

Write a short note on the Wife of Bath in “The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales”.

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The Wife of Bath is one of the most memorable characters in Chaucer's (1340-1400) "The General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales." She is introduced in the General Prologue as a woman who has been married five times and is looking for her sixth husband. Here is a general discussion of her character.

Physical Description: The Wife of Bath is a large, bold, red-faced woman wearing elaborate clothing. Her kerchiefs weigh ten pounds and her stockings are scarlet red. She has gap teeth, is considered unattractive, and wears a hat that is as broad as a shield. Chaucer says about her,

She was a worthy womman al hir lyve;

Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,

Personality: The Wife of Bath is confident, outspoken, and opinionated. She is unafraid to speak and is proud of her many marriages. The Wife of Bath has been married five times, and each marriage has ended in the death of her husband. She is also sexually liberated and believes that women should have control over their bodies and their sexuality.

Religious Beliefs: The Wife of Bath claims to be a pious Christian, but her interpretation of Christianity is unorthodox. She believes that the Bible supports her views on marriage and sexuality and argues that Jesus himself had no problem with sex.

Views on Love: The Wife of Bath believes that true love can only be found in a relationship where both partners are equal. She argues that women should have the right to choose their husbands and that love and marriage should be based on mutual attraction. She knows the remedies of love. Chaucer states,

*Of remedies of love she knew per chauncé,
For she koude of that art the olde daunce.*

To conclude, the Wife of Bath is often regarded as a feminist icon due to her outspokenness and assertiveness. She challenges traditional gender roles and asserts her agency in love and marriage. Despite living in a patriarchal society, she refuses to be submissive or passive. This is how Chaucer represents the Wife of Bath.