

Pondering and reflecting are essential components that an individual must have in his or her mindset in order to innovate, reform or cause a revolutionary change and impact in the world. One of the virtues that I hold to heart is pondering and reflecting, a concept I learned from reading the Qur'an. This concept sparked a special route in my individual mindset, perspective and lifestyle. From ruminating, I was able to become molded into a person who attained the skill to think-outside-the-box and deviate from viewing the universe in a black-and-white image.

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Some of the most historic, influential individuals contributed vastly to mankind by innovating, discovering and developing notions and objects that could lead to huge advancements in several fields. One such time frame in which this was prominent was when people rebelled against the conformist, archaic mindset and the way of life during the Enlightenment Era. The Enlightenment was an era that saw several intellectuals make conclusions on observations, analysis and experimentation, with creditable evidence, rather than blindly following the sermon of the priests in the corrupt churches.¹ Both men and women alike started forming hypotheses and came to their conclusions by observing, pondering and reflecting. Pondering and reflecting is a virtue that I close to my heart even today. The concept of contemplating and evaluating was consistently mentioned in the Qur'an, where I first picked up on the conjecture.² This virtue piqued my interest in the field of neuro-oncology and philosophy, taught me how to become open-minded and how to think before I spoke. From this one rectitude, I can proudly state the rite of passage I have made thusly and the level of maturity I have gained from pondering and reflecting.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once stated, "Beware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk. It is as when a conflagration had broken out in a great city, and no man knows what is safe or where it will end. There is not a piece of science, but its flank may be turned to-morrow; there is not any literary population, not the so-called eternal names of fame that may not be revised and condemned. The very hopes of man, the thoughts of his heart, the religion of nations, the manner and morals of mankind, are all at the mercy of a

¹ *An Age of Enlightenment* by History World International Project retrieved from http://history-world.org/age_of_enlightenment.htm

² *Why Won't You Think?* Retrieved from www.detailedquran.com/quran.../Why%20won't%20you%20think.pdf

new generalization. Generalization is always a new influx of the divinity into the mind...”³ In this quotation, Emerson epitomizes the supremacy of great thinking. Great thinking comes from pondering and reflecting. When an individual is truly a strong thinker, he or she would not spew nonsensical ideas just to attract attention. Rather, a strong thinker would strive to find an impacting discovery to serve as a benefactor to mankind. These tie into how pondering and reflecting benefited me. It had prevented me from acting out and speaking impetuously, and instead steered me towards the path to think about both sides of a situation and become a sensible person.

One such experience in practicing pondering and reflecting was when I stood up female equality in my culture’s traditional beliefs. It is common for females to be viewed as inferior and superfluous in a conservative, Asian culture, and is conveyed most prominently in Bengali culture. Throughout my entire life, I have heard from my very own father say that the respectable and official place for a woman was the kitchen. According to my father, women were subservient slaves to their men counterparts, uneducated, and tools whose purpose was to clean and cook. I was incensed by his prejudice opinions regarding women. To hear those words come from my very own father stabbed at my heart in a discouraging way, as it seemed like my father had no faith in me to become a successful individual. My mind was submerged with poisonous words to lash out at my father to prove to him that women indeed made discoveries that could shake the universe. It was because of Rosalind Franklin, a woman, that we are aware that DNA

³ L. Budd, E. Cady *On Emerson* (1988) retrieved from https://books.google.com/books?id=QGOaq6d4siYC&pg=PA107&lpg=PA107&dq=emerson+quotes+on+generalization&source=bl&ots=0MQPSY_Ixj&sig=s6NuXS7k1gt96M7Nkloqrx-t-jQU&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CD8Q6AEwBWovChMIh87e66b8yAIVBtYeCh3s4ges#v=onepage&q=emerson%20quotes%20on%20generalization&f=false

has a double-helix shape.⁴ It is because of Harriet Beecher Stowe, a woman, whose book Uncle Tom's Cabin, popularized the antislavery movement and was one of the major factors behind the American Civil War.⁵ It was Marie Curie, a woman, who was the *first* person to win a Nobel Prize in two different categories and *died* due to the amount of radioactivity she was exposed to during her research.⁶

Consumed in rage, I wanted to shout, *So tell me what is so superfluous about women when they have made some of the most greatest achievements throughout the course of history?* Instead, I bit back my tongue and retained my anger, remembering the concept of pondering and reflecting. It would be futile to just act impulsively in order to prove a point. I wanted to respond to his misogynistic saying in a different way—I vowed right then to become a woman whose discovery resonates significantly throughout the world and all its inhabitants; I swore to my soul to dedicate my life towards pondering and reflecting ways to find a cure to end the malicious disease of cancer. I wanted to use my virtue and integrity in my own unique twist in order to do the morally right thing. It would be like killing two birds with one stone—I would become a messiah to my people and I would prove to my father that both women and men have equal status. The self-reward that I would attain from following the concept of pondering and reflecting would complete the purpose of my life—to give back.

On a more spiritual level, I feel the importance of pondering and reflecting as it prevents disharmony and feeds the soul, in a sense. Oscar Wilde once said, “Nothing can cure the soul

⁴ H. Nickla, *The Essentials of Genetics 6th Edition* (1996) retrieved from <http://www.nature.com/scitable/ebooks/cntNm-8/118521938>

⁵ J. Tackach, *Frederick Stowe: In the Shadow of Uncle Tom's Cabin*, retrieved from <http://www.historynet.com/uncle-toms-cabin>

⁶ J. Lewis, *Mother of Modern Physics* retrieved from http://womenshistory.about.com/od/mariecurie/p/marie_curie.htm

but senses, just as nothing can cure the sense but the soul.”⁷ Wilde suggests that the senses and the soul are intertwined. In this epigram, he reminds us that our psychological life benefits from the natural purges reality provides so willingly and ceaselessly. Similarly, it states in the Qur’an, “Don’t you think?” and “Lo! Therein verily are signs for those who ponder.”⁸ The universe is filled with several secrets and their secrets are within the signs presented in the entire expanse of everything in creation. The way one attains peace, harmony and a full grasp of life is by pondering and reflecting on the signs. The Qur’an encourages the people to unleash the full potential of their mind by thinking outside the box. The signs are a communication to be transmitted to mankind. The signs are within how a bee transfers pollen from one plant to another. The signs are within how an ill person recovers from his defective state. The signs are within what is keeping the bird soaring when it is flying. In this aspect, only the guided ponder and reflect. The difficulty that comes with pondering and reflecting is that one cannot just touch upon the superficial features. In order to ponder and reflect, you have to be profound and think philosophically about the five W’s. You have to have a scholarly approach when you ponder and reflect, which is a struggle as this skill takes years to perfect professionally. In order to ponder and reflect, one has to endure, be patient and have a firm resolve to discover something reverberating. It takes tenacity and a hard mental drive to successfully achieve a nirvana and have an utterly different way of how one perceives life.

In essence, this virtue embraces the very core of every single branch of study known today. Without pondering and reflecting, we would not have advanced so far in civilization. Without pondering and reflecting, no imperative theories would have been concluded during the Scientific Revolution. Every individual on this planet has, in some way, pondered and reflected.

⁷ O. Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Penguin Class (2001)

⁸ *The Holy Qur’an: A Translation* Chapter 15, verse 75

From pondering and reflecting, I have learned to become creative, imaginative. I have learned to
fray from the mundane way of substituting memorization as comprehension. From practicing
this virtue, I attained dexterity, broad-mindedness and interest. I can proudly state that this one
virtue can serve as a trajectory towards a successful, bright future for me.