

Gedatsu Teaching 9
By Seiken Okano (Gedatsu Kongo)

Gedatsu-kyo monthly newsletter, January 18, 1936
Translation and commentary by Rev. H. Taki

Gedatsu is self-reflection, self-reform, self-renunciation and striving to achieve the highest morality. Follow the path of gratitude – the great path of God. Continually, from morning to night, appreciate and repay the blessings you receive, earnestly pursue your vocation, and observe the path of humanity, which is to benefit the world. This is why I say Gedatsu is sacred.

The great path of gratitude is to be aware of – and repay – the following blessings.

- 1. Without country, you have no home.*
- 2. Without parents, you cannot be born.*
- 3. Without society, you cannot exist.*

Demonstrate the qualities of integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity and gratitude.

I assert the sacredness of Gedatsu because of the following:

- Reverence to God and ancestors*
- Spirit of loyalty and patriotism*
- Cultivation of good moral character*
- Harmony of heart and mind*
- Salvation of mankind*
- Appreciation and gratitude*

These truths form the foundation for your descendants' eternal prosperity. Therefore, please study them carefully. I hope you convey these points to your family, relatives and friends.

Religious faith should not be simply to rely on God for assistance. It is important to self-reflect, self-reform and sincerely practice the path of gratitude. Gedatsu is for your self-awareness and self-realization. This is why I say Gedatsu is sacred. Only through actual practice and effort will you achieve a positive outcome. Gedatsu rejects empty doctrines and theories. It urges you to self-reflect, self-reform and sincerely practice the teaching. You will then achieve the unity of supreme goodness, supreme truth and supreme beauty. Set this as your goal and achieve it through your sincere efforts.

You may deplore the deterioration of our present society, but you are wrong. Understand that we ourselves created this society, which consists of micro-societies of families – with each family consisting of a husband and wife. Thus, our society is an aggregate of families. Our societal deterioration has been caused by the misunderstanding and misconduct between couples. Children are born and raised in these small societies, consisting of husband and wife. Ponder this point. I hope that you reform yourself and work for the betterment of society. This is our God-given duty as humans. I especially urge parents who have small children to fully teach them the essence of Gedatsu.

In conclusion, I would like to say something. Please read the words of Ms. Asano of Kichijoji [in box, page 6], which teaches us the first step in our Gedatsu study. To know the path of Gedatsu could take a lifetime, or then again, it could be done in a day. It depends on your self-reflection and self-awareness. Please read this story and consider it seriously.

Commentary:

Gedatsu Kongo again summarizes the Gedatsu teaching.

Self-reflection, self-reform and self-renunciation form the basic path of Gedatsu study. By practicing these self-disciplines – while putting forth your full effort without asking for anything in return – you will be able to attain true peace and happiness.

Gedatsu Kongo stated: “Without a country, you have no home. Without parents, you cannot be born. Without society, you cannot exist.” Thus, he stressed the importance of appreciating the blessings we receive from three of our greatest resources: country, parents and society. Our existence is impossible without them. This sense of appreciation is the core foundation for our happiness and world peace.

Religious faith is important for human life. However, many people have a mistaken view of religion and faith. Gedatsu Kongo urged us to correct our wrong attitude about religion.

Sincere, disciplined effort – not faith in God alone – builds one’s religious faith.

To believe and revere God is essential for our religious faith. However, if you feel you need not endeavor in your duties because you leave everything to God, you are wrong. You should totally trust God, but, at the same time, sincerely fulfill your duties in life. Sincere practice is essential for our religious faith.

Gedatsu Kongo stated that Gedatsu does not deal with empty theories, but, rather, puts self-reflection and self-realization into actual practice. “Many people fret over today’s problems,” he would say, “but no one has the solution.” Gedatsu is the path to actually solve the problems of the world.

The Founder explained how to reform our society. His solution may sound simplistic and ordinary, but it is the only means to reform the world. It is not a path of instant change, but one of

gradual transformation, which requires time and continual effort. Many people want instant changes to realize Utopia, and do not practice the required daily steps. Gedatsu Kongo stated that the current world condition is the result of this kind of wrongful thinking and attitudes in our past.

Social reform is built on the collective self-understanding and self-reform of each individual.

The Gedatsu path of self-understanding and self-reform leads to social reform. Gedatsu Kongo stated, “You may deplore the deterioration of the present society, but you are wrong.”

It is very important to recognize that society’s deterioration is not the problem of other people. In fact, it is *your* problem. This is because the world is a collection of smaller societies composed of families, couples and individuals. The cause of society’s deterioration is the lack of mutual understanding between a husband and wife. When those couples bear and raise their children, it is quite clear what the result will be.

How can we reform this world then? According to our Founder, there is no easy way. Each individual is the smallest unit of society, and a couple is the smallest society. With this in mind, practice self-reflection and self-reform in your daily life. From these initial steps, social reform is built.

Gedatsu Kongo refers to “the words of Ms. Asano of Kichijoji” – urging us to read her story to understand the true meaning of Gedatsu. Ms. Ko Asano is a Gedatsu member whose personal experience appeared in the Gedatsu monthly magazine.

“To know the path of Gedatsu could take a lifetime, or then again, it could be done in a day,” Gedatsu Kongo tells us. “It depends on your self-reflection and self-awareness.” If you miss this point, you will never understand Gedatsu, no matter how hard you study the doctrine or how diligently you perform *Amacha Kuyo*. Ms. Asano’s personal experience explains this point.

Experience of Ms. Asano

The following account of Ms. Asano of Kichijoji, Tokyo, was published in the Gedatsu-kyo monthly newsletter on January 18, 1936.

“I was a devoted believer of *Hokekyo*, or the Lotus Sutra. About three months ago, when I performed the *Goho Shugyo* practice, the spirit of Honorable Nichiren, who advocated Buddhist teaching based on the Lotus Sutra during the Kamakura period in 13th century, advised me, ‘From today, you should listen to Gedatsu teaching.’ Later, I had a chance to hear a sermon by Gedatsu Kongo. He said that the Buddha, Kobo Daishi and Nichiren were not that great. To me, a staunch believer of the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha and Honorable Nichiren are great teachers. I was shocked and confused by his words.

“About ten days ago, I came to understand Gedatsu Kongo’s true intent in saying those words. He stated, ‘You should be aware of the greatness of God, who allowed the Buddha, Nichiren and all the other great saints to work on earth for the salvation of mankind. Most people do not understand this point correctly. Please read the doctrine carefully and understand this.’

“When Gedatsu Kongo said these words with sincerity, I was so filled with appreciation that my heart cleared. I then became a true Gedatsu member.”

Ms. Asano was a devoted believer of *Hokekyo*, or Lotus Sutra, which is one of the holy Buddhist scriptures. After joining Gedatsu, she listened to Gedatsu Kongo’s sermons.

Gedatsu Kongo would sometimes state, “The Buddha, Kobo-Daishi and Honorable Nichiren are not that great.” [Kobo-Daishi is the founder of Shingon Buddhism. Nichiren is the founder of the Nichiren school of Buddhism, which is based on the Lotus Sutra.] Ms. Asano believed they were all great saints, so she could not understand why Gedatsu Kongo made that statement.

One day, Gedatsu Kongo explained by saying, “You must realize that a Universal God allows the Buddha, Nichiren and all the other great saints to work for the salvation of mankind.” These words cleared her doubts toward Gedatsu Kongo, and she truly understood the essence of Gedatsu.

This story explains a very important point in our Gedatsu study and practice. For believers of Nichiren school, Nichiren must be a great saint. The same is true of Kobo-Daishi to his followers. Buddhists respect the Buddha. Christians faithfully believe the greatness of Jesus. Moslems revere Mohammed most highly. Everyone respects the founder of his/her religion, and believes his/her religion is supreme. This is quite natural.

Strive to seek the Universal Truth.

However, if you believe that your religion is the only truth, and that all other religions are false, you will never be able to attain peace and harmony with people who believe other religions. Your exclusive dogmatism will only bring forth division and conflict among people. You see many such examples in world history.

The Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mohammed and Gedatsu Kongo are all great saints. It is good for you to strongly believe that the founder of your religion is great. However, you must understand that it is God who allows those great teachers to work for the salvation of mankind and world peace. We are all allowed to exist by this Universal God.

We believe in different religions, but the common element to all religions is the Universal Truth. We should see this common ground through each of our own paths. Gedatsu Kongo urged us to break through our sectarianism and to reach the Universal Truth, which is called Gedatsu. 