

# 1):Donne as a Metaphysical Poet

John Donne has been classified both by **Dryden and Samuel Johnson** as a **"Metaphysical Poet"**. This title has been conferred upon him because of his **" sudden flights from the material to the spiritual sphere, his baffling obscurity, his wit, his philosophical allusions, his abstract references to science and religion and the use of conceits"**. Donne's poetry has a **"unified sensibility"**. His poetry expresses through thinking and feeling at the same time. It amalgamates his disparate and divergent experiences. Donne had the knack of presenting different objects together. He connects the abstract with concrete, the physical with the spiritual, the remote with the near and sublime with the commonplace. This juxtaposition of dissimilar thrills us into a new perception of reality

Donne is a metaphysical poet by virtue of the themes of his poetry as well as their treatment and structure. His themes are love and religion, and he delineates them in relationship between body and soul, soul and God, man and his own self and so on. His devices are those of arguments in metaphysical discussion. And, indeed, these attributes of Donne's poetry place him in the main tradition of metaphysical and of English poetry

Chief characteristics of Donne's Metaphysical Poetry are as follows:

- (1) Donne's poetry is metaphysical because of his individualism, his quest for learning, and his ransacking medieval theology and scholasticism. It is witty and obscure. It employs far-fetched conceits. It fuses thought and emotion. His poetry is revolutionary. He did not present smooth melodies, moral parables, and translated passion. He revolted against the Elizabethan, the Spenserian, the Petrarchan and the Platonic ideals. He violated all laws of rhythm. He rejected the spoils of Greek and Latin poetry.
- (2) In his poetry passion and feelings are subjected to wit. Sometimes this play of wit results in hyperboles. He brings together the lofty and the mean, the sublime and the trivial
- (3) Donne's conceits are far-fetched and his imagery is obscure. The flea becomes a marriage-bed, because it bites the beloved after biting the poet and will, thus, introduce his blood in her and hers in him – " This flea is you and I, and this / Our marriage-bed, and marriage temple is"
- (4) From the view point of the exhibition of learning and scholasticism, Donne is a metaphysical poet. There is always an antithesis, in Donne, between natural and divine knowledge. His preoccupation with mortality and death fills his poetry with a macabre element. He decries Death, " Death be not proud / Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men".
- (5) Donne's poetry is harsh and puzzling. Saintsbury calls him a " very great and very puzzling poet". He describes the troubled side of human experiences. There is also the

expression of the passionately apprehended realities of life, often in a tumultuous matter.

- (6) As a poet of love, too, Donne is metaphysical. Love for him is eternal and not a thing of mere sensual and sexual enjoyment. His love-experience is not a physical passion but spiritual. In the poem, 'Good Morrow' he says, "Twice or thrice I loved thee / Before I know thy face or name".
- (7) His technique of poetry is abrupt and dramatic. At the best, Donne has subtle, soaring and reverberating harmonies.
- (8) Donne's genius is metaphysical. In his poetry, wit is everywhere. It fashions his feeling and thought. Passion, sentiment, and sensuality are subordinated to wit. He is called "the monarch of wit". His wit is outrageous and breath-taking.
- (9) Concentration is another important quality of Donne's metaphysical poetry. In all his poems, the reader is held to one idea or one line of argument. His poems are brief and closely woven. In the poem, "The Ecstasie", the poet describes the passionate feelings of love. In this poem he introduces the Platonic concept of love and balances it with the physical love. The principal argument is that man performs his functions worthily through his different acts of love. He develops the theme without digression.
- (10) A metaphysical poem is an expanded epigram. No word is wasted, and nothing is described in detail. Style is sinewy; verse forms are simple and suitable in conveying the sense of the poem.
- (11) "The Sun Rising" is also a metaphysical poem. The poet and his beloved are not afraid of the sun because love does not know season and clime. A series of fantastic conceits follow to prove that the sun has no power over the lovers. Both, the West and the East Indies lie with the poet in the shape of his beloved. Then comes a conceit which also expresses the passion of the lovers: "She's all states, and all Princes I; / Nothing else is."
- (12) Donne also speaks of the soul and of the spiritual love in the poem, "Air and Angels". In "A Valediction: Of the Book" the poet speaks of spiritual love, though here again body is required to give love a visible shape.
- (13) In addition to fanciful conceits, we find a plenty of paradoxical statements in his poetry. In the poem, "The Indifferent" we find Donne describing constancy in men as a vice. In "Twickenham Garden" the very truth kills the poet. In "The Apparition" it is beloved's scorn that has murdered him.

In the light of the foregoing discussion, Donne deserves the title of metaphysical poet because of his obscurity and unintelligibility. The themes of his poems are based on religion and love. His poems indicate the deep-rooted relationship between body, soul, God, man and his own self. He also has yoked the most heterogeneous ideas together. He combines thought and feeling. His conceits are witty. His imagery is far-fetched and learned. There are many comparisons and allusions in his poetry. His

hyperboles are outrageous and paradoxes astonishing. His devices of those of arguments in metaphysical discussion. These attributes of his poetry place him in the main tradition of metaphysical poet of par excellence.

## 2): John Donne as a Love poet

Donne's love poetry is a revolt against the Petrarchan conventions. His poetry is the total expression of his personality: its divergent aspects; emotional, intellectual, emotional, spiritual enter into a strangely perfect assimilation. His poetry gives rise to emotions ranging from ecstasy to despair. There are main three strands in his love poems: *cynical love, conjugal love, Platonic love*. Cynical love is anti-fair-sex, conjugal love is married love and Platonic love is a spiritual love. Spiritual love is not subject to change: "*Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime/ Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time*". Donne's love poems can be divided in three groups.

### First Group:

The poems, "*Go and Catch a Falling Star*", "*Sexual Home My long Strayed Eyes to Me*", "*Women's Constancy*", "*The Indifferent*", "*Air and Angels*", "*The Dream*", and "*The Apparition*" have been written in a cynical strain.

In his love poetry, Donne frequently dwells on the disloyalty and fickleness of woman. No woman is capable of faith and virtue. His poem '*Go and Catch a Falling Star*' ends with a bitter cynicism and denunciation of the fair sex. Nowhere can one find a true woman even if one travels the whole world. Even assuming that a faithful woman has been found, that woman will prove faithless even before the poet is able to visit her: "*Yet she/Will be/ False, ere I come, to two, or three*". Donne describes the infidelity of women in the poem, "*The Message*": "*Such forc'd fashions,/ And false passions/ That they be/ Made by thee*". And in, "*The Apparition*": "*When but thy scorn, O murtheresse, I am dead*".

The lover seeks to kill the flea which has bitten him, but on the second thought forbears, because it has also bitten the beloved and has brought about the union of lovers in her body. He thinks that killing the flea will amount to triple murder. "*Me it sucked first, and now sucks thee / And in the flea, our two bloods mingled be; A sin, or shame, or loss of maidenhead.... / And sacrifice, three sins in killing three*"

"*The Ecstasie*" shows that body and soul are mutually dependent and that one soul cannot unite with the other soul except through the medium of physical love: "*Love's mistries in souls do grow, / Yet the body is his book*". There is sensual and sexual note in his love poetry. Some examples will suffice: I: "*For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love*". (II) "*Twice or thrice had I loved thee*". (III) "*Take heed of loving me*". (IV) "*I can love her, and her,*

*and you and you / I can love any, so she be not true" (V) "Enter these arms, for since thou thought'st it best, / Not to dream all my dream, let's act the rest".*

## Second Group:

The second group of love poems are intensely personal. They are addressed to his wife Anne More. Many of them were written after wedding. They give a fine picture of domestic bliss. Married love knows no change or decay. It is immortal and must continue even in the grave: "*All other things to their destruction draw, / Only our love has no decay; / This no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday*". The poem, "The Good-Morrow" also shows the immortality of love: "*If our two loves be one, or thou and I / Love so alike that none doe slacken, none can die*". Their love is all-sufficient to one another, forming a world of their own: "*She's all states, and all princes I; / Nothing else is*".

Similarly, the poem "*Sweetest Love*" is addressed to his wife. Love triumphs over the idea of parting. This separation is like a short asleep: "*But think that we / Are who but turned aside to sleep; / They who one another keep / Alive, never parted be*". Another poem---'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' also refers to a temporary separation. The poet compares the journey to the two legs of a compass, one is fixed and the other moving to complete circle: "*Such wilt thou be to me who must / Like the other foot, obliquely run; / Thy firmness make my circle just, / And makes me end, where I begun*".

## Third Group:

These poems were written in praise of certain ladies whom Donne knew. Some of them were addressed to the countess of Bedford, some to Mrs. Magdalene Herbert and some to the Countess Huntingdon. 'Twickenham Garden' refers to the poet's friendship with the countess of Bedford. Donne misconstrued her friendly regard as love. She did not respond his advances. He was rejected and rejected by it. He has given vent to his most powerful anger and anguish in this poem. "*O perverse sex, where none is true but she, / Who is therefore true because her truth kills me*". The poem, "The Relic" is addressed to Mrs. Herbert: "*All measures and all language I should pass, / Should I tell what a miracle she was*". The intensity of feelings and directness of expression is the hallmark of Donne's love poetry: "*So, so, break off this last lamenting kiss, / Which sucks two souls, and vapors both away*".

Donne's love poetry is a record of moods, of the conflict between emotion and intellect, of the war between sense and spirit, body and soul. After the physical passion subsided, Donne returned to his spiritual self. Strangely enough, love and death are brought together. Death will open a way to infinitude of love which is not possible in physical existence. "*Death be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for, thou are not so*".

In his later poems, Donne achieves the peace through divine love. From physical love to spiritual love---- this is the way of the mystics. So real and passionate love is the path of a self-discovery, the finding of the Universal soul.

### 3):John Donne as a Religious poet

John Donne holds an important place in the religious poetry of England. In his religious poems also Donne is metaphysical rather than didactic. In them, he analyses and lays bare his various moods in his search for God, and thus these poems resemble his love – poems and satires. To be didactic is never the first intention of Donne's religious poems ; rather to express himself , to lay bare his own moods of agitation , of aspiration and of humiliation in the quest of God , and the surrender of his soul to Him is his intention.

The frailty and decay of this world is the subject of Donne's religious poems. Like many intellectuals of his day, Donne felt that the times were out of joint. Other important themes of Donne 's religious are the insignificance of man himself , the antithesis between the world and the spirit ,the transitoriness of all earthly enjoyments , the pain suffered by the soul in the imprisoning body.

His attitude in his religious poems appears disinterested and detached. He meditates on the *Annunciation , the Nativity , the appearance of Temple , the Crucifixion , the Resurrection , and the Ascension*. He meditates on them profoundly, passionately and intellectually. The truths of Donne's poetry are the truths of the imagination, which freely transmutes into personal experience.

The image which dominates his divine poetry is the image of Christ as Saviour , the victor over sin and death. The strength with which his imagination presents the figure of Christ is the measure of his need , and that need is the subject of the finest of his religious poems. These lines show his desire to see the true church , to resist the devil , as a Temple usurped by the Devil and to release soul from the dungeon of our body: I):"Who is most true , and pleasing thee then / When she is embrac'd and open to most men". II): "*One old subtle foe tempest me , / That not an hour myself I can sustain "* III): "*Myself a temple of thy spirit divine / Why doth the devil then usurp on me"* IV): "*To heaven , its first seat , takes flight / Earth born body , in the earth shall dwell*".

To him, death does not kill us rather it is the rest of bones and soul's delivery. He also prays for purification, purgation and illumination. He also repents his wanton activities of youth. He says: I):"*Die not, poor death, not yet thou kill me / From rest and sleep, which but the pictures bee*". II): "*To breake , blowe , burn , and make me new*" III): "*Batter my heart , three person'd God*" IV): "*But I am betrothed unto your enemy ;Divorce me, untie or break that knot again*" V): "*Except you enthrall me , never shall be free, / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me*" VI): "*Burn off my rusts , and my deformity / Restore thine Image*" VII): "*All my pleasures are like yesterday*".

Similarly in his treatment of divine poems , the poet uses sexual images in holy situations. As for example: "*Betray kind husband thy spouse to our sights , / And let mine amorous soul court thy mild Dove*". In some of his poems, there is a mood of melancholy, despair ,repentance and fear of punishment. I):"*This is my play's last scene / Here heavens appoint / My pilgrimage's last mile*". II): "*Despair behind and death before doth caste / Such terror and my feeble flesh doth waste*"

In short, Donne's poems are his struggle of salvation. He is never satisfied with penitence. He fears that his sins may outweigh God's mercy. He could never get rid of these fears. Each poem has an abrupt personal opening, addressed to God, Christ or Death. The arguments are illustrated with the use of imagery that is simple as well as sexual. A pathetic note of penitence, sorrow and remorse is a salient feature of his religious poetry.

## 4): Donne's Conceits or Imagery

A conceit is a pleasant, fanciful, and far-fetched idea, image or comparison. They are unusual and fantastic similes. It is a comparison between two dissimilar things. It is chiefly on account of excessive use of intellectual and far-fetched conceits that Donne is known as a metaphysical poet. In metaphysical poetry the most heterogeneous ideas are *yoked by violence together*". When objects of extremely heterogeneous nature are *yoked by violence together*", the imagery is called a conceit.

Donne's conceits are metaphysical, far-fetched and unconventional. They mark Donne's poetry. They lend originality and novelty to his poetry. Conceits may be brief or extended. An extended conceit is the comparison of the lovers to the two legs of a compass in the poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning". Another clumsy conceit is in the poem, "The Flea", where the flea symbolizes the marriage-bed and marriage temple. The comparison is neither obvious nor beautiful, but the poet labors to unfold the likeness.

Donne draws his conceits and images from a wide range of subjects. He ransacks nature and art for illustration, comparisons and allusions. The conceits of Donne are learned and they display the poet's wide range of knowledge of science, medieval philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and several others. His conceits are in total harmony with the feeling in the poems. T. S. Eliot gives the name of this harmony "the unification of sensibility" ----- a fusion of thought and feeling very successfully and artistically.

In a single poem we may have different images. In the poem, "A Valediction: Of Weeping", the lover's tears are like precious coins because they bear the stamp of the beloved. The tears are "pregnant of thee" ----- a complex image conveying the idea of conception. The beloved's tears are compared to the moon which draws up the seas to drown the lover. These images are complex and surprising, but they are not devoid of giving pleasure. Donne's poetry is full of conceits and images. Some examples will be sufficient:

(1) In "The Good Morrow" the poet has used simple as well as far-fetched images. The ordinary images are like: *weaned, sucked country pleasures, sea discoverers, maps showing new worlds, and 'two hemisphere'*. The far-fetched image is of *'the Seven Sleeper's Den'*.

(2) In one of the love poems, Donne emphasizes his view that there is no woman in this world, both beautiful and true. He gives us images of "a falling star, a mandrake root, the Devil's cleft



*feet and mermaids*". Apart from the mermaids, none of the other images has anything to do with beauty or love.

(3) The novelty of images in "*The Sun Rising*" is noteworthy. The sun is here "a saucy, a pedantic wretch" who is called upon the late school-boys and sour apprentice, court huntsmen, and country ants. Hours, days, months are here regarded as the "rags" of time. There is surely nothing poetic in these images. But they seem perfectly appropriate in their context.

(4) The poem, "*The Canonization*" is also replete with images of fantastic nature. The poet speaks of himself and his beloved as, "as flies and also as tapers", "as the Eagle and the Dove" and "as the Phoenix combining both sexes". These images are astonishing. The image of Phoenix is original and far-fetched.

(5) In "*Twickenham Garden*", we get images of, "spider love", "the serpent", "the groaning mandrake", "the weeping stone fountain". These are also apt images.

(6) In "*The Ecstasie*" the souls of the lovers are compared to two equal armies confronting and negotiating with each other. Love which does not find an outlet in physical and sexual experience is like a great prince languishing in prison.

(7) There are several images in the holy sonnet, "*A Hymn to Christ*". These images show the sexual and spiritual relationship of the poet with Christ. These expressions are: "amorous", "divorce", "Mary those love thee".----- all used in a metaphysical sense.

(8) In the holy sonnet, "*Batter my heart, three personed God*" where the imagery of adultery is used. The poet is the spouse of God, but the Devil has captured him. In the end, the poet entreats God to ravish him. Freedom and purity can come only through divine consummation.

His imagery may be far-fetched but not irrelevant. It is original not fictitious. Donne's image is not a piece of decoration; it serves to illustrate or convince. The poet has something to say and his conceits help him to say that thing. It has been argued that his imagery is a means of "communicating thoughts and exploring experience and achieving a new insight into it". A metaphysical poem has something to say which the conceit explicates or something to urge which the conceit helps to forward. We can conclude the answer with the Grierson's quotation: "Donne's imagery brings together the opposites of life, all in one breath".

## **I: The Good Morrow**

I: I wonder by my troth, what though and I/ Did, till we loved? Were we no wean'd till then?/  
But suck'd on country pleasures, childishly?/ Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?/ 'Twas  
so; but this, all pleasures fancies bee;/ If ever any beauty I did see,/ Which I desired, and got,  
'twas but a dream of thee

**Reference:** These lines have been taken from the poem, " *The Good Morrow*" by John Donne.

**Context:** In this poem, which is one of the finest ones, the poet seeks to explain the complex nature of love. Love is of physical and spiritual. The physical love involves the element of sex while the spiritual love is the fusion of two souls of the lover and the beloved. This kind of pure love provides a complete world to the lovers --- a world without coldness, fear and decay.

**Explanation: I):** In the given lines, the poet describes the eternal nature of true love. He deals with time past, present, and future. He treats of time past as he wonders what he and his lady love did before they loved each other. The era before their love was a useless one in which they were scarcely awake and hardly weaned and sucked on simple pleasures like children. Perhaps, the poet and his beloved had not grown to adulthood till they fell in love. They were unknown to the real pleasures of love. If they slept their time away in the "Seven Sleepers' den" or were they snorting there unconsciously? They were in state of unconsciousness. All the former pleasures compared to the present ones are just fancies and fictions. Only the pleasure of their love was real. If ever he did see any other beautiful woman whom he desired and whom he got, she was only a reflection and replica of his beloved, who had satisfied his desire, was unreal like a dream.

**II):** *And now good morrow to our awaking souls,/ Which watch not one another out of fear;/ For love, all love of other sights controls,/ And makes one little room an everywhere./ Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone;/ Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown;/ Let us possess one world; each hath one, and is one.*

In the given lines, the poet says that now their long sleep has come to an end and they are fully awake and aware of everything. Their hearts and souls are awake and they wish good morning and all happiness to each other. Their souls do not see each other out of fear or suspicion. They have no reason to feel afraid and affright of anything or to feel suspicious of each other, " *For love controls all love of other sights*". They need not be jealous of one another. Their " *one little room*" is transformed by love into " *an everywhere*" because the pleasure of their loving each other includes all other joys and pleasures of this world. Let navigators roam over the seas and discover new worlds for themselves. Let cartographers draw maps showing more and more worlds. So far he and his beloved are concerned, they are happy with the possession of one world --- the world of love --- where the lovers are united into one. Both the lovers are interested in each other's world. Their reciprocal love, both physical and spiritual, makes them one.

**III):** *My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,/ And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;/ Where can we find two better hemispheres/ Without sharp north, without declining West?/ Whatever dyes, was not mix't equally,/ If our two loves be one, or thou and I/ Love so alike that none do slacken, none can die.*

The given lines show that lover and beloved are merged in one another beings. Their faces appear in each other's eyes. Their looks reflect the simplicity, purity and honesty of their hearts. Their two faces may be compared to two hemispheres which together make up the whole world. the hemispheres of the faces of lovers are better than the geographical



hemispheres, because they do not have the 'sharp North' and the 'declining West'. The 'sharp North' implies coldness and indifference – to which their love is not subject --- and the 'declining West' which symbolizes decay and death from which the lovers are free. Their love is mixed proportionately. It is immortal and beyond the vagaries of time and clime. Their love is mutual and equal; balanced and harmonized.

## 2): The Sunne Rising

*I): Busy old fool, unruly sun,/ Why dost thou thus,/ Through windows, and through curtains,  
call on us?/ Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run? Saucy pedantique wretch, go chide/ Late  
school boys and sour prentices,/ Go tell court-huntsmen that king will ride,/ And country ants  
to harvest offices/ Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,/ No hours, days, months, which  
are the rags of time.*

**Reference:** These lines have been taken from the poem, "The Sunne Rising" by John Donne.

**Context:** "The Sunne Rising" is a typical poem by Donne. It deals with the physical as well as the spiritual side of love. It expresses poet's displeasure at the interfering of the sun with the lovers' affairs. The sun-rising is a source of vexation to the lovers. It is an index of passing time. Nature threatens the pleasures of love. The supremacy of love is established in this poem. Love transcends the limits of time and space because it knows, "no season and no clime".

**Explanation:** In the given lines, the poet treats the sun colloquially and irreverently. He seeks to explain his view-point and outlook as to the supremacy of love and the natural phenomenon – the sun. Love is in itself a universe and the rising of the sun cannot eclipse the reality of love.

The sun peeps through the windows and curtains of lovers' chamber. The sun is a cynical, proud and miserable fool. He is like a Peeping-tome and ill-mannered. The poet addresses the sun contemptuously as old, anybody, saucy, unruly and pedantic wretch. He says that sun may be a source of fear to schoolboys who get late for school, or apprentices who get late for work, or court-huntsmen who get late in reporting to the king whom they have to accompany on hunting expedition, or country ants who must get busy in collecting grains. But the sun cannot scare lovers because the lovers are not to be governed by the artificial divisions of time. It is none of his business to disturb them. Lovers are not bound to change. Their love is not subject to time and the sense of space or time. They are indifferent to the rising of the sun because they can go on making love even after the sun has risen.

*II): Thy beams so reverend, and strong/ Why shouldst thou think?/ I could eclipse and cloud  
them with a wink,/ But that I would not lose her sight so long,/ If her eyes have not blinded  
thine,/ Look, and tomorrow late tell me,/ whether both th' Indias of spice and myne/ Be where  
thou left'st them, or lie here with me/ Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,/ And  
thou shalt hear," All here in one bed lay".*

The poet continues his bragging and boastful tone and also pays exquisite compliments to his mistress. The sun considers its beams so holy, so strong and so sacred that they should be respected. The lover claims that he can eclipse and darken the sun merely with a wink, but he never wants to lose the sight of beauty and grace of his beloved. He asks the sun to go and find out whether the East Indies and the West Indies are still situated at their original location or they have moved from here to lie with him in his bed. His beloved is a combination of both the East and the West Indies. The former is known for fragrant spices and the latter for diamonds. His mistress sums up in herself all the riches, all the perfumes, and all the pleasures and joys of the East and the West. She is the glory of the whole world. The lover is beside himself with feelings of happiness and completeness in the possession of his mistress. He piles hyperbole on hyperbole and praises his mistress in the most extravagant manner. She is all-perfect, all-lovely, all-complete that she alone justifies everything.

*III): She's all states, and all princes I;/ Nothing else is;/ Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,/ All honour mimique, all wealth alchimie./ Thou Sun, art half as happy as we/ In that the world's contracted thus;/ Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties bee/ To warm the world, that's done in warming us./ Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;/ This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere.*

The poet says exaggeratingly that there are no states, no kings and no princes except us. He and his beloved symbolize the whole world. His beloved is all the states of the world rolled into one. She combines in herself all the aroma of spices and all the gold of rich mine. She is contracted into one feminine form. She is the whole world and he the supreme ruler of that world. The rulers of the world merely imitate the lovers. Everything except their love is shadowy and unsubstantial. Likewise, all honors and all the wealth in the world is an imitation of the wealth which the lovers represent. In other words, these lovers are the true rulers of the world; they are all honor; and all the wealth of the world; and they are the whole world too. Nothing else exists. The age of the sun also demands rest and repose. The four walls of their room would mark the limits of its orbit. Let the sun warm the lovers and it will truly be warming the whole world because the lovers are a microcosm of the world.

The poem, "The Sun Rising" is a successful fusion of wit and passion. The poet feels that he possesses, rules and controls the whole world. Therefore, he is superior to the sun itself. From the impertinence of its opening, we pass onto the satisfied love: "She is all states; and all princes, I".

### **3): Song-Goe, and Catch a Falling Star**

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*I): Goe and catach a falling star/ Get with child a mandrake roote,/ Tell me where all past years are,/ Or who cleft the devil's foot,/ Teach me to hear mermaids singing,/ Or to keep off envies stinging,/ And Finde/ What winde/ Serves to advance an honest minde*

**Reference:** These lines have been taken from the poem, " *Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star*" by Donne.

**Context:** In this poem, the poet throws light on the inconsistency and infidelity of a woman. He, through a series of images, shows the impossibility of discovering a true and faithful woman. He has debunked beautiful women. His attitude is cynical and satirical towards fair sex. Donne's happy life in London and his connection with different women confirms his view, "Frailty thy name is woman". This poem is, however, a general statement about woman's inconstancy in love.

**Explanation:** In the given lines, the poet shows the absolute impossibility of a true and fair woman. It is impossible to catch a falling star. It is equally impossible to produce a human body from the root of the mandrake plant. It is impossible to tell where the past years have gone or who split the devil's foot, or to listen to the music of the mermaids. Mermaids are imaginary creatures living in the sea. They are half-women and half-fish. Mermaids are believed to be capable of singing sweet songs. Nobody has heard mermaids singing because mermaids simply do not exist. It is also impossible to change human nature so as not to feel the pain of envy. The pangs of jealousy cannot be kept off by any method whatsoever. Jealousy is a part of human nature, and stings of jealousy are inescapable. It is impossible to find out the favorable climate that promotes honesty and constancy. In other words, it is impossible to conceive of any climate in which women are faithful in their love. Just as these things are impossible, so also a fair and faithful woman is impossible.

*II): If thou bee'st borne to strange sights,/ Things invisible to see,/ Ride ten thousand daies and nights,/ Till age snow white hairs on thee,/ Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me,/ All strange wonders that befell thee/ And swear/ Now where*

The poet wants to know the person who is born with the power to see strange scenes and sights, and even invisible objects. He should go on travelling around the world for ten thousand days and nights till he becomes aged and his hair turns white like snow and if he on return tells me all the wonderful things and happenings, he will not be able to swear an oath that he will never find a woman comprising both faithfulness as well beauty. No beautiful woman can ever be constant in love. Fair woman has lovers and therefore it is impossible for her to be faithful any one of them.

*III): Lives a woman true and fair./ If thou find'st one, let me know./ Such a pilgrimage were sweet;/ Yet do not, I would not goe./ Thou at next door we might meet./ Though she were true, when you met her,/ And last, till you write your letter,/ Yet shee/ Will bee/ False, ere I come, to two, or three.*

If any one finds a woman who is fair and true, the poet would very much, like to visit her, as if on a pilgrimage to some holy place. His journey would be sacred like a pilgrimage. Such a woman would be worth of admiration and adoration. However, the poet feels that such a journey would be futile. The woman might have faithful at that time when you meet her, but she could not be faithful to you. This faithfulness will not last for long. By the time you write your letter to her, she would have jilted to two or three other lovers.

In the poem, the poet despairs about seeing any constant woman. Woman's beauty and her constancy in love are entirely poles apart things. The fickleness of woman could be more easily experienced than described.

## 4): Twicknam Garden

*I): Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with tears,/ Hither I come to seek the spring,/ And at mine eyes, and at mine ears,/ Receive such balms as else cure everything./ But O, self traytor, I do bring/ The spider Love, which transubstantiates all,/ And convert Manna to gall;/ And that this place may thoroughly be thought/ True paradise, I have the serpent brought.*

**Reference:** These lines have been taken from the poem, "Twicknam Garden" by John Donne.

**Context:** The poem, 'Twicknam Garden' is an outcome of the poet's unhappy and unrequited love affair with countess Lucy of Bedford of the seventeenth century. She entertained a friendly affection for Donne. He was irresistibly drawn towards her. The poet had taken the lady's interest in him for love, but eventually he came to know the true nature of her feelings. Her truth killed him. The poet is a misogynist and he has expressed his mental state in a series of attractive conceits.

**Explanation:** In the given lines, the poet expresses his deep and pessimistic feelings. The speaker, who is poet himself, gives expression to his disappointment in love, his frustration, and his profound grief. He is tormented by heaving hot sighs and by shedding tears profusely. He has come to the garden to seek the company of the spring. Its soothing influences can cure every other thing excepting the disease of love. But spring fails to cure the anguish of his heart. He is his own enemy because he along with himself has brought into the garden thoughts of love. Love is like a spider which transforms the character of everything. It can change even heavenly food into poison. He brings into this garden a serpent in the form of love. Sad and somber thoughts of love poison every joy of life. Paradise is a place of peace and blessing but love has spoiled its sanctity.

*II): 'Twere wholesomer for me that winter did/ Benight the glory of this place,/ And that a great frost did forbid/ These trees to laugh and mock me to my face;/ But that I may not this grace/ Indure, nor yet leave loving, Love, let me/ Some senseless piece of this place be;/ Make me a mandrake, so I may grow here,/ Or a stone fountain weeping out my year.*

The poet would have welcomed it if winter should have darkened the beauty and charm of this place. Winter should benight the glory of this garden. Thick mist should cover the trees of this garden. Nature is indifferent to the poet and every living being's agony. Trees should not mock at his present state to his very face. He cannot brook insult by the trees nor he can leave loving. He would like to be an inanimate object in this garden. He would like to be the mandrake plant growing here in this garden. He would like to be a stone fountain shedding tears in the form of jets of water throughout the year.

*III): Hither with cristall vyals, lovers, come,/ And take my tears, which are loves wine, And try your mistress' tears at home,/ For all are false, that taste not just like mine./ Alas! Hearts do not in eyes shine,/ Nor can you more judge women's thoughts by tears,/ Than by her shadow what she wears/ O perverse, where none is true but shee/ Who's therefore true because her truth kills mee.*

As the poet would be shedding tears constantly in this garden, let lovers come here with small glass bottles and gather his tears. His tears are wine of love. Let them test the tears shed by their sweet-hearts by my tears because all tears that do not resemble mine are only crocodile tears. It is sad fact that the tears shed by them are no sign of sincerity of the love of a woman. Feelings of hearts can never be judged by the eyes. A woman's real thoughts can no more be judged by her tears than her dress can be judged by her shadow. The fair sex is, as a matter of fact, a perverted sex and wayward. No woman except his beloved is faithful, and he feels strongly attracted by her charming face and figure but her faithfulness to another hurts him too much. She makes me passionately love and languish for her, because he cannot enjoy her love.

In this poem, the poet gives vent to the anguish of the heart which neither nature can soothe nor poetry. He is in a mood of dejection. This poem is one of the greatest expressions in literature of poignant sorrow and piercing sadness. Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with tears, the well-defined and concrete images drive home the utter despair and incurable pain of a love-lorn heart. Lady to whom it is addressed was never in love with Donne.

## **5): A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning**

*I: As virtuous men pass mildly away,/ And whisper to their souls to go/ While some of their sad friends do say, / Now his breath goes, and some say, 'No'*

### **Reference:**

These lines have been taken from the poem, "A Valediction : Forbidding Mourning " by Donne.



## Context:

The poem is addressed by Donne to his wife, Anne Moore. There is no mockery and no touch of cynicism in it. He bids his beloved wife farewell. There is image of parting; and parting is synonymous with death. But the poet shows the uniqueness of his true love that can stand separation on account of mutual confidence and affection. There love is not based on physical attraction. This separation may be deemed like death, but as good men are not afraid of death, true lovers are not afraid of separation.

## Explanation:

In the given lines, the poet addresses his beloved and offers her consolation for his short absence. Just as virtuous and philosopher type are not afraid of death. They pass away quietly and peacefully. They ask their souls to depart noiselessly. In the same way, true lovers are also least afraid of separation. Their friends may be sad and sullen at the demise of them. Separation only tests their love and loyalty. Ordinary lovers who are addicted to sex may not be able to stand separation. Therefore, his beloved should neither shed tears nor heave sighs. This absence is a sort of touchstone to test and try their mutual love.

*II): So let us melt, and make no noise,/ No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move,/ Twere profanation/ To tell the laity our love.*

In these lines, the poet says that as virtuous man's soul parts from his body, so should the lovers part from each other. There must be no floods of tears, or tempests of sighing. The lovers wish to part quietly without making a noise or scene. The poet asks his beloved to desist from sobbing, shedding tears or heaving sighs. He considers the love between himself and his beloved as sacred one. It would be a disgrace to make it known to the common persons. Similarly, ordinary lovers may lament a separation but their love is so holy and pure that in spite of separation they have no feelings of loneliness. Their love is so chaste and refined that physical absence matters least to them at all. Their love is not based on corporeal enjoyments.

*III): Moving of the earth brings harms and fears,/ Men reckon what it did and meant,/ But trepidation of the spheres/ Through greater far, is innocence.*

According to the poet, earthquakes cause great damage and destruction. People are mortally afraid of them. They estimate the actual damage caused by it. However, heavenly bodies do not cause any damage or destruction. Similarly, their parting should be peaceful and harmless.

*IV): Our two souls, therefore, which are one,/ Though I must go, endure not yet/ A breach, but an expansion/ Like gold to airy thinness beat.*

The lovers cannot define the nature and essence of their pure love. It is the refined love of the mind and has nothing to do with the joys of sex. Their souls are one. Temporary separation cannot cause a breach of love. Absence extends the domain and expanse of love. Just as gold is beaten to thinness and its purity is no way affected, in the same way their pure love

will expand and in no way lose its essence. The lovers are like a lump of gold and the quality of their love cannot change. The frontiers of their love will extend and their mutual confidence and loyalty will in no way be affected.

*IV): Dull sublunary lovers love/ Whose soul is sense cannot admit/ Absence, because it doth remove/ Those things which elemented it.*

The poet says that the love of lowly worldly people is based sensual and physical attraction. To them love means sex and as such they cannot stand separation. Their souls may be two but they are united at and separation or absence. This kind of sexual love is unable to accept separation because the very elements which go into its composition are physical like dimpled soft cheeks and cherry-red luscious lips.

*V): But we by a love, so much refined/ That our selves know not what it is/ Inter-assured of the mind/ Careless, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.*

In the given lines, the poet says that their love is pure and is beyond corporeal hug and touch. Their love is spiritually refined. Their love is so pure and noble that they themselves do not fully understand its implications. They are mutually confident of the faithfulness of each other's mind. They do not much care about the physical absence of the other lover.

*VI): If they be two, they are two so/ As stiff twin compass are two,/ Thy soul the fixt foot, makes no show/ To move, but doth, if the other doe/*

Their love is center like a two sides of a compass. The soul of the beloved is like fixed foot of the compass as she stays at home. The poet's soul is like the other foot of the compass which moves in a circle. The fixed foot moves and leans towards the moving foot, and afterwards, the moving foot rejoins the fixed foot. The rejoining of the circling foot suggests the return of the poet to his beloved. Her soul is the center of poet's being, and keeps him constant as it circles around it.

*VII): And thought it in the centre sit,/ Yet when the other far doth rome,/ It leans, and hearkens after it,/ And grows erect, as that comes home./ such wilt thou be to mee, who must/ Like the other foot obliquely run/ thy firmness makes my circle just/ And makes me end, where I begun.*

In the given lines, the poet says that suppose their souls are not one but two, even so, they are like the two legs of compass bound with one another eternally. Like compass, one partner is fixed and other is rotating around it. The fixed foot of compass may not appear to rotate, when the other foot revolves. The poet must travel. His beloved must remain at home. She controls him, however, distant he may be. She is his centre, and is the cause of that perfection in his life which is symbolized by circle. Her inclination brings firmness. Just as the revolving foot of the compass returns to the central point after completing the circle, in the same way the poet shall return to his beloved. Thus, they will again be united in pure love.

## 6): A Valediction: Of Weeping

I): *Let me pour forth/ My tears before thy face, whilst stay here,/ For thy face coins them, and thy stamp they bear,/ And by this mintage they are something worth/ For thus they be/ Pregnant of thee/ Fruits of much grief they are, emblems of more,/ When a tear falls, that thou falls which it bore,/ So thou and I are nothing then, when on a diverse shore.*

**Reference:** These lines have been taken from the poem, "A Valediction: Of Weeping" by Donne.

**Context:** The poem is an address to his wife, Anne More, on the eve of his departure to a foreign country. It tells that when there is a spiritual bond between two lovers, so their souls become a unit. He proves that his absence is no cause for mourning for his beloved because their love is pure and constant. Its theme is the parting of a woman from a man at which the man weeps and knows the reason for his weeping.

**Explanation:** In the given lines, the poet wishes to shed tears profusely in the presence of his beloved. His tears contain an image of his beloved and as such the tears bear his stamp. Just as the coins bearing the sovereign's stamp are worth and value something, so the poet's tears bearing the stamp of his beloved are of some value. His tears are large and round just like pregnancy and they are just his beloved's creation. They are the tokens of past and future sorrows and symbols of more griefs. When a tear falls, his beloved also falls with it because it contains her image. When they will be in diverse places, they are non-entities.

II): *On a round ball/ A workman that hath copies by, can lay/ An Europe, Africa, and an Asia,/ And quickly make that, which was nothing, All;/ So doth each tear/ Which thee doth wear,/ A globe, yea world, by that impression grow/ Till thy tears mixt with mine do overflow/ This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so.*

**Explanation:** In the given lines, the poet compares the tear to a globe which is nothing until the cartographer has painted it a copy of the world, then it is all complete with countries and continents --- showing all the continents Europe, Africa, Asia. A tear is also round or spherical like the globe on which a map of the world has drawn. Each of his tears bearing his beloved image becomes an emblem of their love, which is the world they live in. So his tears with her image reflected in them change from meaningless drops into worlds. She is his heaven, her tears are rain, which mingling with poet's tears make the great flood - The Deluge -- dissolves and destroys the whole world. The peace of mind of both will be lost by profuse weeping at the time of separation.

III): *O more than Moon,/ Draw not up seas to drown me in thy sphere,/ Weep me not dead, in thine arms, but forbear/ To teach the sea, what it may do too soon;/ Let not the wind/ Example*

*find/ To do me more harm than it purposeth;/ Since thou and I sigh one another's breath;/  
Whoever sighs most, is cruelest, and hastes the other's death.*

**Explanation:** In the given lines, the poet says that his beloved is more powerful than the moon. She can draw up the tides of weeping both from me and herself. He can drown him even if he is in her arms. She should refrain from shedding tears because seeing her flood of tears the ocean too may feel encouraged to use its waves to drown him. She should also abstain from heaving sighs because if she keeps on sighing, the wind will feel encouraged to blow harder and harder, so may do harm him. Hearing your sighs, the wind may grow into a storm on the sea and may drown him. When he sighs, he breathes out not only his own breath but hers too. Similarly when she sighs, she breathes out not only her own breath but his too. Thus, by sighing, they merely sigh away each other's life. whoever sighs the most, is the most cruel and hastens the other's death.

The poet's beloved is like the Moon. She will cause tides, storms and subsequent death. All these images are interlinked, and convey a sense of unified sensibility. Similarly, the falling of tears indicates the falling of beloved, and thus being reduced to nothing. The poet draws images from geography, theology and astronomy. The situation of the impending separation is faced boldly and the need of poise and patience is stressed.

## **7): Lovers Infiniteness**

*D): If yet I have not all thy love,/ Dear, I shall never have it all;/ I cannot breathe one other sigh,  
to move,/ Nor can intreat one another's tear to fall;/ And all my treasure, which should purchase  
thee - sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters ---- I have spent;/ Yet no more can be due to mee;/ Than  
at the bargain made was meant;/ If then thy gift of love were partiall;/ That some to mee, some  
should to others fall/ Dear, I shall never have thee all.*

Reference: These lines have been taken from the poem, "*Lovers Infiniteness*" by John Donne.

**Context:** 'Lovers Infiniteness' illustrates some of the traits of Donne's poetry. Its theme is the growth of love. The additional love created in beloved's heart may justly be claimed by the original lover because the additional love has been created in her heart, and the heart already belongs to the original lover. Their two hearts can be united into one, so that they become just one individual.

**Explanation:** In the given lines, the poet says that if he has not been able to win all her beloved so far, then he can never have all of it. He has exhausted all his resources in trying to win her love. He has heaved all his sighs, shed all his tears, taken all oaths, written letters in the best wordings. He is in no position now to breathe even more sigh, or to shed even more tear, or even to write one more letter to move her beloved's heart. If, despite all this, he has not got her whole love, there is no chance of getting it in the future. Nor can he claim any more of her love. After all, she could give me as much of her love as had been bargained for. She could not do more than required by the contract. If she has given a part of love to him, it means that the rest

of her love was to be given to others. That being so, he will never be able to get entire love, and he will never become her sole possessor.

*II): Or if then thou gavest me all,/ All was but all, which thou hadest then;/ But if in thy heart, since, there be or shall/ New love created bee, by other men,/ Which have their stocks intire, and can in tears/ In sighs, in oaths, and letters, outbid mee;/ This new love beget new fears,/ For this love was not vow'd by thee/ And yet it was, thy gift bein general;/ The ground, thy heart, is mine; whatever shall/ Grow there, deare, I should have it all.*

**Explanation:** | In the given lines, the poet says that even if the beloved has given me all love, it was all that she had at that time. But if new love grows in her heart for other lovers who have full stock of their tears, sighs, oaths, and letters to purchase it, he has new fears about this newly-generated love because it was not promised to him. And yet it should be his, because she has given him her heart. As he is owner and possessor of her heart, whatever and whenever grows love in her heart is his. So dear beloved let him have all the new love that grows in your heart.

*III): Yet I would not have all yet,/ Hee that hath all can have no more;/ And since my love doth every day admit/ New growth, thou shouldest have new rewards in store;/ Thou canst not every day give me thy heart,/ If thou canst give it, then thou never lovest it;/ Love's riddles are, that thou thy heart depart,/ It stays at home, and thou with losing savest it;/ But we will have a way more liberall,/ Than changing hearts, to joyn them, so wee shall/ Be one, and one another's all.*

**Explanation:** in the given lines, the poet says that he cannot have all her beloved's love, for he that has all can have no more. Therefore, as his love grows everyday, she should have more to offer him. Of course, she cannot give me her heart every day. It is riddle of love that heart is given away, yet it continues to remain with the beloved. Thus they lose their heart and yet they retain it. But they will follow a more liberal course than exchanging hearts. They will join their two hearts and will make them one. Then he and his beloved will become one, and they will be everything for each other. He shall become all for her and she will become all for him.

## 8): The Anniversarie

*I): All kings, and all their favourites,/ All glory of honors, beauties, wits,/ The sun itself, which makes times, as they pass,/ Is elder by a year, now, then it was,/ When thou and I first one another saw,/ All other things, to their destruction draw,/ Only our love hath no decay;/ This not tomorrow hath, nor yesterday/ Running it never runs from us away,/ But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day.*

**Reference:** These lines have been taken from the poem, "The Anniversarie" by John Donne.

**Context:** "The Anniversarie" ranks with the best of Donne's love-poems. It deals with, "wedded love". Donne was not only grateful to his wife for the peace and happiness she had brought him, he was also in love with her and found in their mutual love the feeling of security. Donne's conception of true love is something abiding and imperishable, something that dwells permanently in the soul.



Explanation: In the given lines, the poet commemorates the first anniversary of seeing his beloved. He begins by using imagery from the political world, the royal court of kings. All kings, and all their favourites, and all the glory of honoured men, beautiful women and witty people, and even the sun itself, are all older by a year now, than they were when we first saw one another. All other things move towards their death and decay and only their love does not know tomorrow and yesterday. Their love increases with passing hours, days, months, and years.

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