

LIGHT

Can you see in the dark? No, unless you have a light source such as a flashlight, candle or electricity. Can you move around in the dark? You'd better be careful. You do not want to hurt yourself by tripping or stubbing your toe. Darkness has always represented the fear, the ignorance and the suffering we face every day; we cannot not see where we are going, what is happening around us and who is next to us. The unknown is very scary. We are frightened over things and events that we cannot control. We want to be in charge.

In this world though, we cannot be in charge all the time. There are mysterious forces that are guiding our environment with us in it. Just as a leaf that falls into a river, the leaf's only option is to flow with the currents. The leaf cannot not stop, move to the side or wish to stay in one spot. This leaf seems hopeless. But there is always hope. The leaf can be saved if someone picked it out of the water. The leaf could get stuck behind some rocks or twigs keeping it from moving down stream. A bird could swoop down and pick up the leaf. The leaf no longer has to travel down the river.

How do we, the leaf be saved from continuing down the river? By the power of the Odaimoku. By chanting Namu Myo Ho Renge Kyo, we gain the merits of the Lotus Sutra that help us enlighten our spirit and our environment around us. In Chapter 21, it states, "those who expound on this sutra will be able to illuminate the darkness of living beings as the light of the sun and moon illuminate all darkness." By chanting the Odaimoku, we are able to stop the continual cycle we are in. The river represents the darkness, the suffering, the ignorance. The Odaimoku is the savior which can stop the

leaf from continuing down the path of darkness. The light represents the knowledge gained to replace ignorance and the power to control our environment.

Have you heard the term auras? Some people believe that we emit light in different colors around us. There are skeptics that say there is no such thing and that is a trick played by our eyes. What the skeptics do not realize is that we are all an energy source. The light bulb only glows when we flip a switch and send electricity to the bulb. We take food and convert it to energy to make us glow. Food alone will not keep our energy level up. There is a spiritual component that affects our energy field. If we are sad or stressed, we feel heavy and the light bulb glows dimly. When we are happy we feel light and the light bulb is bright and shines forever.

By chanting the Odaimoku, we calm our minds. We become happy. When we are happy we glow. When we glow, we eliminate the darkness around us. Take a look at the Mandala Gohonzon and specifically the characters of Namu Myo Ho Renge Kyo. What does it look like? It looks like rays of light with the long strokes emitting from the characters. Light possesses the power to heat, burn, kill bacteria, purify and illuminate. Light also helps plants grow and create oxygen through photosynthesis. So when we chant the Odaimoku, we are eliminating our sins, our bad karma and purifying our body and mind so that we can stimulate our growth and give joy for the living.

Remember, we all want to be in control but sometimes we cannot control our environment. Chant the Odaimoku all the time and become a bright light bulb. When we start to glow, we are spreading our rays out to the world, brightening our surroundings. Through our chanting we will be able to spread peace throughout the world and become a beacon to those wishing to hear the true Dharma. Illumination not darkness.