PREFACE

The present study is an attempt to bring out Buddhist consciousness in the four novels of Jack Kerouac i.e. Visions of Gerard, Tristessa, The Dharma Bums and Desolation Angels. Jack Kerouac is a key figure in Beat Movement and his insight into the problems faced by America and the world and his belief that Buddhism offers solution to these problems, generated interest in me for his writings, making me undertake the present project.

The introductory chapter surveys the American and world scene that led to the rise of Beat Generation, with its acceptance of voluntary poverty, taking to bohemian life, as a protest against civilization which is characterized by production and consumption. Chapter II highlights how suffering forms the warp and woof in Kerouac's two novels, Visions of Gerard and Tristessa, embodying the first of Buddha's four Noble Truths. Chapter III deals with Zen Practice of meditation which leads to Zen 'Satori'. Chapter IV is deli...
Bodhisattvahood, and brings out how Buddhist consciousness is exhibited in Desolation Angels. Kerouac's evaluation as a novelist is made in Chapter V.

There is a vast corpus of literature available on Buddhist philosophy but Buddha's life and his philosophy does not find much treatment in literature, barring that great piece of writing Siddharth by Herman Hesse. Jack Kerouac makes use of Buddhist tenets in his novels with the ulterior motive that Buddhist East holds solution to the maladies America suffers from. Adapting philosophy to literature is a difficult art and requires great skill in an artist, as is evident in Siddharth, and it is rewarding to see how Kerouac has done it.

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M. F. JILTHE
Milind College of Arts,
Aurangabad.