

GOHONZON

GOHONZON IS A PIECE OF RICE PAPER.



The Law, however, is not paper. When you look at the front of Gohonzon you see the characters of *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo*. If you turn Gohonzon over and view its backside, you don't see the written Law. The Law is neither the front nor the back of Gohonzon; the Law is *Myoho-renge-kyo*. But you can't see it. You can't point to it, or identify it and say there is *Myoho-renge-kyo*. *Myoho-renge-kyo* is a power that exists. The most approximate physical entity that describes *Myoho-renge-kyo* is Gohonzon..

What is Gohonzon? The *Hoben* (second) and *Juyro* (sixteenth) chapters of the Lotus Sutra are explained on the Gohonzon. Gohonzon is the mirror of your life. When you look at a mirror you think you are looking at yourself, but it is only an image of your physical self that you are looking at. You can't see inside yourself --

your thoughts, your spiritual aspect. Gohonzon is the mirror of your heart--the mirror of your life. You need a mirror so that you know what you look like in your heart.

It is believed that there are only 128 extant Gohonzons inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin. Yet, there could be more since Daishonin conferred a Gohonzon to each of the six elder priests who were disciples of his while he was alive. However, five of the elder priests abandoned the orthodox teachings after his death. Each of the five elder priests went their own separate way and established their own sect of Nichiren Buddhism. So, the whereabouts of their Gohonzons is unknown.

You must realize that your life is also included in the universe. The Gohonzon is a small scroll that represents *ichinen sanzen* (which is everything). At the center of Gohonzon is the Law of *Myoho-renge-kyo*. It is this Law which governs everything, including the protective forces of Buddhism (*shoten zenjin*). And as *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo* encompasses everything, including yourself, you are not searching for Buddha or a god outside yourself. You must realize that you have Buddha-nature within you, and Buddha-nature is one of the elements within *ichinen sanzen*.

The most significant aspect of Gohonzon is "*Namu-myoho-renge-kyo-Nichiren*". Everything else is secondary.

Please remember that the Gohonzon must be handled with the same care you confer to yourself.