From Mythological Ages to Anthropocene: Nature and Human Relationship

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Abstract

Ecological problems are some of the most important items on the agenda of humanity in the 21st century. Adding spiritual depth, ethical point of view and basic human traditions to the contribution that human beings provide to ecological problems through intellect will provide realistic and lasting results. In the Palaeolithic Age, where man is under the domination of nature, he owes gratitude to the divine power of nature and worships its elements. With the beginning of industrialization, myths were only old-time stories for humanity. Due to the holism rule of ecology the salvation of nature may be possible by all the living things in the ecosystem behaving in the same way and with the same interaction. Today, there is a need for nature education in which we can teach all mankind that protecting a tree is no different from protecting a forest. Myths in the world we live today remind us of the spiritual, inner richness that nature provides to man; is an effective educational material in the sense that their ancestors can repeat their life integrated with nature. Mythology should be included in nature education. For a qualified nature education, we need the magical atmosphere that mythological stories will create. In addition to this, Duha Kocaoğlu Deli Dumrul Epic will examine the historical ecological perspective of the Turkish community and the messages they give to solve their present ecological problems.

Keywords: nature, myth, mythological ages, Anthropocene (Human Age), Duha Koca's son Deli Dumrul Tale, nature education, nature and human relationship

1. Introduction

One of the most fundamental elements that determine the forms of communication of communities, the perspective of life, and their future is that society's relationship with the nature that it exists in. Today, regarding the ecological problems we either have a deep ecology viewpoint that surrenders to the rules of nature, ignoring the future and progress of humanity or the materialist approach that will exempt us from our responsibilities to nature forever. Although a deep understanding of ecology may bring rational principles for a certain period of time to slow the rapid destruction of nature, neither of these perspectives can produce a permanent solution to the future of humanity. The scientists have called the era that began after the industrial revolution with the destruction of nature in a form that is fast and irreversible *Anthropocene* (Human Age). Thus a geological age in which humankind unlimitedly uses the laws of nature for its own benefit has started. Is it possible to reduce the harm that human causes to nature and to put forth ethical values that are far from personal interests in relation to nature? How is the nature-human relationship in the mythological era? Within the framework of these questions, we will reveal the relationship between nature and man in Turks and the values that have changed and been lost from past to present in the context of Duha Koca's son Deli Dumrul Tale, which is one of the twelve stories of Dede Korkut Epic among the main works of Turkish mythology.

2. Myth and Nature

Mythology enables human's harmony and relation with nature. At a time when natural phenomena could not be explained by science, mythology became a means of explaining obscurities. People were able to explain the events in nature by establishing similarities with their own actions. For this reason, they personalized sky, clouds, thunderstorm, sun, moon, oceans, earthquakes, even whirlwinds (Fiske, 2014, p. 32). One of the oldest beliefs of the Turks is the belief in Sky God. According to W. Thomsen, since the sky was the eternity, the God came into existence and its existence was dependent on our imagination (Ögel, 2006, p. 149). As a component of nature, Heaven, which brought fertility or drought, coldness or warmth, darkness or light to humankind, had

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been an element covering life in an endless form, whose mercy and grace were believed to be needed. On the basis of this belief, sacredness was attributed to the forest, tree, to mountain, water and animals and the path for the relationship between the society and nature was shown through myths. It is unthinkable to give damage to the element to which sacredness is attributed. For this reason, a harmonious relationship with nature was established. The absolute presence of the sky caused the majority of the gods of primitive peoples to bear names reflecting height, Skydome, meteorological elements (Eliade, 2017, p. 105). In the Paleolithic Age, when the collective mind of mankind was dominated by nature, humankind benefited from nature's sources within the framework of respect for it and owed gratitude to this Godly power which did not exist in human.

In the hunting-gathering period, it is seen that the Turks had strong, active and a highly confident character during the centuries in which they lived a nomadic or semi-nomadic life. There are times and strict rules of hunting. It is the power and force caused by the necessity of nature that created this ideal human type. The anger and ambition in the personality of this period's human also come from the desire of the society to prevail against nature (Korkmaz, 2006, pp. 253-254). In this period, myths allow people to learn the secrets that lie in the origins of objects. It is also learned from the myths where the objects can be found and how they can be unearthed again when they disappear (Elliad, 2016, p. 27). They make life easier by shedding light on the obscurities in everyday life. The transition from nomadic lifestyle to settled lifestyle also shaped the structure of society's relations with nature. Humanity began to look at the events of nature with the confidence of the collective mind and knowledge of the ancestors. The continuity of this collective mind and knowledge is also ensured through myths. It is possible to extract the message to be conveyed through myths from the whole of the tale as well as the prohibitions (legal, moral) and punishment in the tale. Mythology also shows how a moral system is established in the relation of human and nature and what is to be done for the continuation of this system. Myths have a vital task at the point of combining the ecological and social elements.

The human character was shaped as less powerful because the discovery of agriculture reduced the need to go hunting and as less active and ambitious because there was no longer need to reach the basic food source in a tough way. During certain periods of nomadic life, tending towards efficient living areas and looking for different sources to make more use of them rather than disrupting them is important for the continuity of nature. Nomadic life does not allow nature to enter into the dominion of human (Saydam, 2011, p. 142). An indicator of the Turks' living in harmony with nature is the animal calendar they used. With the beginning of urban life, mankind needed to manage resources more effectively and the relationship between human beings and nature began to be disrupted due to their constantly using the same source. Human no longer regarded itself as an integral part of nature, but learned to dominate nature. The culture of coexistence enabled the development of the collective mind so they began to produce solutions against the unknown powers of nature. In this process, mythology also started to change because the same myths no longer responded to the needs of the urban people. However, whatever it is, myths are reborn with different tales or with the narration of the same tale's different fiction. Even the emergence of new forms of religion and philosophy has revealed that people cannot do without mythology (Armstrog, 2014, p. 65).

The beginning of industrialization meant that the resources of nature were presented to the service of humanity in a cruel way. Humans' moving away from nature caused them to focus more on production and material values. According to the dominant Western thought, humans were superior to all living things about using resources, they had control over their own destiny; the world provided unlimited opportunities for people; human history was a progress (Özerkmen, 2002, p.174). The enlightenment that came with intelligence found myths useless and dysfunctional. Myths were only old-time tales. This thought would affect the world we are in today inevitably forever. In today's world, we live Myths are an effective educational material in terms of reminding the spiritual, inner richness that nature provides to human beings and being able to repeat the life of ancestors that is integrated with nature.

In an age, in which resources are increasingly depleting today, it is possible to shape the Turkish society's present understanding of nature by showing them their ancestors' relationship with nature by means of mythology. In our lives, if we do not develop an understanding that will fit humanity's current mind power and fill the spiritual void or if we do not reflect this understanding we have developed in the consciousness of the collective, it will not be possible to protect the world from the unavoidable end. Due to the holism rule of ecology, the salvation of nature may be possible by all the living things in the ecosystem behaving in the same way and with the same interaction. Today, there is a need for nature education in which we can teach all mankind that protecting a tree is no different from protecting a forest.

Philosophy, literature, especially verbal culture has a functional place in solving ecological problems on a cultural ground. The philosophers before Socrates attributed their nature interpretations to the equality of the

elements that make up the earth and universal adherence. Nature elements should not be seen as rules that can be altered to meet personal needs and interests but as the elements of an ethical ontology (Bookchin, 2017, p. 86). Myths are cultural elements that are created to be passed on from generations to generations through the philosophical filter of the society they are in.

3. Dede Korkut Epic and Nature-Human Relationship

The stories of Dede Korkut Epic, which we will discuss in our work, are the steppe in the western Isig Lake and the north of the Sirderya River in the 9th and 10th centuries; eastern and northeastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan. It happens in Aphaz province, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Caucasia and Oghuz province. The cities are those that are also known today such as Akça Kale, Trabzon, Cızıglar, Derbend, Hamid, Mardin, Sürmeli, Şiregüven, Bayburt (Gökyay, 2003, p. 11). In the epic, this geography is like a replica of heaven with its mountains, forests, streams, lakes, vegetation and animal diversity. In the tales, the livelihoods of the people are hunting, gathering and animal breeding. For this reason, a harmonious relationship with nature is pictured. So much so, that many elements of nature are personified.

In the semi-nomadic world of Dede Korkut epic, Oghuzs, in the structure we are familiar with, seem to have solved all the problems of the "nature-civilization" transition (Abdulla, 2015, p. 136). In the Epic, there is a rich culture and life style of the Oghuzs that have settled life, unlike the world view and the way of life, (Korkmaz, 2006, pp. 250-251). In the epic, nature shows itself in a very vibrant and effusive way. Even running water is referred to as "bloody water" in the sense of flood waters dragging and drowning people (Ergin, 2000, p. 6). In the epic, metaphors, proverbs, and idioms are used that are created based on very rich natural elements and animals. From these metaphors, we understand the basic characteristics of these elements of nature and the animals and also the value they carry in the daily life of the society. Oghuz people know the value of mother, father, spouse, son, and friend as well as the animals and nature (Binyazar, 2010, p. 86). The number of the animals in Dede Korkut epic proves this opinion. In the epic, there are 358 vocabularies about horses; 79 about camels; 54 about sheep; 40 about bulls; 43 about trees (Derman & Aslan, 2016, p. 211). Living in harmony with nature, found at the core of the nomadic lifestyle, shaping life according to nature, struggling with the mercilessness of nature to survive became the main elements that determine the character of the society in general. In Turkish epics, it is the power and force originating from nature that creates the ideal human type. The hardness and ruthlessness of the nature they lived gave the Oghuz people the character of raider and warrior (Korkmaz, 2006, p. 253). Nature influenced the basic dynamics of the society to a great extent.

In the Tale where Basat Kills Cyclopes, Aruz Koca's son falls while fleeing from the enemy and a lion finds, takes and feeds him. After some time, although they bring this boy home again to Oghuz land after noticing him in the forest, he returns to the lion bed. Dede Korkut intervenes and convinces the boy not to return to nature and gives him a name. Giving name is an important indicator of the transition from nature to civilization. This part states that returning to nature is not possible, acceptable. Returning to nature means getting disconnected from fire, from basic tools that make life easy, weapons (Abdulla, 2015, pp. 135-137). People begin to learn, accumulate knowledge and pass it on to others and the return is both impossible and forbidden.

Superficial ecological perspective produces periodic policies to stop the destruction created by man in nature and to protect the resources whereas deep ecological perspective analyzes the causes of this destruction in nature and tries to put forth principles. However, according to this perspective nature does not belong to humans (Özer, 2001, p.73). According to deep ecology, nature belongs to other species as much as it belongs to humans. As myths pointed out, the idea of deep ecology, based on nature, not human, denies the development of humanity's perception of the world along with many species. We need a power that will combine this superior intellectual power in human with a spiritual balance: Mythology. While discovering what is valuable in pre-modern societies to increase human solidarity, we also have to go beyond all of the narrow-minded and divisive qualities of past and future (Bookchin, 2017, p. 109).

In the tale of Uşun Koca's son Segrek, we see that Kara Tekur has got a grove made and sets up a trap for Oghuz heroes with the geese, chickens, deer, and rabbits that he put in the grove. Trees and animals have always been a source of attraction for Oghuz people. In Looting of Salur Kazan's House Tale, Salur Kazan, finding his homeland in ruins, asks help from the water, wolf- the face of the wolf is accepted to be blessed - and the dog. It is seen that animals are personified.

The aim of a myth was to raise an individual to the awareness of the spiritual dimension which is the natural part of human. (Armstrong, 2014, p. 17) Today, the greatest lack of humans, who exploit all the resources of nature with endless greed, is a mythical environment. When the myths are lost, the coldness and lovelessness of the material come into existence. Today, the real problem with the environmental ethic is that the environment does

not have a value beyond meeting the needs of the individual (Gül, 2013, p. 20). Through the punishments in the mythological narratives, it serves as a lesson for the society, teaches and becomes an example to it (Abdulla, 2012, p. 296).

In the introduction part of the epic, Dede Korkut also gives advice through nature and about nature while giving advice to the Oghuz community. In this advice, the faith in the guidance of nature and the life integrated with nature draw attention. "Wherever you go, the deer know the pastures. Wild ass knows the grass of greenery. Camel knows the tracks of separate roads. Fox knows their smell seven times. At night, mother knows that caravan migrates Horse knows the lightest and the heaviest. The brain knows the pain of unwary head. Lifting up his qopuz, the poet travels from stranger to stranger, from bey to bey. The poet knows the generous man and the stingy man. Let it be the poet playing and singing in front of you. May God avoid the accident that comes furiously lady hey!"

4. Duha Koca's Son Deli Dumrul Epic

At the beginning of the tale, Deli Dumrul goes against the requirement of nature and builds a bridge over a "dry stream". Water is a source of life and the stream providing this source is dried out. In all religious myths, water washes away sins, purifies, and renews (Eliade, 2017, p. 116). This bridge does not serve a social function because it is built on dried stream. Dumrul uses nature here as a matter of interest, forcefully takes money from those crossing this bridge. Moreover, the dryness of the stream indicates that nature is depleted or that the crimes it committed will no longer be forgiven. Nature avoids offering blessings to the hero-and his family-who do not live in peace with it. This situation is like the messenger of a disaster. In Uşun Koca's son Segrek Epic when they think that they will get rid of the bad period that the family is going through Segrek's mother says: "The beautiful flowing water/ Was withdrawn has babbled finally" When human beings are happy, nature is fertile; when nature is fertile human beings are happy. Human and nature is an integral whole. Could the hardness and disharmony in Dumrul's attitudes, doing thuggery in front of the bridge be an internalized reaction to the exhaustion of nature? Is it possible that the fact that the abundant nature, into which he was born, began to withdraw its offerings causing him to be rebellious? What is the problem that causes nature to withhold its sources from Dumrul? Throughout the epic, the expressions of exuberant flowing water, bloody water, pure water, cold spring are frequently seen. Considering that the epic belongs to a fertile geography, where it is abundant in water, it is noteworthy that the water is dried out. In the Looting of Salur Kazan's House Tale, we see Salur Kazan talking with the water which he regards as a living being.

Dumrul rides on the horse that nature provided to him, go to hunting with his hawk. As Azrael flies as a pigeon, Dumrul goes to pigeon hunt with his hawk but he cannot be successful. As it is in many societies with Turkish culture, pigeon is a sacred bird also in Azerbaijan and Anatolia (Kalafat, 2012, p. 148). Hawk is the symbol of khans and heroes (Ögel, 2006, p. 127). Hawk symbolizes power and authority. Dumrul attacks an element of peace with an element of predator (Saydam, 2011, p. 178). It is seen that the elements of nature are tried to be used mercilessly for human interests. Even though Dumrul kills a few pigeons, he cannot catch Azrael. This time Azrael appears in front of the eyes of his horse; the horse gets scared and throws Dumrul to the ground. It is tried to make Dumrul come to his senses through nature and its elements.

Deli Dumrul, asking for forgiveness from Azrael, links the reason of not recognizing him to his drunkenness. He links the reason of this drunkenness to the wine obtained from black grape vines growing in the vineyards on the mountains. He hides behind an excuse such as not knowing what he is saying because he is drunk. Here, nature is being accused by Dumrul of being malicious. However, Dumrul turned the blessing of nature into an element that eliminates the will.

The wine made from black grape vines that Dumrul mentions while asking for mercy from Azrael indicates a period of semi-nomad or settled life. For this reason, there are characters in this story who are far from the understanding of nomadic life, have completed the transition from nature to civilization, leaving nature as heritage, dominating nature in settled life.

Many animals that attract attention especially with the large numbers such as barn full of ram horses, hawk, pigeon, convoys of camels, white sheep in sheepfolds, pied snake and lush habitats such as black mountains with big a hill, cold springs, highlands, vineyards draw attention. Both Deli Dumrul and his father boast of having these animals and lands.

Dumrul's father sees the nature that he lives in as an element that only serves him. It is because when his son asked for life from him, the first thing that he offered to his son instead of his life was the elements of nature that are under his service. He says that he cut nine male camels when his son was born and he can cut his sheep for the sake of Azrael's feast. Instead of his life, he proposes to give the black mountain, which he describes as "mine", springs, horses, the camels, sheep -all of his wealth-. His father boasts by showing that he dominates

nature.

Very similar to the words of his father, Dumrul is also leaving his wife the black mountains as highland, cold water for drinking, horses for riding, camels for load carrying, sheep for eating at the feasts to use after his death. He leaves the elements of nature, to which he has laid claims, to his wife as heritage.

What Dumrul's wife says to her husband, who has informed her of his death and who leaves the legacy of nature's elements, is like a cry. She says that black mountains, highlands, cold waters, a barn full of ram horses do not mean anything if her spouse dies and she says that she can give her life for Dumrul. Dumrul is enlightened with the love of his wife and begs God that he either takes both lives or spares the lives of both of them. God takes the lives of Dumrul's mother and father. He gives 140 years of life to Dumrul and his wife.

Examining the relation of the epic characters with nature, we can learn the character structure of a person and his or her place in society. A person with a harmonious and balanced relationship with nature will keep the same balance in his or her family and in society. Dumrul cannot exhibit a harmonious and balanced character with nature by making a bridge over a dry stream, hunting pigeons with hawk, creating an element from the black grape vines in the mountains that eliminates his will, leaving nature's elements as a legacy, as if they belong to him, just like his father. He is not peaceful, harmonious and balanced in his relationships with his father, his mother, his wife and other people. Owning of natural elements as personal property and leaving them to his wife as heritage are behaviors he has learned from his father. A harmonious and balanced life with nature is a behavior gained in the family especially in pre-modern societies. Therefore, Dumrul's family, who could not transfer this awareness, got punished in this epic.

Humans are part of the nature that they are born into. Trees, water, wolves, birds, horses have the right to live in this nature as much as humans. Humans have equal value with all beings in nature. Nature also serves humans in every sense to the extent that they know its value. Neither society nor nature disappears in one another. Social ecology, without denying the wholeness of each, tries to make a moral continuity by combining the social one with the ecological one (Bookchin, 2017, p. 107). Oghuz people personify the elements of nature and value them as if they are members of the society. In general, there is no concern about respect for nature in the epic. Nature already has Godly power and it is inevitable to respect it.

At the end of all the stories in the epic, Dede Korkut prays about the events in the story. At the end of the seven stories of this epic made of twelve stories, Dede Korkut, makes a wise wish for the continuation of nature. In the story of Duha Koca's Son Deli Dumrul, Dede Korkut, one of the most respected individuals of society, also prays for Oghuzs with the following words: "May your indigenous mountains stand tall! May your big embowered tree never be cut! May your overflowing water never be dried out! May Mighty God protect you from the vile". In this prayer, Dede Korkut makes a wish of a world where the abundance of nature is not lacking. This prayer is also a warning to be in harmony with nature. If it is not done, the result that is waiting for the Oghuzs is revealed.

5. Conclusion

In the Palaeolithic Age, where man is under the domination of nature, he owes gratitude to the divine power of nature and worships its elements. When migrating from a nomadic lifestyle to a settled lifestyle, mankind has begun to look at the events of nature with common sense of trust. The continuity of this common mind and knowledge is also ensured through myths. With the beginning of industrialization, myths were only old-time stories for humanity. In our lives, if we do not develop an understanding that will fit humanity's current mind power and fill the spiritual void or if we do not reflect this understanding we have developed in the consciousness of the collective, it will not be possible to protect the world from the unavoidable end. Due to the holism rule of ecology the salvation of nature may be possible by all the living things in the ecosystem behaving in the same way and with the same interaction. Today, there is a need for nature education in which we can teach all mankind that protecting a tree is no different from protecting a forest. Myths in the world we live today remind us of the spiritual, inner richness that nature provides to man. Mythology should be included in nature education. For a qualified nature education, we need the magical atmosphere that mythological stories will create. Based on Dede Korkut Epic and Duha Kocaoğlu's Deli Dumrul Tale, regarding the nature-human relationship; we see that mortal man cannot own immortal nature, he can only benefit from the opportunities that it offers by living in harmony with nature. These opportunities must be used for the benefit of the society in a correct and reasonable way. Nature may also give damage human beings if not used correctly. Humans are only a small part of the nature. Human beings who think that they own the nature and try to leave it as heritage and consume resources in an unlimited fashion face an inevitable bad end. An abundant nature is humans' greatest luck and human beings must always make effort to protect this luck. In the myths, the depletion of the resources of nature and the situation occurs that is caused by the individuals who do not live in harmony with nature are messages for future generations. The parents, who did not teach their children to have the right relationship with nature, were punished with death in the story. Myths give us the chance to fill the void in our souls and to be different from robots in the age of Anthropocene that we are in now in where resources are consumed limitlessly. The myths that have been reshaped according to the life concept of the people of our age enables peaceful and fair historical background in relation to nature to be better understood by future generations.

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