

A large, bright, glowing orb, likely the sun or moon, is the central focus of the image. It is set against a clear blue sky. To the left of the orb, a small bird is captured in flight. The entire scene is reflected in the calm, blue water below, creating a symmetrical effect. The overall color palette is dominated by various shades of blue, from deep cerulean to bright, almost white highlights from the orb.

What the world needs now is for you
to become a global citizen.

Richard Barrett

The World Needs You to Become a Global Citizen

Becoming a Global Citizen

Throughout history, identity has been the slave to survival and the demon of oppression. We must find a higher order identity that includes everyone.

– Richard Barrett

Most of the problems we experience in our human world are rooted in our sense of identity—our sense of separation from other members of our species. To become a global citizen, we must change our identity: we must eliminate all sense of separation from our lives; we must learn to identify with humanity.^[1]

In *Identity & Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*,^[2] Nobel Laureate for Economics, Amartya Sen, points out that the identity we assume can have a significant influence over our thoughts and actions, in particular, an overly strong association with any form of ethnic identity can lead us to perform acts of violence against others who do not share the same ethnic identity. The main thesis of Sen's book is that we have a choice about the identity we assume.

Sen provides the following example. "A Hutu labourer from Kigali may be pressured to see himself only as a Hutu and incited to kill Tutsis, and yet he is not only a Hutu, but also a Kigalian, a Rwandan, an African, a labourer, and a human being."^[3] The points Sen is making are: a) that you can choose what identity you assume; and b) the choice you make can significantly affect your life experiences.

I have a slightly different perspective to Sen. I don't believe his Hutu labourer really does have a choice of identity because he does not have a level of complexity of thinking that would allow him to see beyond his community.

Furthermore, choosing to see himself as an African or a citizen of the planet would not increase his chances of survival or safety while he is living in Kigali, Rwanda. Allegiance to his tribe and staying close to other Hutus is the only "choice" he has if he wants to keep safe.

Prior to the advent of democracy, the only way to feel secure was to assume an identity of the dominant group in your community or nation. If you chose a minority identity, your survival, safety and security were at risk.

Whatever group we identify with, we care about

When you identify with your family, you naturally tend to prioritize the needs of your family over other families. When you identify with your community, you naturally tend to prioritize the needs of your community over other communities. When you identify with your nation, you naturally tend to prioritize the needs of your nation over other nations. When you identify with your gender, you naturally tend to prioritize the needs of your gender over other genders. When you identify with your religion, you naturally tend to prioritize the needs of your religion over other religions. When you identify with your race, you naturally tend to prioritize the needs of your race over the needs of other races. However, every time you prioritize the needs of the group you identify with over another group, you create separation. Whatever identity you "choose" separates you from those who have "chosen" a different identity.

The sense of separation between the groups you identify with and other groups always tends to increase when austerity strikes—we all become more homophobic, clannish, tribalistic or nationalistic when we have anxieties about getting our needs met. If these anxieties are not addressed, we quickly descend into intergroup rivalry and from there into hostility.

To become a global citizen, you must eliminate all forms of separation from your life. You must adopt a higher order identity; one that is inclusive of all other identities. You must learn to identify with humanity. There are four major areas of separation you must eliminate to become a global citizen: gender, religion, nationality and race. Together, these four areas of separation have been responsible for practically all the sorrow and pain humans have ever experienced.

Gender

Historically, this has been, and still is, the most pervasive form of separation—the one that has probably caused more pain and sorrow than all other forms of separation. Physically, we are all born male or female, and we generally stick to the gender stereotype that the group we identify with (our community) demands of us. Traditionally, this has led to the domination of females by males, and strong homophobic or macho tendencies. Only in recent years has this begun to change in some countries.

To become a global citizen, you must let go of the gender stereotypes of your culture. Male and female must be regarded as equal; there must be no division in rights—no superiority, no gender preferences, unless these are related to the physical attributes or functions of the male or female body. In addition, males must learn to embrace their feminine qualities and females must learn to embrace their masculine qualities. We must also respect the rights of people to choose their sexual identity—those who have gay or lesbian sexual preferences and those who identify as transgender.

Religion

To become a global citizen, we must overcome our “religious” differences: we must learn to accept all cosmologies.

Throughout the ages, humans have embraced many different cosmologies—the worship of nature spirits, the worship of ancestors, the worship of many Gods, the worship of one God, science (the worship of no God) and more recently, spirituality. Historically, our religious attachment has been responsible for significant levels of intergroup rivalry, hatred and the deaths of millions of people.

We must seek to become a “member” of all “religions” by focusing not on the beliefs, but on our deeply-held human values and our direct experience of whatever we consider to be the “divine” creator/provider. Why? Because the moment we identify with one “religion” or spiritual philosophy is the moment we create separation. When I say I am Christian (or Muslim), for example, I immediately separate myself from all the people who are not Christian (or Muslim). Therefore, to become a global citizen we should embrace a cosmology that is inclusive of all religions and spiritual philosophies—the cosmology of soul awareness.^[4]

Nationality

In recent centuries, especially in the Western world, nationality has taken over from religion as the most important source of our identity and intergroup rivalry. Intergroup rivalry at a national level is mostly driven by the economy—the desire to be wealthier, and the desire to own or control more natural resources. When the global economy is good, intergroup rivalry tends to be low. When times are hard, intergroup rivalry increases, not just between nations, but also among ethnic and religious groups within nations.

To become a global citizen, we must overcome our “nationalistic” differences: we must learn to identify ourselves as citizens of the planet.

Why? Because the moment we identify with our country of birth is the moment we create separation. When I say I am British, I immediately separate myself from all the people who are not British. Travelling the world and learning to speak other languages is an essential requirement for becoming a global citizen.

Race

Race is one of the most difficult identities to overcome because it is so visible. Not only do people from different races look different, they dress differently, they have cultures with different rituals and they tend to have different worldviews. You cannot change your race. It stays with you for life. However, different races can share the same religion. In that sense, religion is a higher-order level of identity than race—one that transcends racial identity.

To become a global citizen, we must learn to see past racial differences: we must learn to embrace our true nature—energetic souls experiencing three-dimensional material reality. Everyone you meet is a soul: we are all individuated aspects of the universal energy field.^[5] From this perspective, when I give to you, I give to another aspect of myself because we are all one. Learning to embrace soul awareness provides us with an identity that transcends all other identities because it unleashes within us a sense of empathy and compassion for the whole of humanity.

The direct route to global citizenship

Many people believe that becoming more spiritual not only brings personal benefits, such as improved health, more meaningful relationships and greater sense of well-being, it also enables them to connect with dissimilar others, setting them on the pathway to global citizenship. While this is true, by making "*becoming more spiritual*" their goal, they are missing the point.

Spirituality is the *pathway* to soul awareness. Soul awareness should be your goal. When you focus on the pathway, you never get to the goal. You must look beyond spirituality if you want to become a global citizen; you must understand that every human being is a soul trying to replicate its four-dimensional energetic experience (of love and connection) in a three-dimensional material world (of fear and separation). When you focus on living from soul awareness, not only does everything change in your life, you truly become a global citizen because you are living at the level of humanity awareness.

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1. [Humanity Awareness Initiative](#) ↑
2. Amartya Sen, *Identity & Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (London: Penguin Books), 2006. ↑
3. *Ibid.*, p. 4. ↑
4. [What My Soul Told Me](#) ↑
5. *A New Psychology of Human Well-Being: An Exploration of the Influence of Ego-Soul Dynamics on Mental and Physical Health.* ↑