



An Ecological Approach to Selected Turkish Folk Tales

Seçilmiş Türk Halk Masallarına Ekolojik Bir Yaklaşım

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Abstract

In this article, we investigate selected Turkish animal tales that include ecological sensitivity and consciousness. From an ecological perspective, all living and non-living creatures, including human beings, are connected to one another like a chain, and each one is equal. Unlike the anthropocentric point of view, which sees humans as the rulers of the universe, ecocentrism regards every being as having equal importance, value, and place in the universe. It does not give any extra privileges to humans. In ecocentric thought, every being is in close relationship with others and affects them. These beings' actions and words influence one another. Folk tales, as extensions of myths and products of the collective unconscious, enable

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the discovery of nature's beauties, its unknown or unrecognized secrets, and address issues of creation and cosmogony. Folk tales, which encode the awareness of protecting nature and environmental consciousness in symbols, invite human beings to be conscious and responsible towards nature. Many tales, which also contain important messages regarding environmental ethics, guide the reader on a journey of maturation and help lay the foundations for a healthy, balanced, and conscious future. In these tales, one wrong done to another affects all the other beings in the system, and its effects are difficult to compensate for. Conversely, acts of goodness are profusely rewarded and lead to peace and balance, not only within the community but also within the characters' inner lives. Rejecting anthropocentrism, the eco-centered attitude defends and prioritizes nature's well-being. The tales offer numerous teachings for humanity. The ecocentric stance in these tales prescribes that humans should learn from the workings, harmony, and elements of nature. They reveal the advantages of goodness and virtue while exhibiting the disadvantages brought about by wickedness. They emphasize that nature possesses wisdom, and if humanity conforms to its wisdom and order, it will lead a life of pleasure. Rebirth is possible when a member of nature harms its elements or rhythm but later becomes repentant and remedies the harm. In this article, using the methods of eco-criticism, these points are analyzed and illustrated.

Keywords: *Turkish folk tales, ecological consciousness, ecocentrism, eco-criticism.*

Öz

Bu çalışmada ekolojik duyarlılık ve bilinç içeren seçilmiş Türk hayvan masallarını ele almaktayız. Ekolojik bakış açısında insanlar dahil bütün canlı ve cansız yaratıklar bir zincir gibi birbirlerine bağlıdırlar ve her biri eşittir. İnsanı evrenin yöneticisi olarak gören insan merkezli bakış açısının tersine, ekomerkezcilik evrendeki her varlığın eşit önem, değer ve yere sahip olduğunu kabul eder. İnsana fazladan bir imtiyaz atfetmez. Ekomerkezli düşüncede her varlık diğer varlıklarla yakın ilişki içindedir ve diğerlerini etkiler. Bu varlıkların eylem ve konuşmaları diğerleri üzerinde etkilidir. Masallar, mitlerin uzantıları olup doğanın güzelliklerini, bilinmeyen ya da farkında olunmayan sırlarını keşfetmeyi sağlayan, yaratılış ve kozmogoni konularına gönderme yapan kolektif bilinç dışının üretimleridir. Doğaya sahip çıkma farkındalığının ve çevre bilincinin sembollerle kodlandığı masallar, insanoğlunu doğaya karşı bilinçli olmaya ve sorumluluk duymaya davet eder. Çevre etiği açısından da önemli mesajlar içeren birçok masal, okuyucuyu erginlenme (maturation) yolculuğuna yönlendirir ve sağlıklı/dengeli/bilinçli bir geleceğin temellerinin atılmasına yardımcı olur. Masallarda bir üyeye yapılan haksızlık sistemdeki bütün üyeleri etkiler ve bu haksızlığın etkilerini telafi etmek zordur. Öte yandan, yapılan bir iyilik hesapsızca ödüllendirilir ve yalnızca topluluğun işleyişinde değil, karakterlerin iç dünyalarında da huzur ve dengeyi sağlar. İnsan-merkezciliği reddeden ekomerkezci tutum, doğanın refahını savunur ve önceler. Masallarda insanlık için çok sayıda öğreti vardır. Masallardaki ekomerkezci duruş insanların doğanın düzeni, uyumu ve unsurlarından öğrenecekleri olması gerektiğini öngörür. Masallar, iyilik ve erdemin avantajlarını açılmakla kötülüğün getirdiği dezavantajları gösterir. Doğanın bilgelik sahibi olduğunu ve insanlığın bu bilgelik ve dü-

zene uyarısa keyifli bir hayat süreceğini vurgular. Masallarda, doğanın bir üyesi onun unsurlarına veya ritmine herhangi bir zarar getirirse ve sonradan pişman olup bunu telafi ederse yeniden doğuşu mümkündür. Çalışmamızda, eko-eleştiri yöntemiyle bu noktaları açımlayıp gösterdik. Çevre kirliliği ve tahribatı kaçınılmaz olup gelecek nesiller için hayati bir tehdit oluşturmaktadır. Doğadaki canlı ve cansız tüm varlıklar yaşam döngüsünün bir parçasıdır; Bu döngünün sağlıklı işleyebilmesi için olumlu tutum ve davranışların sergilenmesi, ideal örneklerin öne çıkarılması gerekmektedir. Ekolojik düşüncede doğadaki tüm canlılar iyilik üzerine kodlanmıştır ancak yaşam sınırları ihlal edildiğinde kötülük yaparlar. Ekosistemdeki tüm varlıklar birbirine bağlıdır ve meydana gelen parçalanma/bağılantısızlık dengeleri bozar. İnsanoğlu, aklıyla diğer canlılardan üstün sayılırken, bilinçsiz davranışlarıyla ekolojik dengeye en büyük zararı veren insandır. Hayvanların kişileştirildiği ve mecazi olarak başkarakterler, yardımcı kahramanların figürleri veya gerçek insanlar olarak kullanıldığı bu masallarda, hayvanlar nesne değil, baskın öznelere veya insanlarla eşittir. Sessiz ve pasif olarak değil, lider, aktif ve çoğu zaman insanlardan daha zeki ve makul olarak gösteriliyorlar. Bu rol ve konumlarıdaki hayvanlar akıl, mantık, bilinç, ruh ve bireysellik özelliklerine sahip olduğundan, seçilen masalların insan merkezli değil, insanı yücelten ve önceleyen çevre merkezli eserler olduğu sonucuna varılabilir.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Türk halk masalları, ekolojik bilinç, ekomerkezcilik, ekoeleştiri.*

Introduction

In the human-centered perspective, the human being, who is at the center of the lifecycle, has a dominant quality and role that turns/stops the wheel in the survival of the others. Therefore, it has also the right to exploit, abuse and plunder nature for her/his own interests. On the other hand, in the eco-centric point of view, not man, but animate and inanimate nature is in the center and man is only an ordinary member of this system. Aldo Leopold prescribes: “a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such” (1987: 204). Leopold defines man not as superior to nature, but as a being within and belonging to it. One must learn always to have an admiration, respect and gratitude for other beings. However, since s/he is ‘the most intelligent and the most reasonable’ and most capable of governing among living beings, her/his awareness of nature is essential for the protection, well-being and renewal of it.

In this context, it is essential for people to adopt a holistic view of life emphasizing the integrity of nature, human and all life, and to lead a simple life for self-actualization. Considering the interests of nature, with a new ethical order, moral understanding and perspective, people should redefine their relationship with nature based on respect, love, responsibility and harmony. One should understand that all living and non-living beings (ecosystem) are in direct communication and interaction with one another. All living and non-living beings in the universe are interconnected and affect one another. Therefore, one should know that when s/he harms any creature in this system, s/he will in fact harm herself/

himself, other beings and future generations.

Tales are folk narratives that are interpreted with universal and national symbols in the mythological journey of humanity's existence. Tales, which are the productions of the collective unconscious, bring the generations together in the present within the context of the past and the future through the rich cultural codes they carry. Many folk tales, which also contain important messages in terms of environmental ethics, guide the reader to the journey of maturation and help lay the foundations of a healthy/balanced/conscious future. They suggest an ecological social order and way of life. In these tales, since the health of all the elements that humanity needs depends on the health of nature, its intrinsic and aesthetic value is exalted. Human beings also make their own happiness possible by leaving other beings in peace to live in accordance with their own natures.

Through an ecocritical approach to folk tales, the organic ties of folk tale heroes with the living and non-living world can be revealed. In the folk tale world, the dialogue of the beings in nature, especially animals with human beings, the cooperation of animals among themselves and the kindness they do to human beings are important in terms of drawing attention to the beauty of the pure world in nature. It is only human beings who cheat the purity of the wild world. Therefore, everyone who looks at 'mother nature' as a lesson will have awareness and protect the ecological order. "Ecocriticism, which tries to create an ecological awareness in people by building a bridge between literature and science, elevates nature from being a romantic and idealized object or a being put into the service of human beings to a scientific platform" (Bulut Sarıkaya 2012: 96). Ecocritical method benefits from positive scientific fields like biology and geography and tries to integrate them with literary elements. Through ecocriticism, nature abandons the role of being only a source of inspiration or a servant for humanity and is cherished as a noble being. When the folk tale texts are approached from an ecological point of view, it is seen that human beings in these texts are advised to love and protect nature, so that they can leave a healthy and balanced life to future generations. People should adopt an ethical and reasonable attitude toward nature full of respect and love. According to Love, "Ecocriticism, as a newly-emerging field of literary study, seems uniquely positioned to benefit from interdisciplinary crossovers with the sciences and to avoid the two-culture conflicts of the past" (1999: 561). In the works dealt with, nature/culture dualism, which refers to the dichotomy and conflict between humans and nature is explicated and subverted, too.

In this study, the existence of ecological consciousness in folk tales is revealed by considering the communication of animals among themselves and with human beings in the selected Turkish folk tale texts. The subject can be discussed in two subheadings:

1. The strange touch of animals: The butterfly effect of kindness

The Turkish people, who experienced the nomadic life on horseback, reflected the animal world, which they blessed, loved and respected in their literary texts, especially in

their tales. Folk tales are the narratives that convey the traces of real life through the world of symbols and bring the individual to awareness through a journey into the unconscious. “Animals were the biggest helpers of people to survive and continue their lives in the steppe climatic conditions prevailing in Turkish geographies” (Doğan Arslan, 2000 : 230). When the communication of animals in folk tales is considered by an ecocritical point of view, the messages they give to human beings are better understood. Observing nature, human beings should respect all living and non-living beings that have a role in the lifecycle. The events fictionalized in the tales conveyed in this framework express that nature has an intrinsic value. When the life story of nature is evaluated with the eye of an example, it is understood that everything has an intrinsic and important value in existence, that they are interconnected and that all beings have a separate and important place in the cycle of nature. Wisdoms encoded with symbols in folk tales are immortalized by the fiction of the common unconscious.

The ‘Biocentric Ethical Approach’ within the ecologist movement emphasizes the integrity of all living species. According to Paul W. Taylor (1923-2015), one of the representatives of this movement, each living thing has functional importance in the biosphere (the sphere that hosts living things) and animals are legal subjects. In a deontological sense, apart from animals, plants and all other living things must also be protected, because all living beings, whether developed or not, are ethical values. They are good, and life itself is the main criterion. There is equality, not hierarchy, among living things. Kılıç summarizes some rules that draw attention in Taylor’s biocentered ethical approach: nonmaleficence, non-interference, fidelity, restitutive justice, and doing goodness to others (2008: 168-69). The tales, which deal with these rules with the sense of helping animals among themselves, advise human beings that the beauty and balance of nature should be protected. The virtue of doing good, conveyed through the language of animals in folk tales, generates a butterfly effect and forms a chain of beauty. The following examples can be given:

In the folk tale *Kariyle Tilki (The Dame and the Fox)* collected from the Syrian Turkmen, a fox eats a can of butter and honey, on the pretext of helping the old woman. When the old woman realizes this situation, she cuts off the fox’s tail. When the fox wants its tail back, the old woman tells the fox to give her honey and butter back. Then the fox goes to the bee for honey and asks him for honey. The bees tell the flowers to bloom, and when they eat them, they will make honey. The fox asks the bees to make honey from the flowers. In return, the flowers want the well to overflow. At the end of the tale, the girls bounce on the well and the well overflows. The flowers bloom, the bees land on the flower and make honey, and the fox gives the honey from the bees to the old woman and takes back her tail (Youssef, 2014: 148). In the tale, the fox pays for the evil he has done and realizes the difficulty of the compensation of the harm done to nature. Helping the fox in a difficult situation with the cooperation of all plants and animals is to contribute to the perfect beauty, harmony and order of nature. The tale in question emphasizes that the individual should look at nature as an example and take a lesson from it in order to have the chance to re-exist in a blissful

milieu. The people and animals in the tale understand one another and try to re-build the nature's cycle, beauty, well-being, goodness and order.

In the folk tale *Grandma and the Fox*; Grandma cuts off the tail of the fox that drinks her milk. The fox whose tail is torn off is ostracized by his friends. Thereupon, the fox asks the grandmother for his tail. Grandma asks for a bucket of milk to give his tail back. When the fox asks the cow to give him milk, the cow tells him to bring grass from the mountain. The mountain says if it rains, she can give grass. The fox tells the wind to gather the clouds together and with the help of the wind it rains. It rains, grass grows on the mountain, cows eat the grass and make milk. The fox takes the milk and gives it to the grandmother and takes its tail again. He joyfully picks up its tail and joins his friends (Korkmaz, 2015: 286-287). In the tale, the fox turns his sadness into joy with the help of the cow and the mountains, wind and clouds in nature. In nature, all beings who understand their mistakes and make amends are given another chance. In addition, in case of sadness and need, everyone/everything fights with unity and solidarity to regain happiness. In the tale, the fact that a lot of effort will be required to compensate for a mistake made against the ecological order emerges. Additionally, the tale essentially suggests that eco-centered life has a healthy continuity. It is also essential to compensate for the mistake made against nature, to make sacrifices for its goodness and well-being, and to forgive other beings when necessary.

In the folk tale *The Ant and the Grasshopper*, the grasshopper speaks to pigs, crows, chickens, rats, cats, cattle, farmers, trees and clouds and asks for help in order to save his friend ant, who is about to drown in the sea. The ant tells him to bring the pig's hair to save him from the grasshopper so that he can cling to it and climb to the mansion. The pig tells the grasshopper that he will give his hair in exchange for bringing nuts from the tree. The tree asks the crow not to eat the nut in order to give it its nut. Grasshopper satisfies the chicken and finds a chick for the crow and prevents the tree from eating the nut. He takes feed from Uru¹ to the chicken. In return for this favor, Uru asks him to keep the rat away from their feed. The grasshopper flies to the rat and tells him not to eat Uru's food. Upon the rat's request, he goes to the cat and prevents it from touching the rat. The cat asks the cow to bring milk. The cow gives milk in exchange for grass. The grasshopper asks the farmer for grass. The farmer wants the clouds to rain. With the events unfolding in a chain, the grasshopper saves his friend (Bakırcı, 2010 (a): 549-552). In the folk tale, the struggle of the grasshopper to save the ant depends on seeing the actions of other beings as the reason for his own existence. This point refers to the ideal and ecological identity in that the grasshopper perceives the ant's well-being as its own *raison d'être*. This is also closely related to the idea of reverence for life in general because we should not

envison reverence for life merely as some rule that we could apply to specific situations and, as it were, simply be read as the recommended decision. Reverence for life is more an attitude that determines who we are than a rule for determining what we should do. It describes a character trait a moral virtue rather than a rule of action. A morally good person stands in awe of the inherent worth of each life (Jardins, 2013: 134).

In ecological thought, all beings in nature are considered living and are responsible for ecological balance. People, animals, plants, even inanimate beings are a part of this natural balance. The fact that the well in which the grain is buried is considered alive and that the rat does not touch its grain in return for the favor requested is to fulfill the duty of preserving abundance and wealth. In this sense, the concept of ‘chain of being’ also reveals itself as an ecological reference; all beings generally need each other’s existence. Everyone must take responsibility in preserving the balance in nature. In the tale, the grasshopper makes the biggest sacrifice. The grasshopper, which asks for hair from the pig to save its friend ant who has fallen into the water, acts as a mediator by rushing to meet the needs of all beings in the chain. In this sense, the tale advises the reader/listener to be more responsible toward nature in order to live and to have the sensitivity of a grasshopper. Nature punishes those who act indifferently toward what they see, primarily by excluding them. On the other hand, having a ‘we’ consciousness means meeting a life full of beauty together. In the folk tale, the importance of preserving the balance of nature is emphasized with the philosophies/mottos of ‘respect for nature’ and ‘never reach out for more than you need’ in the language of animals.

In the tale *The Falcon That Steals the Tripe* while a woman was washing the tripe, the falcon kidnaps it and leaves. The woman begs the falcon to bring the tripe back or her husband will kill her. The falcon asks the hen for chicks in return, and the hen asks for feed in return. When the woman asks the threshing floor to give her feed, the threshing floor asks for the pine broom. The woman begs the pine tree and it says that it will give the pine broom in exchange for the axe. The woman goes to the blacksmith to get the axe. The blacksmith says he will give the axe in exchange for yoghurt. The woman begs the cow to give her yoghurt. The cow says she will give yoghurt in exchange for grass. The woman goes to the meadow and asks for grass, and it tells her to beg the cloud to give it rain in return. When the cloud says that it will give rain if the sea makes steam, the sea begs the sun to warm it. Finally, the sea warms the sun and the wishes of all beings are fulfilled in a chain. Nature is based on a balance of give and take and all beings need each other. As a matter of fact, the struggle of the woman to take the tripe and prevent her husband from killing her is the same as the struggle for life of other living beings. It is the reason for existence that all beings in the world take care of each other with positive thinking. As a matter of fact, the death or negative judgement of one of them means the death of the other living being (Alptekin, 2005: 282-285).

In the folk tale *The Fruit of Friendship* turtle, deer and crow become friends. They do not act without asking each other. One day the deer falls into a trap. When the crow cannot save him, he takes the turtle and takes him to the deer to save him. The turtle saves the deer by gnawing the ropes with its teeth. After the owner of the trap comes and sees what is happening, he wants to separate the turtle from its shell. The deer and the crow do not leave their friend. The deer falls down next to the turtle. When the owner of the trap catches up, it runs away again. In this way, the it distracts the owner of the trap and disappears from

sight. At the end of the tale, the deer saves the turtle from death too, and they continue their lives together away from danger (Bakırcı, 2010 (b): 703-704). The folk tale conveys the importance of protecting loved ones by risking death and being happy together. It is emphasised that a society acting with a sense of “us” can achieve eternal happiness.

The folk tales of *The Price of Goodness* (Şimşek 2001: 41), *Gangan Bird* (Bakırcı, 2006: 203) and *The Phoenix* (Alptekin, 2002: 296-297), have the same plot. The Phoenix brings the hero from the underground to the earth because he saves his youngster from the snake. The tales in question explain the butterfly touch, which our ancestors expressed as ‘do good, find favor’, the positive interaction of creatures. It means that they can/do only survive by supporting each other in the natural cycle.

In the folk tale *The Girl Who Eats Man*, when the young man removes the thorns of the lion that pricked its feet, the lion gives the young man his feathers and tells him to burn these feathers when he is in trouble. Thanks to the feathers, the young man summons the lion and escapes from his man-eating sister (Özçelik, 2004: 359). In the folk tale *Mehmet the Lion*, the lions that Mehmet feeds later do him favor and save him from difficult situations. The lions leave food for the hero, who was thrown into the well by his mother, ensuring his survival (Alptekin, 2002: 236). In the tale, the symbol of the sun, the lion helps the heroes who are thrown into the well or to the depths of the forest, gives life to the heroes by assuming the quality of motherhood. As seen in the tale, only a small touch is enough for every new and beautiful beginning. Wild nature never forgets the good done to it and returns it abundantly. This form of behavior encoded in memories is the functioning process of nature and the creatures in nature. On the other hand, any behavior that goes against this balance is never forgiven, and what they have is taken back from human beings.

In the folk tales *Red Fish* (Yardımcı, 2012: 112) and *The Fisherman's Son and The Fish That Does Good* (Sakaoglu, 2002: 281-283), the hero catches the fish that will cure his father's illness, but cannot resist the beauty of the fish and throws it back into the sea. The fish, whose life was saved by being thrown into the sea, provides various help to the hero. Fish, the symbol of abundance and wealth that lives in the mythical and fluid structure of water containing rich minerals, brings countless beauties to the hero's life. “Fish, a religious-mythical motif, is one of the transformation forms of the human soul” (Alsaç, 2020: 241). Acting with the power of intuition and faith, the hero throws the fish he caught into the water and brings it back to life. As a source of internal energy, Fish expresses the hero's own self and helps him change and transform himself in a positive way. In the folk tale called *The Ring of Şahmeran* (a Middle-Eastern mythological figure whose name means ‘the ruler of snakes’), it is told that a poor boy saves a snake, dog and cat from death in exchange for twenty cents. The favor and help done is then returned to the child as a favor. The rescued snake is the son of Şahmeran and gives the ring to the hero as a reward. Thanks to the magic ring, the hero achieves everything he wants (Günay, 2011: 331-336). In the tale, the snake does not leave the hero's favor unrequited. The snake, which symbolizes the unconscious in the theory of transformation of mother nature, tries to illuminate the darkness with its

butterfly effect. With the magic ring she gives to her savior, she accelerates his countless good deeds while fulfilling all his wishes. “The snake is the dynamic of the circle (ring); it is also the symbol of movements that show continuity” (Ersoy, 2007: 271). Snake and ring symbols are the expressions of rebirth/renewal and always denote the journeys of searching for the best and the beautiful. A life in harmony with nature, with an ecological identity, and led according to the codes of nature, will of course be rewarded with goodness and peace.

In the folk tales, the exemplary attitude of all beings in nature, which is built on goodness and instills beauty in human beings, is exhibited. Nature is the source of existence and has the transcendent power of continuous energy. In the examples, the effort of animals to do good in return for goodness is the world of values that nature wants to remind human beings. The ecological approach in folk tales shows that nature provides the continuity of life with beauties and that small positive/negative touches can produce great results.

2. The mysterious wisdom of the wild world and rebirth by listening to the voice of nature

In the ecological cycle, all existing beings are in need of one another. When a person is at the center of this cycle assuming herself/himself superior, s/he disrupts the balance rather than establishing it, preventing the healing of the environment. Mankind, who does not listen to the voice of nature, destroys all living and non-living beings by not spending the necessary effort in protecting biodiversity. The collective unconscious renders animals in the magical world of folk tales to invite humanity to this awareness. Folk tales, which aim to show the society the beauties that it cannot see and to reveal the secrets it cannot solve, aim to activate the extraordinary feelings of cooperation and kindness of human beings by making nature speak. The values to be conveyed within the framework of the human-nature relationship also guide the individual’s self-actualization.

In the folk tale of *The Revelation of the Fox* compiled from the Uighur Turks, the harmony of nature is compared with today’s deteriorated environmental structure using the expression ‘in ancient times’: mountain goats, wild sheep, rabbits, squirrels, quails, pheasants, in short various animals live very friendly in a place full of beautiful grasses and rushing waters (Ardoğan, 2009: 234). In the folk tale, the setting up of animals in a world of fraternity, unity, peace, love and equality in ancient times shows that inner peace and eternal happiness go through having co-consciousness. Nature is the reality that whispers to human beings that the existence of purity, naturalness and beauty are in their own hands. By changing perception, human beings can become aware of the secrets of this mysterious world. In this sense, tales have an important role in establishing nature-human communication.

For the sake of both themselves and the ecosystem, human beings should aim to identify themselves with natural elements and adopt a new and comprehensive identity by putting themselves in the place of living or non-living things. In this sense, “ecological identity

refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relationship to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and sense of self. Nature becomes an object of identification” (Thomashow, 1996: 3). Folk tales are texts that tell about the mythical past of man and they imply that ecological identity is the basic condition for the absolute happiness of man and all beings. In this mythical and ancient world, the world of folk tales, ecological identity, therefore harmony and happiness, dominates.

In folk tales, birds have mysterious wisdom. Human beings who understand their language or listen to nature, manage to get out of the difficult situations they are in. The following examples can be given:

In the tale of *Shah Ismail*, Shah Ismail’s eyes are opened by the wisdom of the birds, whose eyes were taken out and thrown into the well. Two birds look at Shah Ismail, who was pulled out of the well by the gypsies, and say: “If he knows our language, let’s leave two leaves here, let him put them in his eyes, his eyes will open” (Günay, 2011: 159-160). Listening to the birds, Shah Ismail finds the leaves, rubs them in his eyes and his eyes are opened. In the folk tale “*Mayıl and Ab-i Güneş*”, the eyes of the sultan’s son were gouged out and he was thrown into the reed. Birds speak, “A feather falls from us. He has a left eye in his right pocket, and a right eye in his left pocket. If he takes his eyes, puts them in their places and rubs from our feathers like this, his eyes will be opened” Mayıl, who listens to them as they speak, does what they tell and his eyes are opened (Şimşek, 2001: 242). The protagonist of the folk tale *Pomegranate Seed* is an orphan girl named Pomegranate Seed. Her name is used to express beauty in Turkish culture. The girl who suffers from the abuse of her stepmother is left on the mountainside with her eyes gouged out. A bird goes up to the girl: “Oh, if that little girl knew the bird language, she could know there is grass on both sides. If she takes the grass and puts it in her eyes, if she rubs her saliva in her eyes, it will be better than it used to be” (Alptekin, 2002: 287). Applying what she hears from the birds, the girl regains her eyesight. In the folk tales, the doors of endless help are opened to human beings who reach ecological consciousness by overcoming the limits of impossibilities. It should not be forgotten that nature lends a helping hand to every living thing and everyone who listens to it and tries to understand it, both in folk tales and in ecological philosophy.

In some folk tales, the rabbit finds a cure for death with its wisdom. In the tales called *Herb of Life* (Sakaoğlu, 2002: 432) and *Herb of Cure for Death* (Bakırcı, 2006: 275), the hero is killed by slaughter, but if the life herb is found, the hero will be resurrected. The rabbit finds the herb of life and the hero is resurrected. Sometimes the hero applies what he has learned by observing the animals in nature and finds a cure for his problem (Sakaoğlu, 2002: 432). In the folk tale called “What I Was, What I’ve Become, What I’ll Be”, when there is no cure for the sick daughter of the sultan, the girl is left on a mountain. She sees a yellow snake drinking water coming out of two rocks at the top of the mountain, and she can’t stand the thirst and drinks from that water. The sultan’s daughter gets rid of her illness when she drinks this water (Özçelik, 2004: 352). In this tale, again, the guiding and compassionate attitude of nature is revealed.

In the folk tale *The Pigeon, the Fox and the Stork*, the fox tells the pigeon standing on the tree with her chicks to throw one of her chicks down or it will climb up the tree and eat them all. The pigeon is very sad as she gives her two babies to the fox, which threatens her every time that it is hungry. The pilgrim stork advises the fox by saying that it cannot climb the tree and that it was in vain that she fed her babies to the fox. When the fox gets hungry again, the pigeon does as the stork says and challenges the fox. Thus, she saves herself and her only offspring from dying (Korkmaz, 2015: 287-289). In the tale, the stork helps the pigeon by giving advice to her, who cannot see the truth or act logically due to the distress of the situation. In return, the stork enjoys the satisfaction of being a helper. This communication and awareness among animals is a good example for humanity, which is indifferent and uninterested. A kindness done to someone else's life is actually an investment in the individual's own feeling well. The knowledge learned and taught with unrequited love is an endless source of change and transformation for nature/humanity. Love and compassion are the only powers that can renew nature.

The exemplary behaviors in folk tales indicate that animals should live in accordance with their own nature and that they should always be respected and appreciated. Additionally, it is explained how “[a]nimals are accepted as will with their intuition and intelligence” (Doğan Arslan, 2000: 222). Nature is the center of awareness that guides us to open the mysterious doors of the unknown. It is a road map full of endless wisdom for individuals who observe it, understand its language and take care of it. Every individual who is eco-conscious and aware of nature will find herself/himself on the threshold of a new change and transformation.

3. An exemplary call to humanity from ‘The Great Mother’: Do good and protect yourself/nature

Folk tales, while conveying the sanctity of the beings in nature with symbols, enable human beings to rediscover themselves by making an archetypal journey in their inner world. “It is seen that nature is an indispensable part of human life and even forms the basis of ancient Turkic beliefs. It is known that in pre-Islamic periods in Turkic culture, it was believed that there were certain spirits in nature and worship was performed to them” (Şimşek, 2019: 94). Folk tales, which act as a mediator in the soul-body relationship, are remarkable in terms of values education. In folk tales, the fact that animals also have spirits and protectiveness is the reflection of pre-Islamic beliefs in the collective unconscious.

In folk tales, animals' communication among themselves and their cooperation efforts include exemplary behaviors for humanity. The most distinctive characteristic of animals seen in folk tales is motherhood. In folk tales, animals such as deer, goats and cows usually take care of helpless and needy human babies with their nurturing and protective mother characteristics. In the pre-Islamic Shamanist period, it was known as ‘The Great Mother’, ‘good feminine spirit’ or ‘Umay cult’. “Umay Ana Maygıl, Ak Ene among the Altai people,

and Ayisit among the Yakuts are the main ones. According to the Altai people, Umay is the female god who protects children and young animals (İnan, 2000: 34). Ayisit is a group of female spirits that provide fertility and prosperity. Some of them protect human babies and women, and some protect animal babies and female spirits. They collect and combine the scattered life elements to make ‘sacredness endowed by God’ (kut) and breathe this into the child in the womb. Thus, they give life to the child. Pregnant women are always under the protection of these spirits (İnan, 2000: 37). The sacred characteristics of feminine spirits are seen in animal tales in the maternal qualities of animals such as goats, cows, deer and lions. The following tales can be given as examples:

In the folk tale *Melikşah*, the hero, whose eyes were gouged out and thrown into the well, is fed by two fawns (Seyidoğlu, 1975: 275). In the folk tale *Zülfü Mavi*, a goat takes care of the children who were left in the bushes by the witch. An old woman has a goat, which is pastured by a shepherd. The goat feeds the children with her milk three times a day by Allah’s grace (Günay, 2011: 179). In the folk tale *The Golden Boy and the Rose Girl*, the children who are put in a basket and thrown into the river by their aunts, hang out among the tree branches on the shore in a forest place. A poor woman’s goat leaves the herd every day and gives milk to these children (Yardımcı, 2012: 134). In the tale *Don’t Be Too Proud My Sultan, God is Greater Than You*, the sultan takes the shepherd’s son and throws him into a river, but the water drags the boy to the shore. A woman’s cow in the village leaves the herd and gives milk to the child and ensures the survival of the child (Bakırcı, 2006: 228). The forest place in the folk tales and the tree branches/mother nature there exemplify different images of ‘The Great Mother’ archetype with its deer, goat and cow/animal mother form. “The ‘mother archetype’ serves as the first step to understanding creation, the meaning of existence and the universe, and this feature is a reflection of the relationship between mother and baby. Just as a baby first perceives the world and existence through its mother, the reflections of societies’ basic ideas about world view, creation and existence are found in the mother archetype” (Fedakâr, 2014: 8). In folk tales, forest areas and tree branches protect children, who are thrown into river. Goats and cows which separate from the herd and endanger themselves for the existence of other beings, try to instill correct codes of behavior in humanity with their main protective/feeding features. ‘The Great Mother’, who eliminates all obstacles that hinder the process of existence, maintains balance and helps others gain confidence and become conscious with her presence.

In folk tales, in addition to the feeding/protecting qualities of animals, their guiding qualities are also encountered. There is a cow who helps and guides the girl who is persecuted by her stepmother in the folk tale *The Orphan Girl*. The stepmother, who sends her daughter to the vineyard every day, gives only barley bread to her to eat. When the girl cannot eat this bread, the cow cries out and tells the girl that she can get good food if she steps into its own ear. The cow yarns the cotton that her stepmother gave her to yarn in its mouth. When the stepmother’s attention is drawn to the girl’s success in all kinds of difficulties, she suspects the cow and asks it to be slaughtered. When the cow learns that

it is going to be slaughtered, it tells the girl to wrap its bones in a white calico and put them under the manger. These hidden bones turn into gold embroidered dresses and horses, helping the girl in her later life (Günay, 2011: 256-258). In folk tale examples, in contrast to the stepmother, ‘The Great Mother’, with her characteristics of mercy, love, affection, commitment, sacrifice, dedication and guidance, creates an endless source for rebirth and new beginnings in the lives of the beings she touches with her unconditional kindness. Even when the cow/Great Mother hears that she is going to be slaughtered, she prevents burnout by continuing to protect and advise with her maternal qualities.

“In the return to nature and space, the values specific to nature and space turn into a structure that shrinks and swallows people, but it also transforms into values of sincerity, enabling the ‘subject-I’ to re-establish itself” (Şahin, 2018: 121). In the examples of folk tales, ‘The Great Mother’ who guides human beings constitutes the essence of existence with her holiness that constantly nourishes it. Nature, with its nurturing, protective and constructive structure, has owned, encompassed and united everything/everyone. Awareness, which is full of beauties waiting to be understood and gives meaning to our existence, helps the individual to generate ideal examples by transcending himself through nature. Human beings acquire the knowledge of life basically as a result of observing nature, trial and error, and making sense of it. Everything in nature, which serves existence in the life cycle, shows that we need and depend on each other, and allows us to re-establish ourselves.

Conclusion

The reasons that threaten the balance, harmony and beauty of nature are basically thoughtlessness, inability to predict the future, negligence and unconsciousness. As a result, environmental pollution and destruction is inevitable and poses a vital threat to future generations. All living and non-living things in nature are part of the life cycle; in order for this cycle to function properly, positive attitudes and behaviors must be exhibited and ideal examples must be emphasized. Tales, which are the productions of the collective unconscious, contain important examples in conveying the truth, good and beautiful to human beings. In the tales discussed, there are various overt aims: to awaken ecological awareness through such feelings as goodness, cooperation, patience, and to consolidate this awareness by transferring it from the language of animals to human beings. Thus, it has been pointed out that a language that remains hidden in the silence of nature should be understood by thinking on it carefully and scrutinizingly.

In the ecological thought, all living things in nature are coded on goodness, but they do evil when their life limits are invaded. All assets in the ecosystem are interconnected, and the fragmentation/disconnection that occurs disrupts the balance. While human beings are considered superior to other living things with their minds, they cause the greatest harm to the ecological balance with their unconscious behaviors. In this study on animal behavior in folk tales, the perspective of nature/animals to ecological balance is evaluated from a literary

point of view. With the tales in which the ecology-literature relationship is discussed, the concepts of bringing identity awareness, conscious behavior and ‘ecological self’ to human beings, being an ideal example, and protecting nature are examined.

In these tales, where the animals are personified and employed figuratively as protagonists, as figures of supporting protagonists, or real humans, they are not objects but dominant subjects or equals to humans. They are shown not as quiet and passive, but as leaders, active, and often more intelligent and reasonable than humans. Since animals in those roles and positions have the characteristics of mind, logic, consciousness, spirit and individuality, it can be concluded that the tales chosen are eco-centric, not human-centered works, which glorify and prioritize humans.

Notes

1 Uru: A well in which grains are buried and stored

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