

Wonder Tales as Spiritual Resources for Education Towards Sustainability

Oral tradition of all cultures reflects a profound spiritual heritage. From an environmental perspective, their motifs not only encompass animals, plants, and ecosystems, but more crucially, convey the idea of the human-nature sustainability. Wonder tales, in particular, animate human lives and impact us from the very start of our spiritual development. By observing and understanding the motifs, readers and listeners gain familiarity with the social knowledge and values.

The paper observes examples from the well-known European collection of fairy tales, like *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* by the Brothers Grimm, where *The Fisherman and His Wife* (KHM 19), for example, illustrates how the insatiable desire for wealth and political power (might) lead to the progressive degradation of the environment, transforming it from »clear water« to »the sky was pitch black, and there was thunder and lightning. Black waves rose up in the sea as high as mountains, and they all had crests of white foam on top« (Grimm 1812/1857/1987, transl. by J. Zipes). The Slovenian *Tale of Zlatorog*, which gained recognition in German-speaking regions after being adapted by Rudolf Baumbach, similarly exemplifies the old teaching of the essential interdependence of humans, plants, and animals.

The Gianbatista Basile's tale *Il misi* (*The Months*) from the collection *Il Pentamerone* will teach us to »let's allow the heavens to follow their own course, since their trees have been made for this purpose: to temper winter's cold with their wood and summer's heat with their branches« (Basile 1636/2007, transl. by N. Canepa). Similarly, *Dvanajst mesecev* (Twelve Months) – well known in the Slavic regions of Central Europe like Slovakia, Ukraine, and Slovenia – indicates the same idea of the heroine being rewarded for sustainable acting in the right season.

The mentioned ancient creations, together with numerous more narratives of varying lengths, surpass many contemporary simplified environmental tales targeted at children in terms of their profound spiritual depth and intricate multi-layered structure.

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