

Justify the title of the Play, 'Twelfth Night'.

:- 'Twelfth Night' or 'What you will' are both suggestive titles. One critic, Halliwell holds that the caption 'Twelfth Night' arose because the first performance of the play came off on the twelfth day from Christmas. It is a day dedicated festivities. Sir Toby and Andrew Aguecheek are sworn revellers and they severely drub; criticise Malvolio as the latter rebukes and admonishes them for revelling in his lady's house. Sir Toby Belch hits out at him, "Dost thou think, because thou art virtuous, there shall be no more cakes and ale?" In fact, this attitude sets the tune for the subsequent events. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, in league with Maria, devise/invent a trap to put Malvolio to the worst misdeemeanour/situation. Maria forges a love-letter addressed by Olivia to Malvolio.

Malvolio suffers from strange misconceptions (ideas) that Olivia takes fancy for him, and Maria, also, works up to that feeling in him. He says, 'she uses me with a more exalted respect than anyone else that follows her'. It is true, but it is because ^{Olivia} loves his sincerity, his dutifulness, and not him. The scene where Malvolio excessively indulges on his notion of love and lets others enjoy the antics; strange behaviours

from apart is comic in the truest vein.

The twelfth night after Christmas denotes an end of sadness that entail crucifixion. Maybe, Shakespeare intended to harness/combine this aspect of the Christian sacrament to his own interpretations of human life. Sir Toby's remarks about 'cakes and ale' above is a stout defence of revelry in human life. It is a pert/ an effective comment on Olivia's attitude of mourning for her brother's loss that banishes all revels from her house. Malvolio is the target as he is also the most foolish propagator of this approach.

But the play has yet another title, 'What you will'. It is also the title of one of Marston's plays. The introduction to that play has a dialogue in which a character asks as to what is the title.

Another answer, what you will. The play proposed is an amalgam/mixture of comedy, tragedy, pastoral, moral or what not. It is like "a slight toy, lightly composed, too swiftly finished, ill-plotted..." and Twelfth Night seems to fit into the definition as explained below.

The play is avowedly

a Comedy that includes the fun and humour born of mistaken identity, of over-indulgent passion as in Malvolio. The last scene where Sebastian and Viola look in pleasant wonder at each other is a perfect Comedy of Reconciliation. The intrigue of Sir Toby Belch and Maria to entrap Malvolio and Malvolio's funny response are all packed with fun, raillery, wit and humour. But the episode of Viola concealing her mute love for the Duke and the scene where Malvolio is declared mad are verging on the pathetic. In fact, Shakespeare here touches his episodes and plots them in a rare spirit of comedy. It displays human life in all its variety.

The play is a perfect specimen of Shakespearean comedy where life expands and revels ~~in~~ around strange ideas and fancies. The code of the truth is not one, as in tragedy, but many, as life does not consist of one situation. The perfect craftsman that he is, he ~~was~~ re-weaves the various threads of the play at the end into a happy episode of love and forgiveness.

The End

Poohe