

**INTERPRETER OF MALADIES**

**BY NIGHAT ARA**  
Psychiatrist, Counsellor,  
and Therapist



# Money, mind and behavioural addictions

Invention of 'money' is hard to trace back, but historians believe metal objects were first used as money before the time of written history. Transition from barter system to monetary system took place over time for the sake of fairness and convenience in trade. As human needs got more refined, exchanges became more complex, communication became more technology dependent, newer methods and skill sets had to come into play.

Eventually, division of labour got more acute, distance between supplier and consumer grew further. Consequently, money started to gain more power and influence over human life.

Attachment to money (relationship with object, consumerism, living in pleasure principle) became a new norm. Overt or covert meanings and values given to money at personal, cultural, social and political level could make money a source of self-destruction for a nation, if not the whole mankind.

There is 'money of account' (debits and credits on ledgers), which give people a sense of who owes whom and there is 'money of exchange' (e.g. coins, bills etc.). Another kind of exchange in the form of gifts are considered as reciprocal altruism that serves the basic human yearning to love, connect, and belong. Respectful give and take relationship can maintain social harmony by allowing people to live interdependently in a neatly woven social fabric of support and collaboration.

Ironically, sometimes gifts become

implicit 'I owe you' debt or social status symbol when ego insecurities come into play. Underneath these ego insecurities are often fears of becoming 'less than others,' the fear can quickly turn into an ego defence to prove 'I matter,' 'I am important,' or an ego gratification like 'I am one head up' etc. Money also reflects human values because we put our money into what we value. Pictures, words or statements printed on bills and coins are also reflective of social and



national values. Price of something goes up when the demand grows higher than supply (e.g. recent onion crisis). This imbalance could also be created artificially to compound the conundrum further. Unscrupulous businessmen would use the opportunity to test how much value public is ready to attach to the item. This is also a kind of gambling, risk taking, thrill seeking behaviour. Investing a high monetary

value in anticipation of powerful human attachment to a particular object can end up in profit or loss.

Collective intelligence would determine the winner and loser in this game. Pictures, words or statements printed on bills are also sometimes reflective of the moral, cultural values, or historical significance of that nation.

Brain wiring (an evolutionary requirement) changes as environment and lifestyle changes. Human relationship with money is taking new turns as exchanges are becoming more remote. New sophisticated technologies are breaking through, creating more distance between humans.

Young generation shop mostly online, order grocery and food online without having to touch or make any direct physical contact with the object they are buying. Exchanges happen through credit or debit, without any direct interaction with any real people in real time.

Direct human interactions are becoming less and less essential, virtual people are filling up the vacuum. As deprived minds are automatically forming tighter bonds with objects, they are also using objects to soothe the pain of unfulfilled human yearnings. Tolerating the discomfort and unpredictability of human emotional connections are becoming more challenging.

Currently, family systems are breaking down, social values are evaporating fast and attachment to objects are

skyrocketing. A general tendency in unstable corrupt society is to overestimate power of money and equate it to 'Almighty Omnipotent God!'

Insecure and sick minds interpret money as 'love' and 'security, leading to rampant greed, jealousy, aggression etc. Casino, human trafficking, drug-arms and sex trade etc. are just the tip of an iceberg.

Money get diverse emotional meaning because of how the experiential memories are stored in brain and body cells at the time of poverty, oppression and at the time of affluence and power.

'Incentive motivation circuit' of the human brain (neuronal circuits between VTA of midbrain, forebrain and cortex) releases dopamine, leading to a feeling of elation or pleasure. Money, video games, pornography, etc. can stimulate this incentive circuit and motivate humans to repeat the behaviour again and again to get the same elation or thrill (condition reflex). Behavioural addiction results from forming a pathological relationship with these mood-altering objects. Living life on 'pleasure principles' as opposed to on 'reality principles' eventually robs all human potentials. This downward spiral of self-destruction can easily spin out of control.

Social injustice, discriminatory legal system, authoritarian political system, severe power imbalance, inefficient state machinery, ignorance, etc. are some of the root causes of these psycho-social diseases. It is probably worth remembering that good citizens are not born, they are to be created by a conducive environment.

**Photo: LS Archive/Sazzad Ibne Sayed**

## HOROSCOPE



**ARIES**  
(MAR. 21-APR. 20)

You have a lot to offer. Sudden changes are likely. Social activities will be satisfying. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



**TAURUS**  
(APR. 21-MAY 21)

Stay away from unsavoury situations. Minor accidents can happen if you aren't careful. Let your talents shine. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



**GEMINI**  
(MAY 22-JUN. 21)

Put effort into your work. You don't owe anyone an explanation. Avoid social gatherings for a while. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.



**CANCER**  
(JUN. 22-JUL. 22)

Your unique approach will irritate others. Try not to exhaust yourself. Spend some time with your partner. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



**LEO**  
(JUL. 23-AUG. 22)

Romantic opportunities can rise. Your ideas will not be appreciated. Find some time for yourself. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



**VIRGO**  
(AUG. 23-SEP. 23)

Don't start unnecessary debates. Don't easily divulge personal information. Go on a short trip. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.



**LIBRA**  
(SEP. 24-OCT. 23)

Do things you enjoy. Consider investments that have potential. Throw yourself into work. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



**SCORPIO**  
(OCT. 24-NOV. 21)

Make changes at home. Romance may be likely if you travel. Any plans of entertainment will be successful. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.



**SAGITTARIUS**  
(NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

Channel your boundless energy. Amazing things are just over the horizon. Avoid making outlandish purchases. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



**CAPRICORN**  
(DEC. 22-JAN. 20)

Look into new philosophies. Don't make unnecessary moves. You could experience unusual circumstances. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



**AQUARIUS**  
(JAN. 21-FEB. 19)

Direct your energy wisely. Plans with your partner will lead to a great time. Avoid being overly opinionated. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



**PISCES**  
(FEB. 20-MAR. 20)

Find ways to make extra money. Don't overspend to impress others. Don't make unnecessary changes to your home. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.