Modern Retelling

In this modern version of the *"Wife of Bath's Tale",* the persona of the knight is changed with Jose Silver, a 19-year-old college athlete whose presence is often blended with a sense of entitlement. After a gala, Jose, while heading back to the dorm, selects a random girl named Rebecca Jones and abuses her. The woman arrives at the university and reveals all his deeds, for which the university further imposes a strict investigation on the issue. The woman afterwards rejects such charges against Jose. Still, the university remains determined to put Jose on academic notice and wants him to run through a restorative justice program. Identical to the Knight in Chaucer's tale, Jose is allowed to vindicate himself, only by an opportunity that he would be able to fulfil a task. He had to interview 30 women and give the queen the answer to the question she presents to the knight, *"What do women really want?"* (Chaucer).

At first, Jose greets the task as a mere nuisance. He held a notebook and went everywhere on campus. He was waiting for his food at the cafeteria, and he even worked in the library. Thereby, he approached women who entered and asked them questions. He was getting puzzled by their responses. While some of them prioritised respect, others demanded safety. While some of them demanded similar rights of salary equal to men, a couple of them shoved him away. Jose tried to comprehend his new knowledge, though he knew these were so minimal that he could not conclude. Through these, he resembled the experience of the knight from the original text, where he *"could not discover / the thing that would save his life"* even though he approached every single woman he met (Chaucer). The knight knew that women are not a single, predictable group. On the other hand, Jose, in the same way, understood a similar truth where he found there is no simple one-sentence answer to his question.

Jose is getting more disturbed by such confusion and has turned out to be desperate because of the deadline of this interview project. Similar to the knight, he was getting horrified and went back to the university directors without a concrete solution. One day, Jose, while passing by a café, met a women's empowerment workshop. Trinity, an elderly lady with a guttural voice and a pastel scarf, invites him there. She listened to the whole story from Jose, though she was never biased. Then she offers Jose something similar to the riddle from the old woman in "*The Wife of Bath's Tale".* She was attentive and showed a desire to assist Jose, though she asked Jose to promise to complete a lesson that he had not yet realised. Jose had no option, so he agreed.

Trinity answers everything to Jose, including the origins that might have condensed to one concept that woman seeks power to make their own choices. She further spells out that if a woman addresses safety, love, respect, or equality, then all these wants highlight one thing: autonomy. It is similar to what the old woman from Chaucer's tale has spoken, "*sovereignty over their husbands… and… mastery over their loves"* (Chaucer). Jose confesses that this topic has been raised umpteen times, though he was looking for the exact answers without getting confused about them. Trinity assisted him in drafting the final report for his university project.

After everything, just like the "*Wife of Bath's Tale"*, Jose discovers that the answers are easy enough to face that to live by them. Trinity, in the context of agreement, called for Jose to be her volunteer for a sixteen-week youth mentorship program at her centre. Initially, Jose really enjoyed the program, though he disliked the idea of people giving him instructions, and he had never heard of a woman who was the boss. Nonetheless, to keep the promise, he attended the program. As time flies, he understands that Trinity wants him to make a decision, communicate

with people in a disciplined way, and work together with people. She never gives an order, though she had expectations of him. The trust forces Jose to change his own actions.

The change slowly but inevitably affects him. He asks people how they like to be talked to. He becomes more cautious of people's personal space. By noticing the leadership style of Trinity, Jose has understood that for most of his life, he has been thinking that his vision is the most vital one. Now his worldview has evolved while dealing with women. He started fulfilling certain expectations and limitations they have. The humility he receives is parallel to a moral lesson. It resembles the *"Wife of Bath's Tale"*, as women want freedom, peace, and respect. The old woman from the tale, after being given authority, is not just beautiful, but also committed to the knight (Chaucer). Jose's reward is different, though similarly important, as he ends up being empathetic, aware, and mature over time.

Apparently, the semester came to an end, and Jose has completed his community service responsibilities and is still volunteering on his own accord. For the first time, his feelings are getting valued in reality. At the time of his final check-in meeting, his university dean remarked that Jose had changed, and it had already been seen in his report card. Not only the report, but he also heard this from the witnesses. Jose could even realise his changes and betterment. Similar to the knight, he was also egocentric and less sensitive. The difficulty, humility, and the support afterwards by the wise woman further changed him. The lesson that respect is not a rule, but a way of living and entrusting power to choose to others is the basis of a real relationship has been taught by her.

Work Cited

Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Wife of Bath*. Penguin UK, 2015.