



GŌMĒZ

GŌMĒZ (cow's urine), a Pahlavi term which renders Av. *gaomāēza-* and *gəuš māēsman-* (*AirWb.*, cols. 483, 1108). Urine, with its ammonia content, has been used by many peoples as a disinfectant, and *Vidēvdād* 8.13 enjoins that for this purpose it should be that "of small cattle or large cattle" (*pasvąm vā staorąm vā*), that is, any domesticated livestock. A medieval Persian text specifies cow, sheep, buffalo, horse, or camel (*Persian Rivayats*, tr. Dhabhar, p. 295 n. 3).

Maintaining cleanliness is a religious duty for Zoroastrians (see [CLEANSING i](#)); and regulations are given accordingly in the *Vidēvdād*, with one reference in the associated *Vištāsp Yašt* (31), for using *gaomāēza-*, *gəuš māēsman-*, to remove pollution, chiefly after contact with a corpse. In what appears an ancient passage (*Vd.* 8.11), corpse-bearers are required to cleanse their hair and bodies with *māēsma-* "urines" (pl.), after moving three paces from where they have set the corpse down. Elsewhere the elaborate cleansing rite of the *barašnom* is prescribed, in which, after repeated applications of *gaomāēza-*, fine earth is to be rubbed over the body and allowed to dry before the final washing with water (*Vd.* 8.37-39). This is partly to preserve the purity of water (see above, V, pp. 694-95), of which, according to a late Pahlavi text (*Guzastag Abāliš* 4.1-4) *gōmēz* is the servant. The threefold cleansing is enjoined also for contaminated clothing and metal utensils (*Vd.* 7.12-15, 74-75).

Only once, in connection with the *barašnom*, is it stipulated that for *gaomāēza-* the faithful should use a bull (*gaom . . . uxšanəm*, *Vd.* 19,21), presumably because a male creature was thought to be "cleaner." Woman's menstruation was regarded as the second main source of pollution, and after it (it is implied)



the woman must always use *gaomāēza-* before washing with water. If the flow of blood continued unnaturally beyond the ninth day, she must apply the *gaomāēza-* twice (*Vd.* 16.11-12). Imbibing *gaomaēza-* is enjoined only after a still-birth, when the woman, having carried a corpse, must swallow a mixture of *gaomāēza-* and wood ash to cleanse the “*daḳma*” (q.v.) within her (*Vd.* 5.51, see further above, V, p. 696).

Subsequently the use of *gōmēz* was much extended. This is first attested in late Sasanian times, notably in the Pahlavi text *Šāyest nē-šāyest*. *Gōmēz* became widely used not only against all sorts of actual perceived contamination (see, e.g., above, VI, pp. 282, 284), but also against theoretic ones. Thus its application was routinely required of everyone on rising, to remove the impurities of demon-dominated night (Boyce, 1991, pp. 285-90). It was also sometimes used apotropaically (Dhalla, pp. 28-29). The occasions for which the *barašnom* was required were hugely increased, and a briefer version of it, the *si-šōy* (above, V, p. 699), was evolved, with the same use of *gōmēz*. Further, *gōmēz* taken from bulls only was consecrated to increase its efficacy, and tiny quantities were ritually imbibed, with a pinch of ash from a sacred fire, for inner purification before the *barašnom*, and also before initiation into the faith and marriage. This cosecrated (*yašte*) *gōmēz* is called *nirang* from the name of the *Vd.* service, *nērang i dēn* (ritual of the religion), by which it is blessed (Boyce, 1991, p. 284); but often the terms *gōmēz* and *nirang* are used interchangeably. Colloquially Parsis called *gōmēz* by a word of disputed origin, *taro*, while Persian Zoroastrians term it *pājō* < *pādyāb* (see apud Boyce, 1991, pp. 281-82). Reformists reject its use, which traditionalists have markedly reduced without abandoning either this or the use of *nirang*.

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