

The Iranian Oannes

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ZOROASTRIAN religious literature is in many parts so fragmentary that it is no easy task to unravel the true signification of various ideas that are merely hinted at in the writings now extant. Many an obscure word is highly suggestive, and an attempt, however feeble, to explain one of these seemingly unimportant allusions, will not prove futile, if it but provoke further research.

Zarathustra, in the 19th Fargard of the Vendîdâd, is assailed by Angra Mainyus (Ahriman), the Power of Darkness, and withstands the assaults. He then praises all the Powers of God; and, among these, he invokes "the Kara fish that lives beneath waters in the bottom of the deep sea". In the Pahlavi Bundahish, which embodies old traditions, it is said that "it was the first day when the tree, they call Gogard (Gaokerena), grew in the deep mud, within the wide-formed ocean, and it is necessary as a producer of the renovation of the universe, for they prepare its immortality therefrom. The evil spirit has formed therein a lizard as an opponent, so [Page 14] that it may injure the Hom (the Gogard tree); and, for keeping away that lizard, Ahura-mazda has created there ten *Kara fish* which at all times continually circle round the Hom, so that the head of one of those fish is continually towards the lizard. And, together with the lizard, those fish are spiritually fed, that is, no food is necessary for them; and, till the renovation of the universe, they remain in contention".

In the Vendîdad, the word is "Karo Masyo". "Masyo", in the Avesta language, means fish; but the meaning of the word "*Kara*" has not been explained anywhere. The verb "*Kar*", in one of its significations, means, to see, to guard; and the description of the Kara-fish, as given in the Bunda-hish, shows that it continually watches the devouring lizard, and preserves the Gogard tree. The Kara fish, then, is a spiritual principle allegorically represented as the fish, that preserves the white Hom or the allegorical tree of life and immortality.

In the Hari Purana, the God Vishnu is shown as having assumed the form of a fish, with a human head, in order to reclaim the Vedas lost during the deluge. Having enabled Visvamisra to escape with all his tribe in the ark, Vishnu, pitying weak and ignorant humanity, remained with them for some time and gave them instruction, As he was half man and half fish, he used to return to the ocean at every sunset and pass the night there.

The narrative seems to be the original of the story given by the Babylonian Berosus about Oannes, the man-fish, who is no other than Vishnu, the Preserving spirit and the second personage of the Brahminic Trinity. This Deity, having already manifested itself, is still regarded as the future Saviour of Humanity and

is the selected Redeemer who will appear at its *tenth* incarnation or *avatar*, like the Messiah of the Jews, to lead the blessed onward, and to restore to them the primitive Vedas. According to the Secret Doctrine, Messiah is the fifth emanation or potency; — so in the Jewish Kabala, the Gnostic system, and the Buddhistic in which the fifth Buddha (Maitreya) will appear at his last advent to save mankind before the final destruction of the world.

If Vishnu is represented, in his forth-coming and last appearance, as the tenth *avatar*, it is only because every unit, held as an androgyne, manifests itself doubly. [Isis Unveiled.Vol -2-, page 259]

In the 19th Fargard of the Vendīdād (para. 5), Zarathustra speaks of himself as ruling till Soshyant, the fiend-smiter, "come up to life out of the lake Kasava from the regions of the Dawn". Sosiosh, the Persian *avatar* that is to come, appears, from the description given of him, to be a permutation of the *tenth* avatar of Vishnu. And the *ten* Kara fish, that are spoken of in the *Bunda-hish*, may probably be the ten phases of the preserving [Page 15] spiritual principle that, from time to time, has manifested itself and will manifest itself in the great teachers of the human races.

In a letter [Theosophist, Vol -2-, page 214] written by a learned Fellow of the Theosophical Society [F.T.S.], from the monastery of Soorb Ovaness (Armenia), the writer says that the Armenians, who, until the 4th and even the 7th centuries of the Christian era, were Parsees in religion, called themselves Haiks or descendants of King Haig. In the forgotten traditions of these people, we find that they claimed to have remained true to the teachings of Zoroaster. These they had accepted ever since Musarus Oannes or Annedotus — the Heaven or Sun-sent (the first Odacon And Daphos, the man-fish) — arising daily from the sea at sunrise to plunge back into it at sunset — taught them the good doctrine, their arts and civilisation. That was during the reign of Ammenon the Chaldean, 68 Sari or 244,800 years before the deluge. Since then (as demonstrated by the Assyriologists according to the cylinder records), several other Odacons had ascended from the sea, the last coming during the days of the Chaldean king, Ubara-Tutu — "the glow of sunset" — the last but one of the Antediluvian kings of Berosus. Each and all these *aquarian teachers* came from his habitat in lands unknown, ascending from the Persian Gulf. If we study the account given of the Annedotus by Apollodorus and then amplify it with the pre-Christian traditions of Armenia, which say that he made them know the seeds of the earth, taught them to worship their mother Earth, and their father the sun, taught mankind the arts of agriculture — we shall not wonder at discovering that the Chaldean Oannes and Zoroaster are one in their reminiscences. The Chaldean Annedotus was called the "son of the Fish". It was the Hellenized name of their Zoroaster Annedotus, whom the Greeks called Oannes, that led the old Armenians more easily into accepting Christianity than it otherwise might.

According to the Aryan doctrine, the Divine but latent thought in Aditi (the boundless) produces the Great Deep or water (primeval chaos) and deposits in it the germ of Universal Life. According to the Bunda-hish, in the midst of Vourukash or the wide-formed ocean, grows the white Hom, the counteractor of decrepitude, the reviver of the dead and the Immortalizer of the living. This essence of life is subjected to the two opposing principles — Spenta Mainyus and Angra Mainyus (spirit and matter) which are respectively typified by the buoyant fish [Note that Parsees, on marriage and other festive occasions, send presents of fishes as auspicious gifts] and the grovelling lizard, fighting for supremacy in the great ocean of the *Akasa*. The Kara fish of the Vendīdād is a suggestive allegory for the 6th or Spiritual principle that protects the 5th or personal soul from the fascinations of matter or the [Page 16] lower principles, and leads it on, enabling it to swim in ethereal regions and drink of the juice of the sacred Hom

(pure spirit) to attain to immortality.

The great spiritual teachers of the world, who have had their spiritual sense thoroughly awakened and made potent, are called the Buddhas, or enlightened ones; and, in reference to the above allegory, they are called, in some traditions, sons of the Fish.

"Oannes is the emblem of priestly Esoteric Wisdom; he comes out from the sea, because the Great Deep, the water, typifies also the Secret Doctrine".