TRADITIONS define who we are.

In multiracial Singapore, the many festivals, celebrations and observations give us a sense of identity - whether we are Chinese, Malay, Indian, Eurasian or from another race.

Who can ever forget holding lanterns and eating mooncakes during the Mid-Autumn Festival? Or the delightful splendour of Deepavali lights, and the warm feeling of benevolence all around during Hari Raya.

As the world becomes more globalised, young Singaporeans are coming face to face with foreign cultures via television and the Internet. They will surely compare our traditions with the latest fads from the West and elsewhere.

Perhaps they may question the ancient custom of wearing the colour red during Chinese New Year - why not green, or blue, or purple for that matter?

Then, this tradition to ward off the nian monster - a mythical creature that was said to terrorise humans during this season - may die an untimely death.

Should something like this happen, our sense of identity will be eroded and we will lose sight of our roots.

Japan is an example. In the rigorous drive towards modernity, many of its youngsters have forgotten their traditions and cultural uniqueness.

What we need is awareness and education. We should examine our beliefs and customs and seek to understand why they remain relevant despite their ancient beginnings.

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