***Answers***

***Edith Sitwell***

Edith Sitwell’s poem ‘Answers’ takes us towards an inner journey, proceeding from the questions a person is asked. The poem begins a personal discourse, but as it proceeds, the answers whether big or small, become our universal bulwark of life perturbed by persistent questions.

Edith Sitwell begins the poem by telling the reader how we all keep big answers to embarrassing, troubling, irritating, unavoidable and disturbing questions to ourselves; most of the time, we keep small answers ready for such questions. Big questions always bruise our heart and mind and so the poet is trying to manage to keep herself sane and sound and peaceful by using these small answers as bulwark to protect her sanity and peace of mind.

While the small answers seemingly guard her troubled soul, she tries to keep away the huge generalizations and abstractions from all fronts in the dark background of her mind; she does this by observing the small beauties of life, lovely explorations of experiences that give momentary yet lasting happiness and joy. She learns to see stars in the darkness of the night of her life and these twinkling little stars of happiness are a great solace to her.

Even though the poet tries her best to guard herself with her own solutions and small answers to keep others satisfied, the questions themselves hurt her, attack her at unguarded moments; they are shockingly audacious and try to move into her life. These questions want to be answered honestly and demand to be believed.

Edith Sitwell does not want to give up her fight against the big answers that are demanded; she vehemently tries to protect herself with all small answers to protect her spirit; the big honest answers are choking her and demand to be let out in the open, and try relentlessly to overthrow the small answers – her own small solutions to keep the big questions raising their demonic heads.

The poet ends her poem with a beautiful and powerful line : “And all the great conclusions coming near”. The fear is gone now and the conclusions she makes on her decisions are final and no one can intrude into her soul and this gives her the ultimate solution.

The poem begins on a personal note, but as the poem proceeds, we understand that it is not the predicament of Edith Sitwell, but everyone of us. We are always battered by unwanted and intrusive questions; we have big answers ready within but do not have courage to speak them out. Instead, we buckle under societal pressure and keep readymade short answers to satisfy the intrusive minds.

We live in an interdependent society; true. But we also have an independent spirit and an independent life. It is our life, our decision to live the way we want to and others do not have a right to intrude into our privacy to the extent of disrupting the independent spirit. Answers are solutions to our own problems in such an environment; keep ourselves sane and sound and retain our individualism while living in a society that is known for asking big intrusive questions. The conclusion or solution to our predicament lies within ourselves and Edith Sitwell brings this out beautifully.