

## Gedatsu Kongo's "Five Laws"

Translation and Commentary by Rev. H. Taki

### **1. The Great Path of God**

*The Universal God is present when and wherever sincere prayer is offered. How wondrous it is that, when you live with sincere appreciation, any human sufferings – physical or spiritual – are completely resolved through the grace and compassion of God.*

### **2. The Law of Nature**

*Each day consists of morning, noon and night.*

*Each month has its beginning, middle and end.*

*The four seasonal transitions are spring, summer, fall and winter.*

*Modern science – no matter how advanced – can neither alter nor conquer Nature.*

### **3. Highest Moral Conduct**

*May you live according to the highest moral conduct. There are three types of morality:*

- 1. To demand compensation without putting forth effort is immoral.*
- 2. To put forth effort and ask for compensation is average moral conduct.*
- 3. To put forth effort and ask for nothing in return is the highest moral conduct.*

*To await Nature's blessings is the highest moral conduct.*

### **4. Self-reflection**

*Egoism destroys self, home, country and the world. When you observe the present condition of the world, you see that egoism knows no bounds. If you self-reflect and abandon egoism, you can enjoy happiness and prosper. This is because, when you make no demands, blessings are bestowed naturally upon you. Please think deeply on this truth.*

### **5. Laws of the Universe**

*The Laws of the Universe are integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity and gratitude.*

*These are the national treasures of Japan since ancient times.*

### **Commentary on the Five Laws**

Gedatsu Kongo established the Gedatsu teaching in 1929. The "Five Laws," which was published in 1934, constitutes the Founder's outline of his essential teachings, in which he summarized his thoughts on Gedatsu for the first time. When the publication of the Gedatsu monthly newsletter started in 1935, the "Five Laws" appeared in the first issue. Later, Gedatsu Kongo recorded his reading of the "Five Laws"

and distributed it among members. It is this recording, in the Founder's own voice, that we hear at the annual Festivals.

Although the "Five Laws" consists of five parts, this is not why it is called "Five Laws." The Five Laws to which Gedatsu Kongo refers are integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity and gratitude, which are explained in the last part of this writing. Gedatsu Kongo believed these five human virtues to be the five laws of humanity.

**Part 1** explains the most important point about our religious faith: **our unconditional trust in God.**

Human thinking is generally egoistic, but we are normally unconscious of this fact. Religious faith leads us to abandon our egoistic thoughts and trust all things to God or the Universal Life Force, which allows us to live as we naturally should.

Prayer is to express appreciation and leave everything to God. When you pray, you say, "Thank you for allowing me to live this precious life today. I will try my best to fulfill my duties. Please guide me most appropriately." Your sincere prayer connects you to God or the Universal Life Force. When you pray sincerely, you will be guided appropriately.

There is nothing meaningless in the world. Everything, even difficulty or hardship, has meaning. Therefore, no matter what difficulties you may have, do not avoid them. Instead, face the difficulties in front of you, and try your best in every situation. You will then be guided to the appropriate path. Human intelligence cannot explain this, but with sincere practice, you will see God's blessings in your life. This is the essence of religious faith.

**Part 2** is about the **Law of Nature**. You may think everything mentioned here is obvious. Everyone knows the movement of the celestial bodies and the four seasonal changes. It is important, however, to perceive the absolute law in the movement of Nature. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west each day. Nature functions consistently. All beings, including human beings, are allowed to exist by this absolute law of Nature. This realization is the beginning of your religious faith.

We usually live according to our thoughts and feelings. But our life is more than our thoughts and senses. We are allowed to live by the grace of Nature. When you are aware of this, you will be able to do your best in your duties without selfish thoughts. When you live daily in this manner, you will be guided in the best direction.

**Part 3** is about **moral excellence**. Three types of moral conducts are mentioned here. The first and second moral conducts – "to demand compensation without putting forth effort" and "to put forth effort and ask for compensation" – are common human attitudes and behaviors, depending on our desires, thoughts and actions. "To put forth effort and ask for nothing in return" transcends the average human's attitude and behavior. Human thoughts are egoistic, knowingly or unknowingly, which is the cause of various human miseries in the world. Gedatsu Kongo encouraged us to discard our selfish thoughts and leave everything to God. When you do your best in your daily

duties without thought of compensation, you will then surely be guided appropriately by God. This is the essence of religious faith.

Gedatsu Kongo said, “To await Nature’s blessings is the highest moral conduct,” meaning that we should diligently perform our duties without thought of return. God will then guide us appropriately.

You can see how this explanation supports and expands on the statements in Parts 1 and 2, deepening the meaning of religious faith.

**Part 4** explains **egoism and the importance of self-reflection**. Since founding the Gedatsu teaching, Gedatsu Kongo persistently stressed the importance of self-reflection. He believed this to be the key to create happiness.

He said, “Egoism destroys self, home, country and the world.” Egoism is the very cause of human miseries. By observing the present world condition, you can readily understand this. From quarrels and discords in human relations to the conflicts among nations, it is evident that egoism is their underlying cause. Gedatsu Kongo encouraged us to discard egoism in order to create peace and happiness in the world.

This sounds quite reasonable in theory. However, when I thought about this in terms of my own life, I found this very hard to actually practice. I had doubts about this point for a long time, but I now have a satisfactory understanding. Let me explain.

Gedatsu Kongo stressed the importance of self-renunciation, but you should understand that self-renunciation is different from self-restraint. Self-restraint means to restrain yourself from egoistic thoughts and desires through the power of your will. Your egoistic desires still remain unchanged deep within yourself; they are simply hidden by constraints of morality. Therefore, even if you appear and act in a moral manner in your daily life, conflicts among various desires continue to dwell within you. When your will power weakens, the restrained desires may be released and get out of control.

Self-renunciation is completely different. Gedatsu Kongo did not urge us to restrain our selfish desires within us. He simply encouraged us to clearly see ourselves as we truly are. When you deeply self-reflect, you will surely perceive your shortcomings and selfish attitudes within. You will also realize that you are allowed to live by God, and that you are nurtured by receiving immeasurable blessings from many people and things in the world – even though you may have egoistic thoughts and feelings. When you become aware of this, you will naturally feel grateful for everyone and everything, as well as remorse for your selfish attitude in life. Accordingly, you will not be as selfish as before. This is self-renunciation.

Gedatsu Kongo stated, “If you self-reflect and abandon egoism, you can enjoy happiness and prosper. This is because, when you make no demands, blessings are bestowed naturally upon you.” When you deeply self-reflect, you will see that you are allowed to exist by God, and that you are nurtured by all beings on earth. When you are truly aware of this fact, you will naturally become less selfish than before and will want to help and benefit others. Gedatsu Kongo said this is human nature.

The teaching of Part 4 again parallels the previous three parts. When you comprehend that you are allowed to live by God, and fully trust everything to this higher

power, you realize that you are already blessed and nurtured and have no need to demand anything. This is the teaching of self-renunciation.

**Part 5** states that the Laws of the Universe consist of **integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity and gratitude**. As I mentioned before, the Five Laws refers to these five human virtues. In Japanese, they are called “*Gojo*,” which means the five unchangeable paths of humanity. Gedatsu Kongo believed these five virtues to be the essential laws of humanity.

The first virtue is integrity, which Gedatsu Kongo regarded as sincere faith in God. He urged us to thank God for allowing us to live and to trust everything to God.

The second virtue is filial piety. This is appreciation for the blessings of parents and ancestors, who gave us our physical bodies. Integrity and filial piety should be regarded as the core foundation of humanity, because they identify the source of human existence and where we owe our appreciation for our life’s blessings. In short, we may explain these virtues as “reverence to God and respect for ancestors.”

The third virtue is benevolence, which means love, respect and sincerity for others. When you closely observe your daily life, you realize you are supported by countless people, including your family and friends. You then naturally feel appreciative and thoughtful to others. It is only natural that this attitude brings forth peace and happiness.

The fourth virtue is fidelity, which means faithfully executing your duties. This requires you to self-reflect to see if you have completely fulfilled your obligations. When you realize you are supported by countless people and things, you naturally feel grateful and wish to reciprocate in service to others. Benevolence and fidelity should be regarded as one – a natural response to the realization of your life’s dependency on others.

The last virtue is gratitude, which is the expression of respect and appreciation for all people and things. With this quality, you will be able to truly work for peace and accomplish everything. Gratitude is the core virtue for humanity.

Gedatsu Kongo regarded these five virtues as the essence of Gedatsu, and called them the Five Laws of humanity. He said this teaching is not his creation, but the spiritual heritage of Japan\* since its founding. He encouraged us to demonstrate these qualities in our daily lives to achieve peace and happiness.

\* Gedatsu Kongo’s reference to Japan must be understood in the context of his time and culture. The Founder respected and treasured Japan’s spiritual tradition from ancient times, and he strived to revive the Japanese spiritual heritage in modern Japan. Therefore, while he references Japan, Gedatsu Kongo makes clear that the five virtues, or laws, pertain to all of humanity – not to any one nation or people.