



Review

Have you been reflecting? And is it often enough?

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ABSTRACT

Making reflections is one of the key critical skills in leadership and management. Reflecting is good; when one reflects, one learns; and one becomes aware and mindful. And in this review research paper, the practitioner-academician author examines what reflections entail in life and at work, how and what as well as why should one reflect. The author also uncovers some prevalent problems of making reflections or meditations while highlighting its clear benefits.

Keywords: Reflections, self-reflection, being aware; being mindful, learning, meditation, contemplating.

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, the culture is geared towards the extrovert; there is pressure to interact, party and chatter. And given the situation, inward orientation is, at times, seen as problem rather than an opportunity (Helgoe, 2008). It is felt that more than half of all the Americans are introverts, and they can truly tap on their inner source of power and indeed gain energy through reflection and solitude (Helgoe, 2008).

Globally, in these days of quick short trips, instant noodles, disposable diapers, one-night stands, throwaway morality, overweight bodies, and pills that do almost everything from cheer, to quiet, to sleep, to kill. And is it not A TIME NOW to REFLECT – after all, these are these days too where there are plenty of noises, hype and sizzling as well as so much in the showroom window, but no real meat or nothing in the storehouse.

“Let’s use our human intelligence wisely. Otherwise, how are we superior to animals?” (HH Dalai Lama, 2012: 7). Indeed human beings can critically use their intelligence well by reflecting. Socrates once pointed out that “an unexamined life is not worth living”. As one lives, one acts and does an action or take actions. Before/ during or after taking action(s), one needs to reflect and think through of one’s action(s). Generally speaking, one’s thoughts should be extended and systematic by

looking back upon our actions sometime after they have taken place.

Once or twice a year, business leaders and managers do retreats to reflect, take stock, review their actions, gain direction and plan forward. These days, companies in Silicon Valley in the United States are doing more than simply seizing on Buddhist practices. Entrepreneurs and engineers are said to be taking thousand-old traditions and reshaping them to fit the Valley’s goal-oriented, data-driven, largely atheistic culture. Forget past lives, and put nirvana aside; the technology community of Northern California wants its ROI: return on investment in meditation. “All the woo-woo mystical stuff, that’s really retrograde,” says Kenneth Folk, an influential meditation teacher in San Francisco. “This is about training the brain and stirring up the chemical soup inside.” (Kenneth Folk cited in Shachtman, 2013).

Paper’s Aim and Purposes

Here, in this paper, the aim and purposes are to define/ explain reflection and examine what reflections entail in both personal and professional contexts, the need to be

mindful in living and working, and how, what and why would one reflect upon as well as to review some prevailing problems and the benefits of making reflections. To start with, all of us need to know what reflection is. Perhaps we do it often but subconsciously or we take it for granted, for example, there is no need to reflect too long that all of us spontaneously look for happiness in an attempt to avoid sufferings. So then what exactly...

What Is Reflection? What Is Reflecting?

Dictionary.Reference.com defines reflection as “a fixing of the thoughts on something; careful consideration” or “a thought occurring in consideration or meditation”

Knowledge or even anything is of no value to one until one puts it to use. It is always good to do anything and everything with a particular concentration and awareness of the mind. When one reflects, one sees for oneself. And the great promise of the universe can, in fact, be seen in Shoitsu's words (cited in Prentiss, 2006: 141), “see for yourself”.

In teaching and even in training/ human resource development, reflection is “a mental process which, applied to the act of learning, challenges students (participants) to use critical thinking to examine presented information, question its validity, and draw conclusions based on the resulting ideas. This ongoing process allows the students to narrow possible solutions and eventually form a conclusion” (Intime, 2001). It is worthy to note that without reflection, learning ends “well short of the re-organization of thinking that ‘deep’ learning requires” (Ewell, 1997: 9; also cited in Intime, 2001). Effective learning situations require time for thinking.

To reflect is to think further, meditate and to learn. And to listen and in fact to really listen. (Osho, 2012). There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing is mechanical, an aid – just to hear sounds and any creature can hear; but to listen, one is not only hearing, but nothing else exists. To listen is to focus and concentrate as well as to attain understanding.

And as individuals, it is also good to do one's own (self) reflection. Self-reflection is something each of us may challenge or resist doing. This is because often one is afraid of what one might see about oneself. However, it is only through honest or candid self-reflection and appraisal that one can hope to heal and ease our mental and emotional pain. The more selfish and controlling one becomes, the more unwilling one is to be wrong, and the less willing one is to self-reflect. (<http://EzineArticles.com/3977095>). In most ways when one reflects, one also uncovers or becomes self-aware of oneself (emotional quotient, that is, self-knowledge; self-confidence/ self-regulation and control; Goleman, 1999), and these are important soft skills to be nurtured.

In terms of personality and growth, being aware and honest self-reflection is vital for a person to make considerable positive personal changes that will reduce inner pain and minimize negative behavior and destructive experience. Indeed true learning, and more so, mental health centers on having honest self-reflection, being mindful and effecting positive change. If, for instance, one struggles with finding the truth about oneself, rest assured that discovering that truth is always possible. The search will be simple, if one's intention to accept negative truths about yourself is sincere, then any resistance to seeing the whole truth about oneself (that will block one from consciously becoming aware) will melt away.

Reflection can basically help one to:

- 1 better understand one's strengths and weaknesses. [This normally assists in working out one's situational analysis/ SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis.]
- 2 identify and question one's underlying values and beliefs.
- 3 acknowledge and challenge possible assumptions on which one bases one's ideas, feelings and actions.
- 4 recognize areas of potential bias or discrimination.
- 5 acknowledge one's fears.
- 6 identify possible inadequacies or areas for improvement.

(<http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/medicine/reflective/3.xml>)

- 7 prepare, plan and identify key steps for life, if not for one's career (and/or business) in terms of learning, training, growth and overall development.

Reflection can thus lead to better self-awareness, which in turn is a first step to positive change – it is an essential stage in identifying areas for improvement and growth in both personal and professional settings. Having time to reflect can help one recognize approaches that have worked well, and in that way strengthen good habit, practice and exercise. “Reflection leads to growth of the individual – morally, personally, psychologically, and emotionally, as well as cognitively.” (Branch and Paranjape, 2002: 1187).

Parallel to these: “Farmers channel water to their land. Fletchers straighten their arrows. Carpenters turn wood, just as the wise (**leaders and guardians**) shape minds”; human beings must reflect to be awake, learn, grow and make progress. (Verse 80, *The Dhammapada*, cited in Senge and Eyyard, 2005: 43; **bold author's**). After all, it is precisely this assertion and point that this paper seeks to underscore. In fact, reflecting or making reflections and being mindful is also one of the key critical skills in leadership and management. These questions arise out of thinking about reflections:

Why did you do what you are going to do?

Why did you do what you have done?

If so, does the action(s) match or fit with your value(s)?

If not, what are your feelings? If the action does not match with your values, then what are you going to do about it?

How do you reflect?

What can you reflect upon?

When reflecting and being mindful, one ordinarily ponders or examines the reasons as to why one does what one has done. "Why is it so that I (we) have taken such an action?" "Is it I (we) who decide the course of action?" "Should I (we) continue with such an action? If so, why? If not, why not?" It is perhaps one of the wiser ways to cope with all the concerns, anxieties, conflicts, stress, fears and exhaustion so common in modern life.

Not to be in in-the-box thinking, one also needs to check the other perspectives and see other viewpoints. "Have I (we) thinking or looking in narrow terms?" Low (2013: Chapter 1/p. 8) urges leaders should be leaders and not bosses, and at the same time, he urges all to ponder, "Am I (Are we) as a leader(s), being egoistic?" "Who barks orders?" "Who are their own persons?" Or as advised by Sadovsky (1991: 16), "don't talk about yourself first. Find out about others." "Am I (Are we) having an abundance attitude?" "Am I (Are we) looking at the big picture?" Or indeed, "Am I/ Are we being elitist or worse, without being aware of it?" [Being elitist means that as a class of people they do not understand the problems faced by their ordinary followers, and are only interested to pursue their elite interests; these to the author are in fact nonleaders' ways.] It is important that as (a) leader(s), I/ we ask further, "Are there any other angles or perspectives to see and think through?"

As illustrated in the above, it is worthy to underscore the fact that the nature of the stimulus to reflect (such as questions, directions or probes) will affect or impact the quality of the reflection. Here, Surbeck, Han, and Moyer (1991) identified three levels of reflection:

- 1 **Reacting** – commenting on feelings towards the learning experience, such as reacting with a personal concern about an event.
- 2 **Elaborating** – comparing reactions with other experiences, such as referring to a general principle, a theory, or a moral or philosophical position.
- 3 **Contemplating** – focusing on constructive personal insights or on problems or difficulties, such as focusing on education issues, training methods, future goals, attitudes, ethical matters, or moral concerns. The nature of the stimulus or directions initially provided to the learners, as well as the feedback they receive after the initial reflection, will determine the extent to which they reach the contemplation level of reflection.

We can, in most ways, see that in reflections or as in Buddhist meditations, thoughts are considered, and "considered thoughts are a great gift. Our thoughts can set a direction, bring us understanding, analyze and discern, and put us in time with the life around us. When we rest in the heart, then we can use thought wisely, we

can plan and imagine in benevolent ways." (Kornfield, 2008: 148). Whatever that one experiences, one should be mindful of that experience. Mindfulness, being patient and receptive as well as having non-judging and present-oriented awareness, helps everyone. Kornfield (2008: 97) indicated that, "mindful attention to any experience is liberating. Mindfulness brings perspective, balance and freedom."

How Do You Reflect?

Several conditions exist for good reflection. One needs to take time to stop and think. It is good to prepare oneself for reflection - know what one wants to achieve or have one's goals set. One should keep an open mind (JinBodhi, 2013); one should have a level of objectivity about oneself and the impact of one's actions while adopting an honest, open and non-defensive attitude to the experience. (Branch and Paranjape, 2002).

Start by establishing a routine or making it a daily or regular affair. Have regular meditation, and "add any books or images that help make it feel like a sacred and peaceful space" (Kornfield, 2008: 107). Whether one is sitting on a chair or a cushion, one should make oneself comfortable and sit erect without being rigid.

One good way of reflection or meditation is to reflect on quotes. One can further reflect when one looks at quotes or phrases whether from the great books such as the Bible, the Koran, the Talmud or in fact, certainly from any other books. A single quote can, at most times, have the ability to make one think or rethink, touching one deeply. Reflecting or reflections can help one to rethink or reconsider one's life in some way, which is why this researcher loves using quotes.

One Zen saying goes as such, "When we know what we do not know, that is the beginning of wisdom." Reflect on what one knows, or what one does not know. Explore and expand the topics or issues. One can in fact reflect by meditating or thinking/ thinking further on a particular topic or issue affecting one and/ or one's family members, one's work and others. When one reflects, one appreciates the pause, the silence. When reflecting, one "pause(s) and respect(s) the moment, letting the situation unfold at its own pace." (Carroll, 2004: 127). In reflecting before one speaks, such as during meetings, one can reflect on the acronym **THINK**; and one can ask, "Is it **TRUE**?", "Is it **HELPFUL**?" or "Is it bringing **HAPPINESS**?", "Is it **INSPIRING**?", "Is it **NECESSARY**?" and finally, the **K** in the acronym **THINK** is "Is it **KIND**?" (adapted from <http://www.allacronyms.com/THINK>).

"The quieter you become, the more you can hear." (Zen Gems, 2005). When one reflects, one stops talking – even whatever internal talk ceases, and one listens deeply. There is a Native American saying that goes,

“Listen or your tongue will keep you deaf.” (Summersdale, 2010). Talking is like growing weeds; and talking too much is like overgrown weeds in the garden, it makes the garden ugly or less beautiful. Silence is to be appreciated; silence is golden; allow silence to transport one... allows it to take one to the core of life.

Interestingly, Proverbs 2.2 highlighted: “Turn your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding”. In this regard, when one reflects on one’s action(s) in relation to others, one opens up, broadens and perhaps relates better with others. One can better understand others when talking or relating with them. “Is the other party trying to be friendly?” “Is the other party putting in much effort?” “Is the other party being kind (enough)?” “Is he or she creating or building much goodwill?” Undeniably when one makes effort, attempting to see things from the other parties’ perspective(s) and viewpoint(s), one can increase or grow one’s empathetic feelings towards others (the other parties), and one builds connection with one’s setting and the world. One can then see what Kornfield (2008: 12-13) labeled as the first principle of Buddhist psychology, that is, “see the inner nobility and beauty of all human beings” as well as the second principle, “compassion... (as) our deepest nature. It arises from our interconnection with all things”.

Then again, in Buddhism, one cultivates the natural ability to ‘let go’ in mindfulness-awareness or sitting, meditation. Most of our mental sufferings come from holding on too tightly our beliefs. One needs to hold one’s thoughts rather lightly or even deconstruct them. Most of our sufferings too come through holding too tightly and dearly what we love or even like. One needs to take and accept them as they are – in situ – whether they come or they go, not that one doesn’t care or is not bothered. As in the Mahabaratha, Arjuna was advised by Sri Krishna to be objective, to be a warrior, just to fight regardless of who the enemies were – without any attachment but with all detachment.

Carroll (2004: 27) spoke of, “sitting is traditionally considered a singular moment where we discover the balance between getting somewhere and being somewhere at the same time, like riding a bike”. In sitting meditation, one tries to get somewhere – to develop calm minds and open hearts – by letting go of one’s constant verbal rehearsals and being fully with one’s situation as it unfolds. One learns that one can ride the present moment without the training wheels of story lines and preconceptions. In meditation, one lets go of our internal dialogue/ talk or noises hundreds of times-over and over and over again. Over time, one discovers a balance to one’s effort that is lively yet effortless; simple yet demanding. Just as a sportsman’s daily workout is key to performing on the court or field, regular reflection or meditation is the basis or foundation for balancing effort and extending it to the job/ work.

What Can One Reflect Upon? Why Would One Want to Reflect?

One can also focus on on the deeper levels of meaning – moral, ethical, social and/or professional issues (Branch and Paranjape, 2002). We should be mindful of our lives and how we lead them. The single most important reflection this author would propose is “What is your vision?” and “Do you have a clear vision for yourself?”

Connected to the above is the issue of “What would your life be?”, one needs to ask these questions:

“Are you leading a purposeful life?”

“How can you lead a purposeful life?”

“Do you have worthy and splendid goal(s)?” (JinBodhi, 2013: 38; paraphrased by the author).

“Where are you going?”

“What do you want to achieve? How do you want to achieve?”

“How can you improve yourself, alleviating the happiness of yourself and that of others?”

“In living (leading) and working, how can you keep on going, helping yourself and others, making the world a better place for all?”

Essentially, “in leading, how good or excellent are you as a leader?” and “in managing, how good or effective are you as a manager?” “In leading and managing, how loving and/or caring are you to your people?” One thus needs to be mindful of one’s living, leading, managing and working as well as one’s relationships with others or those around oneself.

In *How to Be a Success in Everything*, Rae (2013) suggested several simple reflection or mindfulness exercises to practice when re-framing one’s perspective. And they are:

Do what one loves and does it often. (see also Low, 2013a).

If one does not like something, one changes it.

If one does not like your job, one quits.

If one does not have enough time, one stops watching television.

If one is looking for the love of one’s life, one stops; they will be waiting for one when one starts doing things one loves.

[Yes, it is from the Holstee Manifesto where it all began is in 2009. During one of the United States’ worst recessions, when brothers and cofounders Dave and Mike Radparvar quit their jobs to dive headfirst into building a dream company with good friend and founding partner Fabian. Rather than writing a business plan, they wrote down together the things in life they wanted to work towards, to value and not to forget, on the steps of Union Square. From this, came the Holstee Manifesto. Mike Radparvar (cited in Rae, 2013) indicated that “Holstee exists to encourage mindful living. We grew up in an age where faster, cheaper, and bigger were valued above

craftsmanship, values, and quality. We hope to change that for future generations.”.]

Of significance, HH The Dalai Lama (2012: 3) spoke of human beings, “the superior sentient beings”, having the potential not only to create happiness/ reduce sufferings for themselves, but also to help other beings, increasing their happiness and/or reduce their sufferings. Perhaps one can at times inflict sufferings or cause miseries to others even without one consciously knowing it; here, one needs to ask, “What were such actions, and how one can avoid them? Or reduce such actions?” One can therefore reflect on one’s living and living with others. We can thus reflect on living as well as on our work and working life; all of us “have a natural creative ability and it is very important to realize this”.

It is good to ask “Why?” Why am I doing this? (Rae, 2013). Why are we doing this? Why are we taking such an action? Why are we creating this product? Why are we buying the product? Why is this a design principle? Asking “why” encourages you to go deeper and become more aware of what is driving one, and whether or not one wants it to be driving oneself.

To this author, business and national leaders should meditate or reflect on the path(s) forward, the strategies and the goals for their companies/ nations; they also need to ask themselves, “How tall do they stand?” In other words, they need to examine their conscience/ their value systems and check their integrity and actions to ensure that they run their organizations/ nations well, such as, for example, in accordance to corporate social responsibility while seeking or ensuring benefits for the greater majority. Leaders too need to ask whether they are promoting the right values especially to the newcomers, the new organizational members or new citizens. And when leaders become successful, they may also want to reflect on their success. “What makes them successful?” “What are the key success factors?” And employees should perhaps reflect too; positively-speaking, they may want to ponder on the benefits they received from their employers... to count their blessings.

Of significance is also the issue of integrity and temptations faced by leaders, especially of big organisations and in this regard, this author would paraphrase Rajann (2008: 42-47) who spoke of these five (5) temptations. This author would strongly urge leaders to reflect along these lines:

1. “Are you tempted by the enjoyment of the status that accompanies your role?”
“Are you being lured by power and make decisions for all the wrong reasons?”
“Are you having self-interests? And these need to be checked?”
2. “Are you tempted by the need to be liked well by the people whom you lead?”
3. “Are you tempted by the need to ensure that your decisions are correct?”

4. “Are you tempted and are inclined to preserve harmony within the organization?”

“Are you preferring to maintain the status quo even when a good fight and change has been ordered by the doctor (and you vey well know it!)?”

5. “Are you tempted by the need to maintain the comfort among the people you lead?”

It is worthy to note that in organizations (nations) where leaders, especially Chief Executive Officers: CEOs are never wrong and never weak, employees emulate their examples or behaviors. People would not want to give honest feedback, they often tend to sing the tune that the leaders want to hear; much posturing also take place and consequently real dialogue and decision-making die. Leaders who are not self-interested, but are enlightened are often open to being wrong, to being weak, to being honest about their shortcomings, build rapport with their people. Such leaders eliminate or minimize much politics and skin saving that exists in many companies where blood in the water means death.

Interestingly, Albert Einstein once said that, “each of us is here for a brief sojourn; for what purpose he knows not, though he senses it. But without deeper reflection, one knows from daily life that one exists for other people.”

(<http://quotations.about.com/cs/inspirationquotes/a/Reflection3.htm>). In this regard, to attain a higher standard of leadership, it can also be argued that, as the Mahatma (“the Great Soul”) Gandhi puts it, leaders should truly (reflect to) feel rather than intellectualize the needs of the people. (Nair, 1997: Chapter 10). To add further, through Gandhi’s dressing like one of the Indian peasants and his personal contact with the people, he felt for the Indian society (Nair, 1997). Gandhi recognized and personalized India’s real problems: the practice of untouchability, the lack of interest in sanitation and hygiene, religious intolerance, discrimination against women, and the exploitation of Indians by Indians. Mahatma Gandhi – more than anybody or any politicians at that time – truly saw independence in a broad context that had to incorporate freedom from fear, discrimination, and poverty. Understanding and appreciating that the Indians had lost their self-esteem, Gandhi also saw “the need for the Indians to stop assuming that Britain was somehow culturally superior and to develop an appreciation of their own language, culture and heritage” (Nair, 1997: 85); his practical experience and commitment to the truth, his values led him to see the reality. So when and as part and parcel of reflection, leaders thus need to take stock of themselves, and ask: “Do I feel for my people?” “Do I care for them?” “Do I truly care for them?” “Do I serve them?” And indeed “Do I really serve them well?” “Do you spend enough time with them to truly know their needs?”.

From human resource management perspective, business leaders and HR managers should reflect on its challenges and they are basically to:

1 obtain or secure the right skills to where it is needed (staff deployment).

2 spread state-of-the-art knowledge and practices throughout the organization no matter they originate (knowledge and innovation dissemination).

3 identify and grow talent – identify who can function effectively within the organization and develop the staff's abilities (talent identification and development) (Dessler, 2005; Stone, 2013).

4 take care of the health, safety and welfare as well as the overall well-being of the employees as well as that of the entire business (Stone, 2013).

5 protect and safeguard, if not, promote the core values of the Company.

6 understand the needs (and the culture) of the employees or people so as to be able to motivate and manage them well.

7 up or raise the organizational commitment of the employees or the people.

In life, goals are necessary; it is worthy to note that people who do not succeed do not have precise or clear goals. Any objectives they have are, on some deep level, habitually low. They succeed at mediocrity or failure (Fisher and Allen, 1997). There is thus a glaring need to reflect on one's goals – personal, business or any other goals. "Do you have any goals?" "What are these goals?" "Are they clearly stated?"

We can also apply what is practiced in both Hinduism and Buddhism. In Hinduism, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (cited in Easwaran, 2005: 290) pointed out that the need to "know the Self within and go beyond all sorrow". HH the Dalai Lama (2012: 189) highlighted that "reflecting on the reality of suffering never induces either pessimism or despair. It leads to the discovery of the root causes of our plight: desire, hatred and ignorance, and to a way of freeing ourselves from them. By ignorance, we mean not understanding the true nature of people and things. It gives rise to the other two poisons. When ignorance dissolves, desire and hatred have no foundation and the source of our suffering has dried up. As a result, we experience a happiness that is spontaneously altruistic and that is no longer at the mercy of negative emotions". Here, what the author has in mind are for the owners of sweat shops or those business owners who are simply profit-centered to reflect. It's about time that they do some reflections along the line of the reality of suffering and doing business. These leaders can ask themselves: "What they (their companies) can do for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?" Or "How can they assist or better their people, others and the world around them?"

When one reflects, one can think or ponder on ways to let go... to be detached. To be detached is not to be not bothered or don't care about it. But one does not micro-manage; it is ordinarily good to let go, and be not too restricting, dominating or conquering; one should rather delegate or allow one's people to grow. Take a simple case of a mother and her dealing with her child; it

is hard for the mother to let go, still tying him to her apron string. Her son has grown albeit now a thirty-year old adult; he has grown out of his dependency on her and is now independent yet she's still treating him like a twelve-year teenager. Still wanting to attend to the son, to the mother, he has still not grown up. Company leaders and managers too should let go, empowering their people. If one's people have grown and are equipped with the necessary skills, then empower them, let them decide and charter their own course. More so, as in situational leadership (S4 Leadership Style, Hersey, 1984), when one's people, having high followership readiness, are both able (competent) and willing (having the necessary motivation) (R4), one can surely delegate the job/ tasks to them. And they should be able to do the job/ tasks well.

What are the Common Problems of Reflections?

Here are some of the common problems everyone does have when it comes to reflecting or meditating. First and foremost, often busy, most people ordinarily have very little time to stop and think – especially at the workplace where everyone is preoccupied or must indeed be correctly seen as busy in some ways or the other; this may restrict opportunities for learning through reflection.

Often most of us find it is difficult to sit still to reflect or meditate. It does not take long to start thinking of all the things one could be doing or to feel restless like one wants to get up. When one sits to reflect and meditate, it is like as if one has spent the whole day in the moving car so it is very natural that one feels as if one's body is still moving though one has just stopped and rests. Meditating is like shifting gears in a car – one shifts into neutral and the engine takes a while to slow down and come to idle. Continue to reflect, meditate and allow oneself to be aware of the sensation of restlessness in the body (<http://www.meditationoasis.com/how-to-meditate/difficulty-meditating/>).

Another common concern that has been voiced out by most respondents is that of one feeling drowsy (http://www.vipassana.com/meditation/mindfulness_in_plain_english_12.php) or falling asleep (<http://berkeleybuddhistpriory.org/pages/meditation/meditation.html>) when meditating. It is quite common to experience drowsiness during meditation; one becomes very calm and relaxed. That is exactly what is supposed to happen. Unfortunately, one ordinarily experiences this lovely state only when one is falling asleep.

And there are times when one is simply too tired yet one still attempts to reflect and meditate; and when one does so, one then dozes off and falls asleep. How then can one stop from falling asleep? Many reasons exist; one's posture may not be quite right or the room be too warm. Perhaps one is not putting enough energy into the sitting or some or a part of one is fighting the meditation;

or maybe one is simply too tired and need to go to bed! (<http://berkeleybuddhistpriory.org/pages/meditation/meditation.html>). To this researcher, it is alright to fall asleep; and when one wakes up, one should give oneself some time to reflect further. Perhaps one's mind can then give new, fresh or different perspectives which can be refreshing. Just reflect... and meditate; simply don't be too fixated or hanged up on the reflection or meditation process.

What Are the Benefits of One's Reflections?

When one has done or undertaken an action, one reflects, and one is then made aware or become mindful of that past action or deed. Reflecting or having reflections are indeed a good daily habit to adopt. One examines oneself, introspecting and being relaxed, one is able to better focus and concentrate (Meditation and Health, 2013), and one thus becomes self-monitoring; one also brings into line oneself with one's values and key beliefs.

"The art of living is neither careless drifting on the one hand nor fearful cinging on the other. It consists in being sensitive to each moment, in regarding it as utterly new and unique, in having the mind open and wholly receptive." cited in Kornfield (2008: 99). *The Dhammapada* highlights that "Mindfulness is the way of life. Thoughtlessness is the way to death. The one who is mindful is full of life. The one who is thoughtless is already like the dead." (Senge and Ellyard, 2005: 28). Mindfulness is good as one can better focus on the action(s) and direction one would like to take. One observes oneself, and one can also be mindful to take actions that fit or in harmony with our values and convictions. One is then not in anomaly or variance with one's values and convictions.

Low and Ang (2012) spoke of attaining the clarity of mind and the purity of heart when one reflects or meditates, and that one takes the right course of action(s), moving in the right direction while aligning with one's head and heart (one's inner understanding and convictions). Being focused, one then moves or acts strategically, passionately and compassionately as well as understandingly. "(Reflections or meditations has) taught me how to properly understand and treat parents... (I was taught) bow to calmly talk things out with my parents when we have differing opinions and conflict. I have changed. I am no longer defiant and rebellious. Instead, am more considerate and thoughtful." (Zhu, 2013: 15)

"To be one with oneself, to sit, to work, to rest. What delight, as if secluded in a beautiful forest." (Verse 305, *The Dhammapada*, cited in Senge and Ellyard, 2005). Through reflections or meditations, one gets wise and is also "awake", "delight(ing) in compassionate activities"

(Verses 290 – 304, *The Dhammapada*, cited in Senge and Ellyard, 2005).

In pointing out "the secret" of the unshakable spirit, Takamori (2012: 103) spoke of "in all things, self-reflection is key". "Do we believe in ourselves when we say 'Yes, we CAN'? And why?" And truly what then will bolster our confidence and CANness. And indeed the Buddha once said that, "All that we are is the result of what we have thought." (Easwaran, 2005: 21). Let go or release the CAN'T. When one thinks one CAN'T, then one needs to reflect on ALL the CANS, one will indeed be surprised. Think of all the many POSSIBILITIES and MIRACLES. In a positive thinking sense, everybody has tried in one way or another in life to make things better for them in life today.

In terms of Buddhist principles of psychology, what this researcher clearly likes about reflection can be seen that is, one principle indicates that "thoughts are often one-sided and untrue"; one needs to learn to be mindful of thought instead of being lost in it. (Kornfield, 2008: 139). As Kornfield (2008) pointed out: such a psychology helps one to work with thoughts in two critical ways, it teaches one how to acknowledge the content of one's thoughts and simultaneously, one learns the ability to disentangle from them.

It is worthy to note that when one is out of balance, one cannot think straight, is worried, not sure or is hesitant. For Carroll (2004), when one reflects, one can learn balance in one's work and indeed in one's life. To this author, one of the best ways to be happy is to let go of all things that make one sad. When one reflects, one can let go, bringing one's uncluttered attention to one's work circumstances, inviting in and listening to one's world, and acknowledging the vastness and liveliness around one. It is really a matter of cultivating one's ability to let go (letting go one's fears/ anxieties and dropping the urgencies, worrying and everything!), and this is essential to whatever kind of work one does, if one is to work to one's full capacity. All of us have the ability, for instance, to say or do just the right thing in the moment or produce useful ideas out of what seems to be thin air. While this ability comes naturally, it must also be cultivated. One thus learns balance, one "gets somewhere, and be somewhere at the same time. Such balance is the height of gracefulness and authenticity. It is the core competency of being awake at work" (Carroll, 2004: 29).

Repeated studies have also shown that deep meditation or reflection can rewire how the brain responds to stress. Boston University researchers showed that after as little as three and a half hours of meditation training, subjects tend to react less to emotionally charged images. Other research suggests that meditation improves working memory and executive function. (Shachtman, 2013)

Limitations and Benefits of the Review Study

One key limitations of the study is that it appears to be more of an academic exercise when in actuality, reflecting or making reflections should be worked out to become a habit or a practice.

One of the key benefits of the review study is that it highlights to leaders and non-leaders the importance, problems and benefits of reflection as well as giving us a sort of template or checklist, reminding what to monitor when living and leading/ working. What's more, we are constantly reminded to ask or check on our values' alignment with our goals and particularly so, our deeds.

The study also reminds us that it is good to check and reflect on our lives, our work and ourselves; it is critical to get clarity of the mind and purity of the heart, and these has also been highlighted: "In today's world, people and the setting are seen as fighting for name – to be well-known or be famous, and what they want, if not desire, is to get the plentiful, rewards and monies. Most of them often put money and name to be the number one priorities in life. Most people take it that being self-centeredness or being selfish as the norm. Not to be influenced by this, one has to clear in thinking and be calm in one's mind. Reflect and learn from the saintly human being. (學為人師, 行為世範), meaning, one learns to be a good teacher and sets good examples." (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APIBmYbeXe0>). And to add further, in our business, one needs to be reminded to reflect, disciplining the mind, be strategic, be green or societally aware and stirring up the elements to further the betterment of oneself, our customers, others and the world as a whole. [After all, a "firm should strive to make profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen" (Carroll, 1991) and all these dimensions should be met simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

One should truly make efforts in thinking further and reflecting, and in doing so that no one else does; it is what brings success to our living, leadership and work.

Reflecting or having reflections, being mindful of life, living and working, and things around oneself, are a daily smart habit and practice; one checks on oneself and becomes self-monitoring. One aligns oneself with one's values and convictions. Mindful, one is awake, and one lives fully.

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