

Gedatsu Teaching 3
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Translation and Commentary by Rev. H. Taki

Gedatsu is truly sacred. Gedatsu is easy to practice, yet also very difficult. This is because we embody the spiritual and physical heritage of ancestors going back tens of thousands of generations.

You may think that your ancestors were truly moral, but I don't believe this is so. Know that if you begrudge someone, you, in return, will be begrudged. If you are jealous, you will be the object of jealousy. Therefore, I implore you to stop being jealous, hateful, sorrowful, combative and arrogant. Because of your ancestral heritage, this is not easily done. You are the extension of your ancestors, and your descendants will extend from you. Therefore, I urge you to improve your thoughts to heighten your morality.

Once you are aware of the negative physical and spiritual traits you have inherited from your ancestors, eradicate them immediately and establish a strong moral value in your family. You will then be blessed with physical health, family harmony and material rewards, and will be completely happy and cheerful. If you assess yourself honestly, you will clearly understand this.

You may think that you alone know your own mind. However, it is impossible to know your true state of mind because of self-praise, formed through generations of ancestors. Only by carefully observing others, and comparing yourself with them, can you know your true self.

You are wrong to think that you grew up by yourself and became an adult without any help from other people. A child, unable to do anything by himself, is painstakingly taught by his mother – from how to hold a spoon to how to walk. When you went to school, your teachers taught you everything. Through the knowledge of your predecessors, you matured. Realize that you are but a tiny drop in a vast sea, in which you receive the blessings of everyone around you. When you truly understand this and express absolute gratitude, you will achieve the highest wisdom.

Your predecessors – through their self-conceit – may have thought they were imparting their knowledge and wisdom. But they themselves forgot appreciation and obligation to their predecessors. Thus, we all have a wrong view of ourselves. We should recognize and improve our ancestral heritage both spiritually and physically. This in turn could improve society. Please think deeply about this.

You are lucky simply to be alive, even though you may idle away your life each day. I would like you to live feeling like the Buddha. The statue of the Buddha is naked with two forefingers pointing toward heaven and earth. There is no deception or embellishment in him. Born naked, he realized and appreciated the sanctity of heaven's blessings. He stated, "I am the only eternal being in the universe," meaning that for the first time, he was able to truly comprehend the sanctity of Nature's blessings. In those words, there is no embellishment or deception. He has distinctly perceived the sanctity of heaven's blessings and virtues. In effect, he stated that if one proceeds with absolute gratitude and obligation, one would truly be happy.

When the Buddha attained this state of consciousness and clearly became self-cognizant, he uttered: "Ah, I have attained Gedatsu!" If you can understand this, it is easy for you to attain Gedatsu. Then you will be blessed with good health, harmony of family and material rewards, and will always be joyful and cheerful.

People who decry societies' degeneration in the world are biased and prejudiced. Who is responsible for the world, nation, society and family? The family, composed of a husband and wife, is a microcosm of the larger society. A group of families forms a society and, in turn, a nation. Today's society is but a cluster of people born from couples who lack proper understanding. I urge you to reform your family and society, but be aware that those who focus only on the deterioration of society are looking in the wrong direction. They should look inwardly at themselves first and realize how, as a couple, they are deceiving each other.

Using the Law of Nature as a mirror, reflect on yourself. You will then see that your mind ultimately expresses itself in your speech and behavior. The most frightening fact is that those around you are the images of you in the mirror. They are visible, they speak, wear clothes and walk around.

People have grand illusions that are only pipe dreams, never to be realized. I urge you to fully understand this and proceed along the path of Gedatsu. Gedatsu is truly sacred. Nothing can be achieved without practicing Gedatsu.

Commentary:

Gedatsu Kongo said that Gedatsu is easy and, at the same time, most difficult to practice. Why is this so? This is because, as he stated, "we embody the spiritual and physical heritage of ancestors going back tens of thousands of generations."

By examining our DNA, we can clearly see that we are the sons and daughters of our parents. No matter one's status in life, one cannot exist without parents. The entire physical and mental traits of our ancestors are in our DNA. We often see evidence of this: a girl resembles her mother, or a boy, without being taught, possesses a distinct habit of his grandfather. Facts like these tell us that every quality inherited from our parents and ancestors is within our DNA.

Thus, we are already conditioned hereditarily when we are born – and after birth, we are conditioned by our circumstances. Our family traditions, in particular, can profoundly affect our personality, all at a subconscious level. Whether that influence is positive or negative is the question. We are all raised in a certain family environment and, therefore, unknowingly influenced by family traditions.

Thus, the spiritual tradition of the family, which is transmitted from ancestors, affects our

mentality and helps form our character. This is so-called "karma." We are all conditioned physically and spiritually by the family tradition of our ancestors.

Self-awareness Unlocks Our Karma

Importantly, Gedatsu Kongo emphatically stated that anyone can become happy, no matter what negative karma he/she may have in the family tradition. We have the key to change our life and realize happiness – namely, our self-awareness. Self-awareness through profound self-reflection will liberate us from family karma. When you find something negative within yourself, try to correct it immediately. Then you can start a new life. This is the path of happiness.

Quoting the Buddha, Gedatsu Kongo explains the meaning of Gedatsu. Buddha's statement – "I am the only eternal being in the universe" – is well known, but I think most people do not understand its true meaning. This may sound very arrogant, but it's not. What the Buddha attempts to say with these words is that each of us is a unique and precious being in the universe. These words are the expression of Buddha's total confidence in human nature and the universe.

When you have this confidence in yourself and the universe, you will be able to comprehend the sanctity of Nature's blessings, and will be truly thankful for it. Gedatsu Kongo called this state of consciousness "Gedatsu." When you attain this state of Gedatsu, you will be blessed with good health, family harmony and material things and will always be joyful and cheerful.

Gedatsu Kongo very clearly expressed his basic idea about "social reform." He explained that the basis of social reform should be in each individual's awareness – that each individual is ultimately responsible for the present society. If you are truly aware of this, you will be able to change society and achieve world peace.

The structure of this world is like that of a clock, in which there are many interconnected gears. If a single tiny gear stops working, the clock will not function. If one gear moves in the wrong direction, the other gears also will move incorrectly. Each gear is responsible for the working of the entire clock.

Similarly, all beings in the universe are interconnected. The universe and we are inseparable. This understanding should be the foundation for the betterment of society and world peace. Reform should always begin with yourself. The situation will then change according to your change, because you are connected with the world. This is Gedatsu Kongo's basic idea about "social reform."

Husband and Wife Play a Key Role

Gedatsu Kongo particularly emphasized the importance of a couple's role. If a husband is unfaithful to his wife, or if a wife is untruthful to her husband, their infidelity will be definitely revealed through their attitudes, actions and speech. This, in turn, will cause various troubles and discord for the couple and the family.

Gedatsu Kongo said, "The most frightening fact is that those around you are the images of you in the mirror. They are visible, they speak, wear

clothes and walk around." These words mean that husband and wife are mirrors who reflect each other. Many couples complain of their discord or each other's infidelity. But blaming each other never solves the problem. Before criticizing others, think about your own attitude toward others. Both husband and wife are responsible for their relationship. If you are unfaithful to your wife or husband, your spouse will reflect your unfaithfulness to him/her. Your partner's attitude is a reflection of your attitude toward him/her. This understanding is the foundation to rebuild the true mutual relationship of the couple.

Children Copy and Reflect Their Parents

A couple's feelings toward each other affect not only their relationship, but also affect their children and especially influence their children's future. When Gedatsu Kongo says, "They speak, wear clothes and walk around," he means the children's attitudes are the reflection of their parents. They copy you. Many families have various problems with children, such as juvenile delinquency and violence. They are the results of their parents' influence on them. Before condemning the children, parents must deeply reflect on their own minds and attitudes. This is the key to resolve the problems.

The husband's and wife's self-reflection and mutual understanding are the keys to solve all problems in the family. While this seems quite reasonable, the reality of the world appears just the opposite. Husbands and wives, parents and children blame each other and do not admit their own faults. Therefore, Gedatsu Kongo stated, "People have grand illusions that are only pipe dreams, never to be realized."

Our self-reflection is the beginning of true happiness. Blaming others without self-examination is like trying to grab an illusion of happiness. Such a pipe dream will never come true. We should look at ourselves first. This attitude will realize our true peace and happiness. This is the path of Gedatsu.