The Principles of Taoism Lao Tzu

The ideas of the Master of Taoism Lao Tzu have influenced Chinese people for more than 2,000 years. Lao Tzu wrote his theory of Tao and the art of leading a life of wisdom more than 2,500 years ago. His name literally translates to Old Boy or Old Master; he is considered a deity by some adherents of Tao.

Who Is Lao Tzu?

There is a lot of speculation about the Master of Taoism Lao Tzu – not much is really known about the man. He is believed to have been a teacher and friend of Confucius, and was possible a keeper of archives in a small Chinese kingdom. He lived around 550 B.C., but many of the details of his life have been lost with time. His book, Tao Te Ching, is the most widely translated book in the world after the Bible. Known in English as the Book of the Way, Lao Tzu's book describes the art of living in harmony with nature and the universe. His Tao poems are truly classics in world literature and are the basis of the belief system for many Tao adherents around the world.

The philosophy of Tao was said to have begun with Master of Taoism Lao Tzu. It is believed that he decided to leave China and head west when he was 80 years old, because he was disappointed by his fellow countrymen and their aberrant ways of being. Before he left, Lao Tzu was asked by a Chinese gate guard to record his beliefs and principles. The result of this request was Tao Te Ching, in which Lao Tzu explains in 81 poems the way to harmony and tranquility. While he may have been somewhat reclusive and contemplative, Lao Tzu deeply cared about society and the state of mankind.

The Ideas and Philosophies of Taoism Lao Tzu

The central belief of the Master of Taoism Lao Tzu is that tranquility can be achieved by doing nothing. This does not mean that people should be passive or inactive; rather, humans should stop fighting the natural workings of the universe. By living in a state of constant desire, humans are guaranteed to live a life of frustration. By letting things unfold in a natural way, people will find harmony with the cosmos.

Tao cannot be described in words, because Tao is said to be what existed before time and before the universe was born. Tao represents the infinite. Followers of Tao try not to even give too much weight to the word "Tao" itself, because the word itself could be limiting. Lao Tzu believed that Tao is similar to a well, because it is empty yet filled with limitless possibility. A well is used, yet is never totally used up.

Under Taoism, humans can only be one with the universe by letting life flow naturally. Like the ebb and flow of water, one must follow the tide, rather than try to swim against the current. Humans do not even need to know their purpose in life; as long as people simply do their work and sit back, everything else will fall into place.