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CLEANSING I. IN ZOROASTRIANISM
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i. In Zoroastrianism

Cleansing is conceived as a cosmic and individual activity is an essential element in Zoroastrianism, which teaches that the assault of the Evil Spirit, Angra Mainyu (see ahriman), brings defilement on all the good creations of Ahura Mazdā and that they, in their struggle for salvation, must ceaselessly strive to rid themselves of it.

In the surviving Avesta, aspects of cleansing are treated in the *Vidēvdād* (or *Vendīdād*), the "Law against demons" (ed. Geldner; tr. Darmesteter; tr. Wolff; on the meaning of the name, see Benveniste), it being the demons, *dēv*s, who as Angra Mainyu's agents bring uncleanness. Many of the texts contained in the *Vidēvdād* are written in faulty Young Avestan or give the appearance of fragments of texts put together without concern for grammar. This has led scholars to attribute the final compilation of the *Vidēvdād* to post-Achaemenid times, either to the Median magi in the Parthian period or earlier under the Seleucids. Greater Media was heavily colonized by Hellenes (Polybius, 10.27.3), and evidence from Egypt and Israel under Macedonian rule shows that the presence of these foreigners made local priests think intensively then about their purity laws, seeking by them to fence off and guard their communities

from contamination. A trace of apparent Hellenistic influence appears in the *Vidēvdād* in the use there of a system of short measures corresponding to the Greek one (Henning, pp. 235-36).

The Pahlavi translation of the *Vidēvdād*, with glosses and commentaries (its *zand*), belongs to the Sasanian period, although commentaries were added down into Islamic times (ed. and tr. B. T. Anklesaria). It became the basic authority on cleansing for the Zoroastrian communities and is repeatedly cited or paraphrased in a series of works classified as *rivāyat*s. These transmit miscellaneous teachings, with instructions about purity and ethics being regularly intermixed. The oldest collection is the *Šāyest nē šāyest* (ed. and tr. Tavadia), which is attributed to the later Sasanian period. Its so-called supplementary texts (ed. and tr. Kotwal) are of mixed dates. Similar works were compiled or written in early Islamic times, when again the presence of foreigners sharpened awareness of the purity code. These are the Pahlavi *rivāyat*s closely associated in the manuscripts with the *Dādistān ī dēnīg* (ed. Dhabhar, 1913; ed. and tr. A. V. Williams), the *rivāyat* attributed to Ēmēd ī Ašawahištān (ed. B. T. Anklesaria, 1962), and those attributed to Ādurnfarnbag and Farnbag-Srōš (ed. and tr. B. T. Anklesaria, 1969). The major cleansing rite is the subject of Mānuščihr's *Epistles*, written in the 9th century c.e. (ed. Dhabhar, 1912; tr. West, 1882; tr. of several individual chapters in articles by M. F. Kanga), and other aspects of cleansing were dealt with by the same high priest in his miscellaneous *Dādistān ī dēnīg* (q.v.; *pursišn* 1-40, ed. T. D. Anklesaria; *pursišn* 41-92, ed. P. K. Anklesaria; tr. West, 1882). Subsequently several texts of this type were written in Persian; they are called *Ṣad dar* "a hundred gates." The most important are the *Ṣad dar-e naṯr* and *Ṣad dar-e Bondaheš* (ed. Dhabhar, 1909; tr. West, 1885; tr. Dhabhar, 1932). These cannot be closely dated, but the Persian *rivāyat*s (ed. Unvala; tr. Dhabhar, 1932) consist of treatises written at intervals between 883/1478 and 1187/1773 by Persian priests in answer to questions from their coreligionists in Gujarat. These cite authority, from the *Vidēvdād* onward, to justify then current practices. In the 11th/17th century a Parsi priest wrote in Persian verse a *Farżīyāt-nāma* "Book of duties" to instruct his community (ed. and tr. Modi, 1924), and in the 14th/20th century Parsis have written about their own practices to inform outsiders. The chief work of this kind, containing descriptions of almost all the cleansing rites, is J. J. Modi's *Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsis* (1922; 2nd ed., 1937). Valuable records of practices among rural Parsis towards the end of the 19th century were made by Seervai and Patel, and J. K. Choksy, in a monograph on purity and pollution (1989),

sought to establish how far traditional usages had by then been modified or abandoned.

The first foreigner to note the operation of Zoroastrian purity laws was Herodotus in the 5th century b.c.e. Other classical authors referred to them in the Parthian and Sasanian periods (chiefly in connection with disposing of the dead), and a number of European travelers contributed observances in the 17th century (see Firby). The purification rites performed by Parsis in the mid-18th century were described by A. H. Anquetil-Duperron, and their observance among rural Persian Zoroastrians some two hundred years later was recorded by Mary Boyce (1975, 1977).

Cosmic processes of cleansing are described not only in the *Vidēvdād* but also in passages from the *zand* of lost Avestan texts. The latter are found mainly in the *Bundahišn* (ed. and tr. B. T. Anklesaria, 1956; *Indian Bundahišn*, ed. Justi, tr. West, 1880). Rain, itself pure, falls on impure objects and in cleansing them becomes contaminated. It runs then into rivers and lakes, which are often already polluted. People must try to keep waters clean by removing from them any decaying dead matter and by preventing such matter from reaching them (*Vd.* 6.26-41; *Šāyest nē šāyest* 2.79-93; *Rivāyat ī Ādurfarnbag* 37-38; *Ṣad dar-e naṯr* 75; *Persian Rivāyats*, ed. Unvala, I, pp. 78-82, tr. Dhabhar, pp. 74-78). But if it is raining one should not lift out dead matter from polluted water and lay it in the clean rain (*Šāyest nē šāyest* 2.94). Another way of keeping water clean is never to wash impure things in streams or lakes, but to draw off a little water for this purpose (*Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag* 58.3; Boyce, *Stronghold*, p. 104). Nor should one spit, vomit, or urinate in them or pour water out over impure things (Herodotus, 1.138; *Ṣad dar-e Bondaheš* 13.14, 16-18, 78.1). Meanwhile the polluted waters of the world all in time make their way to the mythical Pūitika (Pahl. Pūdig) sea, the name of which comes from the base *pu–* “cleanse.” This was held to be tidal. The high tide carried cleansed water back to the Vourukaša sea (Pahl. Frāxkard), the source of rain clouds and all rivers, from where it was distributed again to the world, while the ebbing tide, driven by high winds, carried impurities away (*Vd.* 5.18-19; *Bundahišn*, TD_2, pp. 82.16-83.7, tr. Anklesaria, chap. 10.8-9; *Indian Bundahišn* 13.8-13). Man can help this process of cosmic cleansing by making consecrated libations to water (Pahl. *āb-zōhr*). Water that receives more libations than impurities (*āb kē hixr kam ud zōhr wēš*) returns to Vourukaša in three years, but in nine if the converse is true (*Bundahišn*, TD_2, pp. 90.13-91.6, tr. Anklesaria, chap. 11 C.1-2; *Indian Bundahišn* 21.3-4; *Pahlavi Rivayat* 46.12). Such libations were also held

to help cleanse waters by killing Ahrimanic creatures (*xrafstra*s) in them, such as frogs and crayfish, which were held to be polluting (*Mēnōg ī xrad* 62.35-6, ed. and tr. West, 1871). Killing these directly was also meritorious (*Pahlavi Rivayat* 21.4, 11; Tavernier, I, p. 167).

It was also a duty to help cleanse the earth by likewise killing those *xrafstra*s that afflict it (*Vd.* 14.5-6; *Pahlavi Rivayat* 21.1-17; Herodotus, 1.140; Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* I, pp. 298-301). To crush large beetles or the like on the earth would, however, be to pollute it, and these were sometimes impaled on sharp sticks, which were thrust into walls for the bodies to become sun-dried and harmless. If corpses had been buried in earth they should be dug up and exposed to the sun in a barren place (*Vd.* 3.12; *Ṣad dar-e naṯr* 33.1-2; *Ṣad dar-e Bondaheš* 77.1-5). If a piece of land was polluted by dead matter it should be left uncultivated for a time (fixed in accordance with the measure of pollution), until sun and rain had cleansed it (*Vd.* 6.1-5).

Fire too had to be kept as clean as possible and never used for burning rubbish. *Ṣad dar-e Bondaheš* 79 lists the precautions needed in its care and states (par. 15) that, after a hearth fire has been used for cooking, incense should be put on it and one *Ahunwar* and one *Ašəm vohū* recited. Wood should never be put on a fire with unclean hands, and in *Vd.* 18.19 fire exhorts the householder in the night, “Rise, dress, wash your hands (*frā zasta snayaŋᵛha*), bring firewood.” Should a fire become polluted, there was a ritual for its cleansing. A new fire was kindled from its flames and the polluted one allowed to die out. Another fire was kindled from the flames of the second one, and so on, until the ninth fire, which was held to be clean again (*Vd.* 8.73-96). This ritual, called “exalting the fire” (*ātaš bozorg kardan*, in the Zoroastrian dialect of Yazd *taš mas kartwun*), is referred to in *Šāyest nē šāyest* 7.9, *Pahlavi Rivayat* 37a.14-15. It has been frequently carried out by Persian (“Irani”) Zoroastrians to cleanse fires carelessly used by their Muslim neighbors, the purified ninth fire being then joined to a sacred temple fire, as approved in the *Vd.* (Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 186-90).

It was also incumbent on Zoroastrians to keep their livestock in a cleanly state (*Ṣad dar-e Bondaheš* 83.7) and to drive the evil of dirt from their own dwelling places and possessions by daily sweeping, dusting, polishing, and scouring. Stench too is a pollution, and fragrance, which combats it, was regularly created by putting incense on the hearth fire. A bowl of embers with incense was traditionally carried through the house at dawn to banish night’s pollutions or at dusk to ward them off (Seervai and Patel, p. 209; Boyce,

Stronghold, p. 30). All things used in religious services are first made immaculately clean by being scoured with wood ash and washed with water, then "pure," in priestly parlance *pāw* (also derived from *pu-*) or *pādyāw*, by being rinsed three times again with water before they are consecrated by recital of an Avestan text (Anquetil-Duperron, II, p. 538).

To perform any acts of cleansing effectively the doer must himself be clean. It is, moreover, an absolute duty for Zoroastrians to keep themselves so, since man too is one of the good creations of Ahura Mazdā and must strive constantly to "ward off the demon of defilement (Av. Nasuš, Pahl. Nasā) from his person" (*Šāyest nē šāyest*, suppl., 20.4). "Washing the hands" (Pahl., Pers. *dast šostan*) was necessary before engaging in any pious task, and the whole person was supposed to be frequently washed by pouring water over the body from head (Av. *barəšnu-*) to foot. This form of ablution is described as "washing hair and body" (cf. *Vd.* 8.11: *frasnayānte varəsāsca tanūmca*) or "washing head and body" (Pahl. *sar ud tan šustan*, *Ardā Wīrāz-nāmag* 2.12), often abbreviated to "washing the head" (*sar šustan*). In the Zoroastrian dialect of Yazd it is called *ōweraḵt* "pouring of water," but when speaking Persian the Persian Zoroastrians adopted the Arabic term *ḡosl*, which they pronounce *ḡosel*, while the Parsis came to use Gujarati *nāhn* "bath." This ablution is proper before taking part in any major religious ceremony. "He who wishes that the worship he performs should reach the gods best, let him wash his hands clean and keep his body and clothes in cleanliness" (*Dēnkard* 6.125, tr. Shaked).

If there were any serious contamination water should not be used directly to wash it away, since this would pollute the water itself. This held for cleansing man and beast and lifeless objects alike. In every case a barrier was needed between the impurity and the pure water, and traditionally what was used was cattle urine, Av. *gə́uš maēsman-*, *gaomaēza-*, Pahl. *gōmēz*. This was widely employed as a disinfectant down to early modern times, because of its ammonia content. Jean-Baptiste Tavernier accordingly characterized the Zoroastrian use of it as "practical" (Firby, p. 51), and it could still be justified in the early 20th century among rural Parsis as being cheap and readily available to the poorest in the community (Dhalla, pp. 60-61). In Zoroastrian practice *gōmēz* was rubbed on whatever was polluted, and this was then washed with water (*Vd.* 5.54, 56, 9.33-5). If the contamination was severe, dust or sand was used first to dry off the *gōmēz* (*Vd.* 7.15). Clothing, leather objects, and vessels of stone and metal were all to be cleansed in this way and then left exposed for

a while to the purifying rays of the sun. When people were concerned recital of Avesta was an essential element of such purifications, in order to bring to bear also the cleansing power of the holy word. This regularly included the *Srōš bāj*, also called the *Bāj-e nasrušt* "Utterance against pollution," since Sraoša was believed to be very powerful against contaminating evil (Kreyenbroek, pp. 144-52, with text and tr. of the *bāj*).

As for what was polluting, Zoroastrianism inherited some ancient taboos, which its priests interpreted in the light of their own doctrines. They taught that the worst source of pollution is a corpse, since what is newly dead has been newly conquered by Angra Mainyu, death's originator, whose evil clings to it. Hence the need to keep putrefying dead matter (*nasā*), whether of humans or "good" animals, away from the creations. At death the Nasu, demon (*druj*) of decay, settles on the corpse in the form of a hideous fly and attacks everyone or everything that comes in contact with it. The worst malignity is from the corpse of the purest of beings, a righteous Zoroastrian priest (*Vd.* 5.28), who in life, since he is pure in body and soul, has been a powerful agent for cleansing the world around him. To bring the impurity of death on such a one the Evil Spirit needs to send his forces in strength, and they, having triumphed, remain by the corpse, radiating corruption. The virulence of the Nasu could be a little checked by the gaze of a dog, so as soon as possible after death the ritual of *sagdīd* (lit. "view by the dog") was to be performed. To touch a corpse before this was sinful, as incurring, and potentially spreading, an unnecessary degree of pollution (*Vd. sāde* 7.3, tr. Darmesteter; *Šāyest nē šāyest* 2.1-4, 63-71; *Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, pp. 110-15, tr. Dhabhar, pp. 112-18). Even thereafter it was if possible to be handled only by those who had the duty to dispose of it.

The general concern is to limit the pollution as much as possible. In the case of a natural death, the corpse should be placed on a dry, nonconducting surface, such as stone or sand, and a ritual furrow drawn round it, with recital of Avestan texts, to pen in the *druj*. A fire was to be kept burning—three paces away, for its own protection—and incense put on it, in Persia preferably from a plant called in the Zoroastrian dialect *bū'-e nākōš*, the pungent smell of which is "like a bullet fired against demons" (Boyce, *Stronghold*, p. 149). The corpse is washed three times with *gōmēz* and then with water, wrapped in clean but old white cotton cloth, and, as soon as possible (but always in daylight), carried to the funerary tower (see daḵma) on an iron bier, which should nowhere be set down on the earth, which belongs to the *amašaspand*

Spandārmad (see ārmaiti). The mourners follow at a distance of at least thirty paces and thereafter wash with *gōmēz* and water (Modi, 1937, pp. 52-67; Jackson, pp. 388-94; Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 149-52). Within the house of death, if the corpse had lain on a stone slab, this was to be taken out and cleansed with *gōmēz*, sand, and water and left to be purified by sunshine. If it had lain on plaster or sand, this was dug out and removed. Otherwise the place where it had lain was to be left unused for a year (*Šāyest nē šāyest* 2.14-16), a rule observed in some Persian households until recent times. Any cooked food that was in the house at the time of death was polluted and useless, but other foodstuffs became "clean" again after an interval: nine days in winter, a month in summer (Pahl. *Vd.* 5.44; *Šāyest nē šāyest* 2.41, 47-48).

A person defiled by direct contact with a corpse had to be cleansed by a priest and segregated thereafter for nine nights. In one place in the *Vidēvdād* (19.20-25) a relatively simple rite is prescribed. A ritual furrow was to be drawn round him; he was to recite 100 *Ašəm vohū*s and 200 *Ahunwar*s and to wash four times with *gōmēz* and twice with water; and after nine days' segregation, shone on by sun and moon and stars, he was to be fumigated with incense and would be clean. Administration of this rite is not attested, that used in known practice being (with modifications) the more elaborate one enjoined, with minor divergences between them, in the two other accounts in the *Vidēvdād* (8.37-72, 9.136). This in later times was called the "*barašnom* (head [washing]) of the nine nights," or simply *barašnom*. Among its greater complexities was the use of dust or sand between more numerous applications of *gōmēz* and water, administered in pits or on stones.

A woman was thought to be profoundly contaminated by a stillbirth, since she had carried *nasā* within her (*Vd.* 5.45-56). She was to be shut away in a corner of the house and for the first three days was forbidden to drink water, since this would become defiled. Instead she had first to swallow, in three, six, or nine gulps, a mixture of ash and *gōmēz* (*gə́uš maēsmana ātryō.paiti.iristəm*, *Vd.* 5.51), wood ash being also regularly used for cleaning and sterilizing. This was to purify the *daḵma* within her. Thereafter she might drink milk or wine and eat dry foods, and after three days she was to undergo *barašnom*. Also mentioned is the case of a pregnant woman who had sinfully, that is, deliberately, eaten *nasā* (which need mean no more than the flesh of a creature classified as a *xrafstra*, e.g., crayfish). She cannot be cleansed, but when her child is old enough it may imbibe ash (*warr*, i.e., the "clothing" of fire) and *gōmēz*, be ritually washed, and become clean (*Šāyest nē šāyest* 2.105).

A sentence from the Pahlavi translation of a lost Avestan text prescribes that *gōmēz* alone should be sipped three times by one who utters slander and lies about another (*Pursišnīhā* 8). This was presumably to cleanse the morally guilty, hence polluted, member: his tongue.

Next to *nasā*, the greatest cause of defilement was held to be a menstruating woman (*Vd.* 16.1-10). She was to be segregated in a special building (Pahl. *daštānistān*), so that she would not pollute fire and water. Her food, plain and just enough to support life, was to be served to her from a distance of three paces in a metal dish (which could be cleaned and purified afterward, as wood or earthenware could not; cf. *Vd.* 7.74-75). What her final cleansing was is not stated in the *Vidēvdād*, but it can be deduced that she simply rubbed *gōmēz* over her body and then "washed her head" with water. Should a period last more than nine days, this was regarded as devils' work and the woman had to undergo ritual purification with *gōmēz* and water at three holes in the ground, and many *xrafstra*s were to be killed in compensation for the extra defilement. Childbirth (see children i. childbirth in zoroastrianism) was also polluting and required segregation and cleansing.

The general theory concerning such defilements was that everything leaving the body (such as blood, excrement, spit, breath), whether naturally or through illness or injury, was impure. Hence blood from a cut was also defiling, and after swallowing a tooth one should again not drink water for three days (*Rivāyat of Ādurfarnbag* 34-35, 100). To spit was forbidden, and sneezing, yawning, and sighing were to be checked as far as possible (*Šāyest nē šāyest*, suppl., 12.32). One had to urinate squatting, so as to limit the area contaminated (*Vd.*, Pahl. *Vd.* 18.40-43; *Ṣad dar-e naṯr* 56), and great care was to be taken with hair combings and parings of nails. These were *hixr*, dry contaminating matter, and so could be buried in a barren place, furrows being drawn ritually round the spot with recital of Avestan texts (*Vd.* 17; on such traditional observances in the 20th century see Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 107-09; idem, *Zoroastrianism* I, p. 309).

Since purity was of fundamental importance, it was natural that priests, who were professionally concerned, should have continued to ponder on the purity laws and to extend the traditional cleansing rites. This activity was probably intensified at certain epochs, such as that of Macedonian domination, the later Sasanian period with the stimulus of the written *Vidēvdād* with its *zand*, and the centuries of Muslim and Hindu rule, when the two small Persian and Parsi communities were largely shut in on themselves among others who kept

different purity laws. The results of this process of evolution appear twofold: one, the basic “Avestan” rituals were elaborated on, and, two, their use was extended far beyond what, to judge from the *Vidēvdād*, were their original purpose and scope.

One far-reaching development concerned imbibing *gōmēz* with wood ash. As we have seen, in the *Vidēvdād* this is prescribed only to cleanse from serious inward physical contaminations. Otherwise *gōmēz* is to be used only externally, and ash not at all in the cleansing of persons. Nothing is to be swallowed at the *barašnom* as described in the three *Vidēvdād* accounts. As the main ancient purification rite the *barašnom* seems, however, to have been developed by priests in “post-Avestan” times as an all-purpose ritual, used not only to cleanse from specific direct contamination but also to confer or maintain purity generally, both inward and outward. For this a further observance was added to it, namely that, while the candidate is still clothed and standing outside the ritual furrows, he should take three sips of *gōmēz* with a pinch of wood ash in it, murmuring between each the (Middle) Persian formula: *īn ḵᵛoram pākī-e tan, yōjdāsr-e ravānrā* “this I drink for the cleanness of my body, the purification of my soul” (Anquetil-Duperron, II, p. 546; Modi, 1937, pp. 123, 93). These words illustrate an absence of distinction between physical and psychic inwardness, between material and moral cleansing and the means of their achievement, already to be found in Avestan in *Pursišnīhā* 8. The added rite became a fixed preliminary of the *barašnom*, for whatever purpose this was undergone. It was also made obligatory before the simple ablution (*sar šostan*, *nāhn*) when this was ritually administered by a priest. This ritual bath is part of the preparatory rites for a child’s initiation (*naojote/sedra pūšūn*) and for the marriage ceremony (Modi, 1937, pp. 180, 20). So an adaptation of a harsh physical cleansing for severe inner contamination came to be administered routinely to every member of the religious community. Even though only tiny symbolic quantities were imbibed, the rite can hardly have been easily established, and this makes it probable that it was introduced in the later Sasanian period, when zealous and authoritarian Persian priests, pondering over the written *Vidēvdād*, had the support of powerful kings. There were, moreover, beliefs to draw on concerning the unique sanctity and power of the bull (see cattle ii. in zoroastrianism). *Gōmēz* to be imbibed was to be taken only—it was decreed—from bulls (on the model, presumably of *Vd.* 19.21), whereas that for external cleansing might (as stated in *Vd.* 8.11-13) be “of small cattle or of large cattle” (*pasvąm vā staorąm vā*) in Middle Persian terms *pākān gōsfandān* (*Dādistān ī dēnīg* 47.9), that is, the

creatures of Bahman (q.v.; *Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, p. 311.16). Specifically, the permitted creatures are named (*Persian Rivayats*, tr. Dhabhar, p. 295 n. 3) as cow/bull (*gāw*), sheep (*gōsfand*), buffalo (*gāwmēš*), horse (*asp*), and camel (*uštur*). In the past, therefore, supplies would never have been difficult to obtain. That from the cow or bull was preferred, however, even for external use.

Gōmēz that was to be imbibed was now invested, moreover, with special potency by being consecrated (made *yaštag*), doubtless to give it greater efficacy against the *dēv*s of pollution; and some consecrated *gōmēz*, with consecrated water, was also used in the *barašnom* rite. The consecration was performed through a "Vendidad" service. All such services consist of a *yasna* solemnized from midnight onward, that is, during the Ušahin Gāh, watched over by Srōš, to whom they are regularly dedicated. During this *yasna* the officiating priest reads the *Vidēvdād* aloud in its entirety from a book. This means that this service, unique among Zoroastrian acts of worship for the use in it of a written text, cannot have been instituted before the later Sasanian period. It is in fact first mentioned in the Pahlavi commentary on *Vidēvdād* 9.32 (B. T. Anklesaria, 1949, p. 242), in connection with consecrating the *gōmēz* and water for the *barašnom*, so that it is possible that the desire to perform this consecration prompted the creation of the service and that only subsequently was its use extended to rites for the dead.

The commentary in question runs: "One *Vidēvdād*, dedicated to Srōš (*pad xšnūman ī Srōš*), should be consecrated for this work. For each person reckon at least one pitcher (*dōlag*) of water and of *gōmēz*. They are to be set at that place [i.e. the ritual precinct]. They are to be gazed at (by the priest) at the beginning of the service (*pad yašt bun*), and they are to be gazed at (again) during (the reading of) the *Jud-dēv-dād* . . . . When (the *gōmēz*) is consecrated, it shall be fit (for use; *ē hamē šāyēd*) until it develops an odor (*tā gandag be bawēd*)." In the *Dēnkard* summary of the *Sakādom nask* there is a passage (*Dk.* 8.37.3, ed. Dresden, p. 263.4; tr. West, 1892, p. 126, as 8.38.33) that treats "on lawfully heating *gōmēz* with fire" (*abar dādīhā tāftan ī gōmēz pad ātaxš*) in order to deal with odor developing. The reference must be to consecrated *gōmēz* because only this is stored. This was made explicit by Manuščihr when, in citing the *Sakādom* passage, he used the expression *gōmēz ī yaštag* (*The Epistles* 1.8.1, ed. Dhabhar, p. 37; *Zādspram*, p. xl). The *nask* passage itself comes awkwardly after a section on ensuring the cleanness of firewood (*Dk.* 8.37.32), and this suggests that it is from the *zand* commentary on the *Sakādom*

rather than from the translation of the Avestan text.

More than one pitcher of *gōmēz* and water was needed for the *barašnom*, as appears in statements cited by Manuščihr from the famous commentators Awarg and Mēdyōmāh. In the words of Mēdyōmāh: “All *gōmēz* and water (for the *barašnom*) should be consecrated if possible (*ka šāyēd*). If it is not possible, reckon at least (*pad nidomīh*) for each person a pitcher of (consecrated) water and a pitcher of (consecrated) *gōmēz*. They should be set at that place (where the *barašnom* is to be performed) and then mixed (with the unconsecrated water and *gōmēz*)” (*The Epistles* 1.7.1, ed. Dhabhar, p. 32; *Zādspram*, p. xxxix). Nowadays only a few drops of consecrated *gōmēz* and water are poured into the vessels holding the unconsecrated liquids.

Details of the consecration of *gōmēz* and water are given in the *Persian Rivayats* (ed. Unvala, I, pp. 576-82, tr. Dhabhar, pp. 353-55) and by Anquetil-Duperron (II, pp. 540-44). In one of the *rivāyat*s the special *Vidēvdād* service is called the “Ritual (*nērang*) for consecrating bull’s urine,” but it is generally known as the *Nērangdīn* “Ritual of the religion” an indication of the importance attached to it by priests. The consecrated *gōmēz* itself was accordingly termed *nērang-dīnī*, or *nērang gōmēz* “*gōmēz* of the ritual,” contracted in time to *nērang*. This term tends, however, to be loosely interchanged with *gōmēz*. Since *nērang* is used in all ritual purifications and since purity came to be thought of as the basis of the religion (*Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, p. 378.16-17, tr. Dhabhar, p. 352.22; Anquetil-Duperron, II, p. 344), the *Nērangdīn* acquired great significance for priests and may be solemnized only by those with the highest ritual purity (Modi, 1937, pp. 241-42).

A further measure to give *gōmēz* to be imbibed still greater potency was to ordain that the pinch of ash placed in it must come from a temple fire (*Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, p. 582.5-6, tr. Dhabhar, p. 355), whereas for the original cleansing rite the *Pahlavi Vidēvdād* (5. 51) allowed it also to be taken from a hearth fire (*warr ī ātaxš ī kadayīg*). So to the consecrated *nērang* was added a substance that was itself regarded as profoundly holy. Many of the laity too came accordingly to prize the purifying power of *nērang* very highly (see, e.g., Boyce, 1977, p. 138), accepting the teaching that, “just as the body is cleansed of impurity by water, the soul ought to be cleansed by the *nērang*”; *Ṣad dar-e Bondaheš* 72.3). The basic moral teaching of the faith remained unimpaired, but even this could be expressed in terms of cleanness by priests preoccupied with purity. Thus in the *Vidēvdād* (5.51) it is said that purity is to be achieved by cleaning oneself with good thoughts, words, and acts.

What appears to have been a greatly increased concern for ritual cleansing from Sasanian times onward expressed itself also by a much extended use of *gōmēz* applied externally. It was presumably to promote this that the story was told of how Jamšēd was cured of a leprous-like infection of the hand when a cow staled over it as he slept (*Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, pp. 311.19-315.3, tr. Dhabhar, pp. 295-96). The chief ritual development in this respect appears to be that of *pādyāb-kostī*. The rite of untying and retying the sacred cord (*kostī*) is not described in the extant Avesta, but it seems likely that the original requirement was simply that believers should wash their hands with water before engaging on it, as before any other simple religious task. Perhaps then a second stage was the rule that all exposed parts of the body—hands, face, ears, head, forearms, shins, and feet—should be washed first three times with water in prescribed order, exactly as it is laid down in the *Vidēvdād* (8.41-72) for the threefold washing of these parts with water in the *barašnom* rite. (This ritual ablution before each of the five daily prayers is so closely mirrored by the *wożūʾ* before the five daily prayers of Islam, for which foreign influence is often postulated, that it seems virtually certain that for this Zoroastrianism provided the model.)

Then perhaps at a third stage the worshiper was required to rub these exposed parts with *gōmēz* before the ritual washing with water. This development very possibly came about in the following way: There is an expression *dast ī šabīg* (variant *šabīn*) “night hands” (see *Šāyest nē šāyest* 7.7): “until people “wash the night hands,” no good deed which they do is theirs, for until a man smites Nasuš, the *yazad*s [gods] do not come to him.” The basis for this expression, used as equivalent of *dast ī rēman*, *ašust-dast* (see *Pursišnīhā* 22, ed. JamaspAsa and Humbach, pp. 36-37, with notes), was probably reflection on *Vidēvdād* 18.19ff., where Fire calls for wood to be given it at night with washed hands (see above), so that it can resist the demon Āzi. From this could have come the thought that man too is more assailed by demons at night, so that when he rises his hands need especial cleansing. It would then follow that such polluted hands could not properly be washed directly with water but required the protective use of *gōmēz* as a “barrier,” which is probably the original meaning of *pādyāb* (cf. Parthian *pādyāb*, meaning probably “protection, barrier”; see Boyce, 1991). The whole observance was probably called **pad pādyāb kustī bastan* “to tie the *kostī* with barrier,” reduced in time to *pādyāb-kostī*. And, since the barrier was *gōmēz*, *pādyāb* came to be widely understood as a synonym for that and was used as such, pronounced *pādyāw*, in Zoroastrian dialect *pājō*. Probably at first the rite was required only on

rising, and this is the time for which it is insisted on in the texts (*Guzastag Abāliš* 4, ed. Chacha; *Šāyest nē šāyest*, suppl., 20.5; *Ṣad dar-e naṯr* 50), its purpose being expressly "to drive (the demon of) putrefaction, Nasrušt," from the body (*Dēnkard* 6.317, ed. Shaked; cf. *Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, pp. 314.10-315.2, tr. Dhabhar, p. 296). Any actual pollution, such as that incurred by sexual intercourse, made total ablution necessary. The use of the *pādyāb* rite came, however, to be extended, nominally at least, to the other four times of daily prayer. If *gōmēz* was not available, then "out of helplessness" other "barriers" might be used, for instance, the sap of leaves or herbs or dry grass (*Guzastag Abāliš* 4; *Dādistān ī dēnīg* 47.9; *Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 456.9-10; *Ṣad dar-e naṯr* 50.1; *Ṣad dar-e Bondaheš* 97; *Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala I, p. 193.1, tr. Dhabhar, p. 207). If there was no water to wash?/ no water, dust (*xāk*) might be used instead (*Ṣad dar-e naṯr* 74.3; *Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, p. 311.4-5, tr. Dhabhar, p. 294), but the prayers should be repeated as soon as water could be obtained. This stipulation brings out the fact that water is the essential cleansing agent, the use of *gōmēz* being merely as a preliminary protection for it.

Pādyāb-kostī (the performance of which takes less than five minutes) came further to be required before any act of worship, and it is presumably this rite that is briefly indicated in the statement that, "whenever they recite something aloud, it is necessary to have the hands and face washed with *pādyāb*, for, if not, the Avesta will not be accepted" (*Ṣad dar-e naṯr* 50.5). It was also prescribed before bathing and after answering calls of nature to create or restore purity. Thus *kostī bastan*, which appears to have been instituted—possibly by Zoroaster himself—as a religious exercise and a recurring affirmation of faith, became part of an often-repeated ritual of self-cleansing, the simple rite being permitted only when the wearer was already in a state of ritual purity. A trace of the confusion that this development brought about is perhaps to be found in the fact that some Parsis traditionally perform a "dry" *kostī bastan* on rising before doing *pādyāb-kostī* (Seervai and Patel, p. 208). This is regular practice among the Bhagarias (cf. Dhalla, p. 25), by whom it is called *vasīdī kostī* "*kostī* with soiled (hands)," from Gujarati *vāsī* "not fresh, stale" (private communication from Dastur F. M. Kotwal).

Another, but evidently later, extension of ancient rites was the requirement that all members of the community should undergo *barašnom* at least once in their lives to cleanse themselves from the pollutions of birth. This development was special to the Persian community, so it can hardly have

taken place before the 4th/10th century. In both communities priests themselves underwent *barašnom* many times to maintain or increase ritual purity (Modi, 1937, pp. 100-02). Women after the menopause also sometimes underwent it repeatedly to cleanse away years of pollution (Boyce, *Stronghold*, p. 121), whereas formerly they were adjured to do this by having the *Davāzdah homāst* (q.v.) performed. The *barašnom* was still used for cleansing severe particular pollutions as enjoined in the *Vidēvdād* but was also now imposed for more, and more trivial, contaminations, for example swallowing a tooth (*Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, pp. 249.1-2, 250.11-3, tr. Dhabhar, pp. 251, 252). It was also required, contrary to old prescriptions, in cases where contact with *nasā* was only indirect (see Dhabhar, tr. *Persian Rivayats*, p. 151 n. 7). There was probably resistance to such developments among the laity, for the rite was both costly and time-consuming, and perhaps for this reason another cleansing rite was evolved, first attested in the *Persian Rivayats*, that is, the *Sī-šōy* "Thirty washings." This, administered by a priest with basically the same procedures as the *barašnom*, consisted of a preliminary imbibing of *nērang* with ash and then a threefold ritual cleansing, nine times each with *gōmēz*, sand and water, with finally water being poured over the head three times. The candidate stood on stones within ritual furrows, which were sometimes very simple (Anquetil-Duperron, II, pl. 13.2), sometimes fairly elaborate (*Persian Rivayats*, ed. Unvala, I, p. 600), and which sometimes, it seems through cross influences, approximated to those of the *barašnom* (Boyce, *Stronghold*, p. 111). The ritual itself, performed at the candidate's house (Anquetil-Duperron, II, p. 548; Boyce, *Stronghold*, p. 111), took about half an hour and latterly among the Parsis was administered inside the house, like a simple *sar šostan/nāhn*, without stones or furrows. In the *Persian Rivayats* it is prescribed among complex purifications for a woman after stillbirth (ed. Unvala, I, pp. 233.8, 234.9, tr. Dhabhar, pp. 234, 235) and as cleansing for a man who has carefully lifted *nasā* out of water with covered hands (ed. Unvala, I, p. ; tr., Dhabhar, p. 90). It is rejected as a substitute for *barašnom* where a man has had direct contact with *nasā*, however (ed. Unvala, I, p. 135.1-2, tr. Dhabhar, p. 150). In the 20th century it has been much used by women and by corpse bearers, both seeking through it to keep the level of accumulating pollution in their bodies as low as possible (Boyce, *Stronghold*, p. 111). These were the groups that suffered most from the purity laws, those concerning menstruation being elaborated and in general strictly kept down to relatively recent times. (For practices among Persian villagers see Boyce, *Stronghold*, pp. 99-107.) Although observance of these laws depended partly on communal vigilance and pressure, much was the responsibility of individuals. The

commentaries on the *Vidēvdād* and the later literature show that priestly authorities differed among themselves about details of the purity laws and their application, while the strictness with which these were kept undoubtedly varied between individuals and groups. Priests were required, and also able through their way of life, to observe more of them more regularly than the laity, striving ideally to be "cleanest of the clean," so that their prayers on behalf of the world and the community might be more effective (Boyce, *Zoroastrianism* I, p. 311). Probably during the times of the Achaemenid, Arsacid, and Sasanian empires there were wide divergences in practice among the laity, whereas later those who held to the faith under persecution tended generally to be strict in observance. The elaborated rites of cleansing accordingly appear to have been in the main scrupulously carried out down to modern times, when the combined impact of industrialized urban life, secular education, and wider social contacts began to erode both their observance and their doctrinal basis. This process, proceeding at a different pace in different regions and walks of life, has been ardently promoted by urban reformists since the mid-19th century and resisted, though less successfully, by traditionalists, for by now even the latest rituals to be evolved have the validation of hundreds of years of observance. The *Nērangdīn* is still solemnized several times a year in Bombay and Navsari, for the orthopractic, there and abroad, continue to use *nērang*, whereas this practice was abandoned by leading reformists over a century ago and is known only by hearsay, if at all, to many younger members of the community. The preliminaries for *kostī bastan* are generally now abbreviated and done with water only, while *barašnom* is undergone almost exclusively by priests. Despite divergences in observance, Zoroastrians of all persuasions share an inherited regard for actual cleanliness, as well as an ingrained concern to strive against the pollution of the natural world.

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