



RITUALS IN PARSI CULTURE

S.A.M.Tayaru

(Asst.Prof of English, Dept. of Basic science, Shri Vishnu Engineering college of Women, Bhimavaram, A.P, India.)

ABSTRACT



From the ancient days, Rituals play an important role in human being's life. Ritual means sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and performed according to set sequence apart from the tradition and culture. In India, People believe that, by Performing rituals they can get rid of hostile influences and at the same time attract beneficial ones so that they may progress in their life materially and spiritually without any impediments. The material aim of the rituals is to gain cattle, progeny, long life, wealth, strength, and intellect. Apart from this, the rituals also have a moral purpose as they lay down the rules of conduct that should be followed by a disciplined individual. These rules of conduct in turn help an individual to develop his personality as a complete man.

In India, Parsis who contributed a lot in nation building, though they are a micro-minority community have distinct rituals, traditions and culture from that of all other Indians. As the Parsis migrated to India from Iran 1000 years before, their culture is very distinct from other Iranians also .This paper deals with how the Parsi writers depict, and protect their culture by transmitting their rituals through their writings.

Keywords: *Community, Culture, Migration, Ritual, Tradition.*

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PARSI

Parsi, though a microscopic minority has a prominent place in India. This "double displaced ethnic minority" have a distinct culture, religion and language that they have maintained over the past one thousand years or more. The Parsis follow the Zoroastrian faith founded on the teachings of prophet Zarathustra settled in Gujarat between 8th to 10th centuries.

The Parsis in India are a closed ethnocentric community. The problems and challenges of the Parsi community such as a sense of security, identity, dwindling population, late marriages, and high rate of divorce find expression in Parsi writings. Furthermore, Parsi writing is replete with the community's 'hopes and fears, aspirations and frustrations and a daily struggle for survival'. Parsis fear that their unique ethnic culture could be submerged by the dominant Hindu culture. Dina Mehta, a Parsi writer in her novel *And Some Take a Lover* expresses her apprehensions about the continued existence of Parsis in India through the character Rustom who says: "What has this country to offer us? What kind of cultural life? We Parsis are aliens here. And our days are numbered after the British leave." (*And Some Take a Lover*, 18)

The novels written by some Parsi writers such as Perin Bharucha (*The Fire Worshippers*, 1968) Bapsi Sidwa (*The Crow Eaters*, 1978), Firdaus Kanga (*Trying to Grow*, 1990), Rohinton Mistry (*Such a Long Journey*, 1991), Dina Mehta (*And Some Take a Lover*, 1992) and Nergis Dalal (*Skin Deep*, 2005) show how their work exhibit the consciousness of their community in one way or another and at the same time conscious of individual, national and transnational issues. The writers deal with the typical peculiarities of Parsi culture, rituals, and eccentricities in their works in order to present the uniqueness of their culture for posterity. As A .K. Singh aptly points out: "Their works exhibit consciousness of their community in such a way that the community emerges as a protagonist from their works though on the surface these works deal with their human protagonists." (A.K.Singh, 66).

The present article proposes to look at the particular unique rituals and rites in Parsi culture. Rituals have a central place in human beings

relationship with reality. They bind the present with the past and the future. Therefore they connect the transient with the enduring. Rituals discover, create and sustain the moral fabric of the community. At the same time, they set up social boundaries that cannot be transgressed by individuals. Thus they evoke attitudes, commitments, feelings and forms of behavior. The individuals in the community are educated and trained to respond to the moral, social and metaphysical reality. They foster a strong sense of community, identity and unity. These rituals provide the members of the ethnic group roots to their own cultural values linking them to their past with powerful memories in a physical context at the same time offering comfort and constancy, by giving time and space to the individual to be together in a family. In addition they provide an insight into their cultural values to those who are outsiders of the culture.

Parsis are called "The Fire Worshippers" because Fire is worshipped at the temple which outsiders of the faith are disallowed. They perform every ceremony before Fire. Prophet Zoroaster is depicted in Fire Temple as a benevolent, old man in flowing white beard and a halo round his head standing atop the globe somewhere in the middle of the North Pole. Perin Bharucha has only one novel to her credit entitled *The Fire Worshippers* in which the protagonist Nariman Kanchwalla tells about significance of Fire in Parsi community to his lover, an Anglo-Indian, Portia Roy: "Fire is something sacred to us, so I assume that if a corpse is burnt that would amount to defiling something which is sacred". (*The Fire Worshippers*, 43)

The fire temple plays an important role as a religious and communal center at a Parsi community comes for religious and social gatherings. Firdaus Kanga in his *Trying to Grow* presents the centrality of the fire temple in Parsi community. Parsis have their own New Year, Navroje which is celebrated at Fire temple with their family and relatives. Parsis celebrate separate New Year Day in August every year. The protagonist, Brit's parents Sam and Sera meet each other at first time at the Fire temple on New Year's Day although Sera seem to be blasphemous, wondering what the priest wears under his white Muslin robe. Kanga through Brit



remarks on the Parsis highest seat of spirituality: "We Parsis don't take our religion too seriously; those who do are considered downright dangerous and a little mad." (*Trying to Grow*, 17)

Brit's parents exhibit the centrality of their religious spirit in their humanity towards their physically deformed child. Instead of treating the child with kid gloves, they let the child lead as normal a life as possible, but always ensuring that Brit is most comfortable without cloyingly making him their only priority in life. Parsi children are officially inducted into the Zoroastrian faith through the ritual of Navjote. Parsi parents are very particular about celebrating Navjote, the first ritual in the lives of their children. It is done between the seventh and the eleventh year of the child. First the child takes a special bath called NAHN and then he is given a purifying drink. The initiation begins with a ritual bath, then a spiritual cleansing prayer; the child changes into white pajama pants, a shawl, and a small cap. Following introductory prayers, the child is given the sacred items that are associated with Zoroastrianism: a sacred shirt and cord, Sudra, and Kusti. The child then faces the main priest and fire is brought in to represent God. Once the priest finishes with the prayers, the child's initiation is completed and he or she is now a part of the community and religion. It is clearly depicted in Nergis Dalal's *Skin Deep* in the celebration of Navjote for Nazz and Yasmin (twin sisters) at their grandmother's house. As a Parsi, Nergis Dalal wants to reveal the Parsi culture through her writings to society at large and also passes the culture to next generations of Parsi. Nergis Dalal reveals the greatness of the purification ritual and its significance;

For Zoroastrians, this is like a First Communion or Bar Mitzvah, a formal initiation which every Parsi child –male or female- must undergo. The sudra, a thin muslin shirt worn next to the skin, and the kusti, the sacred thread, handwoven from white lamb's wool, are formally put on the child by priest in a ceremony which [has] great religious significance for all Zoroastrians. (*Skin Deep*,53)

Firstly Nahn or purification baths had been given to both Nazz and Yasmin before the ceremony of Navjote began. Invitations were sent out and

masses of pink, scented roses and white tuberose ordered. Dressed in silk pajamas, fine white shawls covering the upper portion of their bare bodies and embroidered caps on their heads, they were led to the dais where the ceremony would take place. Four Priests dressed completely in white, with gold embroidered cummerbunds, were waiting. The children were supposed to chant the prayers in time with the priests, the sudras were slipped over their heads as the shawls were removed and the kusti wound three times around their waists. (*Skin Deep*,61) It is also pointed out by Vibhuti Wadhawan's *Parsi Community and the Challenges of Modernity: A Reading of Rohinton Mistry's Fiction*, as;

Rituals of Navjote (thread ceremony),

Behram roj (religious festival)

And Achu michu (ceremony) are often alluded to, complete with kusti, dugli and sudras (religious symbols) that help the community preserve its sanctity through rituals. (Wadhawan, 30)

Henceforth, the child continues to wear the Sudra and Kusti and perform the Kusti ritual with the prescribed prayers, throughout life. The Sudra is made of pure, white muslin or cotton while the Kusti is woven of seventy-two threads of fine lamb's wool. In the Pahlavi Texts, the Sudra is described as "Vohu Manik Vastra", the Garment of Good Mind. The word 'Kusti' means a waist band. Being tied thrice round the waist, it points to the trinity of good thoughts, good words, good deeds. These form a barrier insulating the individual from all that is evil.

The institution of marriage is given a prominent place in Parsi community in former times the marriage ceremony began with the young couple sitting facing each other. The officiating priest would then place a cloth between the bride and groom. He would then take the bride's right hand and place it in the groom's right hand and tie their hands seven times with a piece of twine. Prayers would be recited and the assistant feeds the fire with sandal wood and incense. At this point, the cloth curtain between the young couple is removed. The bride and groom throw a fistful of uncooked rice on each other which they had been holding in their left hands. This action symbolizes prosperity. After embracing their parents, the couple leaves and goes to the Fire Temple to pay



their homage to the sacred fire. While going to the grooms' house, the bride holds a small wick lamp in a protective silver vase. The light should not go out on the way to her new home. At the threshold, her husband awaits her. The little wick lamp is kept burning in the bridal chambers all night.

Love marriages are very common in the Parsi community. But they prefer to marry within their own community. Inter faith marriages are not accepted by Parsi people. Children of men married to women outside the faith are considered Parsis but not those of the women. In Perin Bharucha's *The Fire Worshippers*, Nariman who loves an Anglo-Indian Portia Roy faces stiff opposition to her relationship expresses his anguish.

The traditional Parsi disapproval of intermarrying was not for religious reasons at all. It was the outcome of the promise made by the early Persians to Jadhav Rana..... Times had changed but his people hadn't changed with them. It was vicious and meaningless that his life should be in a mess because of a long forgotten promise made by his forefathers in the eighth century. (*The Fire Worshippers*,98)

Ultimately, Nariman sister convinces the elders to keep face with the changing social mores. Similarly in Kanga's *Trying to Grow*, Sam and Sera's love marriage is accepted by all. But their daughter Dolly alliance with a Muslim Doctor and Dolly's cousin Tina's marriage to a Hindu boy are not accepted by their parents. Dolly's parents oppose the marriage as they perceive Muslims to be their historical enemies. Zoroastrian had to flee from Persia to escape the religious persecution by the Muslims who establish Islam in the eighth century. Dolly's parents however finally concede to Dolly's insistence of marrying a Muslim boy friend.

On the theme of marriage, Parsi writers like Perin Bharucha maintains a clever balance, implicitly opposing the rigid code but not appearing overtly rebellious. It has always been a controversial issue among the Parsis who wish to preserve the chastity of their ethnic group even at the cost of extinction. Perin Bharucha tries to reject the concept of ethnical purity through Nariman, an idealist and resists disintegration of community through the character of Nariman's father Pestonji Kanchawalla. Later novels

show that social rigidity to inter –faith marriages is gradually getting eroded.

NUMBER CUSTOM

Parsis have a Number custom. Parsi are fond of the number "a hundred and one". It is clearly shown in *Trying to Grow*. Brit's grandfather was one who was known for his chivalrous nature and having slain one hundred tigers in the service of his princeling, he was given the Diwan's only daughter, a Parsi lady, in marriage.

"On their wedding night he boasted he would give her a hundred one sons.

one for each tiger since his bride was almost forty" (*Trying to Grow*,15).

A hundred and one being a number much loved by the Parsis whose wedding gifts always consist of white envelops with a hundred and one rupee inside.

FOOD

People also connect to their cultural or ethnic group through similar food patterns. Immigrants often use food as a means of retaining their cultural identity. People from different cultural backgrounds eat different foods. The ingredients, methods of preparation, preservation techniques, and types of food eaten at different meals vary among cultures. The areas in which families live and where their ancestors originated—influence food likes and dislikes. These food preferences result in patterns of food choices within a cultural or regional group. Methods of preparation and types of food vary by regions of a nation.

The flexibility to changing social environment yet maintaining their distinct Parsi identity and culture marks the Parsis desire to preserve and safeguard their ancient legacy and heritage. However, Parsi cooking has been shaped by two ancient cultures-- Persia, where Parsis originated, and India, where they later settled. This unusual historical background gives Parsi foods a distinct and unique flavour. Recipes with nuts, dry fruits and shirini (sweet) within them originated in Persia, while ginger, garlic, chilies and spice add Indian flair. Centuries-old foods like saffron, jaggery and vinegar as well as ginger, cinnamon and turmeric all staples in Parsi cooking are celebrated in modern times for their health benefits.



Some food beliefs and practices are due to religious beliefs. Parsi doesn't have any particular beliefs like fasting. In addition to impacting food choices, culture also plays a role in food-related etiquette. People in Parsi community like western people refer to food-related etiquette as *table manners*, a phrase that illustrates the cultural expectation of eating food or meals at a table. Most of the Parsi people eat with forks and spoons. Dina Mehta's text *And Some Take a Lover* bears witness to these westernized manners. The privileged group of westernized communities in India, especially the Parsis, continued to be imprisoned in what the Kenyan writer Ngugi has called "the slave-culture of imperialism." The protagonist Roshini's world is a mirror image of that of the colonial master. Her Parsi family and friends live in houses with "No Eastern colours in evidence" (14) and where "the Indian sensibility was missing"(14). In addition to these superficial trappings of the "master-race," Roshini's people also distance themselves from the Hindu mainstream.

During the 1300 years that the Parsi have lived in India, they have assimilated various influences with which they have come into contact to develop their own distinctive cuisine. Nuts, coconuts (Gujarat and Maharashtra) and spices along with western cuisine have been adopted and adapted making them their very own. According to Firdaus Kanga in *Trying to Grow*, Parsis were "reluctant Indians" who had their own way of food habits. Once the protagonist Brit, his parents and sister go to restaurant called the Madras Cafe and discuss the taste of cuisine in which served an English meal, bland as an ulcer diet. Brit's mother Sera and father Sam commented on Indian food, as

'It's very simple,' said Sera once. 'The Indians are a poor people so the best place for genuine Indian cuisine has got to be cheap.' 'And dirty food is always tastier,' said Sam. 'I mean, nothing can match the flavour of a sweaty palm.' (*Trying to Grow*, 32-33)

For the fun-loving Parsi community, one of the most integral elements of a good life is a grand, tasty meal. No Parsi function is complete without good food, a couple of drinks and some foot-tapping music to dance to. The members of the community gather

in large numbers during Navroze, the Zoroastrian New Year and the six annual feasts known as ghambaars to share a sumptuous meal.

The wedding feast called lagan no bhonu is a feast fit for the king! The party will be fed in batches called panth each approximately numbering three hundred to four hundred guests. The last round will be for the hosts and their close relatives. The host invites the guests to the feast by saying 'jamva chalo ji' (please proceed for the meal). Long tables are placed parallel to each other with people sitting on one side only so that those on the first table face those on the second. The narrow channel between the tables is meant to facilitate those serving the food. The vegetarians are seated apart and served a ghee-filled Gujarati thali.

The cuisine has a way of presenting dishes which make the Parsi fare interesting and tempting. First the patra (banana leaf) is laid. The serving begins with achar and the chapattis on the top right corner and a vegetable dish like Parsi Lagansara Stew is also served. The lagan nu achar, a carrot and dry fruit pickle is traditionally served at weddings or lagans. Wedding feasts traditionally include *lagan nu custard*.

Common desserts include *sev* (vermicelli), *ravo* (semolina) and Malido. Also popular are *faluda* and *kulfi*, both of which are adoptions from the cuisines of the Irani and Urdu-speaking communities. In *Skin Deep*, the protagonist Nazz and her twin sister Yasmin birthday was celebrated by her grandmother. That day started with breakfasts-Parsi rava made from semolina sautéed in butter, and then slowly simmered in milk, flavoured with sugar and sprinkled with slivered almonds and nutmeg. It was then poured into glass dishes and served ceremoniously by servant maids. (*Skin Deep*, 11).

The next serving is of the fish. It is always pomfret and is all selected and weighed. It is either saans ni machchi or patra ni machchi, Parsis love fish and this dish is a famous Parsi delicacy that is prepared in a unique way, wrapped up in banana leaves and steamed after marinating it with masala which is mainly green chutney-based. No Parsi feast is considered complete without these items and there could be a third preparation called tarapori



sooka boomla no patio. It's a pickle of dry Bombay Duck prepared in a wet gravy of onions and vinegar.

Coconut fish rice has symbol of plenty have been accepted into their food culture which indicates a complete assimilation process of the Parsis. Nergis Dalal also mentioned about food habits in her *Skin Deep* as,

From the time that the Parsis had migrated to India, their food was a wonderful blend of different cultures and cuisines. From Persia they brought their love of nuts and saffron, which they used lavishly in curries and sweet dishes. Meat-eaters, they had no particular restrictions or taboos. Parsi cuisine borrowed lavishly from everywhere.-from the British, from the west coast of India, from Gujarat, Kashmir and Goa. There were no restrictions on the consumption of alcohol, and Grandama swore by the therapeutic value of Hennessy's brandy, which she used as a rub for headaches or backaches, and as a quick and effective remedy for tiredness and insomnia. (*Skin Deep*, 59).

Parsis are basically meat eaters and no meal is complete without a meat, fish or chicken dish. Their food has no predominant flavour arising from the use of any specific oil or spice. Chilies and spices are used in moderation and the cuisine takes care to preserve the subtle flavour of the different dishes. Its distinctive taste has universal appeal. The Iranian influence is seen in the meat and chicken dishes cooked with vegetables –potatoes, okra, spinach, and green peas being the most popular in the use of nuts and rose water and the preparation of Pulav, Biryani and Mughal dishes.

Wine and alcohol drunk in moderation are acceptable and were used to toast the king in ancient times. The exhilarating drink Hoama made by pounding the twigs of the ephedra plant and extracting the juice was a consecrated drink and used in the yesna ceremony in which Yesna, the Avestan language recited by the priests to strengthen and protect their community from evil spirit and Wine was given to a woman after the birth of still born child to give her strength.

In contrast to Nergis Dalal, B.J.Manekshaw mentioned some of the taboos in her book *Parsi*

Food, Drink and Customs: The Essential Parsi Cook books as, 'There are very few food taboos and those that exist are more for health reasons. There are four days of Parhezi (abstinence) in the month, when Parsis are expected to abstain from meat-Bahman, Mohar, Ghosh and Ramroj. Meat is not to be eaten during the eleventh month of the year presumably because this is the lambing season and Bahman is the protector of cattle. However, fish and eggs are permitted on such days. Meat is also not eaten for three days after the death of near one as bereavement affects the digestion. The period of abstinence is broken on the fourth day with Dhan sakh which is why this dish is never prepared on an auspicious occasion.

Dhan Sakh, the best known of Parsi dishes has probably evolved from the Iranian khoreste esfannaj, a dish cooked with meat, lentils and spinach. As taste changed, spices were added to the dish to make Dhan Sakh what it is today. The flavours of rose-water in most Parsi sweets –ravo, sev, falooda and in their murambas and sherbets has its origin in Iran. The Halvas and murambas made in India, the Middle East, Turkey and Greece have all been influenced by Iran. In *Skin Deep*, the protagonist Nazz's in-laws asked her about Dhan Sakh preparation

'Can she (Maria, the servant maid) also make dhansakh? I (mother-in-law) had once eaten this in a restaurant and I found it very interesting and different from all the dals we cook at home'.

I(Nazz) laughed- the one dish that all non-Parsis associate with us is dhansakh- a delectable mixture of four or five different dals cooked with vegetables, meat and special spices.

'Yes, she makes very good dhansakh; it is my grandmother's recipe, and very special. I will cook it for you one day'. (*Skin Deep*, 118)

For the Parsi Community, Dhansakh has a special occasional taste although Parsis have no food taboos yet they do not eat the cockerel. This is so because the cockerel heralds the sun and is the bird sacred to Sarosh, the guardian angel of all our urvan (soul), and is not knowingly eaten. As the cow is venerated in India many Parsis abstain from beef. In *Such a Long Journey*, the protagonist who is a bank



employee prefers to cook chicken for his daughter Roshini's birthday celebrations and as a Parsi, he doesn't eat cock perhaps the respect of Indian tradition.

The pomegranate as a symbol of fertility (the fruit is linked to the womb of nature containing hundreds of seeds) and the date symbolizes the true of life are remnants of the Iranian influence on Parsi ceremonies and eating habits. The pomegranate leaf is eaten by a person having the nahn or religious bath.

The Parsi love for eggs has created many egg dishes which are unique to their cuisine. Most are cooked on precooked vegetables. Everything is cooked on wood fire and that is what gives the food a unique taste.

Many pickles and chutneys are adopted from the western coast of India. Exceptions which are typically Parsi are lagan nu achar, meva nu achar, gorkeri nu achar, gharab nu achar, bafenu and the tamoto and mango chutneys. The roti and poori made from wheat flour, millet or milo are adapted from Gujarat, as also most of the tea time snacks such as bhajias, patrel, the famous bhel poori, sev and choora. However dishes like Bhakra (a type of doughnut) and sadhana (steamed rice pancakes) both made with toddy are typically Parsi. The dals and vegetables preparations are also Gujarati or Maharastrian based. The city of Navsari is especially famous amongst the Parsis for its pickles, chutneys, murambas and vinegars.

The cuisine was further influenced by the British when the Parsis came into contact with them. Slow assimilation of English dishes started taking place and the result were sas (sauce), custer (custard), estew (stew) and dhai and masala roasts (offshoot of the English roast beef.)

Slow assimilation of British food into the Parsi culture is evident through the novel, *'Trying to Grow'* the protagonist Brit's mother Sera's hoardings of cheeses, giant slabs of butter, tins of drinking chocolate in the fridge, in the kitchen were brown and white porcelain jars holding kilos of rice and sugar, pickles and jams, spices and condiments.

The novelists have given meaningful hints about other aspects of the Parsi way of life. Bapsi Sidwa tells us that most Parsis are relentless eaters

and have a remarkable passion for elaborate food. Gluttony is another deadly sin which lures the Parsis in a big way. Another distinctive characteristic of Parsis is their loquaciousness. In this way Parsis have great unique rituals and customs which are distinct from other communities. Though they are modernized, they strictly follow their customs and rituals.

DEATH

The people call the Parsis "Kagra khaos" 'Crow Eaters'. But it is a misnomer. It is not the Parsis who eat crows but the other way around, it is not crows but vultures to which the dead are fed. Parsi funeral ceremony is also specific and different from others. The pollution that is associated with death has to be handled carefully. A separate part of the home is designated to house the corpse for funeral proceedings before being taken away. It is an ancient practice still in Bombay, a separate space situated at the Hanging Gardens on the top of Malabar Hill towards Kemp's Corner. This death ceremony was clearly explained by Nariman to Portia, an Anglo-Indian in the novel *The Fire Worshippers*

"That's a sort of continuation of the garden, isn't it?"

No, that's Doongerwadi, and in there is where we have our Dakhmas".

"Doongerwadi? Dakhmas? what on earth.....?"

"Doongerwadi means the Hill Garden and Dakhmas is the Parsi name for "Tower of Silence" (*The Fire Worshippers*, 38)

Parsis wear separate and traditional white clothes for wedding as well as Funeral. That is clearly revealed in the Kanga's novel. Madame Manekshaw slit her throat and invited death following the death of her husband. Brit says:

Sam was called home from his office to help take me to the funeral. Then we remembered I didn't have the knee-length white muslin coat with bows down the front that Parsis are supposed to wear at funerals-and weddings. (*Trying to Grow*, 89)

Parsis take the dead body to the vultures and Brit stood a mute witness to the event. The priest comes to say prayers that are for the cleansing of sins and to affirm the faith of the deceased. Fire is brought to the room and prayers are begun. The



body is washed and placed in clean in a Sudra and Kusti. The ceremony then begins, and a circle is drawn around the body into which only the bearers may enter. As they proceed to the cemetery they walk in pairs and are connected by white fabric. A dog is essential in the funeral process because it is able to see death. The body is taken to the tower of death where the vultures take care of it. Once the bones are bleached by the sun, the bones are pushed into the circular opening in the center. The mourning process is four days long, and rather than creating graves for the dead, charities are established in honor of the person.

Funeral ceremonies of Parsis continue for four consecutive days. On the tenth day after death, certain prayers are recited both in the home and in the Fire Temple. After a month, prayers are again recited and then annually on the death anniversary. The dead body is disposed of in 'Towers of Silence' on the top of a hill. The flesh is devoured by birds of prey and after a few days, the bones are lowered into deep wells at the bottom of which are layers of charcoal, lime and other minerals which slowly dissolve the bones. Thus the mortal remains of the individual are disposed of in a most hygienic manner.

Zoroastrianism, which is followed by Parsis, is a tolerant religion and does not impose its beliefs and rituals on anyone. Zoroastrians refuse to allow any converts into their religion. They have managed to keep their religion and its rituals and temples closed and secret from other community people. It is clearly said by Nergis Dalal through her protagonist Nazz "No one other than Parsi was admitted to their temples, nor permitted to take part in the secret rites performed at births, deaths and funerals. (*Skin Deep*, 23) In this way Parsis have unique and different rituals which make them special among the other communities in India. Hence, the Parsi writers have brought ethnicity through their writings which reveal their rituals as well as their customs to the world.

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Such a long history of Parsis in India, and yet they have successfully preserved their culture and traditions. At the same time they have picked up certain local customs which have been incorporated into their wedding rituals. On the whole, Parsi weddings are an interesting mixture of cultures. The weddings itself is an elaborate and tradition-laden affair spanning for several days. Weddings within the Parsi community are known as "Lagan" and they take place at the Parsi Agyari or Fire Temple. To have a better idea about the whole wedding celebration, let's take a look at their various customs