



## My Perception of America

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As the Harvard psychologist Skinner said, human beings cannot be free from being conditioned with various prejudices. In addition, I'm not an exception to the story of the blind men and the elephant. In this fable, the blind men each attempt to describe the elephant from his own particular vantage point—from the part each could touch. They didn't get the total picture of what an elephant was like until they compared their opinions. Likewise my perceptions of America might not be a total or fair picture of America because my perceptions have been confined to personal experiences, and influences gained from vicarious experiences.

Mainly, my perceptions of America are derived from campus experiences. I am aware of the risks in generalizing from limited and biased personal experiences. However, I have tried to figure out what characteristics of thinking and ways of doing things are distinctively or impressively American.

### **Diligence**

American people seem to me to know how to use time. They think

of time similar to money, therefore, they are careful in the use of time. In a school setting, most American students usually budget their time and try to find out how to study effectively and they make use of leisure time for developing their interests or avocations and making money. In out-of-school experiences, diligence is almost emersed in the study habit so that they usually study hard. When exam time comes they look like soldiers at the front.

As hereditary environment became less important and priority given to seniority became abolished in American society, Americans began to believe that every person should be enabled to achieve the best that is in him, and able individuals no matter how young could move instantly to the top, if their ability warranted. The ability of American students is always tested on an equal and competitive basis so that they have to keep up with standards which are quite contrary to laziness and complacency. If I were allowed to express my opinion, then, I would say that some of the students work around the clock. One of my acquaintances on the campus studies in the day but in the early evening he works at the cafeteria; at midnight he works at the information desk of the men's dormitory. They give me an impression like buzzing bees and humming machines.

I have seen so many married women students working for their master's degrees or more advanced programs. They are not only house-

keepers but also job-partners to their husbands. It's also conspicuous that American old men work until they cannot support themselves physically. I think it's partly due to their wish for independence and also to the unique family system. There is also lack of filial relationships between old parents and children. From the financial point of view the children don't seem to have close emotional attachment with their parents because the aged people are protected by the social security system enacted by the government; also, children are no longer dependent on their parents.

Diligence is thought of as a personal virtue and an asset to self-actualization (success). Diligence gives rise to respect for labor and sweat, to human endeavors, and to present ability rather than one's hereditary environment. American people create wealth with diligence and are enjoying their prosperity of the affluent American society. The best-kept secret in America today is, I think, people would rather work hard for something they believe in than enjoy a pampered idleness.

### **Reality-oriented People**

I think American people love to be practical and reality-oriented when I see the way of their living. They seem to be reluctant to "show off" before others. Even though they are living in an abundant society they are not luxurious and they try to choose the wisest action or decision among probable alternatives. I some-

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