

HARMONY

A Definition

• **noun** (pl. **harmonies**) **1** the combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and chord progressions having a pleasing effect. **2** the quality of forming a pleasing and consistent whole. **3** agreement or concord.

— ORIGIN Latin *harmonia* 'joining, concord', from Greek *harmos* 'joint'.

In any discussion of harmony, besides giving dictionary meanings, one can talk about different aspects of harmony – with self, family, peers, community, the environment and the world at large.

Inner Harmony

Fundamentally, in order to function as a person and achieve inner harmony, one must be at peace and be contented. It is therefore crucial we live by positive values such as love, honesty, integrity, self-discipline and moral courage. It is also important that we accept ourselves for who we are and set realistic goals to help us achieve our fullest potential. We need to recognise that success in life is more than just the accumulation of fame, power or material wealth for ourselves. It is the knowledge that we have contributed to the well-being of others that is most rewarding.

Having inner harmony also involves having a sense of self-awareness with the ability to know and understand one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviour. For example, we can learn more about ourselves when we discover about our likes and dislikes, and what motivates us in life. It is important to know that a person's perception of things around him affects his state of happiness which is more often a state of mind. Adopting a positive attitude towards life, having confidence in oneself and believing in others, especially those who are dear to oneself, are essential ingredients for happiness, fulfilment and inner harmony.

Family Harmony

A harmonious family unit is yet another facet of harmony. Mutual love, care, support and respect are qualities that characterise the harmonious family unit. Members in the family feel a deep sense of belonging and assurance that the family would always be there for them. A family that is harmonious provides a nurturing environment for us to grow and develop in. Thus, members of a harmonious family generally enjoy a greater sense of self-worth and confidence because they are usually proud of their families and themselves.

Harmony with others

We interact with others daily. Thus, it is important that we learn how we can relate well to others. In school and at work, it is often required that we work in teams to complete a given task. Hence, it is important that we learn how we can be good team players. Our ability to relate well to others will enhance our teamwork skills and enable us to become good team players.

Harmony with the community

A harmonious community is crucial for national survival and well-being. People living in a harmonious community display camaraderie, neighbourliness and community spirit. There is mutual understanding and appreciation even among people of different races or religions. There is also a greater sense of belonging and commitment to make the community a better place for everyone to live in. In the final analysis, harmony in the community promotes social and national cohesion which is essential for stability, prosperity and progress.

Harmony with the environment

Living in harmony with our environment requires us to make efforts to preserve our environment so that we could all enjoy living in places that are not only safe, clean and green, but also aesthetically pleasing. By preserving our natural environment, such as the nature reserves, we are also protecting the ecological balance of our natural flora and fauna for all to enjoy. We can also preserve buildings and architecture of the past so that future generations can appreciate our shared cultural heritage. The value of harmony with nature is best described in the words of Chief Seattle of the Duwamish and Squamish tribes in the letter he wrote to the President of the United States in 1852:

...the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to earth...Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself...The shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water, but the blood of our ancestors...How can you buy or sell the sky? The land? The idea is strange to us. If you don't own...how can you buy? (Campbell, 1988, p.3)

Harmony in the world

A peaceful and stable nation is characterised by harmonious relationships among its citizens and between the government and its citizens. A peaceful and stable world involves maintaining harmonious relationships among governments, political leaders and corporations around the world. Peace and stability accrues much benefit for its citizenry and is essential for any country's continued survival and progress. Since we live in a globalised and inter-connected world, having peace and stability in the world will eventually benefit all nations.