

## WORKING PAPER

### Living educational values for enhancing harmonious equitable space

*Parbati Dhungana*

#### Abstract

Equitable strategies seem insufficient for the teacher trainers and teacher educators like me as I value harmony and equity as my professional living values. Educating oneself and others is a holistic (philosophical, spiritual, and educational) professional development. Holistic professional development is making a harmonious professional journey (of inside-out) within personal and professional spaces. However, I looked for the harmonious equitable space only in the outside world/s (professional) overlooking my inside worlds (personal, i.e. logical and intuitive) and living disharmoniously fostering inequity. The existing inquiry culture of seeking solutions (only) in the outside world seems insufficient for holistic professional development. Therefore, I developed my living-theory-methodology by engaging in a participatory autoethnographic inquiry which is partly self-study and partly auto/ethnographic that explored my living values (harmony and equity). The evidence of harmony and equity as my explanatory principles is in the videos (recorded while planning the AERA-2022 Symposium), reflective journals, and everyday professional activities. In this study, I share how I developed a harmonious equitable space to explore a contextual disharmonious inequitable issue and its harmonious equitable strategies. Further, I discuss my insights as a conclusion and the significance of the study in broader contexts.

*Keywords:* equity, harmony, living theory, living-theory-methodology, participatory autoethnographic inquiry

## **Introduction**

I am a harmonious being/teacher. However, I could not sustain or nurture harmony within my professional practices as I could not adapt equitable pedagogical practices. If I were a regular faculty, I could have a continuous faculty development program, enough benefits, subsidies, and incentives (Tadeo et al., 2019). I could not expect such professional development opportunities as an adjunct teacher educator except for some administrative support. This paper shared how I explored harmony and equity as my professional living values that contributed to my continuous professional development. Living harmony and equity as fully as possible supported me to enhance harmonious equitable space that influenced my learning and the learning of my colleagues and students.

## **Literature Review**

Harmony and equity which are complementary to each other are my living values. I, a Nepali female Ph.D. student, teacher trainer, and teacher educator, am seeking a harmonious professional development space with the school teachers which was impossible by enhancing equity. Being a Southeast Asian I sensed harmony and equity from my own (philosophical, spiritual, sociological, cultural, and historical) understanding which is informed by the Eastern Wisdom Tradition (EWT). My authentic (re)definition of my living values, harmony, and equity was meant for making my implicit values explicit.

According to the EWT, harmony or bliss is a human's true nature. I explored harmony as my true nature through verses 1, 20, and 27 of the Bhagavad Gita (my translated meaning). In line with 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 harmony is beyond peace. I explored it in the AERA-planning meeting that was held on 24 January 22. See the video for details as the video shows something similar to the following expression.

<https://youtu.be/Lq68tOfQ6Lg>.

*I just said the word harmony is more spiritual and relational than literal sense so I did not use peace. Instead of peace, I used harmony because it's more relational. Peace might sense harmony of within not outside as outside harmony is more relational. Harmony is connected to action or professional practices. yeah if I use peace that might be only about within only the inner peace and harmony also walks outside in the practices and in relation and we work in action form.*

Thus, I sense harmony within as calmness, peace, and outside in a relationship, in action as a loving and caring space where one can express his/her thoughts and feelings openly and clearly. The evidence of a harmonious state can be spotted on the whole body when it is in action, with sparkling eyes, a smiling face, and loose (no stiffness) muscles.

My concern was, attaining and sustaining harmony seemed possible, however, I frequently experienced disharmony within me (conflictual thoughts and feelings) that reflect in my professional practices (e.g. while teaching graduate students) as inequitable pedagogical practices. I experience harmony as a sense of interconnectedness or oneness. Interconnectedness is another form of my living value, living love (Dhungana, 2021). I made sense of oneness with the help of tantric image of *Ardhanaishwor* (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Ardhanarishwor, a Metaphor of a Harmonious Equitable space

*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 equitable, in Yoga or union, I

experienced harmony. Perhaps, when my logical mind and intuitive heart were equally used, then they were balanced and I experienced harmony. Here, I sensed that logicity and intuitiveness and explanatory principles of my living values, harmony and equity.

In line with the spiritual master, Sadhguru, I knew how to handle my thoughts and emotions, so that there were no anxiety, stress, or tension. When I failed to use my logicity and intuitiveness, there lay inequality or imbalance that resulted in disharmony. When there was a sense of inequity, divisiveness or disharmony, I needed to develop equitable pedagogical strategies to balance my logical mind and intuitive heart. Perhaps, being a teacher of STEAM graduates, I needed to be gender-sensitive (Reyes et al., 2021) and gender-responsive. Therefore, the study aims to develop a harmonious equitable space balancing the logical mind and intuitive heart to attain and sustain harmony within me and in my graduate class. Here evolved a query/research question- *How could I develop harmonious equitable space within and out in my class?*

### **Conceptual Framework**

As I had to develop harmonious equitable space within me and in my class, the word ‘develop’ resonated with me deeply when I explored its connection to Sankhya philosophy. According to the Sankhya philosophy, nothing can be created as everything is already created. We can just develop, enhance, or improve what is already created. And development occurs when Purusha (e.g. consciousness, logicity) falls upon Prakriti (e.g. intuitiveness).

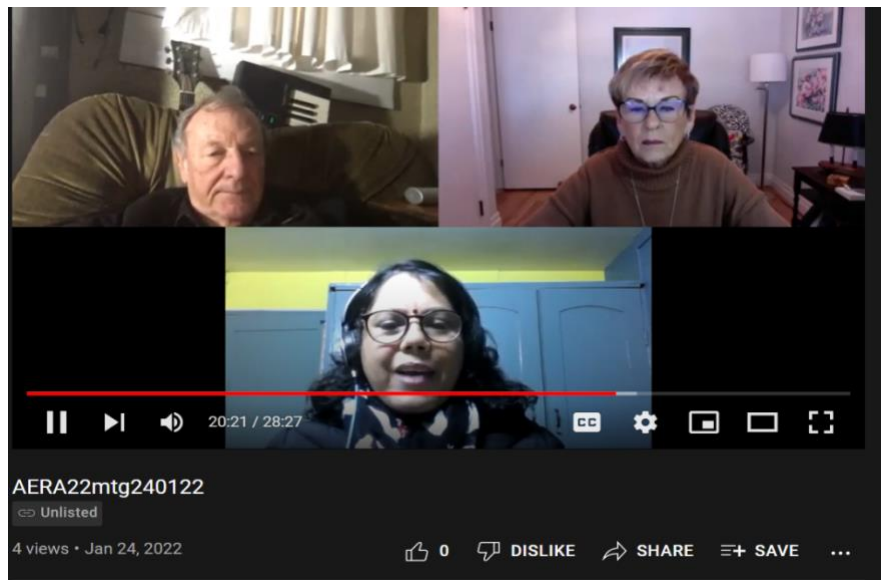
Therefore, intending to influence my learning, learning of my students, and social formation I delved into the research-like question- How can I improve what I have been doing? (Whitehead, 1989). Then, realizing the availability of free and easily accessible inherent multiple tools (forms of consciousness) of self-education such as body senses, mind, and intellect, I explored the contextual issue of inequity. I spotted problems in my consciousness and thus finally explored disharmonious in/equitable strategies to attain and sustain harmony within me and in my class.

Engagement with living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) and culture of inquiry (Delong, 2013, 2021), I saw the possibility and potentiality of exploring a harmonious equitable development space of the inner world (thoughts and feelings) outer world (professional world). The harmonious equitable development space, an integral space, creates a safe space for making journeys within and out. It brings forth tacit embodied knowledge into discussion and realization. Making the implicit values such as harmony and equity while developing an all-inclusive metaphor of living-educational-methodology, *Ardhanarishwor*, implicit, this study continued (re)storying and expanding the horizon of the living value ‘living love’ (Dhungana, 2020, 2021) by living harmoniously fostering equity (at times not). In short, I adapted *Ardhanarishwor*, a conceptual framework, to develop a harmonious equitable space.

## **Methodology**

Inspired by self-study as a research methodology (Whitehead, 1989; Willink & Jacobs, 2011) and dialogue as a research method (DeLong, 2020), I developed the proposal and began the planning for AERA 2022 Symposium. While participating within the harmonious space I began to explore my embodied experiences focusing on my social-historical-cultural self. Sharing experiences and collecting feedback from living theory practitioners, my inquiry became partly auto/ethnographic and partly participatory. I called it participatory autoethnographic inquiry (Dhungana & Luitel, 2021).

For instance, while conversing on 24 January 2022 meeting, I said something like this: “This seems very interesting for me. I made sense of multiple methods. First is participatory autoethnography that means expressing the importance of cultural influences in a participatory i.e. collaborative or cooperative way.” For details, this conversation is recorded in the following video that is (19:50-20:10).



<https://youtu.be/Lq68tOfQ6Lg>

I collected information reflecting on my ‘inner self’ (thoughts and feelings) that projected in the ‘outer self’ (pedagogical practices) or vice versa. Data texts were available in video interaction,

journal articles, and reflective journals that evidence in/equitable pedagogical strategies. For instance, I explored life-affirming energy on a smile as I said something similar like the following on the same meeting from 16:48-17:56.

*I mentioned the word smile on our faces. What I think and feel reflects on my face. When we smile, our eyes sparkle. Sparkling eyes speak or reflect life-affirming energy. If our eyes are also sparkling that means they are speaking. It is very good or positive life-affirming energy otherwise there may be a fake smile also at times or artificial. Our eyes also speak what we really mean. So I think when we smile fully let's say we are having sparkling eyes. You may understand it differently. There is a common saying that eyes are the doors or windows of the hearts. Yes, I mean to say that smile is really important.*

Thus, I examined visual data that captured embodied knowledge. Like Jack I am also using the method of empathetic resonance to clarify and communicate the meanings of a flow of life-affirming energy that flows through me as I experience harmony while preparing for this 2022 AERA Symposium. This flow of life-affirming energy is accompanied by my unique constellation of values (harmony and equity) that are expressed as values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. The method involves moving a cursor backward and forward along a digital video and pausing at the moment of most incredible resonance. The still images throughout this paper capture these moments about the expression of flows of life-affirming energy within harmonious space that for me carries hope for the flourishing of harmony and equity for the common good that is for humanity. I analyzed the information dialogically and dialectically within the harmonious space. I named this inquiry a participatory auto/ethnographic inquiry which is partly spiritual, partly philosophical, and partly educational.

### **Findings**

At the beginning of this inquiry, I experienced disharmony in three 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 approach appear to be integral, non-dualistic, and equitable strategies. These approaches seem free and easily accessible to all individuals irrespective of diversity in terms of gender, class, caste, race, and religion. Fostering harmonious equitable space seemed impossible but it was possible when I used my intellect mind to observing logicity and intuitiveness. Living values such as harmony and equity supported me in attaining and sustaining harmony and equity within me and in my class.

### **Fostering harmonious equitable space**

Here, harmonious equitable space refers to a loving, caring, and respectful professional learning space where all (students and myself) can share academic insights and challenges openly. And also explore ways out together. The harmonious equitable space is a comfortable space. “Comfort space” is the space where one can reflect on practices comfortably (Falter & Barnes, 2020, p. 17). It is a safe and democratic space like a “culture of inquiry” (DeLong, 2013) where novice researchers can openly express vulnerability and gets new insights. According to Delong “culture of inquiry” (as explored from her initial draft of AERA-2022 Symposium) is about

- *Creating a safe, democratic, equitable and supportive space*
- *Building relationships based on ‘loving them into learning’ (Campbell, 2011)*
- *Creating an environment that supports self-determined learning*
- *Embracing and supporting vulnerability, including democratic evaluation*
- *Valuing and unveiling embodied knowledge*
- *Expressing life-affirming energy and contributing to human flourishing.*



The culture of inquiry is a harmonious equitable space where I experienced a loving, caring, and respectful learning space (Dhungana, 2020, 2021). Within the harmonious equitable space, I shared lived experiences openly that created harmony within me and in my professional spaces. So, harmonious equitable space has already existed. However, it took a long time to recognize it. The only thing I did was foster a harmonious equitable space (professional) where my students, including myself, could openly share research discomforts and look for ways out.

The inquiry journey began by creating and enhancing a “culture of inquiry” which seemed a prerequisite before adapting equitable strategies. Therefore, I created and enhanced a harmonious space to influence my students' learning. For instance, on 29 November 2021, we, a community of “culture of inquiry, " includes (images from left to right) Michelle Vaughan, Swaroop Rawal, Jacqueline Delong, myself, and Jack Whitehead, had a virtual planning meeting for AERA-2022. We agreed to ponder into a question and participate in the following meeting in the 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 adapted multiple pedagogical approaches such as art-based, gender-responsive, participatory, research-based, and open pedagogical approaches. I realized that a single pedagogy was insufficient to facilitate a six-month course to university students. My adaptation of multiple context-responsive pedagogical approaches supported fostering equity, disrupting systemic inequality, and deepening learning.

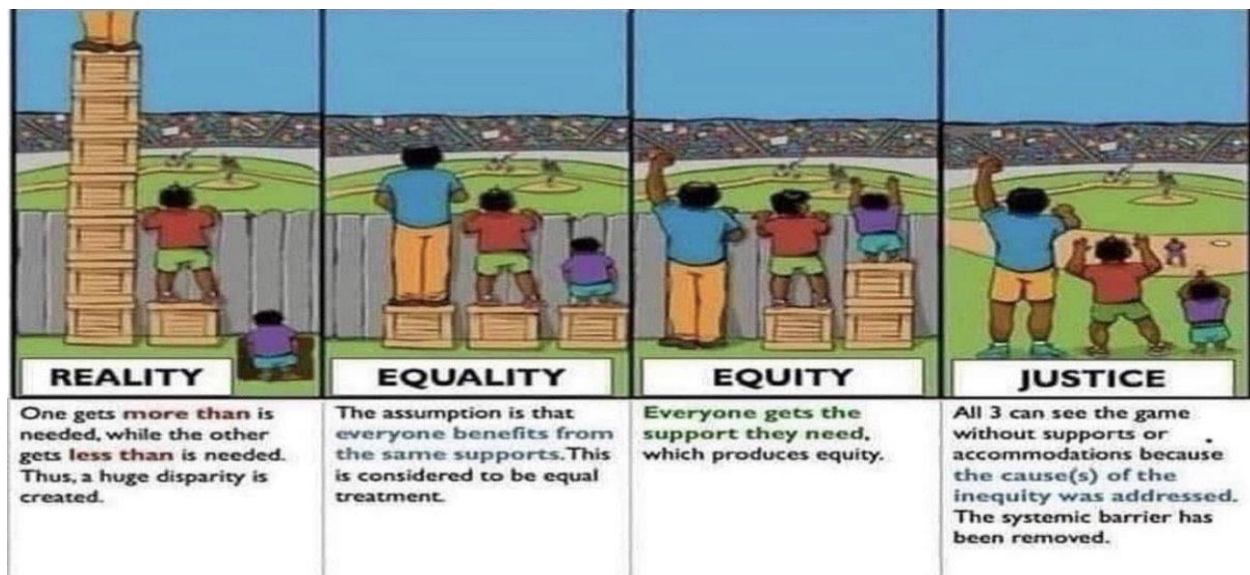
Meanwhile, my reflective engagement raised a question: Who are disadvantaged students in my class, female, ethnic, quantitative, and mixed methods practitioners, less interactive or introverted students? Or those who do not have an education background, are not good at technology use, or those who are rural residing and working students? Every time I explored a new disadvantaged group, I experienced disharmony within each time. I felt I was not adapting equitable pedagogy. Like Daniel (2020) suggested, I adapted the strategies of assigning different assignments and works to the students and designing assessment first to address challenges in COVID-19 pandemic. In the context of COVID-19, online education was not making overall effectiveness, although having the effectiveness of institutional support and trust towards online systems and formative assessment procedure (Tartavulea et al., 2020). Unlike in the face-to-face mode, interaction and active learning was not easy to ensure, which might be supportive (Tartavulea et al., 2020). Then I changed the pedagogical approach to foster equity, disrupt systemic inequality, and deepen learning.

For instance, responding Michelle's questions (I was wondering as I read your piece about the practical changes you made to your instruction and curriculum throughout this inquiry. Could you share some and how your students responded?) on 23 January 2022, I said,

*When I explored that female students in my class appeared less interactive, I shared this as my reflection on my pedagogical practices. Students, mainly female students, agreed. In the next couple of weeks, a student shared her planning of future research in which she wanted to enhance female students' participation in learning. Then I changed my class planning (as I prepared to give a lecture-based presentation on Research Methods). I engaged students in focus-group discussion by dividing the class into two groups to explore the causes of less participation of female students in class. Accordingly, we had a focus group discussion in which all students, including female students, participated actively and concluded that classes need to be gender-responsive. Each student is unique and needs to be dealt with differently (e.g. become culture-sensitive). Reflecting, a student said something like this, "I think I will change my research approach. I thought about conducting quantitative research, but today I realized that the focus group*

*explored the causes of less interaction and (explored) ways out then and there which the Survey method would not explore. I am impressed.*

Thus, I tried to enhance harmonious equitable space that supported me to adapt gender-responsive pedagogy in my class. Meanwhile, I was developing my consciousness as I became more aware of in/equitable images that I see around me and responding to them metaphorically. For instance, although I had seen the following image many times on Social media, that time I realized that it carries my life-affirming energy, equity. Then I shared it on my Facebook as a cover picture so that every time I open my page, this image reminds my value and inspire me to live it to the fullest.



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

Here, my logical mind saw the shortest one as a disadvantaged individual. My intuitive heart said, “Hey, only male! From this image of reality vs equality vs equity vs justice, I got the answer that female is a disadvantaged group in the present context. Absence of female matters.

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 research-like questions orally and in written form. I could use the intuitive heart to share insights and experiences, including feelings and emotions, within a safe and loving environment.

Although I expressed metaphorically, I could not fully express my inner disharmony as my logical mind dominated 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. This might have happened to my students too, yet I was unaware and unconcerned of it. However, fostering harmonious equitable space continuously I could explore the reason for my inner disharmony that I discussed below.

### **A disharmonious inequitable issue**

Continuous enhancement of harmonious equitable professional space supported to explore contextual disharmonious inequitable issue. For instance, 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.



For details, you can watch 30:21 minute video at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cM7WEP3ON-E>

(Re)watching the video, I explored that more than female, I, non-English language speaker is a disadvantaged individual/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. It is very difficult to understand even the word 'pedagogy', which is a 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.*

From the conversation, I realized that only the use of the English language was my implicit inner disharmony, as I valued intuitiveness and overlooked logicity. Using logicity, I could look for alternatives to express myself to the fullest. For instance, when I discussed my discomfort openly in my class whether my students had somewhat similar views or not. Many of them agreed with me and shared their use of mother language in their lesson delivery. Then we began to look for ways out.

### **Harmonious equitable strategies**

Then I used my intellect (not logical mind) and explored harmonious equitable strategies for fostering equity, disrupting systemic inequality, and deepening learning. They are multilingual inquiry, participatory inquiry, socio-cultural inquiry, and post-material inquiry.

### ***Multilingual inquiry***

Multilingual inquiry (i.e. integrating ‘other than the English language’) was one of the harmonious equitable strategies of novice researchers. But I explored the linguistic barrier as a research agenda while (re)watching our videos. I made sense and argued 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.*

Although I shared that I was confident, it was a paradox. My repetition of words and ideas (e.g. uh, I) shows that I was not confident enough. I spoke for about 2 minutes (10:27-12:46) but could not make my content precise and presentable. Then I reflected as

*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.*

I realized that 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 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. Reflecting on my Ph.D. thesis writing journey, I reflected as

*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 from national and international supervisors. I had to explain why I used Nepali and Sanskrit frequently, not English. 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. It is painful when I must italics Nepali and Sanskrit expressions, perhaps doing so I was Othering my authentic expressions! But they are close to my heart as they expressed my intellect, neither only emotions not only thoughts but beyond!*

Thus, I was I felt empathetic towards my 'selves'. Connecting to my professional activities, I was empathetic towards my students. They might feel the same and have the same query when I usually prefer the 'only' English language in my class. Despite integrating the Nepali language in my facilitation process, the Nepali and English languages would not represent my country's diverse (more than 100) languages.

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 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) would provide 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 was 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. I had a query as I collected data by recording videos, analyzing videos, and presenting



recorded videos in the conferences, could I use ‘video as a genre of living educational research presentation’? It was yet to explore.

Reading my initial draft of this paper, Michelle got angry (seemingly disharmonious) as disharmonious inequitable culture as she expressed as,

*Thank you for sharing Parbati, I always enjoy reading your work and this is a lovely piece! I loved how you weaved together the evolution of your own thinking and growth within this idea of seeking harmony. I was engrossed when I read your explanation of harmony is attained through a balance of intuitive heart and logical mind. Similarly, I was angry when I read about the linguistic barriers that exist for your students (and you) within the academy. The values/ideas that get "blessed" by the academy as a result of linguistic hegemony do not seem to be the values/ideas that encourage living a harmonious life (to me). There is a tension there, and I believe you may be working on a larger idea of value hegemony that is related to the language of power in academia (perhaps there is a better term for this that I do not know!) Thank you for your important work and for inspiring me this morning!*

My linguistic barrier might be the result of the language of power in academia. Or I might have valued one over other. Reflecting I responded her as “I think I need to use the word 'hegemony' carefully so that I won't mislead the discussion of the value words, 'harmony' and 'equity'. Perhaps my logicity was dominant in this regard.” Perhaps, that was why the students did not show how much interest in integrating multiple languages in the research besides a medium of instruction. Perhaps, it was beyond the University culture. But still, I was not disheartened. For instance, the study (Dhungana, 2020, 2021; Shrestha, 2021) motivated me to move on with high aspirations as they integrated multiple languages. While planning for AERA-2021, 2022 Symposium, a multilingual community, I used Nepali, Sanskrit, and English languages to express my implicit values (DeLong, et al., 2021). However, it was a limited space where I could use multiple languages as freely as possible.

***Participatory inquiry***

Here, participatory inquiry refers to collaborative and co-operative inquiry process (Heron & Reason, 1997). Participatory inquiry supported me to make better sense of my living values that influenced my learning, and the learning of my students and peer.

For instance, as I planned to meet and discuss on 27 December 2021, I provided the following four questions (adding one more question for contextualization) as an activity developed by Michelle, finding them relevant to my context.

- 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?

While providing the 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?’ However, I could have reframed the question to contextualize (e.g. STEAM department in Research Methodology class). I assumed that students might not express as they expressed if I was specific. 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 made critical comments to inequitable practices of the teachers and universities. So I did! Even if they raise the 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 others).

Considering them as general questions I provided them as a final reflection activity (alternative to arts-based reflection) to openly and fully express themselves. Perhaps it was my

strategy, not to ask to make direct comments instead engage indirectly through class activity. This turned into a participatory approach as among 27, 9 students who found arts-based reflection activity confusing and tough, welcomed it.

I re-read students' responses to the five questions and explored how I enhanced harmonious equitable space (at times not). For instance, on 23 December 2021, responding to the question-- *What can online professors do to create an equitable learning environment that fosters deep learning?*- a student wrote:

*It is a challenging job to create an equitable learning environment. As there are students from different backgrounds in adult learning, the instructor has to be aware of differences among the learners. S/he has to ensure that all the learners actively participate through cross-checking. S/he can encourage them through flip learning as they may not enjoy with new topic at once. Knowing students individually and enabling them to participate by calling their names, making the group leader, especially hesitant ones, may ensure participatory learning.*

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. For instance, I could (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. Besides, I got an insight that participative analysis would deepen my/our understanding of inequality/inequity and support to explore equitable strategies.

Thus, I enhanced harmonious equitable space supported to live my values that influenced my learning and the students' learning. Further, it influenced a peer. For instance, when I read Michelle's initial draft of her study, I learned that I coaxed her to develop equitable strategies. After reading my initial draft and listening to my work, she discussed her reflections as:



<https://youtu.be/Di0743Jhn-Q 291121>

*One of the things that I saw come up in a couple of pieces our writing was this idea about, and I decided to write my own first and then read other people's, so after I read everybody else's I thought 'Oh, well it seems to be that there could be a potential thing here about creating space or safe space for these conversations or for just discussion or just being.' Then I went back and I kind of looked at what I had written and was like, you know it's funny because I think that I did you know in my own writing I feel like I did something that I am always warning my teacher researchers against. I went in and said 'Oh I already know what the problem is. I already know what this is and here I kind of jumped right into it, like maybe these are some things I could do to fix it.' Then I read Parbati's and got to the end where she has this challenge about who are the disadvantaged groups and I thought 'well geez, I feel like I already pre-emptively answered that question without even asking the question.' So I think it really was helpful for me to read everybody else's writing and maybe what I would like to do is to start asking some questions for my students and creating some space for them to tell me what is pressing for them, what they feel, what they see, what, if they had the magic wand, what they what they would like the experience to be like and then how they think I could be a service in that. So, it was a really good exercise for me who really likes to get to the end and find and find the solution and tie it with a bow. It was a really good exercise for me, and I think it's definitely put me back into that frame of mind of slowing down a little bit and asking questions and creating space. So, I feel like, personally, that's what I'm going to enter into the next term thinking about is how to do that. Thanks everybody for your contributions.*

Through the reflection of on 28 January 2022 as in the linked video, (14:25-16:50) she crafted above mentioned guiding questions and researched to understand her students' experiences as online learners and how they would define and recognize equitable teaching practices in an

online medium. I was excited when I learned that we had almost similar influences and insights (December-March) although we belong to different geographical, cultural, and social locations.

Thus, participatory inquiry enhanced harmonious equitable space in Nepal and the US, within me and in the classes. However, participatory inquiry opportunities may not be possible for many novice researchers.

### ***Socio-cultural inquiry***

Here, socio-cultural inquiry refers to the investigation by developing a socio-cultural conceptual framework by developing socio-cultural perspectives. Being a teacher educator, I needed to have culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education which requires a culturally responsive conceptual framework (Gist et al., 2019). According to Gist, et al., (2019, p. 1) “culturally responsive pedagogy is a combination of knowledge, practices, and dispositions that center racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students’ cultural traditions, experiences, and perspectives to facilitate meaningful and transformative learning opportunities.” In my context, within the harmonious equitable space, we could develop participatory inquiry that supported to make sense of a socio-cultural framework to see the gender, gender issue and make sense of other in/equitable practices and strategies.

For instance, 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 meaningful as he wrote: *“From Parbati I am learning the meaning of Ardhanarishwor 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.”* Similarly, acknowledging eastern wisdom tradition and making sense of gender-balanced, a post-gender metaphor of my/our study (Dhungana, et al., 2021) Jackie wrote in her initial draft as

*We all feel that we need to continue to become more conscious of inequitable practices in ourselves, in others, and in our social formations. The results include the evidence-based, values-based generation of educational knowledge that is grounded in accepting educational responsibility, active citizenship, and cultures of inquiry (Whitehead, 2013; Delong, 2013). They include a Living Educational Theory approach to continuing professional development (DeLong, 2021) and with Dhungana's work, the integration of Sanskrit images and post-gender metaphors for understanding power balance/imbalance:*

I realised from this reading that I have been developing a socio-cultural perspective.

Perhaps I was making sense of harmonious equitable space through the socio-cultural framework. Their acknowledgement of my knowledge grew my confidence. Then I began to share socio-cultural perspectives in the academic forum to influence others and me.

For instance, on 25 January 2022, I asked a southeast Asian presenter (Dr Tariq Rahman) about the socio-cultural perspective in the Education South Asia Seminar who was critiquing English language. You may watch the following video for the details.

[https://www.facebook.com/parbati.dhunganaparupoudel/posts/4819044061549103?notif\\_id=1643039652301375&notif\\_t=feedback\\_reaction\\_generic&ref=notif](https://www.facebook.com/parbati.dhunganaparupoudel/posts/4819044061549103?notif_id=1643039652301375&notif_t=feedback_reaction_generic&ref=notif)

From his presentation that followed by my question about a socio-cultural perspective to look into English language hegemony, I realized that I ignored Sanskrit and blamed other languages (Nepali and English). I began to ponder what made me so, was that influence of so-called modern education or ignorance of Vedic and Yogic knowledge. Rather than blaming the current education system, I began to think. It was not too late to explore the answer and start to find the root causes of my disharmony by going to the root as Sanskrit is considered the root of Nepali language, the language I know better than Hindi and English.

The socio-cultural perspectives that I developed within the culture of inquiry in the planning of AERA-2021 supported me in engaging in the socio-cultural inquiry process and developing a conceptual framework (Dhungana, 2021). The satvic framework which was

developed from a socio-cultural inquiry (Dhungana, 2021) also helped me further in my ongoing Ph.D. thesis writing. However, socio-cultural inquiry got stuck whenever the issue of material and non-material appears.

### ***Post-material inquiry***

When the issues of material and non-material appears, an adaptation of post-material inquiry is vital for enhancing harmonious equitable space. Here, language is material and yet to understand is non-material. Inspired by the study (Apffel-Marglin, 2018) I could make sense of multiple selves (e.g. academic and spiritual) as disharmonious selves and engage in a post-material inquiry process by exploring material (educational) and non-material (spiritual) spaces. I think the researchers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century who are facilitating the future researchers (i.e. 22<sup>nd</sup> century) need to go beyond material inquiry, that is post-material inquiry. For instance, on 17 January 2022, reaching here, I reflected as

*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.*

*I understood equality as samaanata and equity as samata (my Nepali translation). Inspired by Bhattacharya I decided not to italics Nepali words. According to of a Nepali dictionary, equality and equity mean almost the same (equal state) as both share the same phenomena-sama, means equal. The only difference is that equity is more connected to a neutral and baseless state whereas equality is the equal state. I think a neutral state is widely discussed connecting to neutral language. However, I sensed it beyond that. Like the third space, a neutral state is being in the third space and developing a not bias perspective, neither one over the other. I think, equity is not only about someone providing support to disadvantaged groups of people for any empowering intent, but also supporting to develop third space perspective. Perhaps, it is like the state*

*of realizing both Purusha and Prakriti positioning self at the centre. According to EWT, at the center lies, the human who can make a continuous journey through the three spaces: Purusha, Prakriti and the third space.*

When I made sense of the chakras considered imaginary energy centres and life-affirming centers in the non-material inner world, I realized that equity is everywhere. For instance, nature is equitable. The colorful flowers attract other creatures (e.g. bees) with their colors and the white flower attracts other creatures with its odor. I shared this in the meeting that was meaningful in my context and to my peer. For instance, Michelle said almost similar to this, “Students have unique strengths like Parbati talked about flowers of nature”.

I deepened my understanding of post-material inquiry when Jack shared the following at the 24 January 2022 meeting, which can be accessed from the video link expressed between 15:25-16:29.:

<https://youtu.be/Lq68tOfQ6Lg>

*We can see we can experience uh similar kinds of experiences with the energy that is flowed now Parbati you mentioned uh the eastern wisdom tradition of the chakras where I've actually studied a little bit of that in my history and it felt again very important in terms of like the Chinese notion of qi that flow of energy so that I'm really pleased with to say yes I think through the video and the visual data and using that process of empathetic resonance we can clarify values that are embodied in who we are and what we are doing in our relational programs and practicum planning together which is very different than just a linguistic exercise am I making sense to give the meaning of words in terms of other words what we do what I'm saying I think we can now do is to clarify and communicate the embodied expression of our meanings over time.*

His comprehension of the Nepali and Chinese perspectives of the flow of energy in the non-material world was beyond material inquiry. However, the sense of the non-material world seems interesting to us, which might be possible through a post-material inquiry. The interest of post material inquiry was also traced back to a 13th-century Persian poet Rumi who wrote a poem which I found somewhere is roughly translated as follows:

*Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing  
and right doing there is a field.  
I'll meet you there.  
When the soul lies down in that grass  
the world is too full to talk about.*



It appears that Rumi's 'field', perhaps a third space was not mere imagination but explored through post-material inquiry. We human beings have unique strengths of intellect that can adapt post-material inquiry through which we can explore the unexplored, reach the unreached, express the unexpressed, hear the unheard, and so on.

For instance, if I were limited to senses or body, I would not explore the conflict of my logical mind and intuitive heart. I would not attain and sustain harmony. I would not develop a harmonious equitable space adapting Ardhanarishwor conceptual framework. If I were limited to perceiving Ardhanarishwor as a Hindu god's image, I would not influence self and others to this extent. For instance, I began to raise my voice for gender justice openly.

The following post of Facebook Wall on 27 January 2022, I commented as "*I would much appreciate it if there was (at least) one female presenter. Anyway, best wishes.*" In this post my university colleagues, who recently perused PhD degree, were about to present Participatory Action Research: Reflections, Insights, and Challenges. It was exclusionary practice as the male presenters represented of so-called Brahmin caste, disregarding diversity. As participatory action research is an inclusive approach, the practitioners seemed exclusive. It was disrespect of the more than half female population of Nepal as the initial census showed that they are male and female.

Later I reflected that I could have raised my voice for social justice. 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 think my perspective is becoming a razor-like sharp, placing myself between logical mind and intuitive heart; Purusha and Prakriti; eastern and western. And I was attaining harmony. Attainment was possible with an intellectual sense. However, sustaining or

nurturing was not possible without a loving, caring, and respectful culture. I found a ‘culture of inquiry’, a ‘womb-like space’ or safe, open, cozy, loving, caring, supportive for sustaining harmony. However, I felt I need to be challenged as at times I felt pampered to nurture my logic, and know living contradictions. Here, I am not living contradictions, but rather consciously embracing my part using intellect. In consciousness, unhelpful contradictions of dis/harmony or in/equity disappear like darkness disappear in the presence of light and only remains light, i.e. disharmony and inequity disappear in harmonious equitable space.

### **Conclusions**

By enhancing harmonious equitable space, I have gained the three significant insights that I discuss here as conclusion of this study. 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 first inspired by the discussion on the notion of Kahneman’s (2011) ‘thinking fast’ and ‘thinking slow’. Later, I integrated with the Vedic and/or Yogic perspective of consciousness from Eastern Wisdom Tradition (EWT), such as my living-educational-methodology metaphor (Dhungana, 2020). 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. In short, I got the following three major insights.

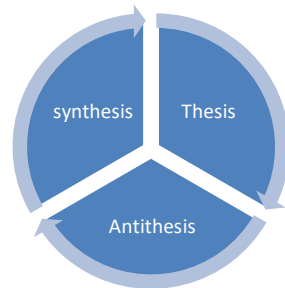
***Theoretical insights:*** I realized that logic and intuitiveness are like two hands which are tools that we use harmoniously complementing each other for harmonious living. Whenever we fail to balance one, the other may get hurt, we adapt equitable strategy to support the

disadvantaged. When one hand gets hurt, another hand gets burden, and faces difficulties. So does male and female, logicity and intuitiveness, eastern and western perspectives. They are not binary, dichotomous, unhelpful but rather complementary to each other and remain in the balanced form that balanced state creates harmony within and out in actions. We may experience balance for a short time, however, we attain harmony. The only thing is we need to nurture that moment, we need to nurture that harmonious state by balancing logical mind and intuitive heart consciously for the common good. Whenever we experience either logical or intuitiveness in dominant state, we need to be conscious of 'underused' quality and use that. Then rational mind and intuitive heart may get into conflict (or disharmony). This conflict is dialectical and results into synthesis, a new knowledge. This is an inductive (not deductive) process as dialectical discourse accepts common values (leaving the rest) and develops consensus. The common value which is not contradictory is *pragya* or wisdom, the harmonious state. Knowledge is perceived through our senses, mind (thought and feelings), intellect, and beyond, i.e. consciousness. It is neither like the only Socratic approach of using intellect mind nor like only Sophist who relied only on senses to explore the truth but integral way of embracing both as realities in themselves and parts of the reality of some other whole. This kind of knowledge is called *gyan*.

Metaphorically speaking, it was the state of *Ardhanarishwor*, a harmonious, integral, whole, one-like or balanced state. It appears as *akhanda* (non-dual, indivisible). Seeing a whole (not as fragments) is the state of complete freedom and the end of the problem (here disharmony and inequity) which is possible by observation (Krishnamurti, 2022), through the intellect.

***Methodological insights:*** I had a theoretical insight. I adapted two methods: *dristi* (observation) and *manana* (dialectics). First, I observed myself moving the cursor backwards and forwards to examine my dis/harmonious state. I spotted harmony on my smile and laughter that reflected a

complete (both inner and outer) harmony. This harmonious state is the balanced state, a balance of logical mind and intuitive heart which could be perceived by intellect mind (not merely by senses).



Then I engaged in manana or a cyclical dialectical process (see Figure 2). Dialectical process is a method of data analysis in which first I looked into ‘thesis’ or claim. Then I brought ‘antithesis’ or contradictory idea. Then I observed the conflict of thesis and antithesis. That arises synthesis. I did not stop there when synthesis becomes a thesis and requires an antithesis. It goes not in a linear but a cyclical process as shown in Figure 2. I personified as Ardhanarishwor as logicity and intuitiveness create synergetic effects and occurs creation.

**Professional insights:** I experienced of professional insight when I adapted multiple pedagogical practices to address inequity as either equity or inequity, it is in a fluid state (in/equity) that takes any shape (inequity and equity). When I was harmonious, I was more equitable, when I was disharmonious, I was more inequitable and vice versa. It is a continuous cyclical dialectical process as shown in the Figure 2. Besides my professional growth, I was towards the process of professional formation. According to Seal et al. (2019) the method of professional building includes:

- 1) *Developing critically informed educators equipped to work in multi- disciplinary environments, contexts and cultures.*
- 2) *Evolving critically reflective practitioners and learners who can be self-directed and work as part of a team.*
- 3) *Facilitating connections*

*between theory, policy, politics and practice. 4) Enabling student's to confidently articulate professional values and resolve conflicts between their professional and personal identities, ethics and values. 5) Producing graduates with professional accreditation and high employability skills. (p. 232)*

Although the professional formation could be “developed and sustained on a philosophy of working collaboratively, which includes students, graduates, sector employers, placement providers and academics”, I could imagine it to make it possible in our context while teaching and learning with graduates (Seal et al., 2019, p. 232).

### **Significance**

I discussed above how enhanced harmonious equitable space explored contextual disharmonious inequitable issue uncovered and how harmonious equitable inquiries evolved to address the issues that influenced my learning, learning of students and peer. My findings would be significant in diverse contexts as harmony and equality are universal humanitarian values for flourishing humanity.

For instance, on 24 January 2022 meeting Jack shared (something similar to) the possible influence of this study in diverse context as follows (which can be accessed on the following video link too):

<https://youtu.be/Lq68tOfQ6Lg>

*One of your contributions can could be something that historically. Nepal has been very well-known for in terms of the quality of spiritual communications between people that there's something about that when I talk about a relational dynamic. It's something to do with what you're highlighting about harmony and it feels to me that you really do embody those qualities. It feels to me that this could also be in terms of that sense of a culture of inquiry that we could try and make sure that what you've written in this paper where you're drawing attention to the spiritual values from within. If you like your own cultural context, then we're actually taking those seriously.*

Harmony can be my professional living value and a spiritual value. Spiritual values are universal values that flourish humanity. For instance, in one of our conversations (24 January 2022), connecting the current gender injustice in Afghanistan, Jack explored the relevance of my study in the context of Afghanistan. The details can be viewed from 10:25-12:36 in the video:

<https://youtu.be/Lq68tOfQ6Lg>

*On Friday I think it is one of the living theory doctors Ariana Briganti is taking part in a virtual conversation Edinburgh which is looking at the education of women in Afghanistan and Ari in her doctorate focused on gender inequality now at the moment what's happening in about Afghanistan with women is really very difficult because they're being denied access to educational provision now our symposium is looking at if you like contributing to cultivating you know equitable education systems so my question is when you say about when I fail to use my logic and intuitiveness there lay inequality or imbalance that resulted in disharmony I'm curious about whether some of the experiences of disharmony can have an external effect or cause like what's happening in Afghanistan that the inequality is being caused by policies of the government of the Taliban now that for me is what Ari is focusing on is disharmony you know there's a problem there about inequality um and I was just curious about and I liked very much what you were writing about that sense of disharmony but I wondered whether there was also that issue that some of the contexts like the one in Afghanistan at the moment is almost outside the individual psyche you know it's being created by uh in this case the Taliban government refusing equitable uh provision for girls and women so that I'm going to work at that myself you know looking at what you've written so that was very very helpful to me.*

Knowing self with reference to embodied experiences and the experiences of the world and vice versa is the process of intellect mind which shows the hope of influencing others in diverse contexts who value harmony and equity including educational settings to ensure harmonious equitable educational practices. The absence of intellect mindful practices is self-marginalization which will be understood as self-ignorance of the inherent quality of consciousness of all that would be interesting, meaningful engagement to the self-study practitioners. The harmonious equitable inquiries will explore the multiple layers of conflicts (e.g. ignorance and intellect), which deepen diverse readers' self-learning and deepen integral perspective (e.g. Western Modern Views and Eastern Wisdom Tradition). The use of the metaphor of *Ardhanarishwor*

would add hope of exploring almost forgotten other harmonious equitable spaces. The EWT (e.g. tantric philosophy) may help to (re)imagine (Timalsina, 2013) a harmonious equitable world through (re)search, (de)construction, (re, co)construction of alternatives, or by nurturing immense available possibilities for the common good. The results of this research will also be significant for teachers, teacher educators, and policy developers in the diverse local, national, and international contexts, including the ones who aspire for harmonious equitable space.

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