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## **Festivals, Heritage, and Environment: A Decadal Review (2015–2025)**

**Saira Iqbal**

Assistant Director Press & Media, Allama Iqbal Open University,  
[saira.iqbal@aiou.edu.pk](mailto:saira.iqbal@aiou.edu.pk)

**Arslan Butt**

Assistant Professor (Visiting), NUSASH-NUTECH. [dr.arslanbutt@nutech.edu.pk](mailto:dr.arslanbutt@nutech.edu.pk)

### **Abstract**

This research examines the changing cultural, ecological, and socio-political aspects of South Asian festival traditions in India and Pakistan in an interdisciplinary literature review between 2015 and 2025. Rooted in the discourses of environmental humanities, cultural anthropology, and heritage studies, the study identifies three connected thematic paths: festivals as manifestations of intangible cultural heritage, human-nature relationships in ritual practices, and dynamic adjustment of festivals in the face of socio-political instability and digital change. Using a qualitative visual mapping method like a word cloud, the research identifies salient terminologies and thematic overlaps, increasing methodological transparency. Research findings indicate festivals as living cultural systems that encode ecological knowledge, maintain communal identities, and mediate contemporary challenges like climate change, urbanization, and religious pluralism. Despite such richness, the literature exhibits some critical shortcomings, such as a shortage of comparative, cross-border work, and scant exploration of digital hybridity, as well as little focus on intergenerational transfer and climate exposures. The work suggests future research that includes ethnofuturism—a frame of reference being increasingly applied to European cultural studies—to imagine culturally embedded but future-oriented festival practices in Asian settings. This integration can be used to reimagine festivals not just as archives of heritage but as adaptive methodologies for ecological and cultural sustainability in the context of global uncertainty.

**Keywords:** South Asian Festivals, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Environmental Humanities, Ritual Ecology, Cultural Resilience, Digital Transformation, Ethno-futurism

### **Introduction**

Intangible Cultural Heritage includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festivals, and traditional knowledge related to nature and the universe. These elements preserve cultural identity and are passed down through generations (Diwasa, et. Al 2007; Andretta, 2017). Festivals reflect the values, belief and rhythms of the communities that celebrates them. These are the vital expressions of Intangible cultural heritage (ICH). These are often rooted in agricultural cycles, religious practices and historical commemorations behaving as a living archive of identity and collective memory (Falassi, 1987; UNESCO, 2003; Cudny, 2014). Festivals offer insight to the intricate interplay between human societies and their environment by offering dynamic practices,



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specifically in the regions where seasonal and ecological patterns affect ritual timings and meanings (Ingold, 2000; Rudiak, 2016). Festivals and rituals are integral to cultural identity and environmental awareness across societies, that most of the time reflect human adaptive responses to seasonal and ecological rhythms (Frost, 2015; Prasetyo, 2023). In South Asia, especially in Punjab, festivals like *Basant*, *Lohri*, *Baisakhi*, *Sawan Melas* are strongly interlinked with agricultural cycles serving both as festivals of seasonal change and ecological practices. *Lohri*, for instance, marks the end of winter and the beginning of longer, warmer days suitable for crop cultivation (Singh, 2015) while *Basant* celebrates the arrival of spring (Bala, 2023). These festivals also align with ritual traditions globally, that honour rain, fertility and harvest (Witzel, 2015).

Despite of their cultural significance, these festivals are in continuous threat by climate change, urbanization and environmental degradation. In Punjab, because of the rising pollution levels (AQI over 1900 in some regions), unpredictable rainfalls, agricultural burning, industrial emissions and vehicle pollution is not only worsening people's health but also threatening rituals, festivals and social practices that are linked to agricultural cycles (Hussain, 2024; Ahmed, 2024). The intangible cultural heritage rooted in rural memory is at risk due to migration, economic marginalization, and the disconnection of people from ancestral land-based customs.

Over the last decade, there has been a noticeable expansion in scholarly literature on festivals, with a focus of researchers on anthropological, sociological, heritage studies, environmental humanities and cultural geographical aspect (Jepson & Clarke 2014).

In this review paper, the focus will be on the festivals of Pakistan, a region that is known for its cast cultural diversity and ecological variety where festivals are interlinked with both human-environmental relationships and traditions based on history. This review aims to examine the ways in which festivals in Pakistan have been studied over a decade, focusing on the key trends and shifts in existing research. By focusing on the region Pakistan, this paper offers a detailed understanding of how festivals are not only a celebration of cultural heritage but also presents itself as a mechanism of environmental adaptation, seasonal awareness and community cohesion in the changing world.

Through an analysis based on themes, this review will explore the issues addressed in contemporary research like impact of climate change, role of festivals in sustaining ecological traditions, evolving festivals in the face of modernization and globalization. By narrowing the focus to Pakistan, this paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on ICH and its connection to both human -environmental dynamics, by highlighting the regions significance but often overlooked the role in global festivals studies.

This review article examines a decade of festival studies (2015–2025), with a focus on how researchers have addressed themes of intangible heritage and human–environment relations with a regional focus on Pakistan and India. Drawing from interdisciplinary literature, it aims to trace emerging patterns, identify gaps, and provide a thematic map of the evolving discourse on festivals as both cultural performances and ecological expressions.

To guide this synthesis, the review addresses two central questions:

1. What key trends have emerged in the study of festivals in Pakistan and India over the past decade, particularly in relation to intangible cultural



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heritage and human-environment interactions?

2. How has the literature on festivals in Pakistan and India addressed the challenges posed by climate change and environmental degradation, and what adaptive strategies have been identified in festival practices?

By engaging with these questions, the paper highlights how contemporary research conceptualizes festivals as living heritage—embedded in ecological knowledge, threatened by environmental transformation, yet adaptive in form and function. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on heritage preservation, sustainability, and cultural resilience in the face of climate change,

### Methodology and Scope of the Review

This review article has solely dealt with academic research of 2015-2025 published as a form of papers/articles analyzing festivals against the geographical region of South Asia, especially India and Pakistan. The range involves inter-disciplinary works from anthropology, heritage, environmental humanities, and South Asian studies due to the complex and dynamic nature of festivals as ecocultural events.

To select relevant literature, a systematic search was carried out in large academic databases, such as JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The following combinations of keywords were used: festivals of South Asia, rituals of Pakistan, rituals of India, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Ecological festivals, climate and festivals, and Seasonal festivals. The search was restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles that have a primary thematic focus on India or Pakistan.

Following evaluation and screening, 23 articles were shortlisted for inclusion after exclusion criteria of non-peer-reviewed material, media reports, and studies without either a regional or thematic focus were applied.

### Textual Visualization for Theme Identification

To assist the analytical process and to create an initial map of frequent ideas and research focuses, a word cloud was produced based on the corpus of the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the 23 studies selected. The above visualization was done on WordArt.com, where the frequency of words was used to ascertain visual emphasis of words. A systematic search was undertaken on prominent research databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar for locating relevant literature. The keyword combinations used for the search were: festivals of South Asia, rituals of Pakistan, rituals of India, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Ecological festivals, climate and festivals, and Seasonal festivals. The search narrowed down to peer-reviewed journal articles with a main thematic focus on India or Pakistan.

Following screening and assessment, 23 articles were selected for inclusion after exclusion of non-peer-reviewed items, media reports, and studies without a relevant regional or thematic focus.



**Figure 1: Word Cloud Visualization of Key Terms in Reviewed Literature (2015–2025)**

The word cloud generated is a qualitative review exploratory visual mapping tool meant to:

- Highlight key lexical fields and central terminologies
- Uncover interdisciplinary intersections between environmental, cultural, and ritual arenas
- Strengthen emergent issues like sustainability, climate, ritual, community, and intangible heritage

While the review is still broadly qualitative in scope, this visual method introduces some degree of methodological transparency, providing readers with an overview of conceptual load and thematic preoccupation in the literature being reviewed.

**Thematic Coding and Categories**

Based on an in-depth reading and qualitative thematic coding of the selected articles, three major analytical categories were identified:

1. Festivals as Expressions of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)
2. Human–Environment Interactions in Festival Practices
3. Socio-Political Transformations and Post-COVID Shifts in Festival Dynamics

Following is the structured table summarizing the **Methodology section** of this review paper:

Aspect	Details
Timeframe	2015–2025
Geographical Focus	Pakistan, India
Disciplines Covered	Anthropology, Heritage Studies, Environmental Humanities, South Asian Studies
Databases Searched	JSTOR, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar
Search Terms Used	“festival studies”, “ritual”, “intangible cultural heritage”, “seasonal celebrations”, “climate and culture”, “cultural resilience”
Inclusion Criteria	Peer-reviewed articles



Aspect	Details
Exclusion Criteria	Media articles, non-peer-reviewed content, studies without regional relevance
Approach to Analyse	Thematic coding: grouped under ICH, environment, transformations and adaptation/ Textual Mapping of Literature Themes

## Thematic Overview of the Literature

Following are the themes that have been selected:

### 1) Festivals as Expressions of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Festivals serve as the most lasting forms of intangible cultural heritage that carries collective memory, belief systems and values of communities. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding ICH identifies festivals as a vital category of ICH recognizing them as, “practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities recognize as their cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003). Over the past decade, the existing literature emphasized the role of festivals as dynamic cultural performances that not only save traditions but also negotiate contemporary identities. Shahzad and Rubab (2024) examine the cultural and religious significance of lunar eclipses in Central Punjab, Pakistan. The research documents the interpretation of celestial phenomenon through ritual practices.

The findings organized into socio-cultural traditions like oral folktales, superstitions and religious practices highlights how eclipse serve as a nexus of indigenous cosmology, communal memory and spiritual meaning-making in agrarian societies. Firdous and Sabiha (2023) explores Hindu festivals in Bahawalpur through Berry’s model of acculturation, examining how the community navigates cultural preservation and adaptation. The study highlights the strategies of integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization in minority contexts. Bala (2023) focuses on the cultural grandeur of the *Basant* festival at the Lahore Darbar, highlighting its traditional and performative elements. Not only such kind of cultural festivals have been under examination but religious festivals like has also been under consideration in a lot of scholarly works. Jan, Rehman & Khattak (2019) emphasizes significance of religious activities as a means of promoting social cohesion and interaction between these communities. Ali and Chawla (2019) investigate the cultural life of Kalasha people of Chitral, focussing specifically on their festivals. This article examines key festivals like Joshi, Rat Nat, Uchaw and the Winter Solstice. These festivals have been under consideration of this study to highlight the significance of cultural identity and social cohesion. The study incorporates ethnographic research exploring the meaning behind the festivals and their deep-rooted cultural significance among the Kalasha people. Naqvi et al. (2018) explores how cultural heritage festivals especially the Lok Virsa Festivals in Islamabad, Pakistan can influence tourism through the word of mouth. The study presents a model where authenticity, promotion, loyalty, quality and satisfaction affect the spread of WOM. Fenn & Joshi (2021) explores the cultural impact of festivals in India by establishing the relationship between culture and festivals, the role of culture in shaping values, and how are these values manifested in the celebration of Indian festivals. The study adopts a descriptive approach to examine the



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cultural influences on festival celebrations. Tewari (1982) explores women's participation in fasting and festival celebrations in Uttar Pradesh, highlighting the rich artistic expressions, traditional rituals, and folkloric stories associated with these events. It emphasizes how these practices embody cultural identity, reinforce social bonds, and reflect gender roles within the community, offering insights into the broader socio-cultural landscape of South Asia.

### 2) Human Environment Interaction

The festival in Pakistan reflects the complicate relationship between communities and natural surroundings. Rooted in agricultural cycles and seasonal transformations, many traditional festivities are shaped by environment. This section explores the ecological basis of rituals and how festivals have evolved with changing environmental conditions.

For instance, Pradhan et al. (2025) analyses Odhisa's rituals like *Nuakhai*, *Bakula Amavasya*, and *Makar Sankranti* with the lens of ecocriticism and cultural ecology, unveiling their embedded ecological wisdom. Taking insights from lived experiences and oral histories, the authors explained the role of these traditions in sustainability. The study by Das (2024) explores the interconnection between cultural practices and ecological sustainability in Himachal Pradesh's Dehra Gopipur region finding out how agricultural fetivals like *Lohri*, *Baisakhi*, *Minjar*, *Vriksha Puna*, and *Nag Devta* in seven villages foster environment stewardship. The study demonstrates traditional rituals encode sustainable land-use and biodiversity practices providing valuable insights for modern ecological strategies and advocating their preservation as integral to holistic conservation approaches in mountain ecosystem.

Arumugam (2025), analyse *Karthigai Deepam*, an ancient Tamil festival of lights unveiling the cosmological significance through fire rituals that connects divine and mortal realms. The study contrasts domestic and temple observance showing the symbolic connection of cosmic and intimate spaces.

Mondal and Pandey (2024), in his study highlights the tribal festivals like *Sarhu*, *Baha*, *Kunde Habba* reinforce climate resilience through ecological practices and rituals, The research explored the ecological awareness by tribal art forms like Warli and Gond art to protect ecosystem practices. Similarly, cultural deeply influences climate change responses, shaping perception and adaptation practices. Sustainable adaptation in Rural areas of Pakistan relied on integrating cultural values and local knowledge (Sadiq & Chaudhry, 2024).

Khan et al. (2024) explores the disproportionate effect of climate change on local communities, focussing on the Kalash people of northern Pakistan by highlighting the dire need for inclusive adaptation policies that prioritize the unique needs and traditional knowledge of the people in climate resilient planning. Ritual symbolizes the connection between humans and nature while fostering environmental consciousness. The study focusses on how such rituals go beyond ritual practices, preserving environmental knowledge and local wisdom. The research focuses on environmental education and sustainability.

S. Kumar (2023) explores the historical and cultural significance of millets in India, particularly in the context of harvest festivals and religious practices. The paper traces the importance of millet via vedic text by highlighting their role in various rituals as a staple in the Indian diet. The paper advocates for the preservation and promotion of this ancient crop to support not ancient cultural



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tradition and sustainable agricultural practices.

Similarly, several research focus on the tribes of West Bengal like the indigenous tribe of Chota Nagpur plateau in West Bengal have a deep connection with nature worshipping elements like air, water and land instead of idols. These practices not only value nature but also promote environmental conservation by keeping a balance between human activities and natural resources (Sarkar & Modak, 2022).

Rebecca Cairns (2020) explores the complex interplay between Hindi religious traditions and ecological care through the lens of *dharmic environmentalism*. He argues that communities embody a lived environmental ethic rooted in religious values that can served as localized models of sustainability.

The study by Shafqat, Marinova & Khan (2022) explores the sustainability potential of ICH in informal settlements, identified as urban extensions of rural life. Using grounded theory and thematic analysis, it defined four key themes of sustainability heritage: values and practices, communal networks, built environment and rural remnants. The argument of the research was to preserve vernacular sustainability via informal settlements and should be supported through culturally appropriate planning. Pradhan, Goswami, and Swain (2025) analyze selected rituals of Odisha through the lenses of ecocriticism and cultural ecology

Previous studies on Indian festivals and rituals have underscored their intrinsic ties to agrarian rhythms, seasonal cycles, and cultural identity, reflecting a deep-rooted relationship between humans and their natural environment. Within the frameworks of ecocriticism and cultural ecology, scholars have examined how ritual practices embody sustainable environmental values and localized ecological knowledge. However, focused attention on Odisha's regional rituals—such as *Nuakhai*, *Bakula Amavasya*, and *Makar Sankranti*—remains limited. This study builds on emerging scholarship (Pradhan, Goswami, & Swain, 2025) by offering a localized, experience-based exploration of how these traditions foster ecological consciousness and reinforce the interconnectedness of nature and culture in everyday life.

### 3) Socio-Political and Post-COVID Transformation

Festivals have historically reflected socio-political transformations, a manifestation of shifting power dynamics, communal identity and cultural negotiations. After COVID-19, festivals have also seemed unprecedented change, developing as a response using digital spaces, altered rituals, and emergent expressions of collective response. This section synthesises literature that examines both political nature of festivals and their new shapes in a pandemic reconfigured world.

Raza (2015) highlights religious festivals in Lahore, the cultural capital of Punjab that has historically served as a vibrant centre of religious and socio-political activities. However, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, has brought the significant transformations in the everyday life of Pakistani, including the people of Lahore. Increased security threats led to the restrictions on public gathering weakening the city's vibrant spiritual traditions. The once ceremonial atmosphere of communal harmony and festivity faced serious challenges effecting the cultural landscape of the city. The research emphasizes



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the need of preserving and reviving city's festival as a means of cultural survival and as a testament to the city's enduring civilizational spirit.

Parvez (2018), has explored the tradition of kite-making and kite-flying. Many traditional festivals like this one have disappeared because of shift in population and rise of modernization. Mughal (2014) examines the use of multiple calendars in shaping social rhythms and reflects broader patterns of cultural continuity and change in Rural Punjab. The focus of the study was on *Jhokwala* village in *Lodhran* district. The argument was the function of shifting use of calendars as a lens to understand social transformation and negotiation within traditional frameworks.

Mallhi et al. (2020) discusses the challenges of celebrating Eid ul Azha during COVID 19. The authors highlighted that the slaughter of animals in typically controlled and confined to specific locations in many Muslim countries including Pakistan. The article explains the rural-urban migration prior to Eid – a usual trend in some places, can result in the transmission of virus from one place to another. The study highlights that densely populated animal markets with poor health standards facilitates high possibilities of human-to-human transmission of disease. Inadequate awareness among people entails high risk of transmission of virus and the study appeals for immediate intervention to reduce the cases.

Sahoo & K. (2020) discuss how globalization and digital interconnectivity allow diasporic communities to market Kerala's sacred Theyyam ritual around the world. The research demonstrates that performing Theyyam outside its home context alters its spiritual meaning, resulting in cultural commodification. This is an indication of the conflict between maintaining tradition and reproducing it for global consumption.

This article by Jayaraj & Krishnamurthy (2024) discusses how the meanings of Teyyam, a ritual play of North Kerala, change constantly due to meaning-making processes. The authors discuss three important dimensions—origin stories, textualization and performance politics, and modes of circulation in the present times—to show how Teyyam manages tradition and change. The research places Teyyam in a floating signifier position, which highlights its malleability and receptiveness to new meanings, but also strengthens the fact that ritual is forever pliable and open to new reinvention.

### **Interdisciplinary and Expanding Scope**

The literature reviewed from 2015 to 2025 shows an evolving interdisciplinary methodology in studying festivals particularly India and Pakistan. The inclusion of anthropology, environmental humanities, cultural studies and sustainability science is indicative of a larger movement in heritage research. Previous research was mostly descriptive, concentrating on ritual forms and local culture. Recent work, however, has broadened the scope to consider festivals as intricate cultural systems that overlap with ecology, economy, history, socio-political shifts and policy.

The reviewed work illustrates that festivals are no longer being studied separately as carriers of knowledge, sites for minority identity formation, and spaces for negotiating tradition and modernity. Researchers like Pradhan et al. (2025) and Das (2024) place festivals within ecocritical and cultural ecology paradigms providing useful insights into sustainable land use, biodiversity, and



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climate resilience. Others such as Shahzad and Rubab (2024) expose how heavenly rituals inscribe indigenous cosmologies. These studies highlight those festivals, rather than being fixed customs, change under the pressure of socio-environmental forces and therefore require contextually sensitive, interdisciplinary research.

Moreover, festivals in urban and rural contexts are emerging as central themes on how communities counter climate change, marginalization and digital change. This was explored through the studies of Shafqat et.al (2022) and Firdous & Sabiha (2023) where they researched in slum areas and religious minorities. With digital media and pandemic interventions reshaping the scenery of festival practice, there is a greater need for interdisciplinary work in monitoring these changes and their long-term cultural consequences.

### Discussion and Synthesis

#### Thematic Convergences and Divergences

Across the three themes, several convergences are evident. Festivals all over the world are reservoirs of memory and identity, linking past practices to present predicaments. In the Basant celebration of Lahore or the agrarian festivities of Himachal Pradesh, there remains a shared appreciation of heritage as material and symbolic practice. Scholarship highlights how oral traditions, seasons' cycles, and performative arts are transmitted intergenerationally through festivals, affirming communal belonging and robustness.

Concurrently, what appears evident is substantial divergences. In Pakistan, for instance, scholarly focus is often focused on religious pluralism, minority cultural expression, and postcolonial identity—notably in the works of Jan et al. (2019), Ali & Chawla (2019), and Khan et al. (2024). Indian scholarship, on the other hand, is most likely to emphasize ecological embeddedness and cosmological continuity, e.g., in explanations of tribal rituals and dharmic ecocentrism (e.g., Sarkar & Modak, 2022; Cairns, 2020). This geographical difference reflects diverse national priorities and socio-political contexts shaping heritage discourse.

#### Scholarly Gaps and Future Directions

Despite increasing academic interest in festivals, heritage, and human-environment interactions, there are still large gaps in the literature. First, the field remains dominated by case-studies instead of comparative research. Although studies of individual festivals like India's *Diwali* or Pakistani's *Basant* are insightful, the lack of transregional frameworks limits our ability to identify shared patterns of cultural resilience or adaptation. A more organized, cross-border strategy would unveil how South Asian festivals reflect on global pressures such as globalization, urbanization, and policy changes.

Second, the effect of technology on festivals requires more- in depth empirical exploration. Hybrid festivals have remade participation in festivals. Yet the far-reaching implications of these changes—whether they disperse tradition or enable new modes of cultural expression—are yet underexplored. Urban environments exacerbate this dynamic, as festivals more and more take place in digitally mediated, multi-stakeholder spaces where local practices intersect with international influences.

Third, festivals tend to be examined as fixed cultural "products" instead of as



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fluid processes of negotiation. Future studies need to employ real-time ethnographic approaches to deconstruct how festivals are negotiated and co-produced by heterogeneous actors such as artisans, religious clerics, tourists, and policymakers.

Lastly, the climate emergency is still a glaring blind spot in festival studies. Environmental shocks—droughts, floods, and air pollution—are already derailing traditions. Few studies, however, investigate mitigation measures or analyse which festivals are most exposed to climate risks. Future research directions must prioritize digital ethnography of virtual festival spaces, systematic documentation of climate-threatened cultural practices, comparative cross-cultural studies to broaden geographical representation, and in-depth investigations into intergenerational knowledge transmission to ensure the continued relevance and resilience of these vital cultural expressions in an increasingly globalized and technologically mediated world.

### Summary and Reflection

The tripartite analysis reveals festivals as complex, living organisms of cultural heritage that simultaneously preserve tradition while dynamically responding to contemporary challenges. Theme 1 explores how festivals reflect and shape intangible cultural heritage and cultural identity, while Theme 2 explores how human–environment interaction is embedded in cultural rituals and seasonal festivals, revealing the reciprocal relationship between ecological cycles and community life. The tension between these themes presents a crucial paradox: the very festivals that strengthen cultural continuity (Theme 1) face existential threats from the environmental changes they traditionally helped communities navigate (Theme 2). Theme 3 compounds this complexity by revealing how festivals become contested spaces during socio-political upheavals and public health crises, simultaneously vulnerable to restriction yet remarkably adaptive through digital innovation.

Significant gaps emerge in the literature, notably the digital engagement with the festivals by having in consideration the trends of the current times and the future. The dominance of South Asian case studies generates geographical blind spots, while climate change forecasts are noticeably absent in research on environmentally based festivals. Perhaps, most importantly the literature does not pay sufficient attention to intergenerational transmission, leaving uncertain whether young people view these traditions as oppressive remnants or rich cultural assets.

These findings have deep policy significance. The documented decline of shared festivals such as Lahore's kite flying custom highlights the necessity of legal protections that safeguard public celebration spaces while accommodating necessary security measures. The environmental sense inherited in tribal festivals suggests cultural heritage policies should be incorporated with environmental conservation programs. For marginalized communities like the Kalasha, policy frameworks must balance cultural preservation with sustainable development pressures.

Future research agendas should include longitudinal studies of festival adaptations to climate change, cross-cultural comparative analyses of festival digitization, and action-oriented participatory research involving youth in cultural transmission process. The dire need is to create assessment frameworks



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that quantify not only cultural value but also the ecological sustainability and climate resilience of traditional festival practice. This multidimensional strategy might revolutionize festivals from susceptible heritage to active means of cultural and environmental sustainability in a more uncertain world.

### Conclusion

This review emphasizes that South Asian festivals are much more than celebratory events—they are dynamic cultural systems rooted deeply in ecological rhythms, social negotiations, and political worlds. The last decade has seen a huge growth in the methodological and thematic reach of festival studies, from descriptive accounts to critical, multidisciplinary analyses that incorporate environmental humanities, digital ethnography, and cultural policy.

The data indicate that festivals are living records of intangible heritage, systems for intergenerational transfer of knowledge, and adaptive forms of response to ecological and socio-political change. Yet such richness is also under mounting stress. Digitalization, climate change, urbanization, and marginalization test the continuity of festival forms while at the same time producing new pathways for innovation and resilience. And so, festivals must be recognized not as fixed remnants of the past but as fluid spaces in which tradition is repeatedly reinterpreted within the context of the present.

To protect and revitalize such cultural expressions, a concerted call for integrative research and policy-making paradigms is needed, which appreciates the many-faceted value of festivals—cultural, ecological, social, and economic. Comparative and transregional studies, youth engagement, digital documentation, and climate-sensitive approaches must be prioritized to ensure that the heritage embedded in festivals continues to inspire, educate, and unite future generations.

In addition, research in the future could adopt an ethno-futurist perspective—already making inroads into European heritage studies—to investigate how ancestral festival practices can guide ecologically sustainable futures in technologically mediated societies. Ethno-futurism offers a useful framework for thinking through how indigenous and ancestral knowledge systems can not only endure but actively mold emerging ecological and digital realities in Asia. Bridging this view has the potential to enhance scholarly research as well as policymaking, putting festivals at the forefront of building strong and creative cultural futures.

In an increasingly uncertain world, festivals are imbued with transformative power—as places of memory, identity, resistance, and renewal. Their complexity should be embraced by interdisciplinary and forward-thinking scholarship, not just as an academic priority but as a cultural one.

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