

Ho, whose beliefs are based on a philanthropic tradition set by his grandfather Sir Robert Ho Tung and grandmother Clara. Ho's transformation as a Buddhist is recounted by his peers as reaching its zenith five years ago. His vehement belief in the power of Buddhist wisdom to transform people's lives is a driving force. One source at the Centre of Buddhist Studies at the University of Hong Kong, which his sponsorship helped establish in 2000, says, "He tries to promote the highest level of Buddhist wisdom that really can help people. [It's] Buddhism as a form of psychotherapy — he strongly believes Buddhism can transform people's minds."

Meanwhile, Taoism is present community-wide, with temples and altars featuring deities or ancestral tablets in accordance with auspicious dates on the lunar and solar calendars. Divided into philosophical and religious schools, this polytheistic religion worships deities based on history and geography. Food or paper objects such as bank notes may be set out as a sacrifice to the gods or spirits of the departed. Intertwined with social mores, the likes of lion and dragon dances, and even fortune-telling such as astrology and divination, all fall under Taoism's rich, varied and historically com-

plex banner. With philosophies dating back to early Buddhist and Confucian times in China, central texts such as the Tao Te Jing, much like the deeply rooted ethical and philosophical teachings of Confucianism, have entrenched Taoism's pervasive local influence.

Threading the ancient philosophies of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism together, Hinduism remains one of the world's oldest religions. One of Hong Kong's noted families, the Harilelas, are quiet advocates, with granddaughter of elder patriarch, George Harilela, Tiana, citing her beliefs in a religion that forms the core to family life. "I look at Hinduism as more of a philosophy than a religion," she says. "My family instilled these basic principles in us: 'This is your religion, these are the Gods, these are the stories.'" She outlines the karmic circle as being one of Hinduism's most profound teachings. "Karma, how it's all about doing good and being good — ultimately, it's that simple."

Basing life around the teachings of sacred Hindu text the *Bhagavad Gita* — which advo-

cates the supreme state of reaching *samadhi*, a mystical union with God, has for Harilela become intertwined with the practice of yoga, devised by India's holy men to provide spiritual sanctuary by stilling the mind. "Hong Kong is one of those powerful places that if you don't take the time to go within, it takes over you," states Harilela. "In a very busy city where everybody's calling, you [can] lose yourself."

Chimes in Tsang: "It is a case of my faith — rather than using it to guide me [in] facing up to the challenges and opportunities that I have been given in life, accepting them as emanating from the divine wisdom of God," he states resolutely. "It is a challenge He sets us, the challenge to live our faith." □

Above: A Muslim in prayer at the Kowloon Mosque
Left: Tiana Harilela honours her spirituality at the Harilela home shrine in Kowloon Tong
Below and right: Family patriarch George Harilela along with brother Hari sets an example of respect and tolerance for all through the Hindu faith

