Is Tao a new religion? Many often wonder if there are any differences between Tao and Religions. Below are some of the commonly asked questions.

Q1. What is the difference between ‘Receiving Tao’ and ‘Having a religious belief’? Are there any conflicts? Nowadays, there are so many religions, why do I have to receive Tao?

Although these questions may be confusing and causes doubt in one’s mind, yet it represents the inspiration of real wisdom from within. This is because, when a potential Tao recipient, is beginning to be concerned about the Truth of Life and the Universe through introspection, his real wisdom has awakened.

Receiving Tao enables us to uncover our True Nature, to realise its existence, which will guide us to understand life’s true purpose and direction.

Religions represent a combination of beliefs and putting those beliefs into practice via the forming of religious groups. Although the Truth exists among Heaven and Earth is only one, when Saints of different times and places realised this same Truth and used different languages to express their realisation; differences started to occur.

Each religion has its own unique way of explaining what it considers as holy and divine. When each of them is of the view that their explanation is the one and only Truth and denies others’ explanation, conflicts begin to happen.

Essentially, there is only one Truth and it is the absolute. Receive Tao is to pursue the great ultimate Truth and the true purpose of life in the Universe.

Q2. What are the basic fundamentals and Doctrines of Religions?

Civilisations are the roots of religions. The purpose of religions is to teach mankind the way to return to its origin. Since humans had become so ‘corrupted’, God descended various Saints to different parts of the world to preach the Truth. However, these religions emphasise on different aspects of the Truth. Some emphasises on cultivating life, some on cultivating to recover the True Nature, some on saving mankind, some on benefiting the world.

All religions are of the view that there is only one Supreme Being in the cosmos and God created all beings, yet they perceive the Genesis differently. The religions all hold the same idea (although with different jargons); that the True Self is immortal, perfect and benevolent. The ultimate goal of life is to reach immortality. They all stress on cultivating oneself and perfecting one’s virtues.

Q3. What are the key differences and comparisons between TAO and Religion?

1) Essence
Tao can be considered to be the origin of religions. Similar to a tree, Tao is the root while the branches that grow from the root represent the various religions. The purpose of having a religious belief is to have faith and accept the Truth, which is to believe in Tao. In order to believe and accept the Truth, we should not only put effort in merely reading and understanding the scriptures, we should go directly for the source & realise the Truth that awakened the past enlightened Saints of the religions.

2) Conditions giving rise to the religions
The existence of a religion requires the birth of a founder, yet the existence of Tao does not require any founder because it exists naturally by itself. And whatever that exists naturally is the Truth as there is no human involvement or intervention in it.

3) Purpose
From Tao’s perspective, there is only 1 Truth. As long as religions continue to preach the Truth, they will be able to influence the hearts of people and will flourish for a long time. This Truth or Tao is the origin and source of all religions. To receive Tao is to pursue the origin; to believe in religions is to get inspirations from the doctrines hence the emphasis is on faith, acceptance and acting in accordance to the teachings.

4) Cultivation
The skill on the cultivation of inner awareness is the main difference between Tao and other religions. What Tao talks about is to use our inner awareness to be our guide, while religions teach people to follow a pre-determined set of method and discipline in order to cultivate. We need to bear in mind that receiving Tao is merely the first step to the cultivation of inner awareness. A life-long journey has to be dedicated to
5) Affinity of propagation
Tao is only propagated to the masses in this era. This decision is made by Heaven and not by humans. In this period, God has descended the precious Tao to save all beings with the right affinity. Religions are the production of history and culture. The modern sociologists are of the view that religions are the product of humans and societies. Hence, the success or failure of a religion is entirely dependent on the functioning of its believers.

The differences between Tao & Religions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tao</th>
<th>Religions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Root of all teachings</td>
<td>Branches of Tao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is our Conscience, Buddha Nature, True Self</td>
<td>Are a form of doctrine, rules and principles to be followed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path to liberation from the cycle and death</td>
<td>Guide one to accumulate merits for future lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One can receive Tao only through the Great Teacher</td>
<td>One can acquire any religion upon one’s interest and belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The spreading of Tao depends upon the decree of Heaven</td>
<td>The spreading of great teachings depends on the efforts of the followers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ultimate Truth is revealed when the time is appropriate</td>
<td>Religion is always present since it was established to guide people to be morally upright</td>
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Hence religions lay the foundation and provide the guidance to maintain the moral values of mankind. To receive Tao does not mean one has to accept a new belief or religion but one has begun to realize his/her True Nature. With this realization of our inborn True Self, we have actually found the way back to our homeland.

Q4 What are Inner Meanings of TAO?

1) Tao is the Universal Truth of Life
Tao is the mystical & indescribable energy that created billions of galaxies, stars and solar systems & billions of life forms on Earth; including humans, animals and plants. Hence, it is the origin of all lives and the Lord of all beings. Inside a human, Tao is the centre of all thoughts, feelings and emotions and controls all bodily functions. Everyone has Tao within themselves, yet does not know its existence.

2) Tao is not a sutra or literature; it represents the path which leads mankind back to Heaven. All Scriptures and teachings of various religions elaborate on the Tao. One cannot find Tao in Sutras irrespective of how much reading one does. Tao can only be transmitted by the Enlightened Teacher with Heaven Decree. Religions called it Origin, God, Brahmah, Heaven, Allah. Though the names are different, they all refer to Tao, the only Buddhahland in the cosmos and the only Lord of all souls.

2) Tao is our Conscience, Our True Self
Since Tao is the creator of all things and beings, there is close relationship between Tao and man. Buddhahland gives man soul which is our True Nature. To act in accordance to this True Nature is called Tao, to cultivate Tao is to continue refining our actions, thoughts and behaviours to a perfect standard. Tao cannot be deviated even momentarily. If it can be deviated from then it is not true Tao. Acting in accordance to Tao creates virtues, morality in our behaviour. We have to do this in every waking moment of our life.

3) Tao is the awakening of our True Self
We must have real Tao to awaken our True Nature. In the Tao Receiving ceremony, the ‘Point-out’ from the Bright Master awakens our True Nature, pointing out our bright True Self and directly opens up our door of wisdom. With perseverance and persistent efforts put in Tao cultivation, gradually we will be able to cleanse all the six emotions and desires and restore our original nature. This is a faster and more practical way of reaching enlightenment.

4) Tao is the heart dharma that has been passed on from Buddhas/Patriarchs.
Buddha Sakyamuni, was given the mission of propagating Tao in India some 2500 years ago. After giving sermons for 49 years, he passed on the essence of Tao to his first disciple, Mahakasyapa, who became the first Patriarch of Tao in the West until Patriarch Bodhidharma came to China. Tao Heritage continues till today and the Tao that we receive now is actually the heart to heart transmission that had been passed on from past Buddhas and Patriarchs.

5) Tao is life’s ultimate perfection
All religions are created for the purpose of reaching life’s ultimate goal: immortality, to return to the Origin. The common cultivators only want to receive fortunes and blessings. In actuality, the ultimate mean of reaching immortality, should not be restricted to any one religion or doctrine, it should be directly addressed to the heart/mind and it is the realisation of the heart/mind that enables one to reach the life’s ultimate destination. As a result, from this perspective, religions simply represent the different means to arrive at the same destination. As long as cultivators are able to realise Tao, all religions and doctrines are equal. Here, Tao represents the stage when one finally attains enlightenment after sincere cultivation and Tao propagation.

CONCLUSION
The Truth that exists among the Religions is similar; Religions and Tao does not contradict each other and neither is it separate from one another. They are actually mutually related. We could say that Tao is the essence while Religion is its function. Tao needs the religious teachings in order to be propagated. Neither Heaven nor Earth can speak hence the wide spreading of the Truth must be dependent on humans. Similarly, Religions cannot exist without the guidance of the Truth, otherwise they will not be able to lead and guide sentient beings.

Hence, receiving Tao and having a religious belief is not in conflict, what causes conflicts is the differentiating hearts of humans. The purpose of having a religious belief is to realise Tao, to be aware of the Truth and to attain self-realisation of our True Nature, this is Tao.

We are so fortunate and honoured to be able to receive Tao. We should make use of this rare opportunity to become an enlightened person who is able to practise self-awareness so as to help others achieve enlightenment and perfection in cultivation.

In this modern society, technological advances are turning this world into a global village, the diverse cultures of humans will not be restricted by borders between countries and the Truth that is shared by the Religions will be discovered by mankind. The propagation of Tao is to establish the foundation for this significant event. All these are attributed to the mercy of God and also represent the goals of millions of Tao cultivators.

Tao & Religions
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