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Remembering Gujranwala: An Ethnographic Portrait of a Disappearing Punjabi Culture

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ABSTRACT

This ethnographic research examines the swift degradation of traditional Punjabi culture in the Gujranwala district of Pakistan, which can be attributed to the processes of urbanization, globalization, and the shift in intergenerational values. Employing a mixed-methods approach that combines the findings of surveys conducted among both urban and rural populations with extensive oral history research, this study provides evidence of a profound shift in the principal cultural practices. The findings of the quantitative analysis reveal a sharp drop in sociality, with younger urban generations increasingly isolated during celebration seasons and showing a strong affinity for Western clothing and food. These modern trends are juxtaposed with a richly detailed qualitative account of the intangible cultural heritage of the region, which describes intricate social practices, community-based governance systems (Panchayat), craft-based economies, and life-cycle rituals that had previously defined the everyday lives of the people. The findings of this study isolate the key factors that have contributed to the loss of cultural heritage, including the disruption of extended family structures, the depreciation of indigenous knowledge systems and occupations (Kumhar, Lohar, Julaha), and the replacement of traditional media with modern alternatives. The study concludes that this cultural transition is more than merely a shift in practice; it is, in fact, a profound disruption of social cohesion, collective identity, and local ecological knowledge. It urges immediate and intentional preservation strategies, hypothesizing that these cultural traditions offer critical templates for sustainable community living, mental health, and cultural resilience in the face of rapidly accelerating homogenization in the modern era.



Introduction

Culture, defined as a system of learned and shared behaviours (Linton, 1945), is the basic fabric of a community's identity and social structure. The Punjabi culture, with its long history, is a complex and rich place-based system of social practices, crafts, and community values. However, such localized cultural systems are now increasingly threatened by globalization and urbanization, which can lead to cultural homogenization and the loss of intangible cultural heritage (Appadurai, 1996; Smith, 2006). The district of Gujranwala is taken as a key case in this respect. It is suggested that the changes in lifestyle and preferences are symptomatic of a more profound systemic shift—a loss of social capital (Putnam, 2000) and a transition from a relational to an individuated social framework, which has profound implications for community health and cultural sustainability.

Gujranwala is a historical city in the Punjab province of Pakistan, located on the Grand Trunk Road, a historical route that leads north from the city of Lahore. The history of Gujranwala is inextricably intertwined with the history of the region, and its name is often associated with the Gujar tribe, who are said to have inhabited the area many years ago. Historically, Gujranwala remained a significant passage route, particularly during the Mughal era, for people and armies traveling from Kashmir to Afghanistan and the Punjab plains. The city further emerged as a significant centre during the Sikh Empire in the 18th century, when Charat Singh, the grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, made it his home. With the annexation of Punjab by the British in 1849, Gujranwala marked the beginning of a new era as a district headquarters. The historical and geographical importance of Gujranwala, along with its changing political and cultural significance, has made Gujranwala what it is today—a city that is alive with the passage of history (Ali, Javed-ur-Rehman, & Shabbir, 2021).

The research argues that Gujranwala is undergoing a deep and rapid process of cultural change. The visible signs of this change, such as clothing, food, and behaviour, are not random events but symptoms of a deeper systemic shift from a relational, place-based society to an individuated, space-based society. This decay is not limited to the surface level of society but affects the very roots of communal life, including indigenous knowledge systems, craft economies, informal governance networks, and the complex rituals that once sustained social relations. The loss of these factors indicates not only a shift in practice but also a possible disruption in the social resilience, intergenerationally, and psychosocial well-being of society.

The purpose of this research is to provide a systematic documentation and analysis of the current cultural shift taking place in Gujranwala. The research will provide answers to two major questions: (1) What are the most susceptible aspects of traditional Punjabi culture in Gujranwala that are at risk of being lost? (2) What are the key socio-economic forces that are driving this shift? Through the answering of these questions, the current research seeks to contribute to the pressing debate on cultural preservation in South Asia, arguing that a clear comprehension of the extent of loss is the first and foremost step in any intervention.

Methodology

This research used a sequential mixed-methods design to record and examine the cultural shift that has occurred in the Gujranwala district. The research design was deliberately sequential in nature, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in a manner that allowed for the initial establishment of modern behavioral trends, followed by a more in-depth exploration of the traditional cultural setting within which these trends might be understood. The data collection process was carried out over a purposeful sample that included both rural and urban areas of the district, with further stratification by age group, focusing on the younger and older generations in

particular, in order to explore the process of intergenerational transmission and value shift. The first stage of the research involved a structured survey that concentrated on key aspects of culture, such as social behavior, fashion, and food. The data collected was analyzed to provide an indication of comparative trends between groups. The second, more in-depth stage of the research concentrated on qualitative data collection, using ethnographic techniques in the main, including semi-structured interviews and oral histories with older generations and cultural custodians. These stories provided rich, experiential data on traditional ways of life, rituals, social organization, and everyday experience, which were then analyzed thematically. The combination of these two data sources—the trends from the survey and the insights from the interviews—is central to the analysis presented in this paper, and enables a detailed exploration of both the what and the how of cultural shift in the region.

Documenting the Shift: Contemporary Trends in Gujranwala

Quantifying a Social Shift

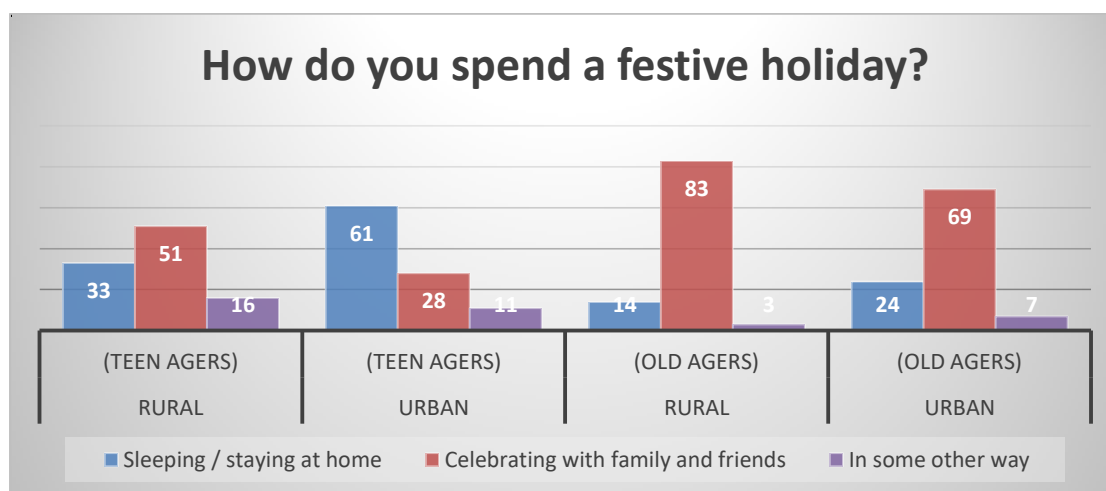
The people of Gujranwala are famous across Pakistan for their fun and loving nature. They are very warm hearted. There are different tribes, families and communities but they are known to celebrate each festive and tradition with great enthusiasm and zeal. To assess the current position of their loving and hospitable nature, the field surveys in urban and rural settlements are conducted. The results are as below:

Results

When natives of study areas are asked that how they spend their festive holidays, their replies comprise following results:

How do you spend a festive holiday?				
	Rural (Teen-Agers)	Urban (Teen-Agers)	Rural (Old Agers)	Urban (Old Agers)
Sleeping / staying at home	33	61	14	24
Celebrating with family and friends	51	28	83	69
In some other way	16	11	3	7

Figure: How People of Gujranwala Spend their Festive Holiday



Interpretation

This survey reveals the fact that there is a sharp difference between the rural and urban populations as well as old age group and teenage group. The 33 percent of the teenage groups of rural areas spend their festive holiday by staying at home while the ratio of the same age group in urban areas is 61 percent. When the same question is asked to old age group interestingly only 14 percent of old agers of rural area spend their festive holiday at home. On the other hand, in urban area 24 percent of the old age group stay at home during the holiday.

The second colour in graphs shows that 51 percent of the rural teenage groups spend their festive holidays with friends and families while in urban are the ratio of the same age group is only 28 percent. The old age group is still social and spends their holidays with family and friends as a figure of surveys let us know the fact that 69 % old age group of urban areas and 83% of rural areas spend their festive holidays with family and friends.

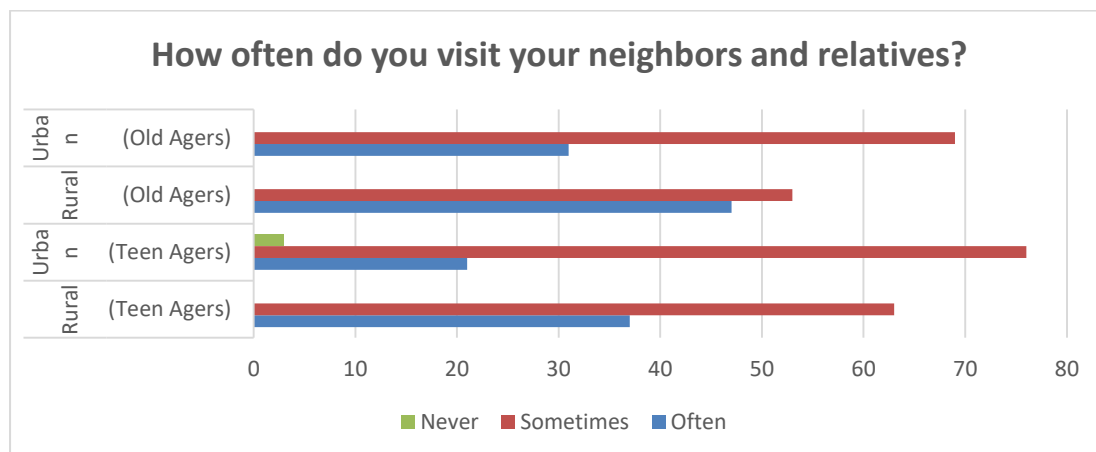
So, it can be opined that the people of Gujranwala who were famous across the country for their warm heartedness and loving nature, now, they are reluctant to be social and spend their leisure time with friends especially the young age group.

To assess the immediate situation of social bonding in the study area, another question is asked to the people of Gujranwala: how often do you visit your neighbours and relatives?

The results are as below:

How often do you visit your neighbours and relatives?				
	Rural (Teen-Agers)	Urban (Teen-Agers)	Rural (Old Agers)	Urban (Old Agers)
Often	37	21	47	31
Sometimes	63	76	53	69
Never	0	3	0	0

Figure: How often People of Gujranwala Visit their Neighbours and Relatives



This field study exposes the social activities of natives. The 37 percent of teenage groups of the rural areas often visit their neighbours and relatives while the ratio of the same age group in urban areas is 21 percent. When the same question is asked to the old age group, there is only 47 percent of old agers of rural areas who often visit neighbours and relatives. On the other hand, in the urban areas, 31 percent of the old age group do the same activity.

Embodied Change: Clothing as a Marker of Cultural Preference

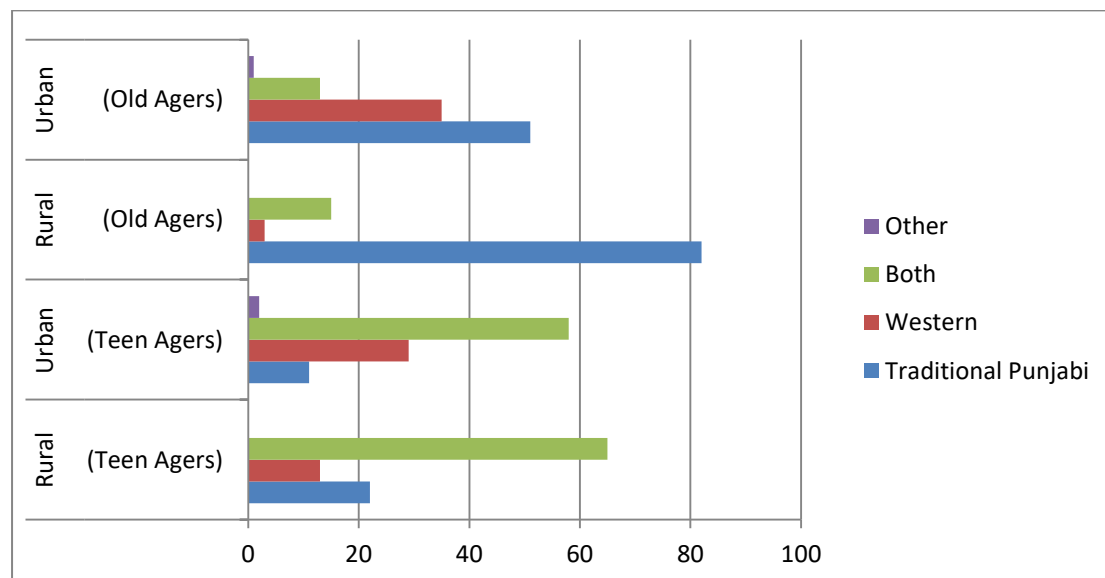
Gujranwala is a true epitome of Punjabi culture especially regarding to dresses. A general observation reveals the fact that famous dressing culture of Gujranwala is influenced by western civilization as a birds-eye view let us know that many young people in the study area are not wearing what are their cultural dresses but most of time get dressed in western design clothes.

Result

To assess the real scenario the following question is asked to the denizens of study area and results are compiled:

Which types of clothes do you prefer wearing?				
	Rural (Teen-Agers)	Urban (Teen-Agers)	Rural (Old Agers)	Urban (Old Agers)
Traditional Punjabi	22	11	82	51
Western	13	29	03	35
Both	65	58	15	13
Other	0	02	0	01

To make it clearer and more understandable, the above-collected results are shown in the following bar graph.



Interpretation

The results reveal the fact that the current scenario of dressing culture of Gujranwala has sharp contrast to its past. It is very unfortunate that only 11 percent of teenagers in urban settlements while 22 percent, although twice to urban area but very low percentage, in rural settlements wear their traditional clothes. on the other hand, when the people of the old age group were asked the same question, the results were entirely different. 82 percent of this age group, who belongs to rural settlements, wear traditional clothes and 52 percent of the urban settlement do the same.

In above-collected figures, it is also observed that the 65 percent teen agers of rural are and 58 percent of urban areas wear western and traditional both dresses. Resultantly, it can be opined that

the dressing traditions of the study area is under great threat as a major portion of young people show their interest to wear modern western dresses.

Consuming Modernity: The Shift in Food Culture and Public Health

There is no blinking on the fact that the natives of the city of wrestlers famous across Pakistan for their eating trends and the Desi cuisines of Gujranwala are also famous across the country. A native of study area was in the view of that a tour of Gujranwala cannot be completed if its desi food is not tasted. Gujranwala is famous for its barbecue especially roasted sparrows and Reshmi Kabab. Another native told us that the traditional breakfast of the study area is also something pertinent to mention like Ghani kay Paye. Families through the country come here to eat these traditional foods.

On a similar note, Gujranwala is famous for a number of traditional eateries, including Haji Allah Rakha, which is famous for its traditional dishes like Dal Fry, Seekh kebab, mutton karahi, chicken karahi, and goat chops. Another popular place is Shahbaz Tikka Shop, famous for its roused sparrows and chicken pieces, also known as tikka. The rural areas also have their own unique food items, with a preference for natural ingredients; a popular drink in Gujranwala's food culture is Chati ki Lassi, which is considered an essential part of the food culture. In rural areas, Lassi is a preferred drink over carbonated drinks, symbolizing the hospitality of the people. In addition, Gujranwala has a drink called Sardar, which is made by grinding various ingredients such as poppy seeds, watermelon seeds, almonds, and sunflower seeds into a fine powder. The powder is then ground by hand and mixed with water and sugar. Another typical drink is Sattu, which is nothing but roasted barley grains; the locals in the surrounding areas have it with brown sugar.

The last decade has seen many changes in the cuisine culture of Gujranwala. Although traditional foods and drinks are still very popular but some new food trends are also influencing the taste buds of natives. Many small food points, as well as large setups of Junk food, have started their operations in the city of wrestlers. The hamburgers of MacDonald's, petty burgers of KFC, carbonated drinks, Chaman Ice cream, chinees food are now the favourite foods of young people.

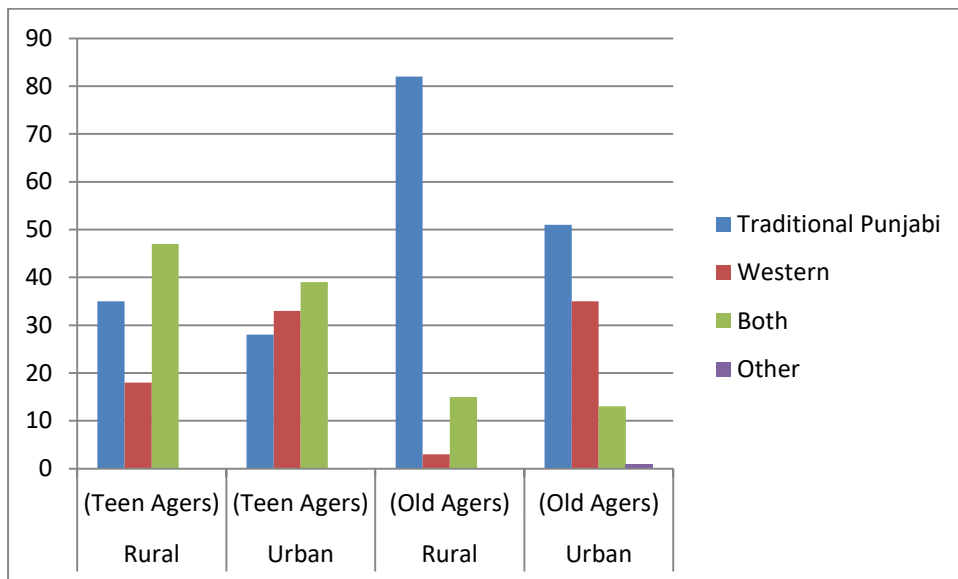
Results

To assess the current scenario of eating culture in the study area the following question is asked to the different age groups of rural and urban settlement and results are compiled in the table:

Which types of cuisines do you prefer when eating outside?				
	Rural (Teen Ageds)	Urban (Teen Ageds)	Rural (Old Ageds)	Urban (Old Ageds)
Traditional Punjabi	35	28	82	61
Western	18	33	03	17
Both	47	39	15	22
Other	0	0	0	0

Interpretation

The above numbers tell us the fact that western foods are getting popularity in study area as 18% of rural teenagers, 33 % of urban teen ageds and 17% of Urban old ageds have developed their taste buds for western food. On the other hand, traditional Punjabi cuisine is still demanding in natives. The statement gets its proof from above table where 82 percent of old ageds belonging to rural settlement and 61 percent belonging to urban settlements have still their food traditional one.



The above graph appraises us that traditional food is very popular among people of study area but western food is getting its roots deep day by day as a considerable number of young people like junk food which is extremely injurious to health. The people of Gujranwala who were known for their healthy bodies now getting fats, diabetes, blood pressure problems and heart disease owing to this western unhealthy food culture.

Part II: The Foundations of Tradition: An Ethnographic Reconstruction

The Rhythms of Daily Life and Labour

Description of a regular day in traditional Gujranwala villages

The conventional day in the villages of Gujranwala begins before the break of dawn, with activities cantered around prayer, gendered division of labour, and the requirements of an agro-pastoral economy (Eglar, 1960). The whole family gets up at least two hours before dawn, with no one allowed to stay asleep after the Fajr prayer. Men and children go to the mosque before the men head out to the fields after a breakfast of lassi and bread.

Division of labour is clear and hard. Boys in charge are responsible for the buffalo, milking them into bigger containers, while younger ones are in charge of the calves. One interesting aspect of their culture is the Dhary, where children are fed milk straight from the udder. Older men, often from the Rajput caste, retire after prayers to smoke the huqa (water pipe) and drink fresh milk, taking on a supervisory role over the day's activities before gathering at the Chopal (common sitting area). The labour of women is even more arduous and crucial to the sustenance of the household. They get up even earlier, as signalled by the stars, to grind several kilograms of grain on stone grinders and to churn milk in order to produce butter. Milk is slow-boiled in huge clay pots (Chati) over fires lit by dried dung of cattle (uplay), which gives a characteristic reddish tinge to the milk and its products, a preference that is culturally valued. The dung is carefully harvested, dried into pyramid-shaped piles, and used as the primary fuel for cooking. Besides food processing, women are also engaged in repairing clothes, spinning cotton on the Charkha, and processing grain with large wooden pestles (Okhal and Mosal). The last activity, often done by two young girls who sang while doing the work, is very tiring. Women are also responsible for all childcare activities, including nursing, without any modern technology assistance. The day ends with the return of men for dinner, after which they can point out any deficiencies in household

management if there are any standards to be met (Cheema, personal communication, December 21, 2019). This never-ending cycle brings all the members of the family into a system of collective productivity, where living and performing one's, social roles are inextricably tied to the land and the livestock.

Utensils

The home material culture is marked by functionality and the use of local materials, which symbolized a pre-industrial and agrarian lifestyle (Eglar, 1960). Water was conserved and carried in large, multi-functional clay pitchers that could hold up to 10 kilograms of water. A functional classification of utensils was assigned according to their use: eating from clay vessels or metal cups, eating from Murad Abadi or copper-painted platters, and cooking mainly from clay pots (*handi*) since metal pots were a rare commodity. Wealthy Hindu families often demonstrated their status by using brassware sets.

Storage was effectively integrated into residential architecture. Walls had large copper shelves and wooden panels called *Chikka* for drying and storing clean utensils. Women made plates and trays (*Changair*) from woven plant stems. The important element was the small, windowed mud storeroom (*Kothri*), which protected grains, precious items, and jewellery. Specialized items facilitated agricultural activities: brass cups for measuring milk, copper containers for carrying *lassi* to the fields, and wooden spoons and rollers for preparing food. Even maintenance was done using local materials, with ash used as an abrasive to polish brass, thus completing a cycle of sustainable use (Shamim, personal communication, October 23, 2019).

Foods

Wheat bread and *Besni* bread (mixture of 1/3 grams and 2/3 wheat) had been eaten. The breads of corn, millet and rice were made in winter. The bread of gram was also used. The porridge of corn, rice pudding (a dish made of split pulse and rice boiled together), simple rice, sweat rice (made with *Ghur*), mash pulses instead of vegetables, *Karhi* (a food that *basin* and yogurt spices and turmeric are cooked), *Khandian* of *basin* had been eaten. In the day time, *basin* bread, mint sauce and *Lassi* were often used. Super was contained lady finger, sponge gourd and pumpkin. They cultivated these vegetables in the fields. They often ate jungle's herbs and sweat. In the rainy season, mangoes were in abundance and often used with bread, however, milk, *Ghee*, butter and *Lassi*'s use was more common. The meat was scarcely used but sugar's made eatables were enjoyed as favourite foods (Ilyas, personal communication, December 30, 2019).

The Lohaar

The Lohaar (blacksmith) was an integral part of the village's craft economy, with a focus on iron and steel tool-making and repair. The blacksmith's workshop was not only a place of production but also a very important social centre—a secondary *Dara* or community gathering place. As part of their daily work routine, the elderly and other members of the village would gather there in their leisure time to exchange pieces of gossip, discuss local politics and religious issues, and enjoy the *Huqa* (water pipe), often obtaining tobacco from the Lohaar himself. Thus, the Lohaar's role was more than just metalworking, providing a platform for the exchange of news and ideas that helped to build the community (Liaqat, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

The Tarkhan

The Tarkhan, or woodworker/carpenter, played a vital part in the construction and upkeep of a village's wooden infrastructure, including doors, windows, frames, and furniture. His role was not

limited to carpentry but included the following dimensions of village patronage and reciprocity. He had a close relationship with the local elite (Chaudhries), performing additional roles like grain grinding and having informal access to any household. This was reciprocated in terms of gifts of food, particularly lassi, butter, and desi ghee, from the women, and in cash and kind (grains, rice, and wheat) from the Chaudhries. The social system of reciprocity was sustained through life-cycle events, where the elite provided considerable support to the Tarkhan's family in terms of his family's weddings. In turn, he provided carved wood for the Chaudhries' Huqa (water pipes), thus establishing a patronage relationship that sustained interdependence and affection across social divisions in the community (Hanif, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

The Kumhar

The Kumhar (potter) had specialized knowledge that was tacit regarding the creation of functional pottery from clay, which was an important part of everyday life (Polanyi, 1966). The potter worked on a foot-operated wheel set up in a shallow pit and was able to create clay into necessary vessels like water pitchers (Matki), cooking pots (Handi), and drinking cups. These clay pots were common in the villages of Gujranwala.

However, like other traditional crafts, this one is also on the verge of extinction due to the interlinking factors of cultural and economic changes. The younger generation is now more interested in contemporary tableware made of steel or glass, downgrading the importance of clayware. The lack of demand for this craft, coupled with the Kumhar's own struggles to pass on this complex and practical knowledge to the next generation, is indicative of the crisis of intangible cultural heritage in the region. The impact of this extinction is not only limited to the loss of a profession but also the irreparable loss of a line of aesthetic and practical knowledge (Hanif, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Social Structure, Governance, and Community Roles

Gerontocracy and Social Hierarchy: The Authority of Elders

One of the defining features of the traditional social organization is the gerontocratic hierarchy where the elderly, regardless of gender, command unqualified respect and authority. Such respect was also accorded to honoured guests and was backed by strict codes of conduct. Speaking loudly, smoking the huqa, listening to music (including gramophones), or playing games like cards was not allowed in their presence. Their orders were considered commands to be obeyed without question or hesitation, a relationship that is often summarized by the unspoken rule of "yes, boss." This absolute authority made their decisions final and unchallengeable, thus solidifying their position as the ultimate moral and social authorities in the village (Butt, personal communication, December 28, 2019).

The Panchayat: Traditional Village Governance

The Panchayat (village council) was the main, decentralized institution of justice and conflict resolution, and represented a system of local self-government (Ashraf et al., 2023). It was normally made up of five of the most senior and respected elders of the village (Sarpunj), chosen for their religiosity, good character, and impartiality. Although membership could be passed down through influential families, it was ultimately a matter of reputation for being fair. The Panchayat functioned through a formal and public process. The disputing parties would put forth their claims to the council and the public, in a shared forum such as a Chopal. The Panchayat would then render a verdict. The Panchayat's verdict was enforced not by the law but by a strong social force; failure to

comply would lead to a total boycott by the whole village. This ensured a convenient and rapid process of dispute resolution that was also socially meaningful.

However, according to the informant, the Panchayt's power and credibility have been greatly diminished in the modern age. This is due to the erosion of the Panchayt's founding ideals of perceived bias in the decision-making process and the corrupting influence of outside political power, causing villagers to increasingly go around it to the police stations and courts (Butt, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

The Dara: The Village Social Hub

The Dara, a common area that was accessible to all and usually consisted of a room and a courtyard, was the social and communicative hub of the village. It was an informal institution where all the villagers would assemble every day, especially in the evenings, to chat, have a smoke of the Huqa, exchange information, and discuss both individual and collective problems, from politics to village issues. This was a place where all the villagers were in constant interaction with each other, and this ensured that they were all well aware of each other's happiness and problems. Therefore, the Dara was not only a physical location but also the driving force behind the development of social cohesion and social identity. Nevertheless, the respondent notes that this fundamental institution is slowly disappearing. This is due to the cumulative effect of the lack of interest in such traditional events by the younger generation and the encroachment of private leisure activities, which have contributed to the erosion of this fundamental institution (Arshad, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

The Saipi: Embedded Service and Patronage

The Saipi was an important individual in the embedded service and patronage system in the village. The Saipi was a person from the lower-middle class who was closely tied to a Chaudhry or Nambardar (a landowner), and his job was to do a variety of personal and household services such as haircuts, cooking, messaging, taking care of guests, and preparing the Huqa. In return for his loyal service, the patron not only provided him with shelter and food but also money and other essentials every six months to a year as a token of the relationship of reciprocal obligation. This long-standing practice is now becoming an exception. The reason for this is the emergence of new economic prospects, as the sons of Saipies find regular employment either in the country or abroad, and as such, gain economic autonomy that enables them to move away from the patron-client relationship. At the same time, the persistence of social hierarchies in which the elite class considers them as inferior, contributes to the breakdown of these relationships, emphasizing the transition from a co-dependent patron-client relationship to a more transactional one (Adnan, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

The Chaukidar: Informal Village Security

The Chaukidar (watchman) was a source of unofficial, community-managed security, who would patrol the village streets at night with a heavy wooden stick called a lathi and shout reminders to be vigilant, "jagte rahana". The watchman was different from the state-appointed security personnel in that he was a voluntary and trust-sanctioned member of the community. He had a deep understanding of the entire village, including every home, and was a protector of life, property, and honour. His remuneration was not a salary but a collective effort by the villagers. The informant observes that there has been a recent change in this tradition, where the villagers have started hiring Pathan watchmen from outside, who are considered to be more diligent. This is a transition from an organic security system to a contractual one, but the essence of the personal sacrifice for

the security of the community remains the same (Ashraf, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

The Kochwan and the Tanga: Vanishing Transit

The Kochwan was the propelling force behind the horse-drawn Tanga, which was the main means of short-distance transportation for goods as well as passengers. The Kochwan was adept at handling horses or donkeys. He could be identified by his chanta, which was a stick with a long leather strap to prod the animal ahead. This traditional mode of transport has been made practically obsolete by modern technological advancements. The convenience, speed, and prestige that come with motorized transport such as cars and rickshaws have made the entire community opt for them, even in the villages. The Tanga is now considered slow and outdated by the younger generation of "facility-lovers," thus the end of a source of livelihood and a familiar sound in the countryside (Khawer, personal communication, January 1, 2020).

The Sadda: Ritualized Communication

The Sadda is the actual process of delivering invitations for joyful events (for example, weddings) or announcements of tragedy (for example, deaths). This was done by a messenger, usually from the Saipi class, who would deliver a physical envelope with the information about the event. The act was incorporated into social ritual and reciprocity. Upon receiving the message, the relatives would not only acknowledge the message but also give the messenger some monetary tips or gifts (salami), depending on the family's wealth and display of generosity. The Sadda thus reinforced social networks through personalized contact and ritual exchange. This practice has been largely replaced by the efficiency of digital communication. The immediacy and low cost of telephone calls and social media announcements have made the personalized Sadda messenger appear redundant, and thus the way of this ritualized level of social communication has been undermined (Hanif, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Rites of Passage and Lifecycle Rituals

Marriage: Ritual, Reciprocity, and Social Integration

The village wedding was the most prestigious social occasion, an event that lasted several days and served to consolidate kinship ties, exchange, and group identity. The marriages were largely endogamous, contracted within the family or caste, and any violation would invite drastic punishment from the family. The procedure was secretly set in motion by parents when their children were adolescents, through trusted intermediaries (Kami—the barber and musician), who conveyed information, as direct observation of the bride was not allowed.

The formal engagement (shagan) was finalized with a symbolic gift of rupees. The comprehensive consent letter then followed extensive preparations: making clothes, jewellery, and the wedding feast (Valima). The groom's side arranged the Valima before the wedding party (Barat) left. One of the most important pre-wedding ceremonies was the Neuta, a community fundraising event where a recorder took donations in the form of cash contributions, pooling resources together to help with the wedding expenses.

The Barat, with decorated carts, reached in the afternoon and stayed for two nights. Functions included music, dancing, and fun activities like horse racing between villages. The wedding feast, prepared in massive cauldrons, consisted of rich cuisine like Zarda Palao. Humorous rituals, like hiding the shoes of the groom, were followed by presents (Salami) to the groom, which could be simple household items. The bride's leaving was an emotional social occasion, symbolically

representing a loss to her natal family. Upon her arrival at the groom's residence, her jahez (dowry) was displayed, symbolically establishing the family's prestige. The union was also considered to be a lifelong commitment, with the village elders having the authority to settle any disputes, thus making divorce impossible. The entire exercise, from the mediated match-making to the social funding of the union, served as an effective tool for integrating the individual into the larger social network (Hunjra, personal communication, December 22, 2019).

The Hanging of Leaf's (Shree): Apotropaic Ritual

After childbirth, a safeguarding practice involving the Shree (leafy stems) was also prevalent. These stems were suspended above the door entrance as a magical shield meant to protect the defenceless infant from evil eye (nazar), witchcraft, and ill intentions of evil beings. This practice, based on folkloric beliefs, existed side by side with religious and scientific doubts, which labelled it as superstition (shirk). The informant has pointed out that greater religious awareness and the influence of scientific rationalism have greatly reduced the practice of traditional safeguarding practices (S. Bibi, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Jhooli (Swing) and Infant

The Jhooli was a traditional, extemporized cradle that played a pivotal role in the care of infants. The cradle was made by mothers using their dopattas (shawls) tied to a charpai (bed). It served as a cozy, swaying area where the baby could be rocked to sleep. The activity was also accompanied by certain cultural scripts. The caregivers would chant rhythmic couplets such as "Allah ho Kaka So jay" or imitate the meow of a cat to calm or gently shock the baby into sleep. In the modern age, the traditional Jhooli has been mostly replaced by commercially produced cribs and baby swings. This has led to a debate between the two, with some people favoring the traditional comfort of the Jhooli and others favoring the standardized safety and convenience of the modern version, exemplifying the struggle between traditional knowledge and modern consumer culture in child-rearing practices (S. Bibi, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Loriyan (Lullaby): Intergenerational Transmission and Professional Oral Tradition

Loriyan are a set of traditional lullabies, which are a form of oral poetry that plays a crucial role in child-rearing practices. The Loriyan are mainly sung by female relatives, such as mothers, grandmothers, and sisters, and consist of rhythmic poetry, religious components, and folkloric narratives that are intended to calm the child. Apart from the calming role, Loriyan also serve as a means through which cultural values are transmitted across generations. The practice appears in two different forms: an intimate and familial form of the practice as it occurs within the domestic setting, and a professional or performative form of the practice. When the birth indications of Shree are noticed, troupes of singers, drummers, and collectors arrive at the household. They perform Loriyan in praise of the family and the newborn, in exchange for alms in the form of money, grains, or gifts. This professional form of the practice places the birth in a larger social economy of celebration and patronage, thus effacing the distinctions between folk art, ritual, and social welfare (S. Bibi, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Akath (Gatherings): Communal Labor and Social Cohesion

The Akath refers to the spontaneous, duty-bound gathering of neighbors and kin from the muhalla for matrimonial ceremonies. This gathering took place within the Dara or the family courtyard and was a form of organized community labor. The work was divided on the basis of age and status, with the young ones being allocated tasks such as arranging charpais for guests, while the elders handled hospitality. The Akath served two purposes: first, it eased the host family of considerable

logistical support, and second, it promoted social cohesion. This joint activity encouraged a measure of "love and affection," thus extending community networks. The participant notes that the shift to commercial marriage halls has made this practice redundant, replacing the social capital derived from joint activity with the personal convenience and efficiency of commercialized services (Shahad, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Festivity, Recreation, and Performance

Recreational and other Activities

The Islamic holidays of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, also known as Baqar Eid, were/are the primary community events, representing the concepts of religious devotion, renewal, and communal joy. The preparations began with the sighting of the moon in the month of Shawwal, marked by beating the drums, preparing traditional sweets like vermicelli (seviyan), and socializing late into the night.

The day was marked for ritual cleanliness and fashion display. After a joint bath, people wore new or best clothes—men in kameez and dhoti, and boys in new pagri (turbans)—before the congregation gathered for the Eid prayers, often held at a common ground (Eid Gah). The festivities were then taken to the larger community through warm hugs, visits to relatives, and handing out sweets to children.

These celebrations highlighted social functions and processes of integration. Women and girls decorated themselves with silver jewelry (anklets, bracelets, nose rings), while newlywed brides marched through the streets. Eid al-Adha celebrations were centered on the ritual sacrifice (Qurbani) of animals, whose meat was distributed to all villagers, including Muslim and non-Muslim neighbors, which highlighted a strong sense of community and charity that sometimes went beyond religious lines (Essa, personal communication, June 16, 2019).

Fairs: Communal Markets and Sensory Festivity

The local fairs (melas) were important inter-communal gatherings where Muslims and minorities had equal representation. These were temporary markets where vendors sold various commodities that met both basic and relatively luxurious needs of the villagers: from basic ones like colored soap and simple glassware to celebratory foods like jalebi and barfi made from desi ghee. The fair was also a place for customary masculine expression, where men often carried ceremonial clubs (lathi) with them. For most people, a small outlay of a few cents was sufficient to get several hours of pleasure and satisfaction, making the fair an eagerly looked-forward-to relief from the mundane and an important platform for communal engagement and pleasure (Butt, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

Chandni (Full Moon Night): Gendered Ritual and Social Sanctity

Chandni was a unique, religious assembly for young girls, organized on rooftops during the full moon night. Eight to ten girls would assemble with spinning wheels (charkhas), singing folksongs while spinning cotton into threads. The family hosting the event would offer traditional sweets, which marked the beginning of this religiously organized hospitality and joint female labor. This was done in a highly revered social tradition; the girls' safety and sanctity were collectively ensured, with men taking active roles to protect them. The community viewed this manifestation of female happiness and productivity as a source of collective spiritual goodness and social well-being (S. Bibi, personal communication, October 5, 2018).

Swinging in the Rainy Seasons: Seasonal Leisure and Gendered Space

The monsoon season brought with it a unique tradition of girls from different groups assembling at garden groves to swing on rope and wood seats suspended from trees, known as “peeng.” This was a two-month long period of carefree fun, with group singing being an integral part of this activity. Like Chandni, this too took place within the strictly demarcated gender lines, with the area being considered sacrosanct for the girls, with the male villagers ensuring that it remained exclusive to them. The villagers took satisfaction in watching this manifestation of youthful happiness, which was seen as a positive omen. During other seasons, similar single-gender meetings for singing and dancing took place indoors, thus ensuring that this vital domain of female socializing remained intact (S. Bibi, personal communication, December 31, 2019; Hunjra, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Swang (Folk Theatre): Caste, Performance, and Exclusion

Swang is an annual folk theatre tradition conducted by the Sudra, the lowest caste in Hindu society, who are the village’s resident performers. Stories based on kingship, love, and heroism were enacted in the village square, with costumes and props designed in-house. Along with particular folk songs (Kafia), these performances were a significant social event for the village men, but women were strictly barred from attending, which corresponds to the current gender-based norms of public space (Cheema, personal communication, 13 October 2019).

The Chimta and Drum: Sonic Traditions

Two major instruments shaped the aural topography of the region. The Chimta (fire tongs) was a percussion instrument made of two iron bars, which produced a ringing sound when struck, and was often used to accompany folk singers. The Dhol (large drum) and Dholki (small drum) were more widespread, acting as key identifiers of life-cycle ceremonies, festivals, and fairs. The drummers, who were often recruited from traditional families, could be identified by their characteristic clothing, long hair, and use of betel. They were known to decorate their drums and commanded a lot of respect. Currently, the trade is in decline because of a lack of interest, increased expenses, and the availability of pre-recorded music, thus limiting their use in modern celebrations (Javaid, personal communication, 13 December 2019).

Spectacle and Stunt Performances

Village fairs also featured daring physical performances. The Cycle Circus involved endurance tasks, such as a performer riding a stationary bicycle for long periods of time or balancing the weight of a tractor, thus gaining the attention of the audience and material rewards. Likewise, the Behropia (impersonator) would come during the harvest season, disguising himself as a police officer or a government official. By using a mix of threats and comedy, the impersonator would act out a scripted scenario with the villagers before pulling out the trick and finally collecting rewards in the form of cash and grains. These acts combined performances of thrill, social commentary, and fund-raising. Like other folk arts, they have been superseded by passive forms of mass entertainment (Shamim, personal communication, 13 December 2019).

Material Culture and Sartorial Identity

Traditional Sartorial Codes

The traditional dress in Gujranwala was marked by simplicity, practicality, and social distinctions. The essential male costume included a dhoti or tehband (loincloth), a simple shirt (kameez), and sometimes a cotton waistcoat. The female attire was a modest combination of black shalwar

(baggy trousers), a simple shirt, and a muslin dopatta (headscarf). During winter, the warm clothing was khaddar (homespun cloth). The most important clothing feature for men was the turban (pagri), which had both functional and deep symbolic meanings. It was made from two meters of unstitched cloth and was worn around the head in different ways, either fully covering it or with a piece draped over the shoulders. In addition to providing protection from the weather, the pagri was a universal symbol of respect and honor, and to remove a man's turban was a serious social faux pas. The modern replacement of the pagri with hats and caps indicates not only a shift in fashion trends but also the loss of an important symbol of male identity and respect (Adnan, personal communication, November 25, 2019).

Lukdi and Lacha (Unstitched Attire)

The Lukdi (for males) and Lacha (for females) were traditional, unstitched garments that functioned as lower body wear, wrapped around the waist instead of shalwar. They were made of 4-5 meters of fabric, usually white for people of respect, and were tied and worn underneath a kameez. The rich showed their status through highly embroidered kameez that matched the Lukdi, making this humble piece of clothing a medium to convey one's status and decency in the village dress code (Arshad, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Kulla (The Formal Turban)

The Kulla was a specific formal type of turban, symbolizing a higher social or religious position. Starched with a starch solution (maya) and ironed thoroughly, it was shaped to stand erect on the head of the wearer. This majestic form was the preferred headgear of landlords (Nambardars), village headmen, and religious functionaries such as the Imam of the local mosque. A specialized form, including a cap (topi), was worn for horse-based sports such as tent-pegging. In this way, the Kulla served as a specific visible sign of authority, religiosity, and elite performance, setting its wearer apart from the ordinary pagri (Hunjra, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Tanga Gora (Horse Cart): The Displaced Convey

The Tanga Gora, or horse-drawn cart, was traditionally the major mode of local transportation for both people and merchandise. In the rural elite Chaudhri and Nambardar families, possession of a Tanga pulled by a prized white or black horse was a prominent status symbol. Modern modes of transportation such as rickshaws, motorcycles, and cars have made this traditional mode of transport largely redundant because of their greater speed and convenience. The informant remarks that although this shift has improved the efficiency of transportation, it has also brought about a new set of problems associated with noise and air pollution, thus indicating a trade-off between traditional speed and modern-day environmental concerns (Khawer, personal communication, 13 December 2019).

Julaha (The Weaver): The Unraveling of a Handicraft

The Julaha or weaver was the traditional craftsman who provided necessary household textiles like khais (floor mats), kambals (blankets), and daris (rugs) on a handloom (khadi). These products, with intricate floral designs in bright colors, were a unique local art form. This craft is now critically endangered. The mechanized textile industry has resulted in an influx of cheaper, mass-produced alternatives that have shifted consumer preference to ready-made garments. This economic factor has been exacerbated by a lack of intergenerational knowledge transfer; most Julahas did not transmit their skills to their offspring, who sought more viable ways of earning a living. As a result, the remaining practitioners are now elderly, with this craft on the brink of

extinction—a clear example of market forces causing the loss of intangible cultural heritage (Younas, personal communication, December 13, 2019).

Analysis and Discussion

The empirical and ethnographic evidence that has been put forward in this research points to a deep and complex cultural shift taking place in Gujranwala. This is not a straightforward development of practice but a systemic shift from a collective, place-based society to an individuated, space-based society (Appadurai, 1996). The findings of the survey in Part I, in terms of a disengagement from communal celebrations, a preference for Western clothing, and a change in eating habits, are not individual anomalies. They are, rather, symptoms of a much deeper degradation of the complex social, economic, and ritual environment that has been carefully described in Part II. This analysis draws these findings together in order to suggest that the engines of urbanization, intergenerational value change, and market rationality are undermining the very fabric of traditional Punjabi society.

The essence of this change is the breakdown of the social structure. The traditional village, with its social organization based on the cycles of collective labor, the Panchayat's authority, and the social center of the Dara, sustained a strong, dense social capital (Putnam, 2000). Life was necessarily social, with well-defined roles from the Saipi to the Chaukidar, and further strengthened by communal rituals such as Akath meetings for weddings. The reality presented by the modern survey evidence is in sharp contrast to this, indicating a generation, especially in the urban areas, that favors private recreation over communal celebration and makes little effort to visit neighbors, a finding that is in line with research on the urbanization of rural society in Punjab, where the nuclear family replaces the extended family. This is a clear indication of a paradigm shift, where social relationships, once automatically generated as a part of the fabric of everyday life, now need to be deliberately cultivated in a world of privatized homes and virtual communication. The erosion of the Panchayat, due to prejudice and politics, is a clear instance of the breakdown of trusted, local governance, leading to a power vacuum that is filled by remote, anonymous, and often inaccessible formal institutions—a phenomenon that has been noted across South Asia, where state institutions substitute for traditional systems of justice.

This social transformation is reflected in the changing material culture. The traditional dress code of Pagri, Lacha, and Kulla was not only a piece of clothing but a symbol of respect, social position, and local culture, which can be referred to as embodied cultural capital, as described by Bourdieu (1984). The shift to Western jeans and tees among the youth symbolizes a desire to conform to a global and modern culture, which effectively erases local hierarchies and symbols, as described by Ritzer (1993) in the cultural homogenization process due to global consumerism. The palate is also being transformed. The nutritional environment of Sattu, Lassi, and locally grown vegetables, which are part of an agro-pastoral system, is being replaced by the convenience and packaging of junk food, which is a part of the nutrition transition model, where urbanization in Pakistan is associated with the consumption of processed fats and sugars, as described by the correlation between urbanization in Pakistan and the consumption of processed fats and sugars. This change in the palate, as described by the respondents, has direct implications for public health, which associates cultural change with the rise of lifestyle diseases. The body itself has become a site where global market preferences override localized and ecological knowledge.

The hardest hit of these changes is the artisanal knowledge economy. The village was a network of specialists, each with their own role: the Kumhar (potter), the Lohar (blacksmith), and the Julaha (weaver), whose knowledge was maintained through patronage and trade, creating a moral economy (Scott, 1976). The absence of interest from the younger generation in these trades, as

reported in the interviews, is a logical reaction to an economic system that undervalues the handmade in favor of the cheaper, mass-produced alternative—a phenomenon that has precipitated the "crisis of craft" documented across the subcontinent. This is more than a loss of employment; it is the loss of the tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966)—the skilled hands of the Kumhar, the beating heart of the Drummer, the weave of the Julaha. When a Kumhar stop being a Kumhar, an entire tradition of aesthetic and functional knowledge, often transmitted orally from generation to generation, is irretrievably lost, a direct loss of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2003).

The causes of this degradation are interconnected. Urbanization physically deconstructs the geographical logic of the village, making random assembly less possible—a geographical shift related to what Harvey (1989) describes as time-space compression. Formal education and employment patterns focus ambitions on national and international markets, separating youth from local arts and agricultural rhythms (Lerner, 1958). Digital and satellite communication transmits a standardized, consumerist vision of modernity, often causing local practices to appear outdated or "primitive" by comparison, a process Appadurai (1996) describes as the function of mediascapes constructing local desires. Such factors combine to encourage a perspective emphasizing individual freedom and acquisition over collective duty and traditional knowledge.

The implications are far-reaching. The loss that is recorded here is not of quaint traditions but of a vibrant social infrastructure. The traditional culture offered a ready-made solution to conflict resolution (Panchayat), social security (Neuta collections), mental health (communal festivity), and sustainable living. The loss of this culture has the potential to result in a society that is characterized by increased anonymity, reduced social support, and a fractured cultural identity—consequences that have been linked to a loss of collective efficacy (Sampson et al., 1997). The nostalgia that is expressed in the ethnographic narratives is, therefore, more than a simple longing for the past; it is a recognition of the lost cohesion that is implicit in that past. The dilemma that Gujranwala, and societies like it that are in transition, face is how to find a way that does not simply eschew modernity but instead seeks to integrate the benefits of modernity with the best of the past that is so vividly at risk of being lost.

Conclusion

This research has been recording the deep cultural transformation that has been taking place in the Gujranwala district, tracing the shift from a networked, ritual-filled society to one that is becoming more and more individualized and globalized. The data that has been collected about the breakdown of social ties and the changing cultural values is not superficial but points to the unraveling of a traditional ecosystem—the colorful fabric of artisanal livelihoods, communal governance, and symbolic rituals that the elderly remember so vividly. The implications are much larger than the loss of customs; it is a critical loss of social and cultural capital. The Panchayat and Dara institutions ensured justice and psycho-social support, and the artisan economy ensured community resilience. The loss of these institutions has resulted in a void that is currently being filled by the state apparatus and a consumption-based identity, which has serious implications for community health.

Thus, preservation must be regenerative. This involves the integration of local history into the education system, the development of economic systems that place value on artisanal knowledge, and the use of media to re-narrate tradition as a dynamic process. More importantly, there must be a re-imagining of modern community spaces that can serve the purpose of the Dara, providing face-to-face interaction that cannot be achieved through digital networks. Ultimately, the future of Gujranwala is not one of tradition versus modernity, but rather a conscious synthesis of the tools of modernity to preserve the best aspects of its social fabric. This research is not only a

documentation of loss but also a testament to why this cultural essence must be incorporated into the future of this region, so that its legendary resilience becomes the guiding conscience of its progress.

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