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Let the Symphony of Life Dance with an Unrelenting Crescendo

Meenakshi Mohan, Ed.D.

*Life is a book of verses
wrapped in melodies of love, glory, and sadness.
Between tears and laughs, they weave a story.
The symphony of life moves on
with unrelenting crescendo
with the Sun and Moon as our constant companions.*
(Meenakshi Mohan, published in the anthology, *Let Love Heal the World*, April 2021)

2020 is over, and 2021 is working hard to erase the mayhem of COVID 19. Hopefully, the day will arrive soon when this pandemic will be a footnote in the annals of world history. As I look out from my window, I see the vast span of the blue sky, my crape myrtles dancing in a symphony, a couple of red robins tweaking and hopping from branch to branch, the sun playing hide-and-seek in the shimmering waters of the pond—it is all so peaceful and so full of hope. I frequently find my peace in my poems and my paintings.

We have been through the strangest of times—first, the COVID 19 crisis reshaped the world in many ways. Our society, government, healthcare, economy, lifestyles, family relationships—all have been affected. It has impacted not one region of one country; its calamities are evident worldwide. Second, George Floyd’s death on Memorial Day reignited the call for equality, not only in America but also worldwide. George Floyd’s death was a cruel reminder that inequality continues to be “crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chain of discrimination,” as Martin Luther King stated in his “I have a dream” speech.

As if these were not enough, natural calamities took over. Locust swarms, earthquake, floods, landslides, fire, smog, volcano eruptions, beheading in France, the election stress in the USA, the pandemic tsunami in India, and disharmony in the Middle East—all are keeping us at the edge of our seats, waiting for what’s next. At this time, I remember a few lines of my poem, “May the Melody of Love and Peace Capture the World,” which I wrote as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi (published in *Setu Bilingual Journal*, October 2020), and honor him with my pen and ink painting, *Gandhi*.



May the Melody of Love and Peace Capture the World
Meenakshi Mohan

....
*Gandhi, the messiah of humanity, we need you.
Our earth is in chains.
Manacles of pandemic and endemic scourges
threaten our world.
Racial injustice, crime, violence, greed, poverty,
religious and political crisis
made holes in the fabrics of our lives.
Let your charkha
knit a virtual tapestry of harmony.*

As a child, I wanted to fly like a bird. I would stretch my arms and race to compete with them, but oops! To my greatest disappointment, I learned I could never be a bird with wings. Later in life, I covered an expansive terrain of the world on the metallic wings of the airplane. My journey was still on when this deadly pandemic struck us, and the whole world stood still—the travels stopped, and in our quarantine, we stayed homebound. Then, we learned we could still fly high and wide through virtual explorations. We connected with people worldwide from one

continent to another without stopping. Then, I also realized that there is yet another way to fly by stretching our neurons where even the sky is no limit.



The collection of twelve scholarly articles in this issue reminds me of what Kofi Annan said: “*Knowledge is power, information is liberating, and education is the premise of progress.*”

(A testimony to his wisdom is reflected in my pen and ink artwork *Knowledge is Power*, published in *International Writers Journal*, March 2021.)

The Spring 2021 issue of *i.e.: inquiry in education* is filled with a wealth of scholarly works of practitioners. All these articles conjugate a wide variety of educational experiences even during these unprecedented times:

Akat, M., and Peker, A.: *Investigating the Relationship Between Adolescents’ Interpersonal Problem-Solving Skills and Developmental Guidance Needs*. This study examines the extent to which the interpersonal problem-solving approaches of adolescents predict their developmental guidance needs.

Connery, L. A., and Frick, W. C.: *A Formal Administrator Mentoring Program: Perceived Learning Benefits and Insights into Leadership Well-Being*. This research investigates a formal principal mentoring program and reports on participants’ perceived learning benefits and well-being. The study highlights aspects of mentoring relationships evidenced in the explicit and intentional development of school leaders.

Dere, L., and Gokcinar, B.: *Learning to Use Historical Evidence: Reflections from the Experiences of Prospective Social Studies Teachers*. This study aims to determine perceptions and experiences of prospective social studies teachers who create learning and teaching activities using historical evidence.

Iseri, E. T., and Tabak, B. Y.: *Investigation of Teachers' Self-Assessments of Their Ability to Create a Positive Classroom Environment*. This study aims to examine teachers' self-assessment of their ability to create a positive classroom environment.

Islim, O. F., Kamali-Arslantas, T., and Solmaz, E.: *Digital Parentship Practices of Instructional Technology Faculty Members*. This study aims to understand the digital parentship practices of Instructional Technology (IT) faculty members within a qualitative approach. The survey findings provide information to help understand the digital parentship practices from the technology field and suggest parentship strategies for young children.

Kagnici, A., and Sadi, O.: *Students' Conceptions of Learning Biology and Achievement after STEM Activity–Enriched Instruction*. This study investigates the STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) model's effect on students' academic performance.

Kang, M., and Duong, A.: *Student Perceptions of First-Time Online Learning During the COVID 19 Pandemic in Vietnam*. The purpose of this study is to gain insight into students' perceptions of the first-time online learning they experienced at the university level during the school closure due to the COVID 19 pandemic and their future expectations about this learning mode.

Karacabey, F. F.: *School Principal Support in Teacher Professional Development*. This study aims to examine the level of support provided by school principals in teachers' professional development. It is based on a cross-sectional survey design of the quantitative method.

Senyigit, C., Onder, F., and Silay, L.: *An Inquiry-Based Learning Approach for Effective Concept Teaching*. This research aims to investigate the effect of simulation-supported inquiry-based learning on the conceptual understanding of preservice teachers. The analysis reveals that inquiry-based learning was found to be more effective than lecture-based learning.

Tras, Z., Sunbul, M. G., and Baltaci, U. B.: *Investigation of the Relationships between Optimism, Perceived Social Support, and Hope*. This research aims to examine the relationships between optimism, perceived social support, and hope. It finds that the variables of perceived social support and hope predict optimism.

Yalcin, M. T., and Eres, F.: *Investigation of the Relationship between High Schools' Instructional Capacity and Academic Achievement*. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between a school's instructional capacities and students' achievement gains.

Zeybek, G.: *The Effect of Layered Curriculum on Students' Academic Achievement and Learning Retention*. This study aims to determine the effects of layered curriculum activities on students' academic achievement and retention of learning to assess their views regarding the applied program.

The happenings of the last one-and-a-half-years have filled me with a myriad of emotions—sadness, helplessness, rage, contemplation, reverence for God, acceptance. Some good also happened in my life—the long-awaited birth of my granddaughter and my grandson's first year in college remind us that life goes on. It is a kaleidoscope of colored glasses. Let's pick the splendors of the rainbow from the blues and blacks. With hope, let's look forward to a new

dawn, unique learning, and awakening. Let inquiry in *i.e.: inquiry in education* be a quest for learning. Let the symphony of life dance with an unrelenting crescendo. Let's move on with a *Silent Prayer* (as presented in my poem *Silent Prayer*, published in *Confluence UK*, May 2020 and my oil on canvas painting of the same name) for a happy, healthy 2021 to everyone!



A Silent Prayer
Meenakshi Mohan

*As my vessel sails through the stormy,
tumultuous waves of life
I stretch my wings to reach Thee
in silent prayer,
please guide me,
to conquer the clamorous journey ahead
with astute knowledge and strength
Then,
endow upon me the peace and calm
as flows in the heart of the ocean.*

Dr. Meenakshi Mohan is an educator, freelance writer, art critic, children's writer, painter, and poet. She has taught at universities in Chicago, Boston, and, more recently, for Towson University in Maryland. She specializes in Early Childhood Leadership and Advocacy. She has published widely in this area and presented numerous papers and workshops. Some of her academic writings and books include Motivational Learning and Art Integrated Curriculum; What is Education; and Art, The Emergence of Literacy and Motivation. Her book reviews, art critiques, interviews, and poems regularly appear in scholarly journals. Stanford University digitally houses her writings in its initiative Life in Quarantine. She has received several awards for her excellence in teaching from the universities where she has taught and has been listed twice in Who's Who Among American Teachers.

Dr. Mohan has authored two children's picture books, The Rainbow in My Room and The Gift, and edited Tamam Shud: Poems of Kshitij Mohan. She coedited An Anthology of Poems for Children. Recently, she had a solo exhibit of her paintings in Potomac, Maryland. Most of her

paintings are in private collections. She was nominated for January 2021 as an Artist of the Month by the DCSAACI (DC South Asian Arts Council, Inc.), a South Asian Cultural Ambassador for the DC Metro area. She has also been featured several times in local journals in the Maryland area.

Meenu is currently on the Montgomery County Library System's Advisory Committee for its Potomac, Maryland branch. She is on the Editorial Team for i.e.: inquiry in education, a peer-reviewed journal published by National Louis University, Chicago, Illinois. As an editorial member, she reviews, edits, and writes articles, academic book reviews, and editorials. Some of her forthcoming projects include:

Children's Storybook with Integrated Curriculum Resources for Educators and Parents

A Book of Poems for Children

A Canvas of Colors and Words—a book of her paintings and poems

Several articles, poems, and paintings to be published in various anthologies

Meenakshi lives in Maryland, USA.