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THE AMERICAN CONSCIOUSNESS:  
CULTURAL ASSUMPTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

General Statement of Purpose

We have only been back a few months, and we are very frightened by much of what we see in this country. We have some questions to ask you, America:

\*Gandhi wrote that to eat too much is like stealing when there are people who do not have enough to eat. Why, America, do you compete so fiercely? Don't you have enough to eat?

\*Why are you so concerned with impersonal credentials, lists of publications, degrees, awards -- and so unconcerned with the person?

\*Why do people at Stanford put locks on their bicycles?

\*In many parts of Asia where we hitchhiked there were only few cars. When a car did come, there was rarely an empty seat. If there was, however, they would stop and give us a ride. America, you have such big cars and so many empty seats. Why don't you stop?

America, we have returned, and in our small way, we are going to try to show you the possibility of a different value orientation. We plan to re-enter this society, while maintaining some values we hold very strongly -- Simplicity: few possessions; a poverty level income so we do not have to pay taxes and therefore in no way support the war; no automobile (as a gesture against pollution and the fast, impersonal way of life.) Humanity: an emphasis on cooperation and sharing; the acceptance of our basic worth as human beings, independent of degrees and social advancement.

Our program calls for cooperation: not only in our joint undertaking to complete the program, but in the sharing of our knowledge and ourselves both during and after its completion. We plan to teach and to offer guidance which reinforces rather than criticizes cooperation among students; for in this age of increased technological specialization, it is only through sharing that we as a species are going to survive.

Further, we are not going to hide behind our credentials, for they are useful only as a vehicle for personal contact, The teaching is living: what we say and how we live must remain as one. In this way we hope to fulfill our own human potential and to bring out the full potential and creative possibilities of those with whom we come into contact.

The proposal outlined below is the first part of a two part joint Ph. D. program. The program is cooperative on a thematic level. The subject matter of the two parts is complementary: part I deals primarily with an analysis and evaluation of cultural assumptions; part II deals primarily with alternatives. The subject matter of the two parts is also interrelated, as there is much inevitable and necessary overlapping.

The program is also cooperative on another, an experiential level. We intend to engage in some team teaching, in which our complementary training will be brought into play. We are even considering the possibility of collaborating on a thesis. In this manner, through the form and content of our program, we intend to give expression to the cooperative ethic, which we offer as an alternative to the assumptions of the present educational system.