

TWELFTH NIGHT AS A ROMANTIC COMEDY

Questions:

Consider Twelfth Night as a romantic comedy. Or

Twelfth Night is a typical romantic comedy of Shakespeare." Discuss. Or

What aspects of Twelfth Night justify its being called a romantic play? Or

Critically comment on Twelfth Night as a romantic comedy. Or

Consider Twelfth Night as a romantic comedy. Or

Bring out the romantic elements in Twelfth Night.

Introduction:

William Shakespeare has written a number of romantic comedies. *Twelfth Night* is one of the finest comedies of the author. We know that a romantic comedy is a play in which the romantic elements are mingled with comic elements. It is a form of comedy which deals with love. Love at first sight is often its main theme. Generally, a romantic comedy starts with some problems that make the union of the lover difficult. But it ends with their happy union.

It can be compared with the *Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado about Nothing* and *As you Like It*. It deals with the light and trivial incidents of life. It combines romantic elements with comic elements. It has a happy ending. Happiness through Marriages: *Twelfth Night* possesses certain features which are common to all romantic comedies of Shakespeare. It is based on love leading to marriage. Almost all the characters are the patients of the same disease - love. The fifth act brings them all happiness through marriage. The Duke gets Viola, Olivia gets Sebastian and Sir Toby feels content with Maria. The entire fifth act echoes with the wedding bells and offers a happy ending.

Female Dominance: In Shakespearean romantic comedies female characters play important role. This predominance gives the play an air of romance. In this play the entire story revolves round the two female characters named Viola and Olivia. Even the chief male characters find their significance due to them. Like Rosalind and Celia, Viola and Olivia dominate the whole plot.

Mirth and Laughter: The atmosphere of the Twelfth Night is full of mirth and laughter. From the beginning to the end the play presents a beautiful love story. When the play opens we find a Duke who is panting for Olivia. Viola in the guise of a boy gets a job with the Duke. She has fallen in love with him, though she keeps it a secret. Since the Duke has a great love for Olivia, he sends Viola to her to plead for him. Viola is good looking and charming. She wins the heart of Olivia. This triangular love makes this play interesting and romantic.

Happy Ending:

The fifth and final act of the play shows the happy ending. In this act we find Sebastian, the twin brother of Viola. He is very smart. His arrival solves the problem. All mysteries are exposed and almost all the characters get their due share of cheerfulness. This happy ending makes the play highly romantic.

Happy Blending of Fact and Fiction:

A happy blending of fact and fiction is a very important characteristic of the Twelfth Night. The person and the places, the plot and the setting are all imaginary. They have been given romantic touch by William Shakespeare. Some characters like Fest, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Malvolio are humorous characters. They provoke laughter and create a romantic atmosphere in the play.

Music and Song:

Music and song play important role in the comedies of William Shakespeare. They are the keynote of the Twelfth Night. The whole body of the play is studded with songs. In short, the song and music of the play provide this comedy an excellent romantic atmosphere.

Summation: To conclude, Twelfth Night is the purest and merriest comedy that Shakespeare wrote ever. Dowden has rightly called this play 'Joyous, refined and romantic.'