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Money Madness – D.H. Lawrence

Money is our madness, our vast collective madness.

And of course, if the multitude is mad
the individual carries his own grain of insanity around with him.
I doubt if any man living hands out a pound note without a pang;
and a real tremor, if he hands out a ten-pound note.

We quail, money makes us quail.

It has got us down; we grovel before it in strange terror.
And no wonder, for money has a fearful cruel power among men.

But it is not money we are so terrified of,
it is the collective money-madness of mankind.

For mankind says with one voice: How much is he worth?

Has he no money? Then let him eat dirt, and go cold. –

And if I have no money, they will give me a little bread
so I do not die,

but they will make me eat dirt with it.

I shall have to eat dirt, I shall have to eat dirt
if I have no money.

It is that that I am frightened of.

And that fear can become a delirium.

It is fear of my money-mad fellow-men.

We must have some money
to save us from eating dirt.

And this is all wrong.

Bread should be free,

shelter should be free,

fire should be free

to all and anybody, all and anybody, all over the world.

We must regain our sanity about money
before we start killing one another about it.

It's one thing or the other.

D.H. Lawrence was a major twentieth-century English writer. He has written several novels, short stories, poems, plays, essays, travel books, and translations. 'Money Madness' is the poet's perception of the materialistic (money-oriented) world. He also imagines a moneyless society through this poem. The poem, 'Money Madness' shows us the picture of a world obsessed (mad) with money. The poet has brought out a money-centered society wherein an individual is measured based upon one's money power. He says that money madness is the massive collective madness; each individual carries her/his share of insanity. If one has to hand out a pound note, one feels the pain, and to hand out a ten-pound note, is a real shock. Money has made us slaves. It has a cruel power. The poet says that we are frightened of the collective madness. A human being's worth is measured by money. If he has no money, he has to eat mud and go cold (keep silent). If we do not have money, they will give us a little bread so that we do not die. The poet is afraid of eating mud without money. It is this fear that can become a delirium. So, the poet says that we must have some money to save us from eating dirt. However, D.H. Lawrence comes up with a wish to live in a better society where bread, shelter, and fire should be free to everyone all over the world. We must come out of this money madness and regain our sanity before we start killing one another. The poem 'Money Madness' is a reflection of human society that was transforming rapidly due to industrialization. Nevertheless, the concern expressed by D.H. Lawrence is relevant in today's context also. Though it may not be possible to think of our life without money, money madness holds its power and it has created a situation of unfair competition, rivalry, and selfishness.

"Money Madness" is all about people's insanity over money in this materialistic world. Their thoughts are only filled with the crisp notes and jingles of coins. According to the poet, the multitude is mad and an individual has their fair share of insanity with him. People hesitate while sharing a little. The poet describes how money makes them slaves and afraid of losing their possessions. He is of the view that "money-madness" is more frightening than the cause. They don't care to enslave the penniless fellows. The poor ones are even made to eat dirt. At last, the

poet in a vexed tone says that the essential things for survival should be free. Otherwise, this madness must lead humankind to ruthlessly kill each other.

Lawrence's poem "Money Madness" explores the theme of money and other themes associated with this concept. These include materialism, fear and apprehension, cruelty, and lack of compassion. The main theme of this poem centers on the lust for money. Lawrence describes what human beings are up to for it. It has turned into a precious thing for a living. Hence, people have become ruthless in protecting their wealth. The poet thinks that the money-madness of humankind is the root cause of all the evils. Besides, he also showcases the cruel treatment towards the poor fellows and the fear of having no money in this poem.

Questions & Answers-

How does D. H. Lawrence show that the possession of money is a kind of madness?

The poet points out the peculiar actions human beings take in order to fulfil their hunger for money. Not only that, they devalue others for not having money. In this poem, he shows their peculiar reaction while handing over money to others. So, the possession of money makes them do absurd things as lunatics.

Does money make you feel better?

Indeed, money makes us feel better. But it is a short-term solution to a major problem, unhappiness. To be happy, one needs to improve one's internal state. External developments are transient. While inward developments help one to find fulfilment in life. Money has no role in this inward development of mankind.

What is the meaning of "Money Madness"?

The term "Money Madness" is an ironic reference to the greed of human beings for money. It is compared to a mental disorder. People do senseless things and react irrationally. Hence, Lawrence describes this peculiarity as insanity.

What is the message of the poem "Money Madness"?

Through this poem, the poet advises us to regain our sanity. Otherwise, the madness for money can lead human beings to kill each other without a justifiable cause.

What is the poet afraid of in “Money Madness”?

The poet is more afraid of the “money-madness of mankind” than money itself.

What is the opinion of the poet in the poem “Money Madness”?

In this poem, the poet opines those human beings must regain their sanity in order to restrain them from killing each other.

How do you think people can overcome money madness?

People can overcome the craze for money by self-interrogation. They have to ask themselves what is the real worth of money. It is just a means for survival, not a cause of fulfilment. In the materialistic world, they are controlled by money. To regain their sanity, they have to be the masters of money, not slaves.

What happens when the multitude goes money-mad?

When the multitude goes money-mad, they react irrationally for the fear of losing money. They judge others’ worth by their wealth and treat them inhumanely.

Why does the poet repeat the words “all and anybody”?

The poet repeats the phrase “all and anybody” for emphasizing the fact that the basic needs for survival should be free to everyone living across the world.

Why does money make us quail?

When one gets too attached to money, it makes them fearful of losing it. This possessiveness is the root cause of their insecurity.

Why does the poet state that money is our “collective madness”?

The term “collective” hints at the fact that “money-madness” is not a problem for a few of us. In this materialistic world, it has become a universal ailment. The difference lies in its manifestation in each individual.

Why must we regain our sanity about money?

We must regain their sanity about money to stop them from causing irrevocable harm to humanity.

What do you think the poet means by “I shall have to eat dirt”?

Through this line, Lawrence hints at the inhumane treatment one gets from society if he has no money.

Why does the poet say “And this is all wrong” in the poem “Money Madness”?

According to the poet, if one has no money, he is treated with contempt and indignation. The way of weighing one's worth by money is wrong.

What is the significance of “multitude is mad”?

Through this phrase, the poet describes the universality of the concept of “money-madness”. There are not a few but most of us are mad about money.

What does it mean to regain sanity?

To regain sanity means to be sensible and rational.

What is the “strange terror” associated with money?

The “strange terror” of money is associated with our fear of losing it.

Why does the poet say that he will be forced to eat dirt if he has no money?

The poet says so to hint at the fact that it does not matter what one had. People judge one's worth with money. If the poet does not have any, he will face indignation like others.

What is the “cruel power” of money?

Money invests rich with the “cruel power” and makes them the unofficial rulers of the world. In this materialistic society, the rich have the power to treat the poor inhumanely.

How is a person's worth valued by money?

According to the poet, if money is a parameter to judge one's worth, he will be weighed by his wealth. If he has no money, he must face inhumane treatments. It seems as if they are slaves to wealthy people.

What does the poet mean when he says money has got us down?

By this line, the poet describes how humans have gone below the humane standards for money. Their attitude shows to what extent their minds have gone down for it.

Why does the poet state that money is our collective madness?

The poet states that money is our “collective madness” as he deals with a topic of universal importance regarding the money madness of man. This madness is not on small or individualistic level but it is the madness of the multitude.

Why do we grovel before money?

We grovel before money as it has become the controlling power of our lives. It makes us kneel Infront of itself. It makes us fearful and a sense of apprehension and stress grips us. It has an exaggerating power to influence our life.

What does the poet mean by, ‘I shall have to eat dirt’?

The poet says that if he has no money, the world would give him “little bread” to eat, in the name of humanity. But even this small offering does not come for free.

He has to suffer through pains unheard and criticisms unparalleled. This is what the poet means when he says “I shall have to eat dirt”.

What is the poet afraid of?

The poet is afraid of the inhumane and pitiful situation of eating dirt if one has no money. He fears that such madness for money might result in the world going completely insane.

Do you agree with the poet that our basic needs should be free?

Yes, our basic needs such as bread, shelter, and fire should be free to people all around the world. It is the cost of these basic needs that make man rush for money and once these needs are made free, man would regain his sanity about money.

How are people without money, usually treated?

They are made to eat dirt and go cold.

What things should be made available free of cost?

Bread, Shelter and Fire.

What happens if we do not regain our sanity about money?

We start killing one another.

How does money trigger fear in an individual?

The poet D.H. Lawrence in his poem “Money Madness” looks at money as the madness of mankind. He takes us through the situations wherein money influences every individual from all walks of life. Money can trigger fears when one has it and when one doesn't have it. It can create pangs in an individual who has to hand out a pound note and it can even create a tremor in someone who has to hand out a ten-pound note. Money makes us quail and a strange terror envelops us without it. The poet says that this is all because money has a cruel power. The feeling of not having

money makes one fear a wretched situation where one has to eat dirt. This fear can turn into delirium.

How does money have a cruel power over men? OR

Discuss the theme of the poem Money Madness.

D.H. Lawrence's poem "Money Madness" is a critical examination of the modern era's frenzy for money. Money has become a powerful force in today's societies, and it now has greater importance in people's lives than anything else. The poet's poem attempts to exemplify this situation and to depict the social and moral degeneration that such madness for a materialistic object results in. Wealth and money are such seductive forces that we are unable to control them; rather, they control us. Thus, the poet describes how wealth inverts control, saying, "It has brought us low, and we grovel before it in strange terror." The poet questions whether there is a human being in this world who can hand out a one-pound note without feeling a pang of guilt. No matter how noble he feels while handing over that note, his heart always wishes he could do all good without ever having to remove a note from his pocket. And when it becomes a ten-pound note, we feel a genuine tremor within. The greater the sum, the more difficult it is to give it away. Often, society judges a man solely on the basis of his wealth. If he is impoverished, society says, "Let him eat dirt and die of exposure." Thus, money wields a cruel power over men by compelling us to kneel in front of it and also by exaggerating its ability to influence our lives.

How does the poet make a distinction between money and money-madness?

According to the poet, everywhere we look, there is madness for money. Indeed, money can be thought of as a metaphor for the term "craziness." This is not a case of small or individualistic madness, but of "multitude" madness. In a broader sense, the poet asserts that we are terrified of mankind's insanity for money, not money itself. He distinguished between money and money-madness in the poem with the lines, "But it is not money that we fear; it is mankind's collective money-madness." Money should not be blamed for mankind's insanity; rather, it is the madness associated with it that degrades man's moral values. The human race has succumbed to madness as a result of the money craze. Anguished by it, the poet opines that we should cure

ourselves of “money madness” rather than “money,” and that unless we “restore our sanity” regarding money, man will revert to animal status. We’re going to start murdering one another for the sake of profit.

How do you think people can overcome ‘money-madness’?

People can overcome “money-madness” if bread, shelter, and fire are made universally available to everyone, everywhere. This is because we all struggle to earn a living, and it is the cost of these basic necessities that drives man’s desire for additional money. The cost of such things is what impoverishes man. Once a man’s basic needs are met, he will regain his financial sanity. The abolition of materialistic goods with a price component would assist people in overcoming “money madness.”

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