the members of the beat generation practise the works of perfect charity breaking the monotony of the American capitalistic culture.

Violating the tendency Kerouac's main character Japhy Ryder comes with "his tremendous and tender sense of charity" (*Dharma* 61) who "was always giving things, always practicing what the Buddhists call the Paramita of Dana, the perfection of charity" (61). The beat generation people discovered their own culture directly opposite to that of prevailing mainstream culture shattering the prevailing social norms of earning much, becoming rich and living materially sophisticated lifestyle in the corporate American society. The charity works like helping and caring for others were included in beat practice. The sense of perfection of charity is revealed when Kerouac quotes Diamond Sutra as: "Practice charity without holding in mind any conceptions about charity, for charity after all is just a word" (6). Ray's service of food to "a thin old little bum" (5) whom he meets while going to Santa Barbara from L.A., shows his work of charity. Similarly, when Ray, Japhy and Morley set out their journey to Matterhorn, Japhy's special caring about them with food enough for three of them and climbing boot for Ray, is very important in regard to the practice of charity.

The idea of charity has been skillfully illustrated in the novel through the keen observation of Japhy's behaviour. Ray describes:

[...] he cleaned out the rest of the chocolate pudding but made sure that I got most of it ... he made sure his sleeping bag was farther away from the fire than mine so I would sure to be warm. He was always practicing charity. In fact he taught me, and a week later I was giving him nice new undershirts I'd discovered in the Goodwill Store. He'd turn right around and make me a gift of a plastic container to keep food in. (61)

Charity works shouldn't necessarily be more Christmasy and glittering instead they should be perfect with the purpose of utility to the needy people. No selfishness is there. Japhy's practice of perfect charity comes from Eastern religion. It is a fierce blow to the benefit-seeking business-oriented capitalistic society. For Ray, Japhy's way of giving the gifts "was charming; there was nothing glittery and Christmasy about it, but almost sad, and sometimes his gifts were old beat-up things but they had the charm of usefulness and sadness of his giving" (61).

Charity is need-based. Otherwise it is not. "And I'm not working tomorrow so we'll cut some firewood for Sean"(131), Japhy says to Ray "That's all he wants you to do" (131). With his lofty ideas Kerouac violently attacks the American capitalistic commercial mentality in a very artistic way through his great voluble novel *The Dharma Burns*.

IV. Conclusion

Examination of the key issues surrounding countercultural elements and the clues regarding beat generation in *The Dharma Bums* clearly reveals a single important theme: the text is a countercultural text in the contemporary American society. The elements of Buddhism, purposeless excessive wanderings, indulgence in sex and drug, disobedience of the values, stealing and the practice of charity are the key elements of the text that help us to see the text as a countercultural document. Bebop and jazz music, excessive hiking and hitchhiking and breaking moral system of the society signify the entire quest for freedom. Desire comes from the genuine soul that is always true. It gives the spiritual prosperity in the materially prosperous American society. It tries to loose the people from the chain of conformity and constrained society. Now, it is not difficult to see Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* as a countercultural novel. The central characters make Journey to escape from the boredom of conformity of modern society. By this they show their profound dissatisfaction to the prevailing mainstream society of the 1950s. As they explore some new territories in the worldly places, in the same way they become able to achieve spiritual satisfaction by subverting the tendency of mainstream culture that was identified as the materially sophisticated but spiritually sterile.

The characters in the novel represent the beat generation writers of the time. They adopted unconditional life styles and went to counter the mainstream culture as rebel. Because their activities were considered as immoral and irrational they, went in the hand of Zen Buddhism to authenticating their activities. Buddhism is a counterculture for Christianity. Their activities like drug use, sexualities, drinking and stealing are concerned

with the spirituality. In the quest of eternal freedom they emphasize on their personal happiness. They do what ever they like, breaking the boundary of the earlier established culture and tradition.

Kerouac is interested in the jazz music that represents the black culture because it is important for its free expression of creativity, originality and spontaneity; it helps him to counter the prevailing culture. Taking the characters from marginal group and their distinct lifestyle Kerouac has been able to revolutionize the world with what he calls "the rucksack revolution". It has put a question mark to the complacent bourgeois culture of the suffocating capitalistic American society that stood for materialism, suppression and cruelty.

The Dharma Bums centers on the idea of counterculture dealing with how the Beat Generation people involve themselves in the activities like jazz, bebop, drug, communal living, frenetic travel, anarchistic dropout politics, religious experimentation, anti-materialistic ascetic lifestyle and criminalities, and how they explored the most extreme potentially ecstatic areas of the self to counter the philistine and inhibitive society of culturally repressive America of the Cold War era. The novel is radically different from that of narrow and exhausted mode of expression of the literary establishment and has become the milestone in the literary tradition of counterculture.

Kerouac's *The Dharma Bums* has been found as a work that is important for its idea of the perfection of charity or Paramita of Dana. The tendency of loving and caring for other has been typically exemplified through its characters. One is always found for the service of others. They have the attitude

of helpfulness without any preconception. Lots of imageries with lofty ideas prove that it is a countercultural novel in the postmodern world. Moreover, the exploration of Asian literature like haiku and adaptation of Oriental lifestyle suggest a profound dissatisfaction to the mainstream capitalistic culture.

Kerouac's love of nature and idea of primitive simplicity are subject to study of counterculture in the postmodern world of high technology and material sophistication. Anyway, Kerouac has become successful in his mission of searching for the spiritual prosperity.

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