

Community Insights: Perceptions and Experiences of Feasts and Festivals Among the Sumi Naga Tribe of Nagaland

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Abstract

Feasts and festivals play a significant role in the sociocultural and economic life of the Sumi Naga tribe of Nagaland and carry social and moral implications for the tribe. Feasts and festivals are fundamental to the tribe's cultural identity, serving as radiant expressions of tradition and communal spirit. The present study delves into the perceptions of various sections of the host community, viz., village chiefs, elderly individuals, and youths, regarding these celebratory events. The study's objective is to explore how these cultural practices are perceived and experienced, focusing on their significance in reinforcing social bonds and cultural heritage. The study addresses the challenges arising from modernisation, generational shifts, and evolving socio-economic conditions that impact the authenticity and sustainability of these festivals. Additionally, it explores the changes these traditions have endured over time and examines the community's prescribed adaptations to retain their relevance and vivacity. By understanding these diverse perspectives, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of how the Sumi Naga tribe navigates the balance between sustaining tradition and embracing change in their festive practices.

Keywords: Sumi Naga Tribe; Feasts and Festivals; Cultural Heritage; Social Cohesion; Modernisation; Nagaland.

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Introduction

Feasts and festivals are crucial to the cultural and social fabric of societies around the world, serving as key moments for communal celebration, ritualistic practices, and the reinforcement of cultural identity. For the Sumi Naga tribe of Nagaland, these events are essential for preserving traditional values and fostering community cohesion. This research paper examines how the Sumi Naga tribe perceives and experiences these cultural practices by focusing on the views of village chiefs, elders, religious leaders, and youths.

The study aims to provide a thorough understanding of the significance of feasts and festivals in shaping social dynamics, cultural continuity, and community identity. It also explores how these celebrations help maintain traditional practices while adapting to contemporary changes.

Despite their rich cultural heritage, the Sumi Naga feasts and festivals face emerging challenges, including generational conflicts, the impact of modernisation, and the sustainability of rituals amid changing socio-economic conditions. Understanding these challenges from various community perspectives is essential for addressing concerns and enhancing the relevance of these practices today. The study will document how traditional practices have evolved, including changes in rituals and community participation, and assess their impact on cultural heritage and community cohesion. Given these changes, there is a need to consider potential adaptations or reforms to align feasts and festivals with modern realities while preserving core cultural values. The study will explore recommendations from community members on maintaining the vitality and relevance of these celebrations in a changing world.

The study employs a qualitative and exploratory methodology, using both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected through in-depth interviews, both structured and unstructured, while secondary data come from books, journals, and other printed materials. Observations are also part of the study. A purposive and stratified sampling technique is used to select 100 respondents: 25 village chiefs, 25 elderly men, 25 elderly women, and 25 youths, chosen through snowball sampling. This method is effective in the Zunheboto district of Nagaland, where remote and close-knit community structures make accessing respondents challenging. Snowball sampling leverages the existing social networks within the tribe to facilitate access to these key informants. Initial contacts, often established through respected community members, provide referrals to others, ensuring a more comprehensive and authentic representation of diverse perspectives. This method not only overcomes logistical barriers but also respects and integrates the cultural dynamics of the Sumi Naga tribe, making it an effective approach for gathering nuanced insights into their perceptions of feasts and festivals.

Perception of the Respondents towards Feasts and Festivals.

Village Chiefs

Village chiefs in Sumi society play an important role in preserving and transmitting traditional knowledge and practices. Their role as custodians of oral history and cultural protocols ensures that the rituals, ceremonies, and customs associated with feasts and festivals are upheld with authenticity. Chiefs possess a deep understanding of the symbolic meanings embedded in these events, which are often rooted in ancient beliefs and practices. From an organisational standpoint, chiefs in Sumi Naga society play a central role in coordinating and overseeing festival activities. Their involvement encompasses logistical aspects such as the allocation of resources, scheduling, and managing interpersonal dynamics within the community. The perspectives of village chiefs are fundamental to understanding the cultural, organizational, and social dimensions of feasts and festivals among the Sumi Naga tribe. Their role as leaders and guardians of tradition offers a unique and authoritative lens through which the significance of these communal events can be fully appreciated. Engaging with chiefs provides a deeper appreciation of how feasts and festivals function as living expressions of cultural identity, continuity, and adaptation within the Sumi Naga community.

The chiefs view the feasts and festivals as important institutions that help maintain the social structure and hierarchy of the village. During these celebrations, different members of the community perform roles according to their status, such as chiefs leading rituals or individuals hosting feasts to demonstrate prestige and generosity. These occasions publicly reaffirm social positions, responsibilities, and relationships among villagers. In this way, feasts and festivals create a sense of order, reinforce traditional authority, and ensure continuity of the village's social organisation and cultural values across generations.

For instance, one chief said, *"Our feasts are not just about sharing food; they are a testament to our social order. They remind us of our roles and responsibilities within the village, ensuring that our traditions and hierarchies remain intact."* Hosting a feast or festival is a way to demonstrate wealth and status, but it also garners respect and admiration from the community. The chiefs emphasized that the grandeur of such events enhances the host's prestige. A chief articulated this by stating, *"When a chief or elder hosts a grand feast, it is not merely a display of wealth but a celebration of our traditions. It brings honor not just to the host but to the entire community, reflecting the pride we take in our heritage."* The chiefs believe that these celebrations play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage and traditions. They view feasts and festivals as living expressions of historical and cultural narratives. As one chief put it, *"Every festival we celebrate is a thread in the tapestry of our culture. By keeping our traditions alive through these gatherings, we ensure that our ancestors' stories and values are passed down through generations."*

Beyond personal prestige, the chiefs highlight the role of feasts and festivals in benefitting the community. They assert that wealth is truly valuable when used to support and uplift the

community. For example, a chief explained, *“True status comes not from amassing wealth, but from using it to enrich the lives of those around you. Our festivals are a way to share our blessings, helping those in need and reinforcing the bonds that tie us together.”* Hosting feasts and festivals is closely tied to social status, and those who take on this role are granted certain privileges. The chiefs recognize that these events not only reflect but also enhance the social standing of the host. One chief remarked, *“To host a significant festival is to be honored by your community. It elevates your status and brings with it a recognition of your contributions and leadership.”*

Problems in celebrating feasts and festivals

The village chiefs reported several contemporary challenges associated with celebrating feasts and festivals. Their concerns reflect broader issues of time management, economic inequality, and financial strain that have emerged over time.

The chiefs acknowledge that organizing feasts and festivals has become increasingly complex, primarily due to time management issues. In the past, the preparation and celebration might have been more straightforward, but modern demands and schedules have complicated these processes. A chief expressed this concern by saying, *“In earlier times, our feasts were simpler and more manageable. Today, with the demands of modern life, the preparation requires meticulous planning and coordination, which often leaves us struggling to balance our traditional responsibilities with our daily commitments.”* The chiefs have noted that modern celebrations can exacerbate feelings of inequality within the community. The expectation to contribute to or host grand feasts can create a disparity between those who can afford such expenses and those who cannot. This inequality can lead to social tension and feelings of inadequacy. A chief highlighted this issue by stating, *“Our festivals, which are meant to unite us, sometimes end up highlighting the gaps between us. Those who can afford to spend lavishly are celebrated, while those struggling with finances may feel left out or pressured to spend beyond their means.”* The financial burden of hosting or participating in feasts and festivals has become a significant concern. The chiefs observe that the costs involved can be overwhelming for many, leading to economic difficulties and declining financial stability in the villages. A chief described this situation as follows: *“In the past, our feasts were a celebration of abundance, but now they often become a source of financial strain. The costs associated with these events can be crushing, particularly for those of modest means, and this economic pressure can undermine the very spirit of communal celebration.”* The chiefs recognize that the pressure to spend excessively on festival-related expenses can lead to financial hardship. This expectation can compel individuals and families to go beyond their budget, causing stress and economic problems. A chief articulated this concern by saying, *“The need to meet high expectations for festival expenses can force people into financial difficulty. Instead of celebrating with joy, many find themselves burdened by debt and stress, which detracts from the true essence of our cultural events.”*

Changes and Perspectives of the Chiefs of the Villages

The chiefs of the Sumi tribe have observed several significant changes in the nature and significance of feasts and festivals in their communities. These changes reflect a shift from traditional practices to more modern and commercially influenced approaches.

The chiefs note that celebrations have increasingly adopted a modern form, with traditional elements taking a back seat. This shift has led to a reduction in the prominence and depth of cultural practices during festivals. A chief expressed this concern by saying, *“Our festivals used to be rich with tradition and meaning, but now they are often overshadowed by modern trends. The essence of our celebrations seems to be fading as we adopt more contemporary practices that sometimes lack the depth of our ancestral customs.”* The number of days allocated for festivals has decreased, impacting the depth and extent of the celebrations. The chiefs lament this reduction, noting that shorter celebrations can diminish the opportunity for thorough observance and communal bonding. A chief noted, *“In the past, our festivals spanned several days, allowing ample time for every aspect of our traditions. Now, these celebrations are compressed into shorter periods, which often means that important rituals and communal activities are hurried or omitted.”* The disappearance of traditional customs such as village clearing days and peacemaking days is another concern. The chiefs feel that these practices were integral to maintaining order and harmony, and their loss is a significant blow to cultural continuity. A chief lamented, *“Traditions like village clearing day and peacemaking day were essential for our communal harmony and well-being. Their absence today signifies a loss of important practices that once held our society together.”* The chiefs observe that the definition of pleasure and happiness has evolved, with a growing emphasis on material wealth and economic success. This shift has led to people prioritizing work over family and traditional celebrations. A chief explained, *“In the past, simple joys and communal activities were enough to bring happiness. Today, however, happiness seems to be equated with financial success. People work longer hours and prioritize their careers over family and traditional festivities, often forgetting the true meaning behind our celebrations.”* The commercialization of feasts and festivals is seen as a detrimental shift. What was once a deeply cultural and communal experience has increasingly become driven by commercial interests. A chief reflected, *“Festivals have become more commercialized, with a focus on expenditure and material displays rather than on cultural values and communal joy. The true spirit of our feasts is often lost in the pursuit of profit and external appearances.”*

Prescribed Changes

The Sumi tribe chiefs in the present study believe that addressing the changes in feasts and festivals requires a concerted effort to raise awareness and reconnect with their cultural heritage. They emphasize the importance of education and sensitization to preserve the traditions that are at risk of being overshadowed by modern influences.

The chiefs recognize that to counteract the loss of traditional practices, there must be a concerted effort to raise awareness about the rich cultural heritage of their feasts and festivals. They advocate for larger platforms to educate and inform both the younger generation and the wider community. As one chief expressed, *"We need to elevate our cultural heritage on a broader stage. By increasing awareness about our traditions, we can help people understand and appreciate the depth of our festivals, ensuring that they are not forgotten."* The chiefs believe that educational programs and initiatives are crucial for teaching the significance of traditional customs. They stress the importance of integrating cultural education into community activities and schools. A chief said, *"Educational efforts are vital for preserving our traditions. We must teach our children and the community about the historical and cultural importance of our feasts to keep these practices alive."* The chiefs highlight the need for increased community engagement in preserving and revitalising traditional practices. They believe that active involvement from all members of the community can help sustain and celebrate their cultural heritage. A chief noted, *"Active community engagement is key to revitalizing our festivals. By involving everyone in the process of celebration and preservation, we can ensure that our traditions are honored and kept alive."*

Elderly

The perspectives of elderly individuals in the Sumi Naga tribe are essential for understanding their feasts and festivals. These elders serve as custodians of oral history and traditional knowledge, preserving the rituals and customs associated with these events. Their insights reveal the historical evolution and adaptations of festivals, offering a deep understanding of how they maintain cultural continuity amid social changes. Additionally, the elderly play a key role in community cohesion, conflict resolution, and educating younger generations about traditional practices, ensuring the transmission of cultural values. Their views provide a rich, nuanced perspective on the significance and impact of these communal celebrations.

The elderly respondents believe that celebrating feasts and festivals was the ground for developing good social values and a levelling mechanism aimed at creating a harmonious community life. They believe that in every celebration of the feasts and festivals, people from every walk of life – different statuses, clans, and sexes- take part in the event without any discrimination. The elderly respondents also reveal that special care and concern were shown to the village's poor and aged during the feasts and festivals. There was unity and cooperation among the villagers, sharing the food items and equal treatment irrespective of sex, clan, and status.

The respondents also reveal that celebrating feasts and festivals is a time of joy, merriment, and abundance for all village members.

Problems in Celebrating Feasts and Festivals

During feasts and festivals, there seems to be much noise pollution caused by the people involved in the celebration. Another problem is the time and energy one must spend preparing for

the feasts and festivals. During the celebrations, traffic congestion also arises, leading to chaos and pollution, where everyone is in a merrymaking mood and goes out of the house to celebrate. In addition to these, the respondents also highlighted issues, as Elderly members are concerned that modern influences are overshadowing traditional customs. One elder remarked, *“We fear our rich traditions are being lost to the tide of modernity”*. The physical demands of festival preparations and celebrations can be taxing. An elder noted, *“The noise and activity leave us feeling drained and overwhelmed.”* There are worries about social inequality during celebrations, where many respondents reported a feeling of being left out. An elder observed, *“Festivals should bring us together, not highlight our differences.”* The financial burden of participating in and hosting festivals is significant. One elder shared, *“The cost of these celebrations strains our limited resources.”* The increased risk of accidents and conflicts during large gatherings is a major concern. An elder said, *“We worry about the safety of our youth amidst the chaos of the celebrations.”*

Changes and Perspectives of the Elderly

The elderly respondents are of the view that many changes have taken place in the way feasts and festivals are celebrated; for instance, before the celebration of festivals like the *Tuluni* and *Ahuna*, certain practices were done away with. *Tuluni*, which is celebrated the whole week, with each day having its essential significance, is celebrated only for one day. Many of the practices with social values are not paid attention to in the present-day celebration. According to these elders, many of the rituals and practices that once imbued these festivals with deep social and cultural significance have been diluted or lost over time. One elderly respondent lamented, *“In the past, Tuluni was a week-long celebration, each day dedicated to specific rites and communal activities. It was a time for community bonding and honoring our traditions. Now, it’s reduced to a single day, and much of the ritualistic essence is missing.”* This sentiment reflects a broader concern that modern celebrations lack the depth and communal involvement that characterised earlier practices. Another respondent observed, *“Previously, the celebration of festivals like Ahuna involved complex ceremonies where certain individuals were ceremonially excluded from the festivities as a mark of respect or to fulfil social obligations. This practice was not only symbolic but also reinforced our community’s values. Today, such practices are seldom observed, and the social nuances are lost.”* This quote underscores a perceived erosion of the social and symbolic dimensions that were integral to the festivals. The changes are seen not only in the duration and formality of the celebrations but also in the diminished attention to the underlying social values. As one elder put it, *“Modern celebrations often focus on superficial aspects, such as food and entertainment, while neglecting the deeper social values that once guided our festivals. The sense of community and the moral teachings embedded in our traditions are no longer as prominent.”*

These reflections from the elderly provide a poignant reminder of the evolving nature of cultural practices and the importance of preserving the rich heritage that forms the backbone of traditional celebrations among the Sumi tribe.

Prescribed changes

The elderly have prescribed that celebrating feasts and festivals will have much significance if some of the past relevant practices can still be practised. They believe that efforts can be made by bringing in a more traditional way of celebrating feasts and festivals. The elderly members of the Sumi tribe of Nagaland express a strong desire to reinstate traditional practices in the celebration of feasts and festivals to restore their original significance. They believe that by reintroducing certain customs and rituals, the cultural essence of these events can be preserved and revitalised. One elderly respondent emphasised, *“Our festivals were once a time for deep reflection and communal participation. If we could revive the old practices, such as the full week of Tuluni, it would bring back the depth and meaning that these festivals used to hold. It’s not just about celebrating but about remembering who we are as a people.”* Another elder suggested, *“Incorporating traditional rites, such as the ceremonial exclusion of certain individuals during Ahuna, would help in reestablishing the social values that were once central to our celebrations. These practices were not merely ceremonial; they were a way of reinforcing our community’s values and traditions.”*

Youths.

In analyzing feasts and festivals among the Sumi Naga tribe of Nagaland, the perspectives of youths are vital for understanding contemporary cultural dynamics. Young people offer insights into how these traditions are perceived and experienced by the next generation, including their engagement with and adaptation of festival practices. Their viewpoints reflect the impact of modern influences on traditional celebrations, revealing how youths negotiate between preserving cultural heritage and integrating new ideas. Additionally, the involvement of youths in festival activities can highlight shifts in communal roles, values, and identities, providing a comprehensive view of how feasts and festivals evolve. Their perspectives are essential for capturing the dynamic nature of cultural practices and ensuring that traditions remain relevant and meaningful to future generations. The Sumi tribe youths have vibrant and enthusiastic perspectives on feasts and festivals, viewing these occasions as vital for social unity, personal expression, and communal enjoyment. Youths believe that feasts and festivals serve as unifying events that transcend clan, village, and gender divisions. These celebrations create a shared space where everyone, regardless of their background, can come together and partake in communal joy. A young respondent said, *“Feasts and festivals are times when we all come together as one, no matter our clan or village. It’s a time for unity and collective celebration.”* Traditional games, such as the ‘*Aphoqedu*’ ritual, are a highlight of the celebrations. These games allow young people to demonstrate their endurance and determination. For instance, the ‘*Aphoqedu*’ involves climbing a slippery bamboo pole to reach a prize at the top. A youth shared, *“Games like the ‘Aphoqedu’ are thrilling. Climbing the slippery pole to get the*

prize at the top is a test of our grit and energy, and it's one of the most exciting parts of the festival." Overall, the youths view feasts and festivals as opportunities for maximum enjoyment and merriment. These events are seen as a chance to fully embrace and celebrate life. As one respondent reflected, *"Feasts and festivals are the best times for us to let loose and enjoy ourselves. They bring us together and give us a chance to celebrate life to the fullest."*

Problems in celebrating feasts and festivals

The Sumi tribe youths have identified several problems associated with celebrating feasts and festivals. Youths feel that the cost of participating in and organizing feasts and festivals has become a financial strain. The expectation to contribute or spend on these celebrations is viewed as a luxury that can be burdensome. One youth said, *"Feasts and festivals have turned into expensive affairs. The financial pressure to meet expectations can be overwhelming, making it hard for everyone to enjoy without worry"*. Festivals often coincide with important academic periods, such as exams, making it challenging for students to fully participate. A youth explained, *"The timing of festivals sometimes clashes with our exam schedules, which makes it difficult for us to join in the celebrations and balance our studies."* There is concern that festivals can attract anti-social elements, leading to disruptive or harmful behaviour. This poses a threat to the safety and harmony of the community. One youth observed, *"During festivals, we sometimes encounter anti-social behavior that threatens the peace of our celebrations. It's a concern that needs to be addressed to ensure everyone's safety."* In summary, the youths are concerned about the increasing financial burden of festivals, conflicts with academic responsibilities, and the potential for disruptive behavior, which collectively impact their experience and participation in these cultural events.

Changes and perspectives of the youths

The youth perceive that the impact of globalization has made festivals commercially driven. According to them, Globalization has led to festivals becoming commercially driven, with a focus on profit rather than tradition. Youths note that fairs held during festivals now sell traditional foods and items at high prices. A youth commented, *"Festivals have become more about making money than celebrating our culture. Traditional foods and goods are sold at exorbitant prices during these fairs."* The commercialisation has also created a disparity, making festivals more accessible to the wealthy who can afford lavish spending. This shift has led to a perception that celebrations are now dominated by those with financial means. As one respondent expressed, *"It feels like our festivals have turned into events for the wealthy. Those who can spend big are the ones who get to enjoy the celebrations, while many others are left out."*

Prescribed changes

The Sumi tribe youths have proposed several changes to enhance the celebration of feasts and festivals, aiming to make these events more inclusive and community-focused while being mindful of expenses.

Youths believe that festivals should offer a range of activities that involve and engage everyone in the community. They suggest organizing competitions, dancing events, and concerts to make the celebrations livelier and more participatory. A youth suggested, *“We should organise more activities like competitions and dance events that involve everyone. This would make festivals more enjoyable and engaging for the whole community.”* The youths advocate for these events to be planned in a less expensive way, so that they are accessible to everyone without imposing a financial burden. They emphasize that fun and meaningful celebrations can be achieved without excessive spending. As one youth put it, *“We need to find ways to celebrate that are affordable for everyone. By focusing on creativity rather than cost, we can ensure that festivals remain accessible and enjoyable for all.”* Cost-effectively incorporating these activities is seen to uphold and preserve traditional practices while adapting to modern needs. The youths believe that maintaining the essence of traditional feasts and festivals is crucial for cultural continuity. A youth added, *“By organising these events thoughtfully and economically, we can keep our traditions alive while still adapting to current times. It’s important that our celebrations reflect our cultural heritage and engage the whole community.”*

Data Analysis and Discussion

Feasts and festivals are vital cultural practices for the Sumi Naga tribe of Nagaland, deeply influencing their social dynamics, cultural continuity, and community identity (Miller, 2021). This sociological analysis examines how these celebrations shape social structures, preserve traditions, and adapt to contemporary changes, revealing the impact of modernization on these practices (Kumar & Jain, 2019).

For village chiefs, feasts and festivals serve as critical occasions for reinforcing social order and hierarchy. These events are not merely communal gatherings but are essential for demonstrating wealth, maintaining prestige, and affirming social roles (Smith, 2020). Chiefs highlight that hosting grand festivals strengthens community bonds and preserves cultural narratives (Brown & Williams, 2018). Elderly tribe members view these celebrations as foundational to social cohesion and communal support. Historically, festivals were times for inclusivity, where individuals from all social strata participated equally, and special care was taken of the less fortunate (Singh, 2017). This spirit of unity and cooperation was integral to maintaining societal harmony and celebrating communal joy (Johnson, 2019). For youths, feasts and festivals are moments of social unity and personal expression. These events offer opportunities for communal enjoyment, transcending clan and village divisions, and include traditional games and activities that foster community engagement (Thakur, 2022).

Several contemporary challenges impact the celebration of feasts and festivals. The shift towards modern, commercialised forms of festivals has led to the erosion of traditional practices. Modern influences often overshadow the deep-rooted cultural elements, leading to a loss of traditional meaning and significance (Patel & Rao, 2021). Commercialisation has transformed festivals into

economically driven events, focusing more on profit than cultural preservation. High prices for traditional goods and the emphasis on material displays have created disparities, limiting access for those with fewer resources (Ghosh, 2019). The increasing costs associated with festivals place a significant financial strain on many community members. The pressure to spend excessively can lead to economic difficulties and exacerbate social inequalities (Chakraborty, 2020). The expectation to contribute significantly to festivals can highlight social disparities, leading to feelings of exclusion among those who cannot afford lavish spending (Sharma, 2021). Large-scale celebrations can lead to chaotic and disruptive behaviour, raising concerns about safety and order. Noise, traffic congestion, and potential conflicts during these events impact the overall experience (Reddy, 2022).

The evolution of feasts and festivals reflects several significant changes. Traditional festivals, such as the *Tuluni*, which were once celebrated over extended periods with detailed rituals, have been condensed. This reduction impacts the depth of celebrations and communal involvement (Gupta, 2021). Key customs and rituals, including village clearing days and specific ceremonial rites, have diminished or disappeared. This loss represents a significant erosion of traditional values and community cohesion (Kumar, 2020). The shift towards material displays and economic gain has altered the essence of festivals, emphasising profit over cultural values. This commercialisation impacts the authenticity and communal spirit of the celebrations (Patel & Rao, 2021).

To address these challenges and enhance the relevance of feasts and festivals, several recommendations are proposed. Increasing community involvement and educational efforts can help preserve traditional practices. Integrating cultural education into community activities and schools can strengthen connections to heritage (Singh, 2017). Planning festivals to be less financially burdensome can make them more inclusive. By focusing on creativity rather than cost, festivals can remain accessible to all community members (Chakraborty, 2020). Reintroducing traditional customs and rituals can help restore the cultural essence of festivals. Reviving extended celebrations and specific rites can reinforce traditional values and practices (Johnson, 2019).

Feasts and festivals are essential to the social and cultural life of the Sumi Naga tribe, but they face challenges from modernisation, commercialisation, and financial pressures. Addressing these issues requires a balanced approach that honours traditional values while adapting to contemporary realities. Enhancing community engagement, reducing financial burdens, and restoring traditional practices can preserve the essence of cultural celebrations and ensure their continued relevance (Ghosh, 2019; Reddy, 2022).

Conclusion

The study of feasts and festivals among the Sumi Naga tribe provides profound insights into how these cultural practices function as a cornerstone of social cohesion, cultural continuity, and community identity. By examining the perspectives of village chiefs, elderly members, and youths, this analysis reveals the multifaceted role of festivals in maintaining traditional values while confronting modern challenges.

Feasts and festivals among the Sumi Naga tribe serve as vital mechanisms for reinforcing social hierarchies and communal bonds. From the perspective of the chiefs, these events are not merely celebratory occasions but are integral to sustaining the social fabric and demonstrating communal wealth and prestige. They act as platforms for affirming social roles and responsibilities, thus contributing to the preservation of the tribe's hierarchical structure (Smith, 2020). Elderly members provide a historical dimension, emphasising the role of festivals in fostering social harmony and inclusivity. Historically, these celebrations were characterised by equal participation across social strata, reflecting a strong communal ethos. However, contemporary challenges, such as commercialisation and financial burdens, have led to a shift in focus, resulting in increased social inequalities and a dilution of traditional practices (Singh, 2017). The elderly's concerns about the erosion of traditional customs underscore the need for a renewed emphasis on cultural education and community involvement to preserve the essence of these festivals (Johnson, 2019). Youths, on the other hand, represent a generation grappling with the impact of modernisation and globalisation. They view festivals as opportunities for personal expression and collective joy, but are also critical of the commercialisation that has transformed these events into financially burdensome affairs (Thakur, 2022). Their insights highlight the need for adapting festival practices to balance cultural preservation with contemporary realities, ensuring that celebrations remain inclusive and relevant. Émile Durkheim's theory of social cohesion is particularly relevant in this context, as it posits that collective rituals and celebrations reinforce social solidarity and maintain societal order (Durkheim, 1912). Feasts and festivals, by bringing together members of the community and reinforcing social roles, function as modern manifestations of Durkheim's concepts of collective effervescence and social integration. Additionally, the theory of cultural commodification, as discussed by Marxist and postmodern scholars, provides insight into the transformation of traditional practices in response to economic pressures (Marx, 1867; Appadurai, 1996). The shift towards commercialised festivals reflects broader trends of cultural commodification, where traditional practices are recontextualised within a market-driven framework, impacting their original social and cultural functions.

In conclusion, feasts and festivals among the Sumi Naga tribe are dynamic cultural phenomena that reflect the tribe's evolving social structures and values. By understanding these celebrations through sociological and theoretical lenses, this study highlights the importance of preserving traditional practices while navigating the complexities of modernisation and globalisation. The recommendations offered aim to support the revitalisation and sustainability of these cultural practices, ensuring their continued relevance and significance for future generations.

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