



You Do Not Necessarily Need a New Reality

By [Harrison Barnes](#)

Lately I have been coming across a lot of Indian gurus. In fact, a few months ago, I had one speak at my house. I also happen to live directly next door to a house owned by a well-known Indian guru. Several times a week this guru's followers come by and maintain his yard and do all sorts of work around the property. In addition, I see these white-robed Indian gurus walking around my community of Malibu, California, regularly. Just a few days ago my wife saw the actor Owen Wilson walking around with one of them. These Indian gurus have been in favor for a long time. Even the Beatles had one, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

The Indian guru may be viewed as somewhat exotic in the United States, but in reality most of us have our own gurus. In small and large towns across America each week people gather and listen to priests, rabbis, and pastors talk, and people seek them out for counsel. Other people visit psychologists, coaches, psychiatrists, yoga teachers, self-help practitioners, motivational speakers, and the like. Or people study various disciplines in an attempt to get guidance. Some people look up to and worship those who are rich and famous.

I have no idea why this is, but most people seem to have been born with the sense that they are somehow incomplete. Whether it is through religion, bodies of knowledge, or gurus--most people are generally seeking some answers about the state of their spirit, psyche and place in the world, and are in search of something that will "complete" them.

One of the most common messages of all religions is that we are living in this world without any understanding what is *real*. We see the world in many ways; however, religion often tells us that what we are seeing is not actually reality at all. *Reality is found within ourselves*: we do not see this reality because we are confusing the world--its sights, sounds and other indicators as being reality. Reality is actually far different from what we can see, hear and touch. It is more peaceful, happy and meaningful. In Sanskrit there is even a word for the confusing but untrue nature of the world we are experiencing, 'maya', which means *illusion*. The idea is that most people are experiencing the world as an illusion--not for what it really is.

Legions of religions, academic and nonacademic bodies of knowledge, gurus and people have drawn us to the idea that they can help us "see through" the illusion of reality created by our senses, so we can understand what the true nature of reality. The presumed promise of seeing through the "maya" is and always has been something akin to attaining peace, love and understanding. There are many ways that religions, gurus, and various bodies of knowledge go about leading man to this state:

First, there is the relatively uncommon practice (to Westerners especially) of seeking knowledge within, without any outside help: Buddhists believe that each person has the capacity to see this truth by taking the time to meditate and examine his or her mind each day, and also by learning and understanding the teachings of the Buddha. The idea of Buddhism is that everyone can see the truth if they work at their own minds. Buddhists do not require money from their followers, or any formal allegiance to a particular leader or body of knowledge. They simply require that people "look within". The problem with "looking within" is that it can take years of meditation and a great deal of solitary work. This is the sort of work that Buddhist monks are doing in monasteries. The "breakthrough" has to come from the work of the individual, and cannot be obtained by receiving the blessing of another, for example.

The term that Buddhists use for this breakthrough is reaching "nirvana"--the goal of all Buddhists. Nirvana is believed to be *freedom from the ego* (i.e., an "individual-centered" existence) and freedom from mental suffering. When someone reaches nirvana, Buddhists also believe that he or she is enlightened, and is freed from greed, anger, hate and other similar negative emotions. While nirvana can be explained, to be truly understood it must be experienced. This Buddhist idea is the most rarely experienced form of truth seeking. It is not at the sort of truth seeking that most people are comfortable with, because it relies on us exclusively and does not require that we do much other than look within ourselves.

Some people that I know, who have practiced Buddhism, have voiced the complaint that it is too much work. For example, I have a relative who used to go to a Japanese monastery and spend months there at a time. The entire time no speech was allowed in the monastery; people were simply not allowed to talk to one another. The reason for this was that the monastery and its monks believed that people needed to be looking within, not distracting themselves by seeking approval, knowledge and reassurance from others.

The other, more common methods used by people to connect with this higher understanding of reality are through other people, bodies of knowledge, or even altered states of consciousness, as achieved through drug use. Most religions and disciplines require that you give your allegiance to a body of knowledge, leader, guru, or a church. You are usually required to give money and other things in order to find this sense of "grace".

- You may need to study and apply one branch of psychology,
- You may need to study and practice one branch of Yoga,
- You may need to pray to a certain god several times a day,
- You may need to go to attend and give money to a church,
- You may need to give money to a guru,
- You may need to put on Nikes and take poison, so that you can be picked up by a passing spaceship, which is supposedly going to bring you the knowledge that you seek.

All of these are methods of gaining this understanding, or a sense of grace, through someone or something outside of you. For example, Christians are urged to surrender themselves to Jesus Christ. Other religions require that you give a percentage of your income to find grace. Still other religions require that you follow certain diets. This, in my opinion, is where it gets interesting because, in all of these examples, people look beyond their ability to achieve enlightenment through themselves; instead, they rely upon others, who are all too eager to dispense advice and bring people this "peace" that they seek.

I do not think there is anything wrong with following religion, gurus, and so forth. What I do know is that no one can agree on what the right answers are, and if you are to believe most religions and bodies of knowledge, according to them, they are right and all other bodies of knowledge are wrong. There are so many religions, so many gurus and so many ways that people go about finding inner knowledge and

peace that it would probably be impossible to even come up with a comprehensive list. There are probably tens of thousands of methods that people use to find this knowledge and peace. It seems to be never ending.

In order to experience the greatest level of success in your career and life, I believe that there is no approach that is the correct one for finding this "knowledge" of what will make you happy. If you hitch your wagon to the right religion, then you may, in fact, find a great deal of happiness. Or, if you "look within" effectively enough and are self-reliant enough, you may also find happiness.

The difference between the two approaches is that one is self-reliant and the other depends on others in order to find peace. The question is whether you can find what you are looking for alone, or whether you should surrender and follow another. This is one of the more fundamental struggles in our lives and careers, and it is something that virtually everyone goes through.

An alternative to both of these methods is deciding that everything (including yourself) is "ok the way it is", and just going about your business, being focused on your goals. This method allows you not to be distracted by looking within, or following another. This method allows you to accept everything the way it is. However, most people are constantly looking for answers and change. What would happen if you stopped looking for answers and change? What would happen if you just relied upon yourself and upon what matters to you right now? What would happen if you allowed yourself to not be restless?

Most people spend a great deal of time being restless instead focused. They put their hopes and dreams for happiness on people, religions and things that are outside of themselves. Others isolate themselves under the belief that isolation will help them find something magical within themselves. But what if you stopped searching, and what if you just went through life accepting things the way they are?

In order to do your best work it is important that you always keep your mind focused. You need to focus on the here and now, and to believe that you can achieve the things you set out to do. You need to believe you are already complete. You need to realize that you can accomplish things on your own, and that you do not necessarily need to rely on other people, or some big change within yourself. You should accept things the way they are. You do not necessarily need a new reality.

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