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Horizons

Self-Actualisation from Indic Texts

February 2026



Horizons

WISDOM OF INDIC TEXTS

- Self-Realisation & Self Actualisation
- Truthful, Benevolent, Respectful
- Adaptation, Resilience and Acceptance



Values of tolerance, acceptance & resilience have become paramount in the age of AI. The wisdom of the Indic texts can help in attaining emotional intelligence.

In modern times, people are in search of peace and happiness. People are seeking Indian Knowledge Systems, including religious texts such as the Vedas and Itihasas. They offer solace as they not only profess religion but also provide values for good living. These texts are based on self-realisation and understanding, which in the modern era is considered "Self-Actualisation." Certainly, two "As" are in vogue these days: 1) Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 2) Actualisation (Self). AI is in the limelight as the debate covers both positive and negative aspects. In the case of Actualisation, a good understanding of oneself is a positive exercise. A good understanding of oneself and society will only lead to self- and societal growth.

Self-understanding is part of the Indian way of life since ancient times, while Oxford Dictionary introduced the noun form of self-actualisation around the 1850s. Self-actualisation can be understood as self-understanding/self-realisation of one's fullest potential to reach one's goals. Such self-realisation also forms the basis of religions, which insist on knowing "Whom Am I." Ancient Indic text i.e., Vedas, particularly Upanishads, delve deep into this mode of understanding, which forms the basis of different philosophies such as Advaita, Vishishtadvaita, Dvaita, etc.

There is a general understanding that ancient religious texts talk only about the Supreme and are philosophical in nature. Texts like the Vedas talk about values of life, the way of life, as in the Rig Veda, first volume, there are poems on the way of life on the banks of the Sindhu, the use of wool, and metals in daily life.

The first chapter of Taitiriya Upanishad is a well-structured convocation address to students on the importance of being truthful, benevolent,

respecting parents and serving society. A powerful message of self-development comes from questioning norms with respect.

Introspection and logical questioning are part of self-development and transparency. “Do not be afraid or shy of being in the presence of a learned assembly—it is because of this season, you need to engage,” states Taitiriya Upanishad. Self-actualisation has been part of the Indic way of learning.

Multiple Texts Enable Growth and Self-Actualisation

The Vedas are the basic texts of Hinduism. In addition, some texts explain the edicts in the Vedic text, such as the Ramayan. The beauty of Ramayan is that it is not only a biography, but it also depicts the values of the Vedas in stories. These stories motivate us to lead a life of self-actualisation and self-development.

How do our lives revolve? It is through hope and confidence that we get up and pursue our goals. Ramayan preaches these values through the hardships of the hero, Sri Ram, and Mother Sita. Poet Valmiki beautifully elevates the importance of these values by picturing two instances using similar verses.

In literature, the use of the same phrases is not appreciated and reflects on the literary mastery. But why did Valmiki do this? It was to raise awareness on the importance of hope and courage, which is more important than literary laurels. As someone who has been conducting Sunday lectures on “Life Management & Ramayan” in the Hindu Temple of Lubbock, USA, I understand that religious texts provide valuable lessons and guidelines for self-improvement.

Hope is the Basis for Self-Actualisation

Indic texts like the Ramayan celebrate the values of life. Hope is paramount in our lives. Vedas and Ithihasas proclaim that a human life has a minimum of 100 years and ask for a purposeful living. Ramayan elaborates this value through instances in the lives of Ram, Sita, and Ram’s brother Bharatha. As a case in



point, let us take the life of Sita, the heroine of the epic Ramayana. Growing up as a beloved prince of a great king, and married into a great dynasty, she had to suffer in a cruel prison for 10 months, being separated from her beloved husband, which exhibits hope at its best.

Poet Valmiki showcases this great character hope as a discussion between Sita and messenger Hanuman. Hanuman was astonished to see Sita with the sufferings endured —this is the hope Sita had. When Hanuman asks about this, Sita's answer is par excellence. "Hi Maruti! Have you heard the popular saying that human life is a hundred years?

If this is the case, would I not have at least one day of hope?" What an answer! Hanuman witnessed a comparable situation when he met Bharatha, who was waiting to see Ram back in Ayodhya. Valmiki used the same phrase by Sita as the answer by Bharatha. Texts teach us hope and confidence as great virtues, which are needed to carry on with our lives.

Epics are fully replete with positive values for realising one's potential. When Ram leaves for 14 years to the forest, he bids farewell to Minister Sumantra. He insists that Sumantra let his father know that he will return safely with Sita and brother Lakshmana—this is hope amidst uncertainty.

Moving Forward in Life

Everyone has dark days in their life, but one must push ahead. Never cry over spilt milk is a popular adage. We must learn from mistakes and move ahead. Ram, when crossing the river Ganges, says to his brother Lakshman that it is no use worrying about why Kaikeyi sent them to the forest. It is water under the bridge; let us move on. What a way to think forward!

Veda is like edicts from the government, but epics like Ramayan are friendly advice, which gets into people's ears and minds easily.

Self-actualization is a Necessity

Self-development attributes like hope, goal orientation, looking ahead and marching towards a goal are depicted through instances and stories in different texts so that they are imbibed in our true senses. That is why religious texts are treated with respect in communities, and they stand the test of time. In the present times, while AI receives much press and attention, for our well-being and growth science and practice of self-actualisation should be promoted. Both AI and Actualisation will be like two parallel tracks that can move the life engine forward.



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