

## SONNET L

How heavy do I journey on the way,  
When what I seek (my weary travel's end)  
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say  
Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend.  
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,  
Plods dully on, to bear that weight in me,  
As if by some instinct the wretch did know  
His rider lov'd not speed being made from thee:  
The bloody spur cannot provoke him on,  
That some-times anger thrusts into his hide,  
Which heavily he answers with a groan,  
More sharp to me than spurring to his side,  
For that same groan doth put this in my mind,  
My grief lies onward and my joy behind.

The poet contemplates the difficulties of his current stage of journey. He has used the symbols of earth and water to describe the ordinary state; air and fire to indicate the higher states (Sonnets 44 and 45). The higher states are his destination, i.e., his "weary travel's end". Now the poet describes his situation while travelling from the ordinary state to the higher state. Previously he was not able to overcome the "injurious distance" separating these two states. The ordinary state is where the Guide's outward form is. The Guide's inner heart is the higher state, i.e., the poet's ultimate destination. The poet is still attached to the physical presence of his Guide. This is why his journey is slowed down as the poet is hesitant to leave the Guide behind. The poet's attachment is driven by his egotistic-self. In the Sonnet, the egotistic-self is compared to a beast, which carries him ("the beast that bears me"). It is this beast that prevents the poet from reaching his destination.

The poet complains that the travel makes him distraught as he experiences how difficult it is to separate himself from the Guide's company ("how heavy do I journey on the way, when what I seek ... doth teach that ease and that repose to say thus far the miles are measured from thy friend"). The beast that carries him moves very slowly. The beast's behaviour is a reflection of the poet's hesitance. The poet implies that the poor beast somehow knows that he does not want to move quickly away from his worldly pleasures ("plods dully on, to bear that weight in me, as if by some instinct the wretch did know his rider lov'd not speed being made from thee"). Even with angry blows, the poet is not able to force his beast to move faster ("the bloody spur cannot provoke him on, that some-times anger thrusts into his hide"). The beast answers with a groan, which hurts the poet even more, because it reminds him that his challenges and difficulties are ahead of him, and all his worldly pleasures are left behind ("for that same groan doth put this in my mind, my grief lies onward and my joy behind"). As long as the poet is driven by his dull beast, he will not be able to reach his destination.

(Excerpt from "Shakespeare Sonnets or How heavy do I journey on the way" by Wes Jamroz)