

## WORKING PAPER

### AERA-2022 Symposium

#### Living educational values as/for enhancing equitable self-educating strategies

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#### 1. Introduction, objectives or purposes

I am a harmonious being/teacher. I made sense of harmony or bliss as my true nature through the verses 1, 20, and 27 of the Bhagavad Gita (my translated meaning). According to the verses supreme knowledge refers to not being bound with the modes of nature such as ignorance, action, and happiness but to be transcendent from them to be blissful, *Satchidananda*, harmonious or Consciousness (not merely awareness but pure consciousness). According to the Sanskrit text Malinivijayottara, *ananda* is our (human's) true nature. It seems that the highest form of harmony is *Satchidananda*. Attaining and sustaining harmony appears as an inner journey, spiritual or natural process.

Here, attaining and sustaining harmony seemed possible, however, I frequently experienced disharmony within me (conflictual thoughts and feelings) and out i.e. in my professional practices (e.g. while teaching graduate students). I experience harmony as a sense of interconnectedness or oneness. I made sense of oneness with the help of tantric image of *Ardhanaishwor* (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Ardhanarishwor, a Metaphor of a Harmonious One-like Whole

*Ardhanarishwor* is a constellation of *Purusha* (e.g. Shiva) and *Prakriti* (e.g. Shakti) who appears as an inclusive, integrated, integral, whole in parts and parts in whole, harmonious one-like whole. According to Mishra (2017) *Purusha* and *Prakriti* are beyond our psychological perception as they are our qualities of consciousness as logicity and intuitiveness. When these qualities are in Yoga or union, we experienced

harmony. When my logical mind and intuitive heart were equally used, then they were balanced and I experienced harmony. When I failed to use my logicity and intuitiveness, there lay inequality or imbalance that resulted in disharmony. When there was a sense of divisiveness or disharmony, I needed to develop equitable strategies to balance my logical mind and intuitive heart. Here evolved a query/research question- *How could I develop equitable strategies to balance the logical mind and intuitive heart to attain and sustain harmony?*

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to develop equitable strategies to balance the logical mind and intuitive heart to attain and sustain harmony before influencing the learning of others and social formation by delving into the research-like question- How can I improve what I have been doing? Realizing the availability of free and easily accessible inherent multiple tools of self-education such as body senses, mind, heart, and consciousness, the author looks for systemic equity.

The study was the continuous inquiry that was left unexplored as it was sensed as a call for research in the final interaction while planning AERA Symposium 2021. The study was inspired by the discussion on the notion of Kahneman's (2011) 'thinking fast' and 'thinking slow'

integrating with Vedic and/or Yogic perspective of consciousness from Eastern Wisdom Tradition (EWT), for instance Dhungana's (2020) metaphor of living-educational-methodology and the Bhagavad Gita (2013). The study explored how I nurtured inequality by marginalizing my own tools (or embodied experiences) and became a marginalized other by questioning the inequitable habit of mind which values only some of the inherent tools (e.g. logic) considered as important and overlooking others (e.g. intuition). The study showed how one can dismantle embodied marginalized experiences and explore the tools through expanding consciousness.

## **2. Perspective(s) or theoretical framework**

Engagement with living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) and culture of inquiry (DeLong, 2013, 2021) has potential of exploring solutions of the outer world as it creates a safe space for making journeys within and thereby bringing forth unspoken embodied knowledge into discussion and realization. Realizing the implicit values such as harmony and equality while developing an all-inclusive metaphor of living-educational-methodology, *Ardhanarishwor*, this study continued (re)storying and expanding the horizon of the living value 'living love' (Dhungana, 2020, 2021).

## **3. Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry**

Inspired by self-study as a research methodology (Whitehead, 1989; Willink & Jacobs, 2011) and dialogue as a research method (DeLong, 2020), the study explored embodied experiences focusing on self. Data or information was collected by participating in the multiple ways of dialogues (dialogue with inner worlds and outer worlds) such as dialogue with my inner worlds (logical and intuitive) and Socratic-like dialogues exploring common senses with others (e.g. interaction with living theory community of practice) and my university students or outer world.

## **4. Data sources, evidence, objects, or materials**

Data-texts will be available in video interaction, journal articles, and reflective journals that will hold the evidence of equitable strategies.

### **5. Results and/or substantiated conclusions or warrants for arguments/point of view**

In the beginning, I experienced disharmony in three levels: senses, mind, and intellect. Clearing them through expanding consciousness (e.g. Vedic ways: awakening, dream, deep sleep and witness consciousness) I regained harmonious self (for a short time) which was clouded by senses, thinking, feelings, imaginations, dreams and other forms of embodied experiences. Thinking logically, I explored the following strategies: expansive and dissolving; reductive and non-reductive; judgmental and non-judgmental; inclusive and exclusive; deep thinking and common senses approaches appear to be integral, non-dualistic and/or equitable strategies. These approaches seem free and easily accessible to all individuals irrespective of diversity in terms of gender, class, caste, race and religions. But, within ‘culture of inquiry’ I explored the following approaches or strategies that supported me to attain and sustain harmony within me and in my professional practices for a prolonged time.

### **Creating and fostering a community of “culture of inquiry”**

On November 29, we a community of “culture of inquiry” that includes (images from left to right) Michelle Vaughan, Swaroop Rawal, Jacqueline Delong, Parbati Dhungana, and Jack Whitehead had a virtual planning meeting for AERA-2022. In the meeting, we agreed to ponder into a question and participate in the following meeting.

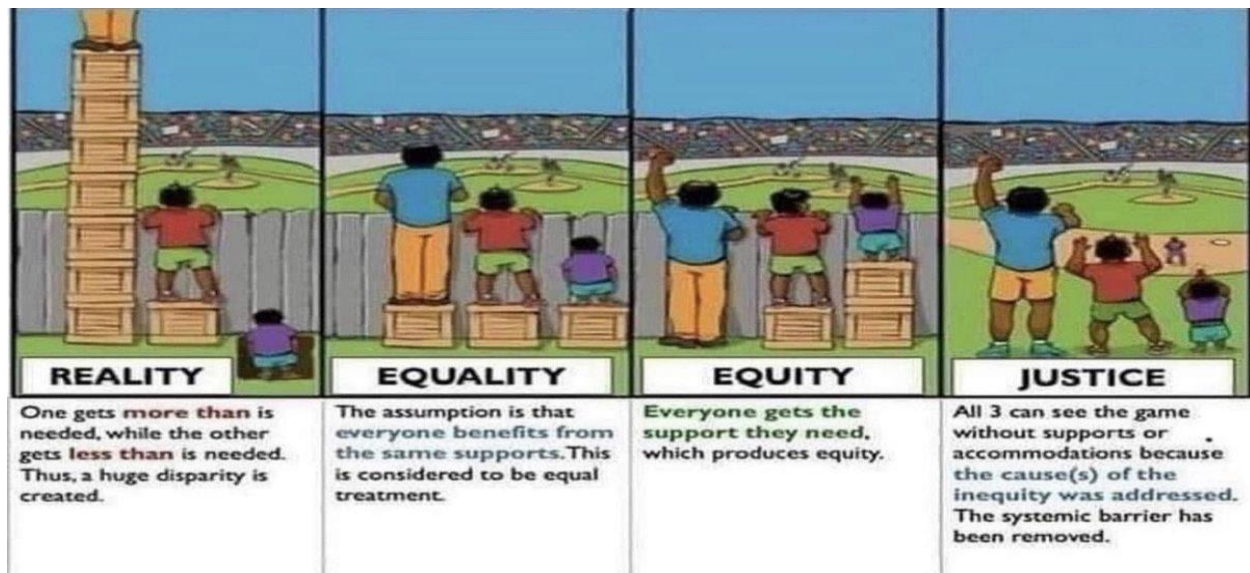


The question was- What kinds of teaching and learning processes foster equity, disrupt systemic inequality, and deepen learning? I reflected on my practices and explored that I had been using

multiple pedagogical approaches such as art-based, gender-responsive, participatory, research-based, and open pedagogical approaches to foster equity, disrupt systemic inequality, and deepen learning. I realized that a single pedagogy was not enough in facilitating a six-month course to university students. Adaptation of multiple context-responsive pedagogical approaches supported in fostering equity, disrupt systemic inequality and deepen learning.

Meanwhile, my reflective engagement raised a question-Who are disadvantaged groups of students in my class? Female, Janajatis, quantitative and mixed methods, those who participate (do not speak much in class, they call introvert), who does not have education background, who are not good at technology use, rural residing and working students? Every time I explored a new disadvantaged group and each time I changed pedagogy to foster equity, disrupt systemic inequality, and deepen learning.

Then I explored an image in Social Media that I shared on my Facebook as a cover picture. From it, I got the answer that female is a disadvantaged group in the present context. The image shows reality vs equality vs equity vs justice as



10:50 AM · Sep 12, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

Here, my logical mind found the shortest one is a disadvantaged individual. My intuitive heart said, “Hey, only male! What kind of justice is it?” I was not harmonious seeing this image, but, I could not share within the community of “culture of inquiry”. I could use my logical mind to explore the insights of research-like questions orally and in written form. I could use the intuitive heart to engage in sharing insights and experiences including feelings and emotions within a safe and loving environment. But I could not express my disharmony fully as my logical mind was dominating my intuitive heart. When my logical mind and intuitive heart were imbalanced, I could not make a meaningful conversation in which I could discuss the image at least with Jackie who also shared this image in her initial draft. However, within the ‘culture of inquiry,’ I could explore the reason for my inability of making harmonious interactions that I discussed below.

**Exploring an inequitable issue: Hegemony of English language**

On 13 December 2021, I participated in the planning meeting in which I had a meaningful conversation as I explored an inequitable issue, i.e. hegemony of English language.



30:21 minute video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cM7WEP3ON-E>

Reaching here, I explored that more than female, I, non-English language speaker is a disadvantaged group that is expressed in the following conversation.

Jackie 02:07: So, how's everybody feeling?

Group: Good.Good

Michelle: Now how can I not, Jackie, with you around. How can you feel anything else?

Jackie: Well, I was reading Parbati's concern about English and it made me feel very sad.

You know it made me feel the injustice and the inequity and I know you have a really good attitude,

Parbati, and you learn from what's an inequality and you have a very positive way of learning from that but it makes me feel badly that English, the *dominant* English, gets in the way of you expressing yourself. Right?

Parbati 3:07: Yes, at times like Jack talked about the hegemony of language but at that time I was not that much concerned. I did not perhaps have that way of perceiving the hegemony of language but when, at the time of writing and, at the time of expressing myself to the fullest I felt like the English language is not enough to express actually what I wanted to express and I had to look for other alternative ways of expressing and presenting.

I think I can argue that the English language is not enough for the researchers not only in the process of writing but also in the process of research where we are developing the tools and going to the field interacting with the people, discussing an issue, making sense and understanding the ideas. Because some of the students are not from an education background they may find the English word as jargon and it is very difficult to understand even the word 'pedagogy' which is very big word for many of the students who are new to the education. So, I felt, being a facilitator of graduate students particularly STEAM graduates, for those who are from multiple backgrounds and from multiple disciplines I feel the need to work on this issue and, support my students so that they would feel more comfortable to express and also go to the real people like stakeholders or let's say to the community to interact with them.

You know that I feel so comfortable to express whatever I feel like expressing within this community but I am not as open to other communities so I don't fear to express whether it is a very stupid thing or very silly thing. I express it because you are here to understand



and I think you all understand means a whole not as a part of that expression so I express in that way.

So, I think I want to tell you not to feel bad because it's not about feeling bad; let's say this is the culture and whenever we feel a hegemony then that means there is a good start. We can move further to work on it; you're very positive far back and I think that helps you and it certainly helps me even when it's not very very good. I try to see if there's something I can learn from it.

### **Exploring equitable strategies**

Then I used my logical mind and explored equitable strategies for fostering equity, disrupting systemic inequality, and deepening learning.

### ***Multilingual inquiry: Integrating 'other than English languages'***

I explored the linguistic barrier as a research agenda while (re)watching our video. I argue that integrating 'other than English languages' in teaching, learning and assessing processes foster equity, disrupts systemic inequality, and deepens learning.

For instance, while sharing experiences, I experienced discomfort. Responding to Jackie's question-Parbati did you use any of that (our previous virtual conversations) when you were presenting? I said,

Of course I used some of the ideas which we discussed in our conversation more than that what I found is I found myself confident enough to to make my presentation um like I feel like it is meaningful and uh I am the one who can make it explicit and uh that conversation with you made me confident that was a very powerful tool to have a presentation because this is this is the virtual platform where i may not [Music] may not

be able to present it differently so this was the only way to make the audience understand and make sense of my presentation and i could do that so uh although i had such uh insights with me a conversation with you made it uh uh possible to bring together in one form and then uh while uh presenting the confidence level uh was high uh because of that very good and you found like you you also told me like I was not I was not the the particular term which you have used there uh I I was not uh sorry I forgot that but uh after that I felt uh like yes I can do it and uh what I have been doing is it's a kind of a life of women like uh science was there within me and I could do it and it was impressive presentation because I think that was the uh one major reason was that very good well thank you for that.

My repetition of words and ideas (e.g. uh, I) shows that I was not confident. I spoke for about 2 minutes (10:27-12:46) but could not make my content precise and presentable. Although I was sharing how confident I was while presenting, I was not confident enough. I asked myself why I repeated the same experiences. When I was with my learning community, I should feel discomfort. But why? It was a (perhaps) linguistic barrier. I could not express well (as much as I could and wanted to do) English. For instance, I would not repeat if I were sharing in Nepali.

Moreover, since the first sharing, I was unable to comprehend well. I thought I did not understand fully. So I confirmed the question from Jackie's follow up email. Here, I felt more comfortable in written form than spoken. I realized I needed to improve my listening and speaking skills. I used to feel 'shame' for not listening and speaking efficiently. But this time, rather than feeling shame, I tried to look for alternatives. I experienced hegemony of the English language that constrained my expressions. I could use an alternative strategy to present my ideas

with non-Nepali speakers. I could use non-linguistic genres such as photo, video, diagram, painting, gesture.

Linguistic hegemony is prevalent in the case of communicating with international speakers and the Nepalese higher education context. English is the only language (except Nepali subject) of research presentation, and Nepali is the only one acceptable in facilitation. However, the use of the Nepali language is discouraged in facilitation. The curriculum is in English including, assignments, learning materials and assessment.

Here (re)arises a query-how much English do we (Nepalese graduate teachers and students) need? Although I used some Nepali and Sanskrit languages to express myself fully or deepen my learning, I received critical comments. I had to explain why I used Nepali and Sanskrit frequently. If the English vocabulary was enough to express my authentic, organic 'self' or they could give justice to my embodied knowledge, I would not use other than English languages. I understand better, make sense quickly and articulate well, integrating Nepali and Sanskrit languages in English.

From this experience, I felt empathetic towards my students. They might feel the same and have the same query when I prefer the English language in class. Despite my integration of the Nepali language in my facilitation process, the Nepali and English languages would not represent my country's diverse languages (more than 100).

So, I asked them to use 'other than the English language' in an equitable strategy activity. At the end of the course, I developed this activity, an art-based critical self-reflective activity, to make a holistic sense of the research issue, purpose, question, and methods. I think my strategy (slightly breaking or stretching university preference of only English) provides an open space to bring 'what was not brought into the university before' (multiple languages and cultural

nuances). Students were excited as they found it new practice. I am also excited to explore to what extent the integration of 'other than English languages' fosters equity, disrupts systemic inequality, and deepens learning at the stage of planning or developing a research concept note or proposal.

My query

I collected data by recording videos, analyzing videos, and presenting recorded videos in the conferences. Can I use 'video as a genre of living educational research presentation'?

### ***Collaborative, co-operative inquiry***

As I planned to meet and discuss on 27 December, I provided the following questions, which Michelle developed, finding them relevant to my context (sorry I did not ask permission to use them, I just realized while writing this). While providing questions and making sense, I had the following two things in my mind: harmony and equality and 'How could I improve what I have been doing?' I added one question (Q. 5) to explore what skills and qualities they enhanced. However, I could have reframed the question to contextualize (e.g. STEAM department in Research Methodology class). I think if I was specific, students might not express as they expressed. Perhaps, students hesitate to raise critical questions and make critical remarks openly and fully (at least) while pursuing their studies in general. Particularly, students rarely make critical comments to inequitable practices of the teachers and universities. So I do! Even if they raise issue of equality, almost all tag inequality only with gender overlooking diversity (age, discipline, research approach, theoretical perspectives, culture, caste, educational background, learning styles of students, skills, quality and knowledge, and other).

It would be general questions, but I provided them as a final reflection activity (alternative to arts-based reflection) so that they could openly and fully express. Perhaps it was my strategy, not

to ask to make direct comment rather to engage indirectly through class activity. Among 27, 9 students chose this option as they found arts-based reflection activity confusing and tough.

- a. What are some of the inequitable experiences that may occur in an online graduate program?
- b. What online teaching practices do graduate students report as deepening their learning?
- c. What can online professors do to create an equitable learning environment that fosters deep learning?
- d. How can learning relationships be strengthened online?
- e. As a researcher, what of your qualities and skills have you improved in these five months?

I re-read the answers and explored initial insights. By ensuring equality through enhancing equity, I believe that I can attain and sustain harmony within and out (in my professional practices). As an online facilitator who has been facilitating graduates, I found myself not promoting equity to the fullest and thereby not attaining and sustaining harmony within and out. How could I enhance equity in my teaching, learning and assessment process to achieve and maintain harmony?

I found myself unjust as I could not (1)use multiple online education tools (less technology adept); (2)connect and communicate with students individually (to explore, verify, address students' strengths, weaknesses and skills, availability of technology); (3) promote collaboration; (4) value diversity (introvert and extrovert students, gender issues and cultural experiences and perspectives) (5) provide constructive feedback timely on assignments.

I think our collaborative analysis would deepen my/our understanding of inequality/inequity and support to explore equitable strategies.

### *Developing a socio-cultural framework*

On December 29 I came to know from Jack's initial draft that he found my socio-cultural (i.e. Vedic and/or Yogic) perspective of consciousness as he wrote: "From Parbati I am learning the meaning of Ardhanarishor from a Vedic and/or Yogic perspective of consciousness from the Eastern Wisdom Tradition (EWT), and the value of integrating this perspective within Living Educational Theory Research."

### *(Re)defining equality and equity*

On 17 January 2022, reaching here, I realized that I need to (re)define equality and equity to make better sense of in/equality and in/equity. An exploration of socio-cultural explanation, definition, or meaning of the value word equality and equity would support exploring context-responsive equitable strategies. I think I may explore de/colonial perspectives of equality/equity. For instance, when I shared "living values are life-affirming energy, living values to the fullest are enhancing energy. Energy lies in chakras. Seemingly seeing from the Yogic perspective, equality is more meant to balance energy or chakras" in our community Swaroop (South East Asian who has almost similar Vedic and/or Yogic knowledge systems) immediately acknowledged it. Her acknowledgment validated my sociocultural understanding of living values or life affirming energies as chakras and vice versa.

Thus, within our culture of inquiry, I was being conscious of in/equality and in/equity (in every aspect of life e.g. family affairs). I was enhancing critical self-reflective ability as I was critically self-reflecting on my pedagogical practices (how to improve pedagogical practices) and exploring equitable strategies (e.g. gender-responsive pedagogy). I found a 'culture of inquiry' like a 'womb-like space' or safe, open, cozy, loving, caring, supportive. However, I felt I need to be challenged as at times I felt pampered.

## 6. Scientific or scholarly significance of the study or work

Knowing self with reference to embodied experiences which will prepare self before reaching to the students to ensure equitable educational practices. Self-marginalization will be understood as self-ignorance of inherent quality of consciousness of all that would be meaningful engagement to the self-study practitioners. The equitable strategies will explore the multiple layers of conflicts (e.g. ignorance and intellect) which deepen the self-learning of diverse readers and thereby deepen integral perspective (e.g. Western Modern Views and Eastern Wisdom Tradition). The use of the metaphor of *Ardhanarishwor* would add hope of flourishing humanity exploring almost forgotten the tantric (means strategic) gesture (i.e. all inclusive). Nepal which is rich in tantric practices and images, the tantric gesture of *Ardhanarishwor* may unravel folk theories and engage readers critically (Timalsina, 2021) to seek alternative socio-cultural possibilities to explore, question, dismantle, and co-construct equitable strategies. The results of this research will be also significant for teachers, teacher educators and policy developers in the diverse local, national, and international contexts including the ones who have interest in giving new life to almost forgotten ideas and dead metaphors.

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