

Wealth That Doesn't Leave You

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Try to keep your attention focused on the breath. Be really alert to what you're doing.

It's so easy when the breath gets comfortable to drift off to sleep—which is not what you want because the Buddha didn't gain awakening by sleeping. He gained awakening by being alert. So be alert to what you're doing right now.

Each time the breath comes in, remind yourself: This is where you want to be. If you find the mind wandering off, be really quick about coming back.

That way you develop good qualities of the mind, because the good qualities of the mind are our genuine wealth. The things we gain outside in terms of wealth come and go: Sometimes they're ours; sometimes they're somebody else's.

You look at the money in your wallet. It doesn't have your name on it. Even your credit card, which does have your name on it, also has the bank's name on it, which is even bigger and more important.

What's really yours are only basically the qualities you've developed in your own mind. This is why we work on the perfections: generosity, virtue, renunciation, discernment, persistence, patience, truth, determination, goodwill, equanimity. These qualities are our wealth.

Whatever way you can develop them, that's how you make yourself rich—rich in a way that nobody else can take away. This kind of wealth doesn't depend on the economy. With money they have exchange rates but this doesn't have an exchange rate that anybody else can make go up and down. The good qualities, of course, exchange themselves for happiness.

And again, that's a happiness that's really yours, one that nobody can take away. Even after death it doesn't leave you.

So try to work on developing wealth inside: in being generous, in being virtuous, in developing all the good qualities that come with meditation, and in fostering all the good qualities that come from learning how to live in the world in a way where you have patience and goodwill for everybody, and you develop all the inner strengths you need in order to deal with what the world has to hand out: what the world dishes out, basically. If you've got this wealth inside, then you don't have to be afraid of anything that the world has to offer. This is really yours and they can't take it away.

And it's your protection against what the world can do to you, so that no matter what they do, you don't have to suffer—because you've maintained your

inner wealth well.

You can keep amassing it every day. This is one area where the Buddha doesn't criticize being greedy. If you focus too much on external wealth, it becomes greed. But if you focus on internal wealth, it's not greed at all. It's heedfulness; it's wisdom.

So do your best to develop as much inner wealth as you can, so that when you do have outer wealth, you know how to use it well. Because this is the other problem with outer wealth: If you don't use it properly it can actually come back and destroy you.

We've seen lots of cases where people use their wealth and power and influence to do a lot of wrong. And they end up destroying themselves.

But if you've got the wisdom that comes from developing good qualities in the mind, then whatever you get will also be for your own benefit, because you see the right and the wrong way to use it.

So invest as much time and energy as you can in inner wealth, because that's the wealth that really lasts.