

Gedatsu Teaching 4
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Translation and Commentary by Rev. H. Taki

We are heirs to an infinite ancestral heritage – including physical and spiritual attributes – which goes back generations to the beginning of time. I have said repeatedly that we are the extension of our ancestors. Our present status and circumstances are intrinsically related to this heritage. Thus, to eliminate the shortcomings of our status and circumstance, as well as the physical and spiritual faults of generations past, is quite impossible. Therefore, I recommend the Gedatsu path as the only means to fundamentally eradicate physical and spiritual ailments.

Throughout the vast period of generations of our ancestors' lives, countless positive and negative attributes were possessed. We are the heirs to these negative attributes, which manifest as physical ailments and mental illnesses. Not only are we impacted by these past faults, but as they are passed on to descendants, they are magnified. Therefore, you must absolve these negative attributes in this life and act immediately. Don't wait for tomorrow. There is no other way but to reform yourself. This is the first step in Gedatsu.

The inherited physical and spiritual faults are due to the vice of generations of ancestors. We should repent to God on behalf of ancestors to absolve their past faults, and with God's protection and guidance, rectify all transgressions. By receiving forgiveness to absolve all negativities, and by becoming pure and proper in mind and body, you enter the main path of Gedatsu.

Furthermore, I repeat: Man must observe the human path, or the five principles of human virtues, which are integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity, and gratitude. But, because man pursues his innate instincts and accommodates his desires, he is prone to be egotistical. Should man follow his thinking, regardless of how he may clear up the past, he will once again revert to his former ways. His efforts will be worthless. Therefore, I tell you to discard ego, namely all selfish desires, and return to man's original mission.

We have not only inherited infinite ancestral faults, we have also received infinite blessings from ancestors. While accepting the immeasurable blessings as they were bestowed, we have been unaware of gratitude. If you have felt a sense of appreciation for the blessings bestowed, it is a matter of how you should repay. In a nutshell, it is God's will to make a better society from this day forward.

How do we accomplish this? By reforming your own mind and heart. How do we do this? The first step is to have the family walk on the right path – then extend it to the village, town, county, state and the whole country. By doing so they may bear all the fruits of true co-existence and co-prosperity. We may then build a secure and strong nation. We must consider how each of us can improve ourselves, which includes the inherited physical and spiritual attributes. Furthermore, as stated before, we should perceive and realize the virtues and vices of past generations, absolve all faults, and strive for a new and bright future for our country.

Man differs from other living things and animals. How far man can advance depends on his spirit and mind. It is unlimited, isn't it? However, there could be differences depending on the application of inherent intelligence and acquired knowledge.

Will those who believe to have intelligence definitely acquire more knowledge? As a matter of course, natural differences will be evident depending on individual works and efforts. Looking at it from a material standpoint, there are many cases where great inherited wealth was completely lost in one generation. Your success or failure depends on how you manage your inherent intelligence and acquired knowledge.

Therefore I say that the Gedatsu teaching is the path to completely reform yourself. I earnestly ask you to cheerfully move forward along the right path according to the universal law.

I have always stated, "Put forth effort and ask for nothing in return. Never forget to endeavor with sincerity in your occupation."

Furthermore, because most religious teachings are just like blank prescriptions, there are those who are healed and those who remain addicted. However, the Gedatsu teaching enables us to completely perceive and understand ourselves. That is, Gedatsu is the Universal Law, which is composed of self-reflection, self-renunciation, highest moral conduct, and the five principles of human virtues, which includes integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity and gratitude.

Commentary:

What Gedatsu Kongo stated here has been previously explained. Gedatsu Kongo has repeated the same teaching to stress the essential point for our attaining true happiness.

First, he explained how we exist. Everyone has a father and a mother. Our parents had their parents, and so on. We were born in the infinite stream of generations of ancestors from time immemorial. We all inherited our ancestors physically and spiritually. Therefore Gedatsu Kongo stated, "We are the extension of our ancestors."

The present "we" is basically the accumulation of all our ancestral heritage. We have received many good qualities from ancestors. But at the same time, we inherited some negative aspects of ancestors. In this sense, we are pre-determined physically and spiritually by our ancestral inheritance. It is very hard for us to be aware of our negative aspects and to break our habitual way of life. Gedatsu Kongo called this family tradition.

Some people may think that, if we are pre-conditioned by the family tradition, our corrective efforts are futile. But, this is not true.

Gedatsu Kongo said that, no matter what negativity you may have in the family tradition, you can free yourself from it and transform any negative family tradition. This is the path of Gedatsu. We must realize the negative ancestral trend within ourselves and immediately practice self-reform. This self-realization and self-reform will absolutely dissolve any negative family traditions from the past. Thus, we can start a new life.

Look to Your Inner Divine Self

Gedatsu Kongo strongly believed that we all possess an inner divine self. This inner divine self urges us to be aware of our negativity within and reform ourselves. No matter what negativity you may have in the past, you should not give up hope. Believe in your inner divine self. Sincerely self-reflect

on your past, and try to reform yourself. Then you will be able to attain true peace of mind and happiness. Gedatsu Kongo guaranteed it. Gedatsu is the path of hope and true happiness for everyone.

This pure self, however, is usually thickly covered by the so-called “karma” of the family. This inherited karma prevents our divine self from revealing itself. Therefore, Gedatsu Kongo stated that you must absolve all negativity within yourself by repenting to God.

This practice will make you become a new person. Gedatsu Kongo explained here about the importance of repentance. The significance of repentance is well explained in the words of repentance in the Prayer Book: “For all the sinful deeds which I have committed in the past through greed, anger and ignorance by the actions of my body, speech and mind, I now most sincerely repent.”

Sincere Repentance Can Dissolve Negative Karma

Every day, we act in various ways. We act, we speak and we think. Through these daily actions, we create our own life. Each moment we create our karma – good and bad – through our bodily actions, speech and thoughts. No matter what karma you may have in your family background, if you become aware of negativity within yourself and sincerely repent – and if you are strongly determined not to repeat it again – you can change the negative trend of the family and become a new individual. This is the meaning of repentance.

Actually, it may be very hard for us to repent this way. As repeatedly mentioned before, it is because our thoughts and feelings are very egotistical. But, unless you become aware of your self-centeredness and reform it, you will never be able to change the negative trend of your family background.

If we practice repentance to absolve the negative karma of the family, does it mean the

completion of our Gedatsu study and practice? Definitely not. This is only the beginning of our Gedatsu practice. Only by practicing repentance to clear up our past, can we enter the main path of Gedatsu. Please understand this important point. As Gedatsu Kongo stated, we have not only inherited infinite hereditary faults, but we have also received infinite blessings. We are allowed to exist by receiving immeasurable blessings from ancestors, society, and all beings in the universe. When we truly understand this fact, we will naturally feel grateful for the blessings of all, and want to work for the betterment of society and people’s happiness.

Strive to Create a Better Society, World

Reform your mind and heart, and have your family walk on a straight path. Then you should extend it to society, country and the world. Your daily practice of this will bring forth world peace. This is the Gedatsu path which Gedatsu Kongo urges us to live.

Gedatsu Kongo stated, “Put forth effort and ask for nothing in return. Don’t ever forget to endeavor with sincerity in your occupation.” These words teach us the importance of sincerity and effort. Trust God, and reflect on yourself in accordance with the Universal Law. You should then make a sincere effort in your activities. This is the path toward true happiness.

In the last paragraph, Gedatsu Kongo stated, “because most religious teachings are like blank prescriptions, there are those who are healed and those who remain addicted.” I believe this statement tells us that religious faith and practice should not be separated from ourselves. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of “self-cognizance,” “self-reflection,” “self-renunciation,” “self-reform,” “self-awareness,” and “self-realization.” That is, religion is not in the doctrine. It should be practiced in our daily lives. This is the most important point of our Gedatsu study and practice.