

**100 Million Eons of Effort**  
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**If you exert a hundred million eons of effort in a single moment of life, the three enlightened properties of the Buddha will appear within you at each moment. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 790)**

In his 1993 Harvard University lecture, SGI President Ikeda gave an easy-to-understand explanation of this passage. To “exert a hundred million eons of effort” means to tackle all our problems with everything we’ve got, he said. By meeting head-on the challenges these problems give rise to, not running away from them, he said that we bring forth the “three inherent properties of the Buddha,” i.e., the wisdom from inside us that can guide us in the right direction.

I read President Ikeda’s lecture when I was a student at Soka University in Japan. At the time, the problems my wife and I faced seemed overwhelming. They weren’t challenges; they were just burdens. We had health problems, financial problems, family problems, work problems, school problems — and it was really cold there. I kept thinking I wanted to go back to America, but when I read this lecture I changed my mind. I imagined myself running a hundred million miles per hour into the cold wind of our problems — not away from them.

This passage kept echoing in my mind during my year in Japan. And eventually it happened: I started liking my problems. Not in the sense of wanting to hang on to them but in the sense of seeing them as challenges. In the end, every one of the problems transformed itself into a benefit I couldn’t have imagined.

Recently at a student division meeting in Japan, President Ikeda shared how he engraved this passage in his heart when he was young. He encouraged the student division members to also live by this passage. Since being a student means facing a lot of problems all at once, it certainly seems appropriate. And since we’re all students of life, I think this is a passage we can all live by.

Come on problems, I’m waiting. I’m ready to “exert a hundred million eons of effort” again.

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