



## His Holiness Karmapa Thaye Dorje

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## The Wealth of Europe

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The financial crisis in Europe, and the suffering caused by it, is something that has increasingly drawn my attention. The population of young people - my own age group - is particularly affected by it. I believe that in Spain, where I begin my third European tour this week, more than half of young people are unemployed. Therefore, I believe that questions such as "what is wealth?" and "what makes us wealthy?" are more relevant today than ever before.

It goes without saying that a certain amount of material wealth - for example, those things related to food, clothing and shelter - is a necessity to sustain our life. Every individual has to work to survive, but when earning a living becomes the exclusive focus and priority of one's life, problems can arise. When we live to earn rather than earn to live, there can be problems of excess and greed.

However, there are also other forms of wealth, required not just to sustain the physical body, but to sustain and develop our mind.

In this perspective, it may be interesting to look beyond the traditional ideas of financial wealth and really reflect on why our human species, among the many different types of existence, is so special and valuable.

As a Buddhist practitioner and teacher it is my hope and belief that Buddhism may have some interesting and valuable input to offer in this area. First of all, when trying to identify the causes for the present crisis from a Buddhist perspective, the root problems are certain human traits such as greed and laziness, all of which arise on the basis of ignorance.

It is one thing to cultivate just enough crops for your day-to-day needs. But when you start to collect crops, and start to stock up with the idea that you'll have less work and more money, this can sew the seeds of unchecked greed. So it is really important to be aware of certain human traits which bring a lot of unnecessary problems. Sometimes when we think we are getting richer, from a different perspective we are becoming poorer.

Though I never went to school myself (as the head of a lineage, I had a special type of education), I had the good fortune to learn about all this from my parents. Later on, when I got into Buddhist studies and teachings, I learned more and more about the faults and qualities of humanity, and that helped me to learn about life.

The inner wealth is our mind, our consciousness. I believe that this mind is like a wish-fulfilling jewel. If you know how to utilise this mind, it can produce the most beneficial effects. The best way to utilise and develop this mind is to absorb knowledge, and the most important kind of knowledge is the one that makes us a kind person, a decent person, a person worthy of respect. And the qualities which make an individual kind, decent, respectable are qualities such as patience, generosity, kindness. The good news is that we do not have to adopt or create these qualities, since they already potentially there in all of us. In this way, the Wealth of Europe lies latent within each and every one of us.

So all we need to do is give ourselves, every day, a bit of a reason to generate these qualities, bit by bit. If we do this, it will not make society perfect, but it will enable us to appreciate whatever circumstances we might face.

I am particularly concerned with the young generation, because they will have a great say in the outcomes of today and tomorrow. In spite of all the negative news about the Wealth of Europe I do not think that we are living in the worst of times. Yes, there is a crisis, but the world is not at an end. If there is richness within each and every one of us - inner wealth - then there is an almost limitless supply in the vision and values of our young people.

Yes, there is a crisis, but thanks to the new communication technologies we can be aware, share our knowledge, and put our heads together to find solutions. This is a great opportunity, and I am sure that something positive will come out of it. Every obstacle is always a turning point. It is a challenge, but it makes us think, forces us to come up with solutions.

From a Buddhist perspective, we actually have to be grateful for obstacles, because without them we never learn. It is thanks to difficulties and challenges that we can come up with solutions, some of which will work and some not. But even if they don't work it doesn't mean we should give up. It only means we should try again.

Ever since I first started travelling, the purpose of my travels has been to visit Buddhist centres around the world, and share Buddhist theories and ideas, and also to convey how we can contribute to the betterment of society and the world.

During my European tour this year, I would like to learn more about how the financial crisis is affecting different groups and individuals in Europe, and understand what they feel about the true definition of wealth. That's why we have created the 'Wealth of Europe' poll to see what the opinions and ideas of Europe's young people are. Perhaps when we see the results, we might see that we are all wealthier than we might think.