

**THE GOLDEN RULE:** Each religion is different, but all teach people to be good. They teach the "Golden Rule": that we should treat others the way we'd like to be treated. Here's a Taoist version of the Golden Rule...

*Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain,  
and your neighbour's loss as your own loss.*

– Tai Shang Gan Ying Pian

## Supporting students

### Taoist teachings have persuaded many Chinese Singaporeans to help schools in their community.

At Qiaonan Primary School, there's always help at hand for students in need. Not everyone can afford to go to school, but the Lorong Koo Chye Sheng Hong Temple is doing its best to change that. Like many Taoist groups, the temple's charity arm gives out bursaries, so that every Singaporean child, regardless of race or religion, can get a good education.

Last year, Qiaonan Primary received \$14,000 for its needy pupils from the temple association.

"We believe in helping others, and we believe in education," says Master Chung Kwang Tong, secretary-general of the Singapore Taoist Federation's youth group. "Taoists are encouraged to read more, and to build their knowledge."

Taoism originated 4,700 years ago in China. It has been practised in China for so long that Taoism and Chinese culture have influenced each other. Many traditional Chinese beliefs and customs come from Taoism, while many Taoist things have come from Chinese culture.

So, many Chinese who are not Taoist accept Taoist customs, such as respecting their ancestors during Qingming. Taoism has also affected the language: many famous Chinese sayings actually come from Taoist scriptures.

Through the years, Singaporean students have benefited from the Taoist belief in education. Several Chinese

• This page is an initiative under the Community Engagement Programme, supported by the Inter-Religious Harmony Circle.

businessmen were influenced by Taoist teachings and decided to donate large sums to educational causes. They included nation builders such as Lee Kong Chian and Tan Kah Kee.

Lee Kong Chian set up the Lee Foundation in 1952. Between 1952 and 1993, the foundation donated around \$300 million, of which three-quarters went towards education. Singapore Chinese Girls' School, St Margaret's Girls and the National Library were some of the causes that benefited.

Like other faiths, such as Judaism and Sikhism, Taoism says it's important to improve yourself, both physically and mentally. And, you shouldn't just focus on yourself. Taoist beliefs divide your life into the internal and the external. The



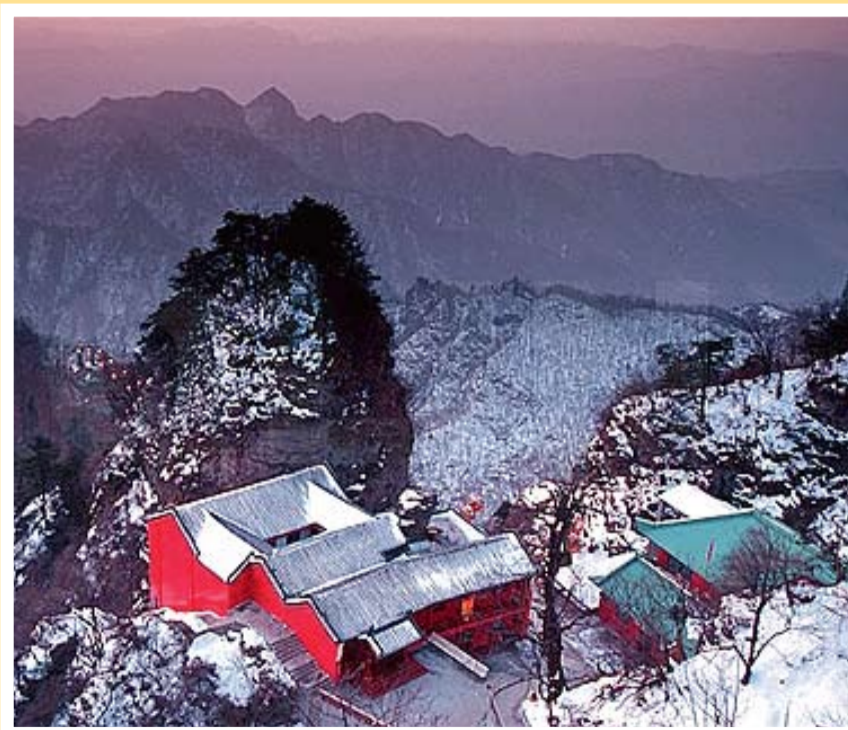
internal refers to yourself, while the external is the world around you. Taoists are supposed to improve not only themselves, but also the world they live in. Says Master Chung, "If we cultivate our inner self, we have to cultivate the outside."

In addition to supporting education, temples like the Loyang

Tua Peh Kong temple also sponsor ambulances for the various nursing homes around Singapore.

The Taoist scripture teaches followers to be selfless and generous to all.

It reads, "The highest virtue is to act without a sense of self. The highest kindness is to give without condition. The highest justice is to see without preference."



### More about Taoists

**FOUNDER:** Taoism started with the great teacher, Lao Tzu (left), who wrote the main Taoist scripture, the Dao De Jing.

**BELIEFS:** Taoists follow the "Dao" or the "way". It is both a set of rules for good behaviour, and an element from which all things are made. Taoists make offerings to show their respect to the gods, immortals, saints and ancestors. Some have small altars at home.

**BALANCE:** The Yin-Yang is the symbol of Taoism (right). The black and the white represent twin forces of the universe that are always opposing each other, but are perfectly balanced in strength. This is in line with Taoist belief in balance and harmony. The Yin-Yang concept is also found in other East Asian cultures.



**CONNECTIONS:** Many parts of Taoism are similar to Buddhism and Confucianism. Taoists also respect figures from other faiths, such as Ganesha, Buddha, and Confucious. The Loyang Tua Pek Kong temple in Singapore is famous because it contains three temples in one complex – a Hindu temple to Ganesha, a shrine to the Malay spirit Datuk Kong, and the Taoist Tua Pek Kong.

**BEAUTIFUL SURROUNDINGS:** Taoists believe that it's not enough to have a beautiful soul, you should make the world around you beautiful as well. In China, many famous scenic nature spots that are now tourist attractions survived because they were protected by a Taoist temple. Taoism says you should try to create a heavenly place on earth, and that includes protecting the environment. Taoist temples try to avoid cutting down the trees around them. Devotees are told not to pluck even a single flower. Some of these sites are so beautiful, such as the Wudang mountains (left), that they have become UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Taoist temples lie in perfect harmony amongst these mountains, as they have done for hundreds of years. Like Taoists, other religious groups around the world have built serene places of worship in the mountains. It shows how everyone needs to connect with nature to get some peace from the bustle of life.