

The Legend of the Fish

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Mons. LeNormant in his learned work "Chaldean Magic", thus gives the old legend regarding the Fish Avatar.

"There were three zones of the Universe; the heavens, the terrestrial surface with the atmosphere, and the lower abyss. The three greatest Gods, Ana, Hea, and Mulge or Elim, answered to or presided over these zones.

"The name Hea means 'dwelling'. This name then was manifestly connected with the time when the God was first imagined to be the same as the zone over which he presided, the zone which served as a home for men and animated beings. Hea afterwards was invoked as *the spirit of the terraqueous surface* and also as lord of the region of the atmosphere. The spirit of this zone of the Universe, he was also the soul which animated everything, penetrated into everything, and made everything which existed in the Universe live and move. The Accadians (and they transmitted this idea to *the Chaldaic-Babylonians* of more recent ages) considered the humid element as the vehicle of all life and the source of all generation. They saw this element circulating everywhere in the zone which embraces the terrestrial surface and the atmosphere. Hea was the soul and spirit of it, and therefore, according to them, closely connected with the humid element. It was specially his domain: the waters were worshipped in their material reality, and the spirits presiding over them were his children. He had no father assigned to him, but he was eternally begotten in the bosom of the humid element; he was said to have issued [Page 17] from the celestial ocean personified as a goddess Tiku. His usual dwelling was in the great reservoir (*Abzu* or *arra*) which surrounded the earth. From this point but one step was necessary to represent him under the ostensible form of a fish-God, and this step was taken; for one of his most usual titles was 'the great fish', or 'the *sublime fish*'.

"As the spirit of the inhabited world and the soul directing its phenomena, Hea is *the repository of all science*. And here we have the chain of ideas which led to this odd notion that the learned God should also be an ichthyomorphous [Having the form of a fish] God. It passed into the Chaldaic-Babylonian religion with the God Hea himself, and he appeared under this form in the cosmogonic legend, where he was the *Oannes of Berosus*, revealing religious and social laws to men. According to extracts from the Grecian historian of Chaldea, 'he had the body of a fish entire, but under his fish's head there was a second human head, while human feet appeared under his tail and he possessed a human voice. This monster spent the whole day amongst men without taking any food, while he taught them letters, science, and the principles of every art, the rules for the foundation of towns, the building of temples, the

measurements and boundaries of lands, seed-time and harvest, in short, all that could advance civilization, so that nothing new has been invented since that period. Then at sunset this great Oannes [According to Berosus, as quoted by Apollodorus, there were many of these fish Avatars of the Supreme Being which were called Annedoti, the first after the lapse of 40 *Sari*, the 2nd after 26, the 3rd after 18 [or 28] *Sari*, then a 4th, and finally a 5th named *Odacon*] regained the sea and passed the night in the vast region of waves, for he was amphibious'.

"As the soul of that zone of the world inhabited by living beings, of the 'dwelling' pre-eminently, Hea was the *God* who 'sees that all is in order', and who defended the frame of nature against the incessant ravages of the wicked spirits. Since he was the God acquainted with science, he knew all their ruses and was able to baffle them; and therefore he alone was possessed of the magic secrets by means of which they could be conquered and repulsed.

"Hence the exceptional importance of the position of Hea in the arts of conjurational magic, of which he was the great God. Hea is the supreme protector of men and nature in the struggle, caused by the antagonism between good and evil, as the annuler and averter of fatal influences, and as the author of theurgic action. Help was sought from him when neither word, rite, talisman, nor even the intervention of any other of the gods had availed to destroy the demon's power".

The trace of an analogous legend that is to be found in the Avesta is interesting to examine. [Page 18]

In the *Bchram* and *Din Yashts*, Zarathustra is said to have been given by these angels, "strength of arms, health of the body and strength of sight as *Karo Masyo*, the *Kar-fish* possesses it, who is under the water, and who is able to see (the minutest things) thin as a hair, a thousand fathoms deep".

In the 19th Fargard of the Vendîdâd Zarathustra opposes the assaults of Ahriman, and while praising the various powers of good, invokes "the *Kara-fish* that lives beneath waters in the bottom of the deep sea".

In the Pahlavi Bunda-hish ten *Kar-fish* protect the *Gogard* or *White-Hom* tree from the lizard or frog that is trying to devour it.

The idea of a fish-god is not to be found in the Zoroastrian writings, but an all-penetrating, keen and watchful sight is attributed to a particular and typical inhabitant of the waters. A like, far-reaching sight is said to have been granted to the Iranian prophet (Zarathustra), and when he has to withstand the attacks of the Powers of Darkness among the several principles of Light that he calls to his aid, he also invokes the *Kara-fish*; and here also it may fairly be conjectured that when he praises the *Kara-fish*, it is owing to the power that it is said to possess of seeing all and everything in the "wide-formed ocean".

In the same ocean is that famous tree, the *Gogard*, or the immortal tree of life which is assailed on one side by the lizard (representing the production of matter) and on the other is protected by the ten [Compare the ten Avatars of *Vishnu*, the Preserver] *Kara-fish* (the several theophanies or avatars of the spirit).

The word "*Kara*" is derived from the root "*Kar*", to see, to watch, and the word "*Karo-Mahi* or *Karo-Masyo*" might be translated as the all-seeing, the watchful, or the Protecting Fish.

This allegorical fish is said to be a production of Ahurmazd, the Supreme Divinity and the highest Principle of Light, and is specially opposed to the allegorical lizard, the outcome of matter that would drag down the scintilla of the Atma which, on its peregrinations through the circle of necessity, evolves as man and has been represented as the tree of life (Gogard).

The weapon of the Kara-fish is its all-penetrating sight, and it is necessary to get a clear idea of this visual-power to understand the full significance of the allegory.

According to the Esoteric Doctrine, man is made up of seven principles: [In the Avesta the names of the seven principles are as follows:— (1) Tanu (2) Ushtana, (3) Keherpa, (4) Tevishi, (5) Baodhany, (6) Urvan, (7) Fravashi] 1) the Body; 2) Vitality; 3) Astral Body; 4) Animal Soul; 5) Human Soul; 6) Spiritual Soul; and 7) Spirit. [Page 19]

The Animal Soul, the body of desire, consisting of our appetites, passions, desires, feelings, is the most dangerous and treacherous of the principles. It greatly influences and is influenced by the 5th, the Human Soul or *Manas*, which is the seat of reason and memory.

The Sixth Principle, called the Spiritual Soul (Buddhi proper) is the Higher or Spiritual Intelligence, or Consciousness, or Spiritual Ego, in which mainly resides the sense of consciousness in the *Perfect* man. This principle is the vehicle of the seventh principle (the Atma or Spirit).

Humanity is yet coursing through the lower "rounds" of its evolution. It has not yet perfected and purified its fourth principle, even the perception of the fifth principle is dim, and the action of the sixth and seventh is quite veiled. There is a continual struggle between the fourth and fifth on one side, and the sixth and seventh on the other, and the upward progress of the human individuality is determined by the strength and success the sixth and seventh principles have over the fourth and fifth.

Where there is real progress, the higher portion of the fifth principle detaching itself from the fascinations of the fourth principle, assimilates itself by slow degrees with the sixth. The mental vision of the fifth principle is never perfect and is always beclouded by the seductions of the desires of which the fourth principle is the seat.

It is only the vision of the sixth principle, the Spiritual Soul or *Buddhi*, that is clear, pellucid, far-reaching and free from all deception.

In the vast ocean of the *Akâsa* — the all-pervading ether of modern science — the vision of the physical and mental sight hardly penetrates to any extent, and where in some instances it goes a short way, it is powerless to discriminate between the illusions and the reality, and unless the *spiritual light* be fully

awakened, the explorer in the realms of the invisible forces is liable to fail and fall a prey to the agencies of evil that beset his path at every step.

It is this beneficial and protecting power of the vision of the sixth principle or the Spiritual Soul, that has been allegorised as the *Kara-fish* with penetrating sight.

In the cosmogony of Pherecydes the Gogard or the Hellenic tree of life is the sacred oak, among whose luxurious branches a serpent dwells and cannot be dislodged. This description is very nearly the same as the Gogard tree of the *Pahlavi Bunda-hish* attacked by the lizard. The sacred tree of the white Homa, [Same as the Soma] which is said to be the king of all medicinal plants, is no other than the allegorical man-tree, the spiritual germ, which, in its long journey through the succeeding cycles, has to ally itself with the various phases of matter that at each turn try to darken its glory. [Page 20]

The Hea of the oldest Chaldean legends corresponds with the Oannes of Berosus. He is the repository of all science; He "sees that all is in order", and is the defender against the ravages of the wicked spirits.

These characteristics of Hea are analogous to the qualities attributed to the *Kara-fish* of the Avesta, which is invoked by Zarathustra when he is attacked by the powers of darkness, and which is said to protect the tree of life.

Zarathustra, possessing the power of sight imputed to the *Kara-fish* appears to us therefore as the Great Teacher whose sixth principle had become potent, and who, whenever he had to withstand the opposition of the powers of evil, used to rely upon the deep strength of his spiritual vision which showed him the true path. It is this allusion amongst several others which shows that he was an initiate and an adept of the good Law who spoke not of vain imaginings, but referred to the exact teachings of Archaic science which deals with the invisible forces of the higher intellect and the soul.

An age of spiritual learning is almost always succeeded by one of material ignorance, and lofty ideas referring to the higher part of man's nature expressed in parables and allegories by ancient sages become encrusted in the course of time with gross materialistic coverings, which, taken in their literal sense, completely disfigure the spiritual teachings. A priesthood originally constituted as a separate class owing to its high learning, becomes in course of time degenerate, unspiritual and ignorant, and continues to live on upon the long-lost reputation of its ancient name. Such a priesthood is unable to explain the science underlying the sacred scripts of which its members are the nominal guardians, and unless an attempt be made in all such religious literature to show that there is a higher science upon which such writings rest, the mere study of the ancient languages and books for the sake of their grammatical and philological construction becomes a waste of energy, which simply tends to confirm that ignorant scepticism which denies the very existence of the religious faculty in man.