

Lovers' Infiniteness

BY JOHN DONNE



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 other 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 me,
Than at the bargain made was meant;
If then thy gift of love were partial,
That some to me, some should to others fall,
 Dear, I shall never have thee all.

Or if then thou gavest me all,
All was but all, which thou hadst then;
But if in thy heart, since, there be or shall
New love created be, by other men,
Which have their stocks entire, and can in tears,
In sighs, in oaths, and letters, outbid me,
This new love may beget new fears,
For this love was not vow'd by thee.
And yet it was, thy gift being general;
The ground, thy heart, is mine; whatever shall

Grow there, dear, I should have it all.

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

SUMMARY

'Lovers' Infiniteness' is an unconventional love poem. The poet bemoans the fact that he will never possess all love of his beloved.

At the outset the poet says that if he has not got the whole love of his beloved then he will never have it all. The speaker is telling his lady-love that he cannot weep or plead with her anymore to gain her affection.

He has tried to "purchase" her with "Sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters." He has not yet been

wholly successful, and he seems to think that he is entitled to the lady's love because of his efforts, rather than because he has fully persuaded her. Donne is saying that love must be all, like the infiniteness of God's love, and cannot be partial. If she is partial then she will give some love to him and some to others and so he fears that he will not have her all.

The poet further says that even if she gives him her all love, he fears that new love created by other men may find place in her heart. These men may have their stock and may outbid him in sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters. He fears that these men may win her love. This new thought creates new fear. He is not satisfied by her love. Then he calls her heart as a ground. He says that whatever grows on this ground is his. She should give to him whatever grows there.

In the concluding paragraph the poet says that he would not have all love because he already has got her love and she can't admit everyday that she loves

him. She may have new love and rewards in store. She can't give him her heart everyday. He also feels that the new growth in her heart will be given to him. The poet says that we should be liberal now and instead of exchanging and changing hearts we should now join them so that we could be one and be everything to each other.

Reference to context:

1) Dear I shall never have it all.

Context: The above line is taken from the poem "Lovers' Infiniteness" composed by John Donne. He was a metaphysical poet, known for his love poems. This poem is an unconventional love poem which expresses the speaker's anxiety about getting all the love of his beloved.

Explanation: This line is the second line of the first paragraph of the poem. The speaker wants to say that if yet he has not got all the love of his beloved he could never get it all. He has tried to purchase her love by his sighs, tears and oaths and letters. But he feels that even then if she has not given him her whole love then he can never have it.

2) Dear, I shall never have thee all.

Context: Same as above

Explanation: The speaker says that he has spent all his treasure to purchase her love. So he should get the love which he had bargained. Even then if she is partial then she will give some love to him and some to others and so he fears that he will not have her all.

3) This new love may beget new fears,
For this love was not vow'd by thee.

Context: Same as above

Explanation: The poet fears that new love created by other men may find place in his beloved's heart. These men may outbid him in sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters. He fears that these men may win her love. This new thought creates new fears in his mind. He is not satisfied by her love.
