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## “O Laal Meri”-Jhulelal and the Sindhi Identity

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## Feedback Page

## Acknowledgement

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I'm grateful to my Professors in the M.Des (CD) programme, who put their valuable inputs throughout the course and also in to the selection of the topic.

I am indebted to Professor Madhumita Mazumdar for directing me towards a topic I was interested in but not quite sure how to work on, for inspiring me to take on the challenge, and for being patient enough to guide me through whenever I was going down the lane. I'm thankful to Professor Vishwajit Pandya for motivating me to look at things from a different perspective which helped me to look into the right direction through the entire course and especially for this project. I'm also thankful to Professor Binita Desai for helping me to visualize the book and also for ceaseless support and faith in my work.

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their warm gestures whenever I visited Adipur and the entire staff of Indian Institute of Sindhology for helping to get the books and other information I needed for research.

I place on record my heartfelt thanks to my parents and their unconditional support and motivation during the project and also to my classmates and friends who were there to support me during the entire project whenever I needed help and motivation. I would also like to thank Mr. Prabhunath Sharma for providing all the necessary materials and technical support.

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## Introduction

In a discussion with my professors I told them about my interest to research and work on my own Sindhi culture in which I've been born and brought up but neither was I fluent in speaking our native language nor did I knew anything about it as we did not lived in Sindhi surroundings and celebrated and followed the local rituals than our own. Listening to this, my professor suggested to look into the God Jhulelal and his multiple identities. Till then I didnot had any idea that the deity was worshipped by Islam and so many other communities as well. The thought of it fascinated me and my curiosity was fueled thoroughly to dig more about the topic. Then while researching for it I got to read the paper written by Michel Boivin on Jhulelal and the Identity of Indian Sindhis'. The paper was so informative and gave me a push to work on. Since then it was never looking back and kept reading and researching everything about the history, mythology, the Sindh diaspora, its rich cultural heritage and more about the Jhulelal and Sindhis.

The project started taking shape at the end of the third semester and I knew that I have to work on the multiple identities of the deity and his changing ways of worship. The final project mentions the physical spaces of worship shared by Muslim and Hindu devotees equally in the name of Khwaja Khizr, Jhulelal, Uderolal, Zinda pir, in Sindh from Pre-partition India, the partition times, the stories of struggle, the resettlement of the community, efforts put in to continue the tradition,

defining the term Sindhiyat, efforts of the scholars to re establish the identity of the community, the recent times of establishing a cultural centre and more.

The title of the book is “*O Laal Meri*” *Jhulelal and the identities of Sindhis* is taken from the most famous sufi song ‘*Dama Dam mast Qalandar*’ which addresses that the deity is worshipped by both the communities in different names of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar and Jhulelal, representing, praising and binding the communities and their supreme power together.

The story is a result of struggle and adaptation and the shift in the definition of ‘home’. The movement that was not limited to physical displacement, but movement in identities of individuals and hence, the entire community.

## Target Audience

The project aims to invite the interest of the people interested in reading and knowing about the history of reviving a culture and how the cultures evolve or change due to various influences and the efforts that are put in to revive it.

## **Problem Statement**

The project is a quest for the identity of Hindu Sindhis and the ways they are trying to re establish it in India in midst of all the cultural influences on their community by raising Jhulelal as their national deity.



## Communication medium

Initially, looking at the nature of the project, communicating through the documentary would have been interesting as it would have been a perfect combination of image/visuals, sound and text to support the narrative and argument of the story effectively.

The final medium chosen was a coffee table book. As the project intended to tell the change and difference in traditions, rites and rituals, architectural style to show the gradual changes from Dome shaped structure to Shikarah and to the structure of Tirath dham in the ways of worship, the visuals- image and illustrations appear to be extremely interesting and appealing to the reader. The use of images, graphics, diagrams, illustrations, charts to go with and to communicate your story creatively. It is also a better medium to reach the wider audience to make them interested especially the current and upcoming generation and to know more about the rich cultural heritage of the Sindhi community.

## Research Phase

### a. Literature review

Once the project topic was finalized I started surfing through the internet about the books and research papers available on the Sindhi identity and Jhulelal when I came across the 'Jhulelal and the identity of Indian Sindhis' is a chapter in the book called 'Sindh through history and its representations- A french contribution to sindhi studies' edited by Michel Boivin. The chapter was dedicated to the Sindhi Hindus and how they were considered between Islam and Hinduism and often termed as liminal. While the community worshipped Hindu deities they also believed in the sufi saints like Lal Shahbaz Qalandar and their own deity Jhulelal. But the influence and traditions seems to observe a shift from those to more towards th Hindu deities which ultimately led to decrease in the beliefs. This helped me understand the situation of Hindu Sindhis of India and how they were struggling to create their own identity. It also helped me to know about the multiple identities of Jhulelal worshipped by other communities like Islam in the name of Khwaja Khizr, Zinda Pir among others.

After reading the interesting chapter edited by Michel Boivin I got to know that he's a french scholar and has spent 35 years of his time in South Asian studies and has researched about the Jhulelal and the Sindhi identities thoroughly. I read his multiple research papers written on Jhulelal, his multiple representations and also on the Sindhi Hindu identities. The paper 'Negotiating a vernacular heritage beyond

borders: Visual representations of Jhulelal between Pakistan and India' by Michel Boivin talks about the various representations of the Jhulelal and the stories behind it. It explores how the iconographies of the Jhulelal have changed over the period of time due to various cultural influences. It helped me to better understand the representations of Jhulelal and his iconographies thoroughly. It tells how the countries which are called as the example of perfect enemies bond because of the places of worship and devotion keeping aside all the complaints and problems it has with each other.

The other paper that I read by Michel Boivin was 'Partition and the Practice of Memory' by Michel Boivin and Bhavna Rajpal which increased my knowledge about the change in physical spaces in Pakistan and in India after the Partition and also about the change in rituals and traditions of Jhulelal. It talked about how the Jhulelal is remembered in Pakistan today, what were the practices that were followed pre partition and what practices and traditions are being continued or not continued here in India now through explaining the practices that were followed and are still being followed it is understood that jyot plays a vital role in the tradition of Jhulelal.

Other than the writing by Michel Boivin I read the book 'National Integration of Sindhis' by Dr. Subhadra Anand which addresses how the Sindhi refugees were brought in India and how many were the refugees in total, how and where they were settled, what were the political and cultural influences, what were the problems they faced and how they adjusted and adapted the new environment, culture and traditions to survive and earn their bread. Towards the end of the book it tells the importance of a centre/place of worship to be made

for the Sindhis to call it their own to have a sense of belongingness to. As my final product was to be a coffee table book I thoroughly went through the Sindhinamah, a coffee table book written by Nandita Bhavnani about the cultural heritage, history, architecture and the people of Sindh to understand how the coffee table books are written, designed and put together beautifully as the combination of text and images.

Other books that I read were the Sindhi culture by U.T thakur, The making of Exile by Nandita Bhavnani, and various other books focusing on the traditions, culture of the Jhulelal and Sindhis in English and also some local mythological books which has the various narratives and stories of Jhulelal in devanagari Sindhi and Hindi languages.

There were various articles which I read online mostly from the Pakistan newspaper site 'dawn' which has interesting and informative articles on the shrines and temples in Sindh dedicated to the deity Jhulelal.

It would be impossible for me to complete the book without reading and understanding these research papers, books and articles. It helped me understand all the aspects and to create the best narrative which answers all the questions that can be raised about the topic. All these articles and books were vital to create the narrative of the book and to show the history, changes in tradition and the efforts that are put in to re establish the identity of the community.



*Front view of the Raja veer temple in Kuber nagar area, Ahmedabad, Gujarat*

## **b. Field study**

### **I. Ahmedabad, Gujarat**

The Sindhi community is scattered in all the parts of India and thus the field work had to be the places of their earliest settlement after partition. As I was in Gandhinagar, close to Ahmedabad which is one of the earliest resettlement areas of the community I decided to go to Kuber Nagar in Ahmedabad which has a huge population of the community. And one of the oldest temples dedicated to the deity. The temple Raja veer is situated in Kuber nagar main market area which has an Indian style of architecture which does not resemble that of Hindu style of architecture used for temples. The temple had the smaller dome shaped structure of the temple which had the jyot kept in it burning eternally. The statue of Jhulelal, his various iconographies and other Hindu deities surrounded the smaller structure where jyot was kept. This was the only temple where I observed 4 different iconographies of Jhulelal. The two iconographies- the one on palla and the other in cradle are common and were seen in almost all of the temple but the Jhulelal as a warrior and the Vishnu avatar of Jhulelal was only seen in this temple.

There was no specific pandit for the temple and it was taken care of by the members of the temple group. I interviewed the head of the group Hemraj Khilwani who told me about the story behind establishment of the temple, the rites and rituals that are followed, the festivals that are celebrated there and the mythological stories about the deity.



1. Front view of the Puj bhai bandh temple in Adipur, Gujarat

2. Priest of the temple and the jyot in the background

## II. Adipur, Kutch, Gujarat

The Indian Institute of Sindhology is situated in Adipur and visiting the town for the study and better understanding about the topic was important as the institute has almost all the books written on Jhulelal, Sindh or the Sindhi Identity. Another reason for visiting Adipur was that this area in Kutch was officially declared as the resettlement areas for the Hindu Sindhis who came to India from Sindh as refugees in 1947. As it was the area which was closest to Sindhi culture and the people there speak the dialect of Sindhi language. But due to various reasons the community was scattered all over India and abroad and a few number of Sindhis only settled there then. Although compared to other areas Adipur is much closer to the traditions of Sindh and still follows the rites and rituals and traditions that were followed in Sindh back then. The town has a temple dedicated to Jhulelal established on the same day when the city was established there. In the earlier years the temple had the jyot burning perpetually in a small structure and it was later renovated several times by the Puj Bandh Panchayat of Adipur which is also the name of the temple. The priest of the temple told the stories of how the jyot was brought by his ancestors and was established in the temple. He told me how his ancestors taught him to follow the traditions and how those had to be changed over the period of time due to adjust in the changing environment and culture around them. As I belong to a place where almost no or minimum Sindhi traditions are followed and festivals are also celebrated rarely and therefore I barely got the chance to understand and experience it closely. Living in Adipur was beneficial to look at those rituals and experience the Sindhi ways of living. Visiting Adipur was also



*The road leading to Koteswar where Tirathdham is established*

important to meet Lakhmi Khilani who is also one of the trustees of the Tirath dham temple being constructed in Koteswar.

### **III. Koteswar, Kutch, Gujarat**

Lakhmi Khilani accompanied me on the trip to Koteswar where Tirath dham is being constructed. He told me the stories about how the tirath dham was constructed and why it is being constructed in Koteswar at that geographical area. We reached Narayan Sarovar and Koteswar on the morning of March 14th 2020. I remember entering the village in a local bus driving on a road with shiny sea water and the sand on both sides. The view was mesmerizing. When we reached our designated stay it was 3pm and all the temples and sites were closed so we decided to visit the Narayan Sarovar temple at 4:30pm followed by the most famous Koteswar Mahadev temple and then the Tirath dham. It was 6:30 pm when I reached Tirath dham. As I reached the site it was not even close to what I imagined it to be. The entrance gate was grand and was nowhere close to any structure that represents the temple or tirath dham. It seemed like a contemporary or cosmopolitan structure until and unless we don't go in and look at the shikarah constructed for the main temple. The structure was different and interesting than what we usually see and expect at a temple. Mr. Harikrishna who manages the daily chores and other miscellaneous work of the Tirath dham was also responsible to guide us all the way through. He guided me all through the Tirath dham and introduced me to every place I wanted to know, click photographs and ask questions about. He introduced me to the Pandit there who



1. Image of the main entrance to Tirath dham
2. View of the main temple from the entrance

told me about the rituals and traditions he was following and the food he was offering to Jhulelal. All of that varied a lot from the temples of Jhulelal at other places. Another thing that was different was that the environment there was so similar to that of Sindhi environment, the Kutchis speak the dialect of Sindhi and worship Jhulelal in the name of Uderolal. That made me feel like I'm at a place which is dedicated to the Sindhi community and follows all its traditions. Visiting all these places physically helped me to develop an understanding of the places of worship and the differences between the earlier made temples and the Tirath dham being constructed recently.



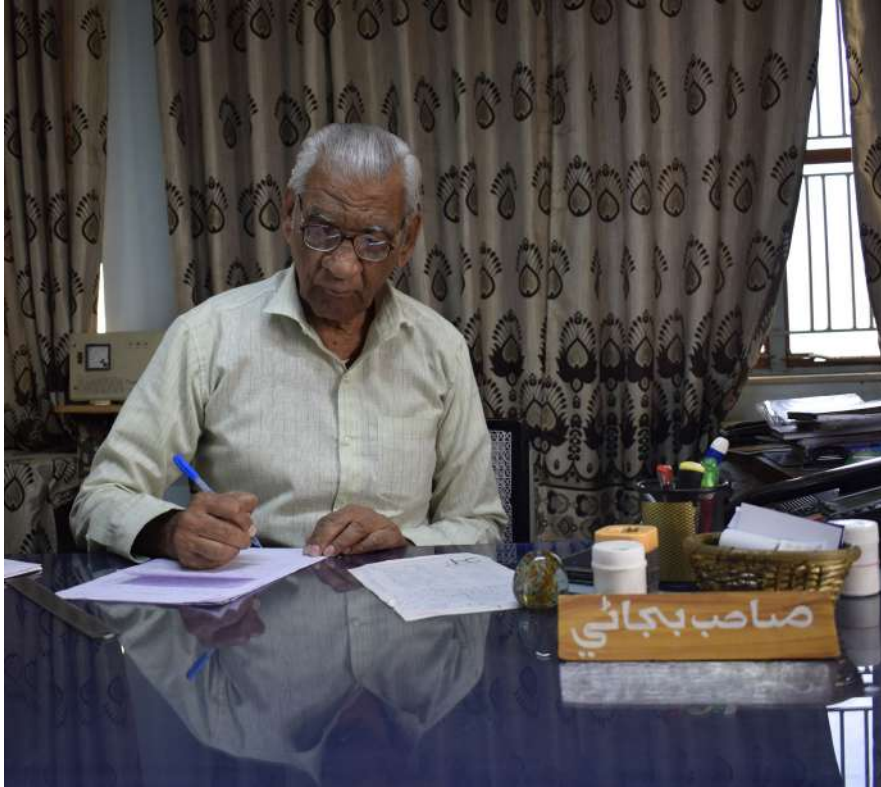


*Subhadra Anand*

### **c. Interviews**

#### **Dr. Subhadra Anand**

She is the author of the book ‘National Integration of Sindhis’ and the lady who proposed the idea of making a cultural complex/tirath dham for the Sindhi community in her book and also at a conference in Indian Institute of Sindhology held in 1997. She had experienced the early years of partition and the pain of leaving the motherland behind and the struggles of settling in a new country. The days when people were hardly settled and the ways they were treated as untouchables and were scared to show their true identity and had to hide their real selves. When we grew she had the urge to know her roots and know more about the heritage. She did her Phd in history on Sindhis mass exodus and the book was the result of that. As per her knowledge she told me all about the history and the books which I should be reading to understand the topic and the Sindhi diaspora. She explained me the reason of why there was a need of Jhulelal tiarth dham to be made and how and what efforts were put in to turn that dream into a reality.



*Sahib Bijani*

### **Sahib Bijani**

Mr. Sahib Bijani who is an architect by profession, writer, a lover of Sindhi literature, music and drama is currently the director of Indian Institute of Sindhology, Adipur. He is one of the most knowledgeable people about the Sindh and Sindhi culture I met. He dedicated his entire life to Sindhi literature and to impart the best of his knowledge to the students, researchers and scholars. He has witnessed the gradual changes and therefore it was a privilege to hear the stories from him. He told me the stories about the Pakistan times and the ways the festivals were celebrated there and the gradual changes that occurred. He also helped me to understand the history of Jhulelal, the influence of Islam and Sikhism in Sindh.

# Design Process

## Structure of the story

The main aim of the story was to understand how the Sindhi Hindus are trying to create their distinct identity where their culture and language was overshadowed by Islam before partition and Hinduism after partition. To understand that the story is divided into 4 chapters starting from the pre partition times to partition times and the resettlement of the community to coming up of early shrines and the influence of Hinduism and the initiatives that were taken to continue to tradition and language to re establishing the identity in current times in a contemporary way.

The very first part of the book introduces the identity of Jhulelal in Sindh shows the important places of worship, Uderolal shrine which is the oldest and most important shrine dedicated to the deity, Jhulelal mandir at mol sharif which is said to be made by a devotee, Shahbaz qalandar shrine which is considered to be dedicated to both the lals, Lal shahbaz Qalandar and the Jhulelal, as shahbaz Qalandar is considered to be incarnation of Jhulelal. The connection is emphasized by the popular spiritual song '*Dama Dam Mast Qalandar*' in which he's referred by the name Jhulelal. The chapter talks about these shrines and the role it played to shape the identity of Jhulelal by observing the architecture style, rites and rituals, and the iconographies of him being worshipped in pre partition India, now Pakistan.

The second chapter in the book talks about the resettlement of the



*Image of one of the inhouse temples in Kuber nagar Ahmedabad showing Jhulelal and other deities*

community in India after 1947 partition and the jyot that were brought in India from Pakistan, the importance of Jyot and how the temples were established initially. The temple shows the changed ways of worship of Jhulelal post partition. The chapter also shows that temples have their own independent organisation regarding the transmission of Jhulelal's tradition. To understand that, here I have taken 3 temples, Chaliho Sahib temple Ulhasnagar, Raja veer temple Ahmedabad and Lal Sahib's mandir in Adipur into study and tried to observe and understand how the architecture style, rites and rituals differ from that of shrines in Pakistan in pre partition times. As mentioned above that transmission of tradition was independent depending on the resources and the various influences it is observed that the architecture style of all the 3 temples differ in themselves, what remains the same/ common is the lightening of the Jyot which is said to be brought from Pakistan and was established in the small stone made temple like structure and renovated in the later years. The temples have statues of other Gods and Goddesses along with the Jhulelal statue which represents the Sindhi community started indulging in Hindu culture and started worshipping other deities as well. This happened because a few years after the partition the community was trying to adjust and adapt in the new environment as a result of which they started worshipping local deities of that geographical area more than that of Jhulelal. And therefore, along with the statue of Jhulelal, other deities statues are established in the temple and worshipped equally or with greater importance in some cases.

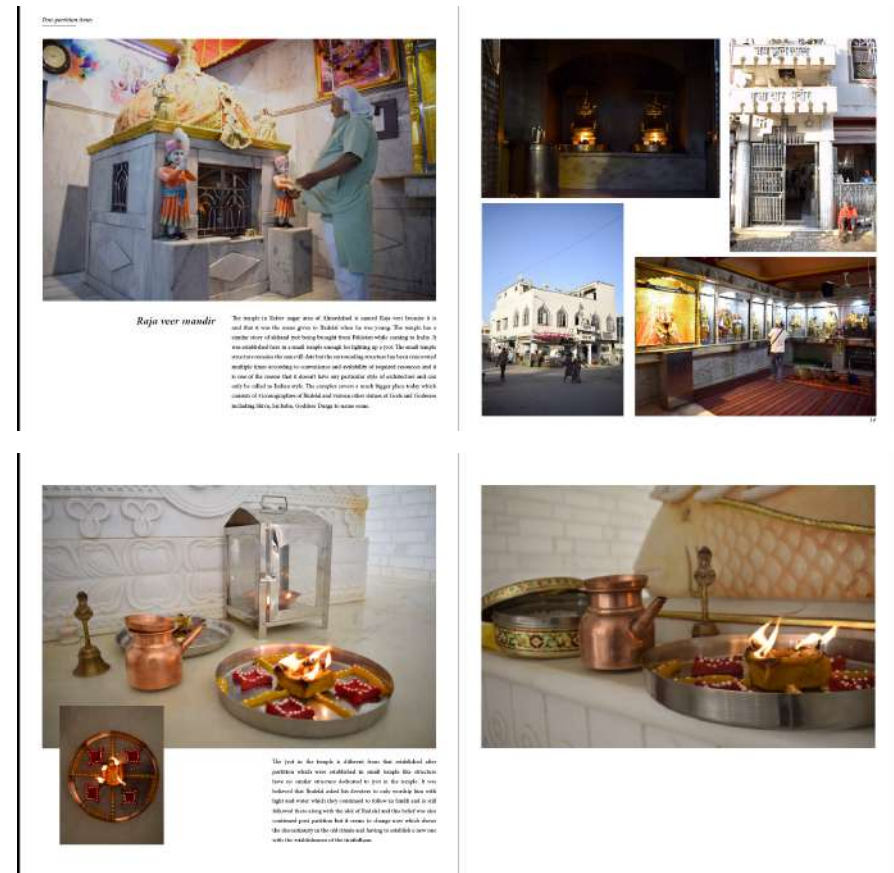
The third chapter focuses on the multiple iconographies of Jhulelal and the reason behind those iconographies. The statue of Jhulelal of

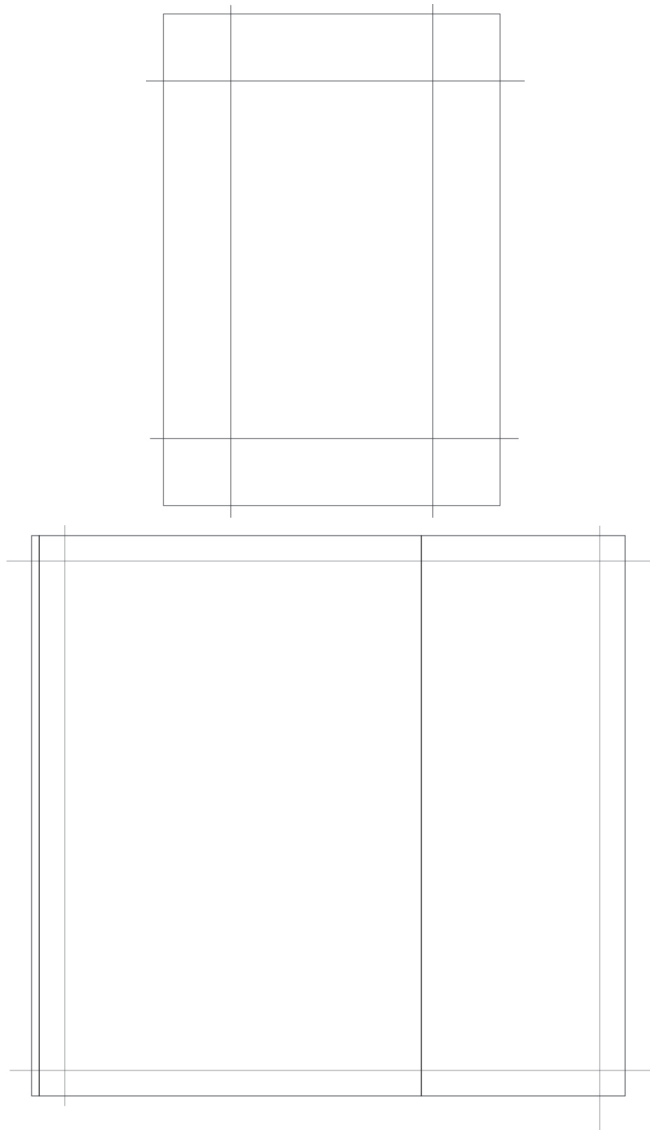
the iconography in which he's seated cross legs on Palla fish with a book in his hands among all the iconographies which are explained in the chapter, is the most widespread representation of him. Although, the reason for which is unknown and it was not imposed by any centralized authority. It also looks at the ways in which Jhulelal is worshipped in homes which helps to understand the influences of the local traditions and culture, panth they follow if any, on the ways of worship. Then it talks about the story and efforts of Ram Punjwani who tried to unite the exiled Sindhis, made Sindhu Sahitya Bhavan and initiated many traditions to revive the Lord Jhulelal and try to establish him as the community's deity.

The last section of the book talks about how the idea of Tirathdham is being constructed and how it is being perceived in current scenarios. It explores how the idea of making of Jhulelal tirath dham will change the people's perception of considering him as God of Hindu Sindhis and how it will act as a physical space to gather for the entire community at a single place for all the rites and rituals to be performed in authentic ways and have a sense of belongingness too, as the Sikhs feel about the Golden temple, Muslims about the Mecca and Hindus about the 4 dhams. It also focuses on the influence of Hinduism and other factors due to which it is being constructed in a particular way. It looks at how Dr. Subhadra Anand and her companions are trying to establish a new identity of the God and what are the expected possible changes after the Tirath dham getting constructed and being open for the devotees to worship.

## Image selection and Storyboarding

Storyboarding is the visual representation of images and text flow in the book which helps to give a better understanding of the flow of the narrative. I made a storyboard with the images and text keeping in mind the flow of the narrative which helped me to get a better understanding to choose the right images to serve the purpose and how the story will unfold in the book.





1. Layout and grid for the book

2. Grid for the cover page

## Layout

Keeping in mind the possible layouts from which no paper waste is generated and also considering its cost the chosen dimensions of the book are 7.5 by 11 inch.

### Margins-

Top: 1.5 inch

Bottom: 1.5 inch

Left: 1.5 inch

Right: 1.5 inch

The margins are kept equal on all sides to give enough negative space for the book to breathe. The negative space gives a clean and organised view to the book which also helps to concentrate on the images and text more.

The grid chosen is the single column grid to keep the text in the middle and images are arranged accordingly to create a visual balance.

### Cover page

The cover used for the book is a thick cover with a jacket on it. The size and margins of the jacket are-

Top: 0.5 inch

Bottom: 0.5 inch

Left: 0.5 inch

Right: 0.5 inch

Spine width- 0.15 inch

Aa

## Heading (20pt, regular)

### Sub heading (11pt, semi bold)

Body text (11pt) Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Duis vehicula blandit odio, vel blandit neque tempus sit amet. Morbi quis libero hendrerit, maximus tortor non, tempor ex. Vestibulum in mi semper, commodo leo ac, molestie elit. Suspendisse ut porta velit. Quisque rhoncus nisi ante, hendrerit iaculis ligula porttitor ac. Donec eu rutrum ipsum. Fusce eleifend eget risus sit amet venenatis. Ut vitae diam vel neque vestibulum volutpat. In rutrum turpis mattis dolor tincidunt, a sollicitudin ex pulvinar. Integer fringilla blandit tincidunt.

## Typography

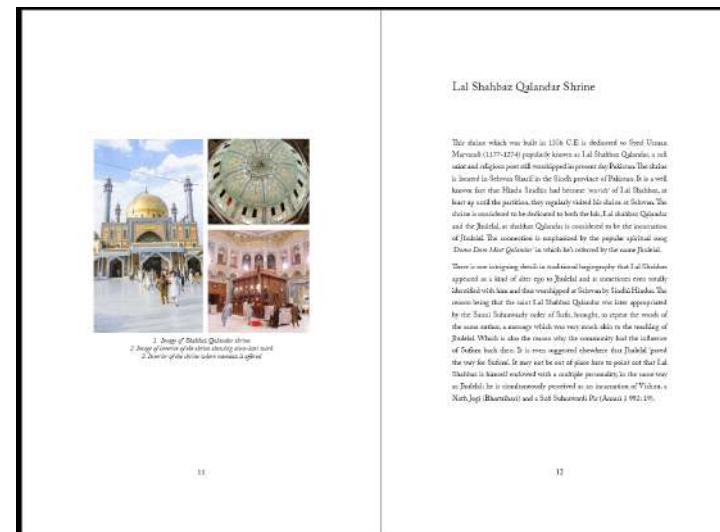
Typography is the art of written communication, a good typography invites the people to read it smoothly with noticing and the bad typography is a hindrance to the eye of the reader.

I wanted to give the book a classic feel and therefore, here I've chosen the 'Adobe caslon pro' typeface which is a classic serif typeface. The Caslon was the name given to the typeface because of its designer William Caslon. The typeface has multiple versions like LTC, Adobe and more, I've used Adobe Caslon Pro because of its better readability and legibility. Another advantage of choosing this font is that it is available in 6 weights which help to emphasize the important words and headings easily.

The font is chosen for both the heading and the body text. The font size for the heading is 20pt and 11pt for the body text.



# Final Layout





*Title font (58pt)*

Font- Scriptina

*Jhulelal and the Sindhi identity (12pt)*

Font- Adobe caslon pro italic



Color code- 94845e



Color code- 94845e



Color code- 94845e

## Conclusion

The project helped to understand that there is no black or white, just the versions of grey. In other words, every culture is a mixture of some other cultural, political or geographical influences, still maintaining their own distinct identities.

The Sindhi community is no different and has tried numerous ways to distinguish themselves from what they were in Pre partition India and the image they adapted in post partition India by establishing their own ways which are again the mixture of all the things that influenced it to be what it is today.

This project was my first experience to make the final product from scratch. The process of finalising the topic, research, binding a story, deciding a medium, its design process was interesting but challenging. It would not have been possible without the professors of M.Des department who guided me at every step. I admit that I made mistakes, slowed down, got stuck numerous times but because of their guidance. I was rescued and able to complete the project on time.

I'm indebted to Prof. Madhumita Mazumdar for guiding me and making me learn at each step. I wished to go some places in person and click the photographs by myself and also experience it to understand further. This did not become possible due to the pandemic but if given chance I would definitely like to take this project further and publish the book.

## Glossary

*Jyot*- Burning lamp

*Pandit*- Priest

*Vishnu avatar*- One of the Gods of Hindu mythology

*Palla*- Name of the fish on which Jhulelal is seated

*Panth*- A spiritual path or way

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