

A GLOBAL VILLAGE  
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When I was young I grew up in a village that had a small commercial center surrounded by homes and a number of farms. Sadly in the last twenty years the town has been discovered. I knew it was in trouble when Woolworth's moved out and was replaced by pricey boutiques. No more going into a huge store with birdcages and fish tanks in the back, and all sorts of little things a kid could buy for a quarter or less.

We lived on the south edge of town close to neighbors who owned a peach orchard. We were allowed to pick up the peach drops that couldn't go to market because they were slightly bruised, but they were always delicious and my mother would turn them into jam. In addition to his office job, my father raised chickens and had three bee hives, a vegetable garden and some fruit trees.

This was the world I grew up in. The smell of dry wood inside an older house, and the sound of radiators gurgling and clanking as they filled up on a winter morning. Outdoors the smells of grass and pine needles, the sweet smell of honey and the slightly less pleasant, but not altogether bad smell of freshly laid eggs.

Yes, there was a city about half an hour away, but it always seemed like another more complicated and challenging world. The Second World War was long past, and people had settled into a peaceful rhythm of life that didn't change much from day to day. Politics came and went every four years without stirring up much passion. Things happened across the ocean in Europe and in far off in Africa and Asia. Yes, there were airplanes going back and forth, but Europe and Africa seemed worlds away.

My father was a bit of a luddite and delayed many, many years on principal, he said, getting a television. It was never clear exactly what this principal was. Once he got a TV, he became addicted to weather reports. The family was not allowed to speak during a weather report. How he would have loved today's Weather Channel!

Then slowly, almost imperceptibly, momentum began to speed up. The comfortable old pace of life where everything was predictable began to slip away. Much of what was happening was good stuff. Women began demanding equal rights—an issue which sadly is still going on. Third world countries also started making their unmet needs known. Also an unresolved issue. Suddenly there were more cars. Route 2 in Massachusetts which my kids had been able to cross on their bikes became so busy that the State erected a Jersey barrier down the middle.

That was my special part of the world. We all remember parts of the world that have been special to us, whether it be Vermont, Massachusetts, India, Africa, Asia. Often these special places where we have grown up represented the our image of the world when we lived there—and all other places we have visited seem a bit different and foreign by comparison.

How do we see t he world? Our planet is a hugely varied and extraordinarily beautiful place. There are many people over the years who have suggested that the planet, our world, might very well have a consciousness of its own. You might respond by saying, don't be ridiculous, the planet is an inanimate abject. Is it? Here's what we know. The planet turns on an axis, and seasons change according to its angle to the sun. Basic information. Historically, we've learned that there have been massive Ice Ages. There is evidence that the Saharan area of Africa was once lush and verdant land. In our own times, we've seen the weather patterns change, dry areas of land become wet, wet areas dry. Wind patterns have changed. You didn't used to see hurricanes off the west coast of Mexico, or even storms and tornados of the magnitude reported today.

What creates these changes? Our distance from the sun has not changed. We are not being affected by other planets or asteroids. How and why does the Earth change its patterns? We know industrial growth and pollution are affecting the weather in our times. But there was no industry around during the Ice Ages or the drying out of northern Africa.

Could it be that the Earth does indeed have a consciousness? And could it be that the Earth adjusts itself to the current circumstances? The most popular theory has been the Gaia Hypothesis, formulated in the 1970's by a chemist called James Lovelock. In the simplest terms, this theory suggests that the planet shows signs of having a consciousness of its own.

Let's suppose for a moment that this is a possibility. Here is the planet with a molten core at its heart. Radiating outwards are layers of white hot volcanic material in constant motion. On the surface is a verdant and varied so-called skin—this visible part being the world as we know it. But there is more to the surface than just the skin. There is something akin to a nervous system.

Ever since the planet was formed, there have been powerful magnetic forces with positive and negative energies reacting to each other beneath the Earth's crust, on its surface, and in the atmosphere above us. Some of this atmospheric energy is what causes the Northern Lights. These magnetic forces are the true nervous system of the Earth.

Enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Every time we use our cell phones, a form of energy flows out to activate the phone of the person we are calling, or emailing or texting. Think of the number of cell phones there are communicating at any one time. Some of these are just across town, or in extreme cases, just across the room. Thousands

of electronic messages are flying around the world at any one time, zooming in and out, crisscrossing each other's paths. So technologies, in a sense, have created a second layer of electronic energy around the Earth.

In short, our planet has a lot going on. Whether or not we believe the Earth has its own consciousness, there's no denying that there is a unity, a wholeness, that sets this planet apart as a self-contained entity.

I was lucky enough to grow up in a comfortable and pleasant part of the planet. Everything more than 50 miles beyond that environment was part of my world, but still a little bit foreign. Each person here has grown up in one or more places in America or on other continents. We all have memories of those places which as children we considered represented the reality of the world.

Today the villages, cities and countrysides where we grew up have become inextricably connected. It no longer takes days or weeks for news to travel around the world. Communication is almost instantaneous. We have become, like it or not, citizens of a global village.

Does being part of the global village mean we lose our identity as citizens of a particular country? I don't think so. Losing our national identities would be a tragedy. It would be a tragedy because each country and each one of us brings an important component to the whole of the global village. Does it mean we lose our ethnic and religious origins? Our ethnicity is becoming more of an open book these days with DNA testing, and many people are often surprised at what they discover about themselves. Religious identity is purely a matter of choice. Religious and spiritual beliefs seem to be shifting all the time these days. We live in a time when everyone can choose to remain in their religion of origin, or explore a new religion or spiritual practice.

The bottom line is that—like it or not--we are an integral part of the global whole. We each bring our own personality, our own special gifts to support this global village. Like those groups of mothers now who are creating care packages to send to the needy children of the Syrian migration, our love and care reaches out to other continents and to fellow human beings whom we'll never meet.

The global village means simply this, our love, our compassion, our basic need for peace must reach out to all people and above all, it must prevail.

EARTH PRAYERS, page 35, John Seed

"We call upon the spirit of evolution, the miraculous force that inspires rocks and dust to weave themselves into biology.

You have stood by us for millions and billions of years—do not forsake us now.

Empower us and awaken in us pure and dazzling creativity...

Awaken in us a sense of who we truly are: tiny ephemeral blossoms  
on the Tree of Life.  
Make the purposes and destiny of that tree our own purpose and destiny....  
May we speak in all human councils on behalf of the animals and plants and  
landscapes of the Earth.  
May we shine with a pure inner passion that will spread rapidly  
through these leaden times.  
May we all awaken to our true and only nature—none other than the nature of Gaia,  
this living planet Earth.  
We call upon the power which sustains the planets in their orbits, that wheels our  
Milky Way in its 200-million-year spiral  
to imbue our personalities and our relationships with harmony, endurance and joy.  
Fill us with a sense of immense time so that our brief, flickering lives  
may truly reflect the work of vast ages past  
and also the millions of years of evolution whose potential lies in our hands.  
O stars, lend us your burning passion.  
O silence, give weight to our voice.  
We ask for the presence of the Divine spirit that binds us together in love.”  
*(abridged and adapted)*