

TOWARD A DELIBERATELY DEVELOPMENTAL CIVILIZATION

Illuminating the Three Key Elements
of Spiritual Transformation



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This concise white paper proposes an integrative approach to spiritual transformation on a global scale. Rather than taking a “prescriptive” approach (offering a formula of what we feel ought to be the case based on our own normative opinions), we take a “descriptive” approach (articulating what we already know to be the case based on existing cross-cultural evidence).¹

¹ Using a descriptive approach to articulate the transformative potential for humanity has several advantages. First, a descriptive approach allows us to frame our theory of spiritual transformation and human potential cross-culturally, based on invariant deep structures common to all human beings. This means that even as human beings continue to exist within their particular cultural, historical, and linguistic contexts, systematic cross-cultural analysis reveals that certain aspects of transformation follow an invariant and predictable developmental pattern. Second, a descriptive approach allows us to articulate a theory based upon clear developmental stage progressions without falling victim to normative claims. Because we draw upon insider views from various traditions, allowing each to remain complete within its particular cultural setting, then judging each within the world sphere that each considers legitimate, we circumvent both the modernist error known as the “myth of the given” while also honoring the important contribution of postmodernists who

In our survey of the vast array of orientations toward the further reaches of human potential, the evidence clearly shows at least three distinct elements of human transformation and development that appear repeatedly throughout various regions and cultures of the world. We refer to these three core elements of transformation as *states*, *structures*, and *shadow*.

Our thesis is simple: any global, universal, cross-cultural understanding of human transformation that seeks to base its orientation on the evidence available must take states, structures, and shadow into account. Conversely, any approach to human transformation and development that leaves any one or more of these three elements out of the overall developmental picture, is by its very nature creating conditions for the development of partial/stunted human beings.

We fully understand, and in many ways agree with, the ideas of pluralism and multiculturalism—that many of the “universal ideas” taken in the past to be cross-culturally universal, found in all human beings, turn out to be merely and only culturally-bound and culturally-created, differing in fact from culture to culture, religion to religion, even individual to individual. But a closer inspection and finer analysis demonstrates that there are many structures, states, and shadow elements that, while their surface features vary, often dramatically, from culture to culture (and from religion to religion), often possess deep features that share a set of characteristics or patterns that are fundamentally similar

have brought attention to the important distinction between emic (insider) and edic (outsider) approaches to scholarship (Wilber’s zone 3 and 4 respectively).

Finally, a descriptive approach allows us to take a meta-perspective, organizing our shared human wisdom about transformation into broad categories that each share common characteristics.

cross-culturally. Certain sequences of structures of consciousness, for example, have been found to have deep features that are similar in Amazonian rain forest tribes, citizens in India, Australian aborigines, and most European countries, to name a few. We're talking not just about incommensurable differences, and not just about rigid universal identities, but about a set of unity-in-diversity features that honor both the diversities and the unities or similarities. These unity-in-diversity characteristics allow valid and fruitful cross-cultural comparisons without forcing cross-cultural (or cross-religious) identities or rigid and putative commonalities.

When states, structures, and shadow integration are honored and intentionally cultivated, humanity opens the possibility of establishing a *Deliberately Developmental Civilization*; a civilization that intentionally supports transformation through all domains of growth and development. If such a civilization can be established, we will enter into a brighter age for humankind; an age wherein awake, mature, and integrated human beings systematically create conveyer belts of developmental potential for all of us to realize our fullest potential.

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The exploration of this type of *Deliberately Developmental Civilization* serves as the core of this paper. Let's unpack the notion a bit further.

WHAT IS DEVELOPMENT?

To begin, let's take a closer look at what we mean by the term development. For our purposes here, we use the terms “development” and “transformation” interchangeably (with both of them intimately connected to evolution in general). In both cases, the terms refer to our innate human capacity to both grow (and heal) through predicable, sequential patterns of mental, emotional, and spiritual unfolding. Because these patterns are generally predictable and reliably progress in sequence (a sequence that cannot be altered by social conditioning), it is also the case that each higher developmental stage transcends and includes (or unfolds and enfolds) the stage that preceded it (just as organisms transcend and include cells, which transcend and include molecules, which transcend and include atoms). This process of unfoldment and enfoldment reveals a natural, nested hierarchy (or “holarchy”) of developmental progression.² Just as evolution has touched the physical and biological dimensions—leaving each marked by sequential stages of unfolding—so evolution has touched the psychological, cultural, and spiritual dimensions as well, also leaving each marked by dependable, broad, general sequential stages of their own growth and development (as determined and demonstrated, not by dogmatic claims or assertions, but by direct and repeatable empirical studies). It is the developmental/evolutionary nature of all of those dimensions that allow the effective planning and growth of each of them—including our own overall spiritual growth and development. And it is the cross-cultural similarities, at a deep-feature level, that allow these developmental/evolutionary

² See Wilber Excerpt B: The Many Ways We Touch; www.kenwilber.com

sequences to be a reliable map for humankind's spiritual growth and unfolding at large (with all of their relative differences and idiosyncrasies included).

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS OF DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFORMATION?

In order to understand development in its various parts, it is instructive to synthesize what we already know through the cross-cultural study of human potential. Let's take a look at the disciplines of developmental science, spirituality, and psychotherapy in a bit more detail.

Developmental science teaches us about our capacity to *grow up* through various developmental *structures* of consciousness. Structures of consciousness generate our internal operating system. They determine our worldview and the various ways we process information. A deep understanding of developmental science and structures of consciousness as a field of study has only been in existence for the past 100 years.³

One of the surprising discoveries in the overall realm of developmental studies has involved a few facts only recently uncovered: it is not the case, as had been regularly and widely assumed, that all humans possess just one major intelligence (generally called "cognitive intelligence" and "measured" by the all-important IQ); but rather, humans actually possess up to a dozen different or "multiple intelligences,"

³ Cross-culturally speaking, there have been initiation rites in native and indigenous cultures of the world for thousands of years. And it is true that each of these initiations mark a new stage in human growth and development. But these stages of initiation are not the same as the structures of consciousness that we refer to here. Rather than simply referring to stages/ages of life, structures of consciousness represent entirely novel lenses through which one views the world.

including (in addition to cognitive intelligence) ones such as emotional intelligence, moral intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, linguistic intelligence, mathematical intelligence, kinesthetic intelligence, aesthetic intelligence, and spiritual intelligence, among others. But an even more surprising discovery was the fact that, despite the very real differences in these multiple intelligences (also often called "*lines* of development"), all of these lines nonetheless develop or unfold through the same basic 6-to-8 major "*levels* or *structures* of development." In other words, different lines, same levels. There are several dozen maps and models of developmental psychology, but virtually all of them present variations on these same basic 6-to-8 major structures of increasing complexity and care as they move from traditional, to modern, to postmodern, to integral stages of development.

Our world's great spiritual lineages teach us something quite different. Rather than helping us *grow up* through structures of consciousness, they introduce us to our capacity to *wake up* to a series of ever-deepening *states* of consciousness.⁴

“Our world’s great spiritual lineages introduce us to our capacity to *wake up*.”

States of consciousness are often referred to as "mystical experiences"—or, psychologically, as "peak experiences" or "altered states"—and traditionally, these are said to come in several varieties: they can involve *nature mysticism* (oneness with the entire gross/physical world); *deity mysticism*

⁴ These states are known variously as Enlightenment, Awakening, *Moksha*, the Great Liberation, *Satori*, Metamorphosis, the Supreme Identity, among many others.

(oneness with a subtle/interior dimension); *formless mysticism* (oneness with an “infinite Abyss” or formless Ground of all Being); and *nondual mysticism* (or a oneness or “unity consciousness” with all realms and dimensions, manifest and unmanifest).⁵

A state of consciousness is a direct, 1st-person, immediate and unmediated experience of a particular dimension of one variety or another (with “spiritual states of consciousness” involving, obviously, “spiritual” dimensions, however we wish to conceive that)—the point is simply that states are direct, immediate, conscious experiences. States of consciousness are very obvious when one has them—when you experience “universal love-bliss” or an “all-pervading oneness with all of reality” or a “sense of loving unity with all things,” you definitely know you are experiencing those. States are so obvious and hard to miss, that human beings have been aware of various states of consciousness—including so-called “altered states of consciousness”—for thousands and thousands of years, going back at least to the earliest shamans and their vision quests, perhaps some 50,000 years ago. And although at first states come and go, a crucial item of development is that these temporary states can become permanent vantage points of awareness (state-stages)—and a great number of contemplative or meditative systems worldwide consist of a series of state-stages of development (a developmental sequence of vantage points) said to reach from, at one end, the narrow, egoic, “separate-self sense” to, at the other, a mystical union with the Ground of all Being or the ultimate spiritual state (however it is conceived)—what the Sufis call “the Supreme Identity.” This, indeed, is known worldwide as a process of “Waking Up.”

⁵ For a detailed look at “waking up” see DiPerna’s book *Streams of Wisdom*; www.dustindiperna.com

Here’s the key point: Most of developmental science (and the entire Western developmental paradigm) has focused on *structures* of consciousness (and the path of “Growing Up”). Most of the world’s great wisdom traditions, on the other hand, have focused on the unfolding of *states* of consciousness (and the path of “Waking Up”). In theory this may not seem like a very big dilemma, but in practice, it could mean all the difference in the world. This distinction between structures and states helps to explain the difference between a fundamentalist and a saint—because what research has discovered is that, no matter what state of consciousness an individual might experience (or no matter how “high” that spiritual state might be) in their process of Waking Up, that state is still *interpreted* by the grammar or *structure* of consciousness that the individual is at in their process of Growing Up (because whatever experience you have can only be interpreted with the mental tools and grammars and structures that you have, and these develop in any line only through our processes of Growing Up). So very high spiritual states of Waking Up can still be badly distorted and reduced if the individual is at a fairly low level of Growing Up. Or to bring it into our current global context, it could mean the difference between Joel Osteen and Pope Francis or between a member of ISIS and a progressive Muslim. Both Joel Osteen and Pope Francis may very well have access to authentic spiritual states of consciousness, but the structures of consciousness through which each of those states is enacted and interpreted are at very different levels. (Needless to say, herein lies one of the major solutions to understanding our global “war” on terror. It’s not about getting rid of religion—whether it be Islam or Christianity—it’s about helping all practitioners come to express their traditions through higher and more mature structures of consciousness. Spiritual experience alone

is not enough. It will be spiritual experience combined with modern, postmodern, and integral versions of each tradition that will help us find a way through.⁶ We'll return to this point in just a moment with some specific examples.)

“Spiritual experience alone is not enough.”

The bottom line is that our world needs human beings who are both evolved through the various structures of consciousness as well as awake to the full spectrum of states of consciousness. Up until this point these two worlds have existed side by side, as if in parallel universes, each leaving out the valuable contribution of the complementary orientation. The reasons for this are entirely understandable...

Unlike states of consciousness that show up in direct experience, structures of consciousness are much harder to spot. Structures are more like the rules of grammar than they are like the direct experience of a word or sentence (or state of consciousness). Individuals brought up in a particular language-speaking culture, for example, will grow up speaking that language quite correctly—they will put subjects and verbs together correctly, they will use adjectives and adverbs correctly, and in general will end up following quite faithfully and quite accurately all of the rules of grammar of that language. But if you ask any of them to write down just what those grammar rules are, virtually none of them can do so. Every one of them is following perfectly a set of rules, yet they

⁶ See DiPerna's *Evolution's Ally* for an in depth look at how structures of development show up in our world's religious traditions;
www.dustindiperna.com

have no idea that they are doing so, let alone what those rules are! The 6-to-8 stages of structure development—including spiritual intelligence—are like grammar—they are 6-to-8 “hidden maps” that govern how individuals think and feel about issues of “ultimate concern”; and yet, while these individuals are perfectly following the particular stage that they are at in this developmental sequence, they have no idea that they are following a hidden map that is determining a great deal of what and how they think about their religious notions. This is why not a single spiritual system, East or West, has any apparent knowledge of the 6-to-8 structure-stages of spiritual growth. They understand the state-stages of Waking Up, but not the structure-stages of Growing Up. (This is why the former were discovered as far back, we saw, as 50,000 years ago; whereas the structure-stages of Growing Up were only discovered about 100 years ago—yet another reason no great wisdom tradition has any indication of them at all.)

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So we have an opportunity now, as a global culture, to create a comprehensive map of development that includes both states of consciousness and structures of consciousness, both Waking Up and Growing Up.

Finally, rounding out the survey of what we already know about our own potential for transformation beyond structures and states, advances in Western psychotherapy teach us about our capacity to heal trauma, addiction, phobia, and unconscious patterns. This means that in addition to Growing Up (through structures of consciousness) and Waking Up (through states of consciousness), we can use the incredible wisdom discovered through psychotherapeutic approaches to engage a process of *Cleaning Up*; integrating our *shadow* to become a whole human being. In addition to the psychotherapeutic tradition of the modern West, the great medicine traditions of shamanic and indigenous cultures have cultivated incredible capacity to work on more subtle levels of reality to liberate karmic patterns and bring beings into deeper wholeness. And although there is no sign that these traditions knew much about modern concepts like transference, projection, or early childhood attachment, anyone who has worked in the context of these traditions knows firsthand of their incredible capacity to reveal shadow, heal trauma, and cure addictive tendencies. In an integral approach, all of these methods of healing and integration would necessarily be included.

To be clear, here is why *Cleaning Up* and including shadow integration is of fundamental importance: Even if a being has gained access to waking up (a nondual state) and a higher structure of consciousness (greater complexity, care, and perspective taking), he or she can still be victim to unconscious motivations, desires, and attachment patterns that create deep suffering for themselves and others.

We often compare this to a bright and pure light shining through a dusty (and perhaps even broken) stain glass window. The light may be real and authentic (access to a deep state), and the colors and shapes on of the glass may be complex (operating

through an advanced structure), but if the glass is covered in ash, very little of the light will be able to shine through. Through interpersonal relationship with a psychotherapist and with a community of other conscious practitioners, we can begin to uproot all of our unseen patterns and heal our deepest wounds. It becomes our duty to *clean up* in this way, not only for ourselves (for in the end we aren't even aware of the patterns) but rather for all those around us (for they bear the brunt of all of the unconscious and integrated aspects of our relative self).

Any map of human growth and development that fails to include all three of these dimensions (states, structures, shadow or waking up, growing up, cleaning up) is falling short of a comprehensive, descriptive analysis of human growth. Anything less than an inclusion of these three dimensions exemplifies a model that is partial and incomplete. Partial models will, by their very nature, create human beings who are lopsided, partial, and broken. The resulting potential human pain and suffering that can come from partial maps of reality cannot be overstated. We have an opportunity in front of us to get this right, as a species, for the benefit and health of the whole.

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This more complete and comprehensive view of spirituality also allows us to understand otherwise paradoxical and contradictory tendencies in

religion itself. Historically, it is likely that religion has been both the source of some of the highest, most elevated, ideal, loving, and noble inspirations ever advanced, and yet it has also been the single greatest source of warfare, torture, and murderous hatred on the planet. How can that be? The answer from this more complete meta-view of religion is straightforward: higher, loving, noble motivations come from religious adepts who are at a greater number of higher structures and higher states, and have less shadow elements; while those who—with the same surface religious beliefs—are at lower levels of spiritual development, and/or experience lower states, and/or possess many shadow elements, tend more readily and exclusively to produce prejudiced, ethnocentric, murderous and hateful motivations.

Cross-cultural evidence very strongly indicates that the higher the structures of growth in spiritual intelligence, and/or the higher the states in waking up, and/or the fewer shadow elements present, then the more loving, more truly spiritual, more conscious and more caring an individual is. Further, given this more complete and comprehensive map of an overall spiritual development, humankind can—for the first time in history—actually plan its spiritual growth in a way that aims directly for the higher reaches of spiritual realization, while minimizing the more negative, hateful, and murderous tendencies of a global humanity—something that also represents a genuine first in history.

WHAT IS A DELIBERATELY DEVELOPMENTAL CIVILIZATION?

In order to understand what we mean by the phrase *Deliberately Developmental Civilization*, it's helpful to first understand the source of the phrase “deliberately developmental.”

Harvard Professor Robert Kegan, well-respected developmental psychologist, coined the term *Deliberately Developmental Organization (DDO)* in his book *An Everyone Culture* to explain the phenomena of organizations and business ventures that take a specific approach to growth that includes the development of each employee of the organization in addition to the ever-growing bottom line. Kegan's research was able to show that those organizations that included the development of the consciousness of each person in the organization outperformed the average organization (that ignored the development of each employee) resulting in not only higher profits but an overall more satisfying work experience.

As the startling reality of this research began to settle in, the question naturally arose, “What would it look like if we took this type of evidence seriously and apply it to our global civilization as a whole?” Similar to the way that each of Kegan's organizations examined the development of the employee, “How would we structure society and what dimensions of growth might we include if we were to optimize the growth and transformation of every being on the planet?” And finally, “If it's possible to create a deliberately developmental organization, would it be possible to create a deliberately developmental civilization?” Although acknowledging other areas of growth, Kegan's research on DDOs gave maximum attention to developmental science and the advancement through structures of consciousness. Our approach to development, as we have seen, is a bit more wide-reaching.

With a more comprehensive understanding of the various types of development in place (the articulation of structures of consciousness through developmental science, the wisdom of states of consciousness as described in our world's

great spiritual traditions, and the path of developmental healing and integration as expressed in Western psychotherapy and some of the world's indigenous traditions), we can examine the notion of a Deliberately Developmental Civilization with a bit more comprehensiveness than Kegan's original research with organizations.

In our view, a Deliberately Developmental Civilization enables human flourishing through waking up, growing up, and cleaning up (states, structures, shadow). By its very nature, a Deliberately Developmental Civilization continually draws from descriptive accounts from around the world so that it remains ever-fresh and constantly reiterating what it means to be a "developed" human being. Ultimately, at its core, a Deliberately Developmental Civilization intentionally creates conveyor belts of transformation (through states, structures, and shadow) leading to a universal culture of the most awake, mature, and integrated human beings possible (which also means, least domineering, least oppressive, least murderous).

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FOR EXAMPLE

Since many people might not be aware of the actual nature of items such as “growing up,” “waking up,” and “cleaning up,” allow us to give a very brief and simplistic explanation of each, showing why each is so profoundly important.

A good deal of recent research has demonstrated that most spiritual systems have both an “explanatory” branch (which consists of belief systems and often mythic narratives that purport to explain the relation of the relative, temporal, finite world to an ultimate, infinite, absolute Ground of Being), and they possess an often more “esoteric” or “hidden” branch (consisting of direct experiences of a spiritual dimension through the practice of contemplation, meditation, vision quest, and so on). The former consists of *spiritual beliefs* about reality (via structures of consciousness in the Growing Up of spiritual intelligence); the latter consists of direct *spiritual experiences* (via immediate states of consciousness in Waking Up).

Thus, the explanatory branch, as a linguistic narrative, consists of various *structures* of consciousness (and so this branch is connected directly to the multiple line of spiritual intelligence; and this means that this branch is that part of spiritual engagement that involves the common 6-to-8 stages of Growing Up—in this case, growing up in spiritual intelligence). These stages of spiritual intelligence, like the stages of all multiple lines or intelligences (recall: “different lines, same levels”), progress through those 6-to-8 major levels, a very simplified version of which (involving just 4 basic levels of overall Growing Up) consists of stages or levels that move from “egocentric” (self-focused or “me-only”) to “ethnocentric” (group-focused or “us versus them,” or the saved versus the damned) to “worldcentric” (“all of us,” or all humans, regardless of race, color, sex, or creed) to

“integral” (synthesizing all previous stages). We now have empirical studies (such as James Fowler’s) showing that an individual’s spiritual belief system goes through all of those structure-stages of development (or Growing Up in spiritual intelligence; and Fowler demonstrated, not just those simplified 4 stages, but the more standard 6 or 7 stages). This is just part of the compelling body of evidence showing that all of a human being’s multiple intelligences (including our spiritual intelligence) cross-culturally develop and unfold through those basic 6-to-8 level/structures—a crucial and profound discovery that is only, as we noted, around 100 years old (and hence much too recent to be included in any of the world’s great wisdom traditions).

Instead, most of the world’s great religions all arose during a period of human evolution that was almost exclusively at ethnocentric stages—so that each religion originally believed that it, and it alone, had the one true way to salvation (the “chosen path” and the “chosen peoples”). Even religions that produced, in their esoteric branch, experiences of major Waking Up or Enlightenment or Awakening, still were almost entirely patriarchal (or sexist), and they embraced slavery (or racism), and so on—that is, even though highly developed in Waking Up, they were still at ethnocentric and prejudiced stages in Growing Up. That’s because, even though they were quite advanced in techniques of Waking Up, leading all the way to traditional “divine unity consciousness,” that was not enough to help them develop to worldcentric stages of Growing Up (they were only at ethnocentric stages of Growing Up). Research has demonstrated that Waking Up and Growing Up are relatively independent, and since the great traditions were almost completely unaware of the structures of Growing Up, they had no way to know that, even though “Enlightened,”

they were still very poorly developed in Growing Up stages.

(When the Western Enlightenment first emerged, it was marked by a belief in the “universal rights of humankind”—that is, it moved from an ethnocentric morals to a worldcentric morals—and for that reason it largely rejected the ethnocentric beliefs of the Church. But the Enlightenment, despite its name, had no path of Waking Up at all, only a major advance in the path of Growing Up, which, profound as it was, also marked the “death of God”—and not just God as an ethnocentric, mythic-literal belief structure, but also as a directly experienced Ground of Being—the so-called “disaster of modernity.” This integral view of development further allows us to see why these two major cultural worldviews—generally called “East” and “West”—both have something very important to offer, as well as having a major lack. What is generally called the “West” is higher in Growing Up, but almost entirely lacking in Waking Up; and the “East” is high in Waking Up, but less advanced in Growing Up—and thus the long-sought integration of East and West is also an integration of Growing Up and Waking Up....)

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So this is an example of the fact that an individual (or an entire culture) can be

highly developed in one path of spiritual engagement and poorly developed in another (such as highly developed in Waking Up and poorly developed in Growing Up—or vice versa). So whereas it is common to hear in religious circles that all humanity needs today is to embrace a genuine spiritual oneness or unity consciousness in order for the world to be at peace, a more integral view demonstrates that what is actually needed is a development in BOTH Waking Up and Growing Up. Leaving either one of those out—as absolutely every spiritual system in the world now does—is to leave humans only partially whole, partially complete, partially ready for peace and a genuine worldwide love.

And the same goes for unintegrated shadow elements (and Cleaning Up). Especially in spiritual circles, where individuals strive to realize and achieve the most positive and noble characteristics possible, it is common to “spiritually bypass” dealing with shadow elements by not actually healing and transforming them, but simply denying and projecting them. The “other” person thus becomes the receptacle of all of an individual’s (or an entire culture’s) negative, “evil” qualities, and thereafter that individual is demonized—and, in times past, were likely to be burned, crucified, tortured, or killed. Only by re-owning and re-integrating shadow elements can such extremely negative human behavior be significantly reduced.

So perhaps we can start to see the profound problems that result when either Waking Up, or Growing Up, or Cleaning Up are not included. And since it is only very recently that such a comprehensive meta-map of human potentials has become available, it is only recently that the true potentials of human spirituality have truly come to the fore—as well as a clear understanding and map of how the highly

“negative” aspects of spirituality that have accompanied it all-too-many times in the past can henceforth be more effectively surmounted.

WHAT’S NEXT?

It is our sense that the time is ripe for the establishment of a Deliberately Developmental Civilization on our planet. And central to this endeavor would be an intentional and conscious unfolding of the higher, deeper, wider, and healthier stages of spirituality (attempting to grow and develop beyond the lower, narrower, shallower stages of spiritual development so strongly involved in negative, ethnocentric, hateful impulses—thus allowing the very truest and highest nature of spirituality to shine forth in all humans).

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If the prophecies of our world’s great wisdom traditions are to have any meaning at all, the second coming of Christ will need to be resurrected in each of our hearts; the future Buddha will need to be expressed in all of us as a global sangha of spiritual awakening; through Tikkun the world must be healed; and the hidden Imam must reveal itself in the further reaches of our own potential. As Hindu visions for the future fulfill themselves and as the Kali Yuga comes to a close giving way to an even

brighter age, our task is to find our way back home to Source and to express that Source as the evolving edge of developmental complexity in the Kosmos. A *Deliberately Developmental Civilization* points us in the right direction. And, at least for now, nothing less than an integral approach will do. +