

BEYOND KNOWING: THE JOURNEY TO ABSOLUTE REALIZATION IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS

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Abstract

In Indian philosophy, knowledge is viewed as a journey from conceptual understanding to absolute realization. The objective of this paper is to describe how conceptual knowledge forms the starting point of this journey and how it leads to the direct experience of truth or the Self. The study adopts a descriptive approach, drawing on classical Indian texts and teachings to present the role of *pramāṇas* (sources of valid knowledge) and the three-step path of *Śravaṇa* (listening or study), *Manana* (reflection), and *Nididhyāsana* (meditation). These stages guide the seeker from theoretical understanding to lived realization, showing how knowledge is transformed into direct experience. The relevance of this work lies in demonstrating how Indian philosophy integrates reason, reflection, and meditation to support both intellectual and spiritual growth. By tracing this journey, the paper highlights the timeless significance of moving from conceptual knowledge to absolute realization.

Keywords: Conceptual Knowledge, *Pramāṇas*, *Śravaṇa-Manana-Nididhyāsana*, Self (*Ātman*), Absolute Realization.

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Introduction:

In Indian philosophy, knowledge is seen as a journey with a beginning and an end. It begins with conceptual knowledge, our initial understanding of reality, and leads to absolute realization, the direct experience of truth or the Self. To reach absolute realization, we first need to understand how conceptual knowledge is acquired. *Pramāṇas*, the recognized sources of valid knowledge, help us gain this understanding. Different philosophical schools have suggested various ways to guide this journey successfully. In this paper, I focus on Śravaṇa (listening or study), Manana (reflection), and *Nididhyāsana* (meditation)—three steps of a single path that lead from conceptual knowledge to absolute realization. These stages show how knowledge can be transformed into direct experience, completing the journey from understanding to realization.

Conceptual Knowledge:

Conceptual knowledge refers to the initial stage of understanding in which a seeker grasps philosophical ideas through study, reasoning, and intellectual reflection. In Indian philosophical thought, this form of knowledge arises from engagement with teachings, scriptures, and the guidance of a teacher, allowing the mind to form clear concepts about reality, the Self, and the nature of truth. At this level, knowledge is mediated by language, symbols, and logical

analysis, enabling the learner to organize and interpret philosophical principles. Although conceptual knowledge does not yet constitute direct realization, it plays a crucial role as the foundation of the spiritual journey. By clarifying ideas and removing misconceptions, it prepares the mind for deeper inquiry and contemplation. Thus, conceptual knowledge functions as the starting point that gradually leads the seeker toward experiential insight and, ultimately, absolute realization. In Indian philosophy, the beginning of knowledge is often associated with the awareness of the individual self, commonly referred to as "I" or *Ātman*. At the initial stage of understanding, a person gains conceptual or intellectual knowledge about oneself. Through reflection, perception, and reasoning, the individual becomes conscious of their own existence as a thinking and experiencing subject. This stage may be called conceptual knowledge because the self is understood through ideas and mental concepts. However, the knowledge of the individual self at this level is not complete. The self appears limited and conditioned by body, mind, emotions, and worldly experiences. Because of ignorance (*avidyā*), a person identifies the true self with temporary aspects such as the physical body, social identity, or mental states. This creates contradictions and confusion about the real nature of the self. For example, the

individual simultaneously experiences permanence in the sense of "I am" while also experiencing constant change in the body and mind. These contradictions indicate that conceptual understanding alone cannot reveal the true nature of reality. Indian philosophers therefore argue that these contradictions can only be removed through the realization of ultimate or absolute knowledge. In Advaita Vedānta, this highest knowledge is the direct realization that *Ātman* (the individual self) is identical with Brahman (the ultimate reality). When this realization occurs, the apparent differences between the individual and the universe disappear. The seeker understands that the true self is not limited by body or mind but is pure consciousness that underlies all existence. At this level, reality is understood as non-dual (*advaita*) and free from contradictions. The distinctions between subject and object, knower and known, are transcended. The individual recognizes that all multiplicity is the result of ignorance and that the ultimate truth is the unity of existence. This realization is often described as *Brahmajñāna* or knowledge of Brahman. (Malkani, 1953, pp. 124, 125) According to Advaita Vedānta, the ultimate reality (Brahman) is completely non-dual and free from all kinds of differences. It is undivided, infinite, and absolute. Because of this undifferentiated nature, ultimate reality cannot be fully

grasped through ordinary conceptual or intellectual knowledge. Conceptual knowledge always involves distinctions such as subject and object, knower and known, or thinker and thought. In other words, intellectual knowledge functions through relations and categories created by the mind. However, the ultimate reality is beyond all relations and distinctions. When we try to know it conceptually, we inevitably impose limitations upon it. Conceptual knowledge divides reality into parts and attempts to understand it through ideas and language. This process affects the purity and wholeness of reality because the mind interprets reality according to its own structures. Therefore, conceptual knowledge cannot reveal the absolute truth in its complete and undivided form. For this reason, truth cannot be fully known if knowledge is understood merely as intellectual or conceptual understanding of reality. The very act of knowing in the ordinary sense creates a separation between the knower and the known, which contradicts the non-dual nature of ultimate reality. Thus, knowledge in the conceptual sense becomes a limitation that the human mind imposes upon reality. (Malkani, 1953, pp. 141, 142)

Role of *Pramāṇas* in the Formation of Conceptual Knowledge:

In Indian philosophical traditions, conceptual knowledge is primarily

developed through the operation of various *pramāṇas*, or valid means of acquiring knowledge. These *pramāṇas* serve as reliable instruments that help the human mind understand and interpret reality at an intellectual level. One of the most fundamental *pramāṇas* is *Pratyakṣa* (perception), which refers to knowledge gained directly through the senses. Through perception, individuals encounter objects and events in the external world, forming the first layer of understanding about their nature and characteristics. However, perception alone cannot explain all aspects of reality; therefore, the mind relies on *Anumāna* (inference) to draw conclusions from observed evidence. Inference allows one to move beyond immediate sensory experience by using logical reasoning, such as understanding the presence of fire by observing smoke. Another important source of conceptual knowledge is *Śabda* (verbal testimony), which refers to knowledge received from trustworthy authorities, teachers, and sacred texts. In Indian philosophy, especially within the spiritual traditions, verbal testimony plays a crucial role in conveying truths that may not be accessible through perception or inference alone. It allows seekers to learn about metaphysical realities, ethical principles, and spiritual teachings through language and instruction. Along with these, *Upamāna* (comparison or analogy) also contributes to

conceptual understanding by explaining unfamiliar ideas through their resemblance to known objects or experiences. By relating the unknown to the known, comparison helps clarify meanings and strengthens intellectual comprehension.

Together, these *pramāṇas* function as complementary sources of knowledge that shape and refine conceptual understanding. They enable the seeker to gather information, organize experiences, and develop a coherent framework of thought. Although this stage of knowledge remains intellectual and mediated by concepts and language, it forms an essential foundation for deeper reflection and contemplation. Thus, through the proper use of perception, inference, verbal testimony, and comparison, a seeker gradually builds conceptual knowledge that prepares the mind for the higher pursuit of direct realization.

Absolute Realization / Experiential Knowledge:

Absolute realization, or experiential knowledge, represents the highest stage of knowledge in Indian philosophical thought. Unlike conceptual knowledge, which depends on intellectual understanding and reasoning, absolute realization refers to the direct and immediate experience of truth. It is not merely knowledge *about* reality but the realization *of* reality itself. In several Indian philosophical traditions, especially

Advaita Vedānta, this realization is understood as the direct awareness of the unity between the individual self (*Ātman*) and the ultimate reality (Brahman). At this stage, knowledge transcends conceptual thinking and becomes a transformative inner experience. Experiential knowledge arises when the seeker moves beyond the limitations of language, concepts, and logical analysis. While intellectual inquiry can guide one toward truth, it cannot fully capture the nature of ultimate reality. True realization occurs when truth is directly apprehended within one's own consciousness. This state is often described in Indian philosophy as *aparokṣa anubhūti*, meaning immediate and non-mediated experience. In such realization, the distinction between the knower, the known, and the act of knowing dissolves, revealing the true nature of the Self as pure consciousness.

This realization removes ignorance (*avidyā*), which is regarded as the root cause of human suffering and misidentification with the transient aspects of existence. When ignorance is dispelled, the individual attains a deeper awareness of unity, freedom, and inner peace. Absolute realization therefore represents the culmination of the philosophical and spiritual quest in Indian thought, where knowledge is no longer theoretical but becomes a direct, living awareness of truth.

According to Adi Shankaracharya, absolute knowledge cannot be established merely through logical argument or intellectual reasoning. Although reasoning may help remove ignorance and clarify philosophical understanding, it is not sufficient to realize the ultimate truth. The Absolute, or Brahman, transcends the limits of concepts and language; therefore, it cannot be fully grasped by the intellect alone. For this reason, the teachings of the Upanishads emphasize direct experiential realization as the ultimate goal of human life. Shankaracharya maintained that true knowledge arises when the individual directly realizes the identity of the self (*Atman*) with Brahman. Thus, absolute knowledge is not theoretical but experiential, achieved through spiritual insight and self-realization rather than through argument alone. (Saraswati, 1961, p. 245) The ultimate reality is fundamentally non-empirical, meaning that it cannot be fully understood through sense experience or empirical observation. Human knowledge generally operates through perception, concepts, and rational analysis. However, these faculties impose limitations on our understanding because they depend on categories, language, and logical distinctions. As a result, conceptual knowledge is unable to grasp the absolute nature of reality in its fullness. Many philosophical traditions therefore maintain

that in order to reach ultimate truth, one must go beyond the boundaries of ordinary sensibility and reason. The path to such realization is often described as higher or intuitive knowledge, a form of awareness that transcends conceptual thinking. Unlike empirical knowledge, which is mediated through the senses and intellect, this higher knowledge is direct and experiential. It is not merely theoretical understanding but a profound realization of the nature of existence. In this sense, reality is essentially indescribable. Language and concepts function by dividing and defining things, whereas ultimate reality is beyond all distinctions and limitations. Any attempt to describe it through words inevitably reduces its infinite nature into finite terms. Therefore, philosophical and mystical traditions often emphasize silence or metaphor when referring to the absolute. Nevertheless, reality is not completely inaccessible. It is intimately present within human experience and can be realized through inner awareness. When this realization occurs, the individual directly experiences the ground of existence, recognizing it as distinct from all particular objects of knowledge while at the same time underlying them. Such realization represents the highest form of knowledge and the ultimate aim of philosophical inquiry. (Malkani, 1953, pp. 93-98) Shankarachariya said about absolute

knowledge, "The fact of everything having its self in Brahman cannot be grasped [intellectually], without the aid of scriptural passage 'That art Thou'. The scriptural knowledge of self-realization is contained in the Upanishadic statements, i.e., Vedaantic aphorisms: self-realization consists in the experience of the identity of Brahman and Aatman. In the next section, we study self-realization in terms of the exegesis of the Vedaantic aphorisms regarding identity." We have also got the unique description about the state of self-realization, which is like; "[Brahmaanubhava is] not that which cognizes the internal (objects), not that which cognizes the external (objects), not what cognizes both of them, not a mass of cognition, not cognitive, not non cognitive. [It is] unseen, incapable of being spoken of, ungraspable, without any distinctive marks, unthinkable, unnameable, the essence of knowledge of the one self, that into which the world is resolved, the peaceful, the being, the non-dua..." (George, 2001, pp. 37 & 44)

The purpose of life on earth is the realisation of this stupendous depth of the Being of all beings, without which life becomes a failure. "If one would know it here, then there is the true end of all aspirations. If one would not know it here, then great is the loss for such a person. Knowing it in every particular being, the wise, on departing from this world, become

immortal" (Kena Upanishad II. 5). There is a severe reproach to those who do not attempt at and succeed in the realisation of Truth.

Godless are those worlds called, with blind darkness covered over, to which, on death, those who are the slayers of the Self go. - Isavasya Upanishad 3.

He, who departs from this world without knowing That Imperishable Being, is wretched. - Brhadaranyaka Upanishad III. 8. 10.

The teacher of the Brahmagvidya is praised in glowing terms. You, truly, are our father, who take us across to the blessed other shore of ignorance. - Prashna Upanishad VI. 8. (George, 2001, p. 27)

Importance of Conceptual Knowledge for Absolute Realization:

If the ultimate goal in Indian philosophy is the realization of the Self or absolute truth, an important question arises: why must the journey begin with conceptual knowledge? The reason is that conceptual knowledge prepares and refines the mind for the possibility of direct realization. Human understanding initially operates through language, concepts, and reasoning; therefore, philosophical teachings first present truth in an intellectual form. These concepts help the seeker develop a clear understanding of fundamental ideas such as the nature of the Self, reality, and the cause of ignorance. Without this preliminary

framework, the mind would lack direction and clarity in its search for truth. Conceptual knowledge also plays a crucial role in removing misconceptions and doubts that arise from ordinary experience. In everyday life, individuals tend to identify themselves with the body, mind, or social identity, which leads to confusion about the true nature of the Self. Through philosophical inquiry and reflection, conceptual knowledge challenges these mistaken assumptions and gradually reorients the seeker toward a deeper understanding of reality. In this way, concepts function as guiding tools that illuminate the path toward higher knowledge. At the same time, Indian philosophers emphasize that conceptual knowledge is not the final goal but a necessary means. It functions like a map that points toward a destination: while the map itself is not the destination, it is essential for reaching it. Similarly, conceptual understanding provides the intellectual foundation that makes deeper contemplation and inner realization possible. Once the mind is properly prepared and freed from confusion, the seeker can move beyond conceptual thinking toward direct experiential knowledge of the Self.

Self-realization requires, as its first step, conceptual or intellectual knowledge of the nature of Brahman, Aatman, and *Brahmaanubhava*. Such knowledge is gained

through the study of the scriptures, especially by understanding the meaning and significance of the Vedantic statements (*mahaavaakyas*) such as “That art Thou.” These teachings provide the conceptual framework necessary to discern the true identity of the Aatman with Brahman. Without this preliminary understanding, one cannot properly orient oneself toward the goal of realization. Thus, intellectual comprehension serves as an indispensable foundation that guides the seeker toward the direct experience of *Brahmaanubhava*. When this realization is described as the “attainment” (*labdha*) of *Brahmaanubhava*, the term “attainment” is used only in a figurative sense (*upāchāra*), since Brahman is ever-present and not something newly produced. “In the empirical experience we attain some new knowledge, i.e., knowledge which had not previously existed as far as we were concerned. In self-realization, however, one does not attain anything new, but only realizes what one is, i.e., his identity with Brahman. According to Shankara, self is Brahman, and self-realization is that experience by which one realizes one’s own real nature.” (George, 2001, p. 36) To have the absolute realisation of the true reality, it is very important to have the knowledge of the reality first. We need to have the true nature of the reality, how it is different from non-reality. In order to this, it has said; “Only scriptural

knowledge can help us to enter into the realm of *Brahmaanubhava*. Though scriptural knowledge is limited to duality, still it provides the knowledge about the reality of Brahman and Aatman and an intellectual understanding of *Brahmaanubhava*. Shankara affirms the authority of the scriptural testimony in our intellectual understanding of Brahman.” (George, 2001, p. 37) Self-knowledge alone enables one to realize the absolute Truth and attain perfection, and it is regarded as the highest form of wisdom. Understanding the Self conceptually—through study, reflection, and discrimination—is the essential first step, because one cannot realize what one does not know. When Socrates asked the Delphic Oracle, “What is the highest knowledge?” the answer was, “Know thy Self.” Here, “Self” refers not merely to the ego, but to the true, immutable Self. Similarly, in India, the knowledge of the real Self has been celebrated since the earliest Vedic period. This demonstrates that conceptual knowledge of the Self lays the groundwork for the direct, experiential realization of the absolute; without such intellectual comprehension, true realization cannot occur. (*Abhedananda*, 1905, p. 121)

The Three-Step Path to Realization:

In Indian philosophical thought, the journey from conceptual knowledge to absolute realization is traditionally guided by a three-

step path: *Śravaṇa*, *Manana*, and *Nididhyāsana*. Indian philosophy outlines a structured path that guides the seeker from conceptual understanding to direct realization. This path emphasizes a progressive approach where intellectual study is followed by deep reflection and meditation. Through careful engagement with teachings, critical examination of their meaning, and sustained contemplative practice, the seeker gradually transforms knowledge into direct experiential awareness. The three stages together provide a systematic framework that supports both understanding and internalization, ensuring that conceptual knowledge ultimately leads to absolute realization.

Śravaṇa: The Stage of Hearing

Śravaṇa, often translated as the stage of hearing or attentive study, marks the first step in the journey toward realization. At this stage, the seeker engages with the teachings of the scriptures, philosophical texts, or a qualified teacher. The primary purpose is to gain a clear and accurate intellectual understanding of the principles concerning the Self, reality, and ultimate truth. This involves careful listening, reading, and comprehension, ensuring that the foundational concepts are correctly grasped. *Śravaṇa* is not a passive process; it requires focused, attention and sincerity. By listening deeply to the teachings, the seeker

begins to familiarize the mind with profound truths that may initially seem abstract or counterintuitive. This stage also serves to remove misunderstandings and correct misconceptions that arise from everyday experience or habitual ways of thinking. In essence, *Śravaṇa* lays the groundwork for the next stages of reflection and meditation by providing a coherent conceptual framework. Without this step, the mind would lack the clarity and direction needed for deeper inquiry and eventual direct realization of the Self.

It can be seen as planting the seeds of knowledge: while hearing alone does not produce realization, it ensures that the seeker is exposed to the essential truths in a form that the mind can later internalize and experience directly.

Manana: The Stage of Reflection:

Manana, or the stage of reflection, is the second step on the path toward realization. After *Śravaṇa*, where the seeker gains intellectual understanding of the teachings, *Manana* involves actively reflecting on and reasoning through those concepts. The purpose of this stage is to remove doubts, resolve contradictions, and deepen comprehension, ensuring that the knowledge acquired is coherent and logically consistent. During *Manana*, the seeker critically examines the teachings, comparing them with personal experience and other philosophical insights. This may

involve asking questions, analysing arguments, and contemplating the implications of key concepts, such as the nature of the Self, the distinction between the real and the unreal, and the sources of human suffering. By engaging the intellect in this way, the mind gradually internalizes the teachings and transforms theoretical understanding into a more profound grasp of truth. Manana serves as a bridge between intellectual knowledge and direct experience. It strengthens conviction, clarifies misconceptions, and prepares the mind for the next stage, *Nididhyāsana*, where contemplation leads to direct realization. Without reflection, hearing alone may remain superficial; Manana ensures that the seeker's understanding becomes stable, integrated, and ready for experiential knowledge.

Nididhyāsana: The Stage of Meditative Absorption:

Nididhyāsana, or the stage of meditative absorption, is the final step in the journey from conceptual knowledge to absolute realization. After Śravaṇa and Manana, where the seeker gains understanding and reflects deeply on the teachings, *Nididhyāsana* involves sustained contemplative practice aimed at internalizing and directly experiencing the truth. It is through this stage that knowledge moves from the intellectual level to the level of lived, experiential awareness.

In *Nididhyāsana*, the seeker engages in focused meditation, contemplation, or deep introspection on the nature of the Self and ultimate reality. The mind, now clarified and free from doubts through reflection, becomes steady and receptive. By repeatedly meditating on the teachings and their meaning, the distinctions between the knower, the known, and the process of knowing gradually dissolve. This deep absorption allows the seeker to transcend conceptual thinking and realize the unity of the Self (*Ātman*) with ultimate reality (Brahman).

Nididhyāsana is the state of meditation. This is the state where people remove every inch of ignorance by practicing the meditation. Direct realisation of self is *Nididhyāsana*. Once an aspirant has listened to the teachings of the teacher and, through reflection, becomes intellectually convinced of his identity with Brahman, he becomes prepared to strive for direct realization, or *Brahmaanubhava*. At this stage, the practice of *Nididhyāsana* becomes essential. *Nididhyāsana* is a form of deep mental contemplation in which the mind is withdrawn from all other objects and steadily focused on Brahman, enabling the aspirant to transform intellectual conviction into direct experiential realization. It “strikes deep the *Vedāntic* wisdom into our heart. It eradicates the innate confusion of the body with the soul.” Meditation is not a

concentration of oneself on Brahman, as an external of separate entity. It is an activity of the mind “in which the mind is turned completely inward, and is firmly. fixed on the inner self and its identity with Brahman till one’s finitude and individuality are dissolved.” (George, 2001, p. 122) *Nididhyāsana*, the practice of deep meditation on Brahman, has two forms: *samprajnaat-samaapatti* and *asamprajnaat-samaapatti*. *Samprajnaat-samaapatti* involves meditation where the aspirant experiences modifications of consciousness while reflecting on the *mahāvākyas*. It has two stages: Initial stage: The meditator is aware of himself as the experiencer, the witness, and of the modifications in consciousness caused by meditation on the Vedic statements. He recognizes both the process and its effects at that moment. Later stage: The meditator no longer considers the origin of these modifications. Meditation becomes so intense that temporal and spatial marks of the modifications disappear, leaving only the awareness of himself as witness and of the effects produced by the meditation. *Asamprajnaat-samaapatti* is a higher state in which all mental modifications cease. Here, there is no duality, no sense of origin or process, and consciousness rests purely as Brahman, free from all mental activity. (George, 2001, p. 122) In the stages of *śravaṇa* (listening) and *manana* (reflection), the aspirant studies the

scriptures, examines the meaning of the Vedantic aphorisms, and discriminates between the perishable—body, mind, intellect, and the plurality of the world—and the imperishable Self. Through this process, the aspirant negates the reality of the transient world and affirms the imperishable Self as real, repeatedly reminding himself: “I am supreme Brahman.” This affirmation is strengthened through meditation, which enables the aspirant to directly experience the fundamental identity of Aatman and Brahman. The practice is further supported by focusing on the four *mahāvākyas* and the eternal syllable ‘Aum’, which serve as aids to deepen concentration and realization. About this state, it has further said; “The meditation on this practical formula makes the aspirant realize Aatman, which activates him is the same Brahman, who vitalizes the entire universe. Thus, the aspirant discovers the identity between the self and the all-pervading Brahman. The conviction arrived at by the meditation on the third *mahāvākya* makes the aspirant experience the truth of anubhava vākya (statement of experience), viz., ‘*Aham Brahmāsmi*’ (‘I am Brahman’).” (George, 2001, p. 123) The stage of *Nididhyāsana* is transformative, as it converts intellectual understanding into direct, intuitive knowledge. It is not merely mental exercise but a process that reshapes perception, consciousness, and experience itself. Through this meditative practice, the

seeker attains absolute realization, experiencing truth firsthand rather than through description or reasoning. In this way, *Nididhyāsana* completes the three-step path, culminating in the full realization of the Self and the end of ignorance.

Śravaṇa, *Manana*, and *Nididhyāsana* are not isolated steps but interconnected stages that together guide the seeker from intellectual understanding to direct realization. *Śravaṇa* provides the initial exposure to teachings, forming the conceptual foundation. *Manana* builds on this foundation through reflection and reasoning, clarifying doubts and strengthening conviction. *Nididhyāsana* then transforms this clarified knowledge into direct experiential awareness through deep meditation. Each stage depends on the previous one: without hearing, reflection lacks content; without reflection, meditation lacks clarity; and without meditation, knowledge remains conceptual. Together, the three stages form a seamless process, moving the seeker from study to reflection to direct realization of the Self.

Relevance and Contemporary Significance:

The journey from conceptual knowledge to absolute realization remains highly relevant in contemporary times, offering both intellectual and practical benefits. In a world characterized by rapid information flow and external distractions, the structured approach of *Śravaṇa*, *Manana*, and *Nididhyāsana* provides a method for

cultivating clarity, critical thinking, and self-awareness. Conceptual understanding equips individuals to analyse and interpret complex ideas, reflection fosters discernment and thoughtful decision-making, and meditative practice promotes mental focus, emotional balance, and inner peace. Beyond personal growth, this path encourages ethical living, compassion, and a deeper sense of purpose, demonstrating that ancient Indian philosophical methods are not merely historical artifacts but practical tools for holistic development in modern life.

Challenges and Misconceptions:

The path from conceptual knowledge to absolute realization, while profound, is not without challenges and common misconceptions. One major challenge is the tendency to mistake intellectual understanding for true realization; many seekers believe that grasping philosophical concepts alone is sufficient, overlooking the need for reflection and meditative practice. Another difficulty lies in maintaining consistency and focus through the stages, as modern life often presents distractions that can disrupt study, contemplation, and meditation. Misconceptions also arise regarding the nature of the Self and ultimate reality, with some interpreting these teachings in overly literal, symbolic, or dualistic ways, which can hinder genuine insight. Additionally, impatience or the expectation of immediate results may lead

seekers to undervalue the gradual, disciplined progression of the three-step path. Recognizing these challenges and misconceptions is essential, as it allows practitioners to approach the journey with clarity, patience, and a realistic understanding of the effort required to transform conceptual knowledge into direct experiential realization.

Conclusion:

The journey from conceptual knowledge to absolute realization illustrates the profound integration of intellect, reflection, and meditation in Indian philosophy. Conceptual understanding provides the necessary foundation, allowing the seeker to grasp fundamental truths about the Self and reality. Reflection deepens this understanding, clarifying doubts and strengthening conviction, while meditative absorption transforms knowledge into direct experiential awareness. Together, the three-step path—Śravaṇa, Manana, and Nididhyāsana—offers a systematic framework that moves the seeker from theory to lived realization. This approach remains highly relevant today, fostering clarity, self-awareness, and inner balance amid modern challenges. By emphasizing the transformation of knowledge into experience, Indian philosophy demonstrates that true wisdom lies not only in understanding but in realizing the ultimate reality within oneself.

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