

12.6.2020.

Subject English II

Poetry.

Birches.

Question - 2.

Frost according to the critics, writes in simple language about the familiar ordinary things. But the simplicity is only on the surface. His poems have ideas and thoughts which are deep, they talk about truth, they teach wisdom. — Discuss with close reference to the poem Birches.

Answer.

At a first glance 'Birches' seems to be a simple poem written in simple language about the impression, the subject makes on the mind of the poet. The poet watches the birches "bend to left and ~~move~~ right," made to bend by "ice storms". In a sunny winter morning, ~~so~~ see the birches loaded with ice and the sunlight makes them take on many hues.

Soon the warmth of the sun makes them shed "crystal shells," falling like a heap of broken glass to be swept away. This is a vivid description of how the snow crystallises and hardens. The poet compares it to the "inner dome of heaven," falling on the ground. The heavy snow fall bends the branches but does not break them, yet they never straighten themselves again. The poet compares the bent birches to "little girls on hands and knees" that,

Throw their hair
Before them over their heads
to dry in the sun".

The "hair" are the leaves that trail on the ground. This is the truth about the birches.

But the poet wants to believe that it is not the ice storm, but some boy swinging on them that has bent the birches. A boy who did not have the access to "town games" of baseball. The only sport he could indulge in it was to swing on his father's trees and bend them one by one, till he had no branch to conquer. This sport taught the

boy a wisdom which only closeness to nature can bring. He learnt not to rush, to climb carefully to the top, with the same care you take to "fill a cup, up to the brim and even above the brim". And then he jumped methodically to the ground, "kicking his way down through the air to the ground".

The poet claims he was such a swinger himself and he dreams of being a swinger again.

A swinger symbolises for the poet freedom, closeness to nature and learning from nature when the poet is tired of his obligations in the world. ("weary of considerations") when he cannot find his way — ("life is too much like a pathless wood") when he is hurt by life, he wants to run away from life (earth) and go back to the birches! His yearning to go back to the birches is not a desire to run away from life or a death wish. It is a desire to renew oneself, to regain lost vigour and wisdom, to start life afresh.
