

MANIFESTATION OF JONBEEL MELA THROUGH
PHOTO-DOCUMENTATION

A Report Submitted
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Design

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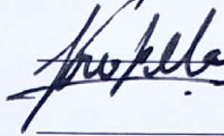
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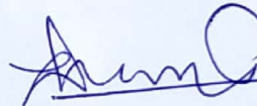
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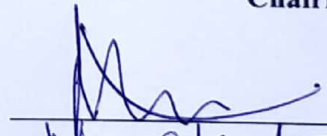
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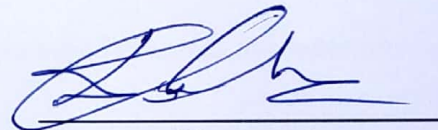

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Abstract

Jonbeel, a photobook, is about a fair organized by the *Tiwa* community, in which the experience of being at a particular space, as an event in the history of time has been recreated employing a tour de photograph. In the process, it has been intended to establish an emotional connection between the viewer and the art, so as to eventually transport the former from the realm of the normal to an overwhelming sphere of instinct and empathic vibrations. The way a photograph is presented can influence the perception of the viewer. While the emotional effect in a documentary image is absorbed but not dwelt upon in elaborate terms, the presentation of the same image in the form of art makes the artist communicate with the viewer in a way that it elicits a multiplicity of response from the latter. All the same, the artist's views and interpretations, as evident from the presentation itself, serve to form a veritable vehicle for deciphering the layers of meaning implicit in the image, thereby investing the work itself with extended meaning and import. *Jonbeel* is presented to viewers as a conduit between art, life and interpretation. This report includes an introduction to the theme, literature review, methodology followed for the final product, learning and experience and future scope of work.

Keywords: Documentary, Photography, Book Design, Photobook, *Jonbeel*, *Tiwa*, Barter.

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1 Introduction

The conservation of cultural assets and passing them on to the future generations imply not only the preservation of the past but also the securing of the future. The efforts to safeguard cultural heritage should increasingly continue through individual, local, regional, national, and international education and projects.

This project aims to draw attention to the significance of the *Jonbeel Mela* organized by the *Tiwa* community, through documentary photography in a contemporary style presented in the form of a photobook.

The secondary aim is to raise consciousness regarding cultural heritage and traditions, along with creating awareness in terms of the significance of safeguarding and passing the activities, such as festivals, which are the communities' source of happiness, unity and amusement, on to the future generations.

1.1 History & Evolution of Photography

Photography, as it is known today, is considered to have begun in the late 1820s when a French inventor Joseph Nicéphore Niépce used a portable camera obscura to expose a pewter plate coated with bitumen to light. It depicts a view from the window at Le Gras, which is the first recorded image that did not fade quickly.



Figure 1. First recorded image by Joseph Niépce

Niépce's success led to several other experiments and photography progressed very rapidly. Daguerreotypes, emulsion plates, and dry plates were developed almost simultaneously in the mid- to late-1800s.

In 1839 Sir John Herschel came up with a way of making the first glass negative as opposed to metal. The same year he coined the term Photography deriving from the Greek "*fos*" meaning light and "*grafo*" - to write (A History of Photography Part 1: The Beginning, n.d.). Even though the process became more manageable and the result was better, it was still a long time until photography was publicly recognized.

Photography was only for the rich and the professionals until George Eastwood started a company called Kodak in the 1880s. This started the mass use of cameras.

Initially, photographs were usually portraits of either one person or family portraits to preserve the memories. Around 1930, Henri-Cartier Bresson and other photographers began to use small 35mm cameras to capture images of life as it occurred rather than staged portraits. This approach was adopted by many photojournalists when World War II started in 1939. This style of capturing the decisive moment shaped the face of photography forever.

Over the past few decades, the medium has been defined by new technologies and formats, among the most important being color photography, digital manipulation, and large-scale printing techniques. Contemporary photographers have often used these developments to present new perspectives on traditional subjects and compositions.

Photography continues to be relevant as a cultural object. Its ability to capture motion, document a split-second of time, construct history, memory, truth and identity helped it climb the ladder of importance in the art world. The evolution of photography is indeed as interesting as the evolution of art itself; with its ups and downs, exciting discoveries and progress that happened along with current streams and social, economic, technological and political events in society (The Digital Death | Widewalls, 2019)

1.2 Tribal Cultures of India

India is the home to large number of indigenous people, who are still untouched by the lifestyle of the modern world. Unity in diversity is one of the most prominent features in the

people of India. Among the diversified population a significant portion is comprised of the tribal people, the original inhabitants of the land. The tribal culture of India and their traditions and practices pervade almost all of the aspects of Indian culture and civilization (About The Tribal Culture..... - Anwasha Tribal Arts and ..., n.d.).

Each tribe is a distinctive community either migrated from another place or the original inhabitants of the land. These different tribes still inhabit the different parts especially the seven states of the North Eastern part, and almost each and every corner of the land. The distinctiveness of the tribes lie in their rituals, cultures, beliefs and above all the harmony in which they survive in unison with nature. Their way of living depicts a well-balanced give and take procedure that in no way disrupts the ecological balance.

One has to love tribal culture in India to truly understand the uniqueness of their culture. Warm hospitality, simple ways of living and sincere judgment of the opinions are some of the traits that mark the tribal cultures of India. Their custom depicts their belief in simplicity. Most of the tribes in India have their own Gods and Goddesses that reflect the dependence of Tribal people on nature (Folklore & Mythology | Readers End, 2019). They have their own festivals and celebrations. The tribal people are clinging to their identity despite of the external influences that threatened the tribal culture, especially after their post-independence turbulent period.

1.3 Melas, Fairs & Festivals of India

Mela is a Sanskrit word meaning 'gathering' or 'to meet' or a 'fair'. It is used in the Indian subcontinent for all sizes of gatherings and can be religious, commercial, cultural or sport-related. In rural traditions *melas* or village fairs were (and in some cases still are) of great importance. This led to their export around the world by south Asian diaspora communities wishing to bring something of that tradition to their new countries.

In recent times "*Mela*" also popularly refers to shows and exhibitions. It can be theme-based, promoting a particular culture, art or skill. Generally, in "*melas*" people can find eateries, entertainment activities, shops and games.

In modern usage outside South Asia it has become a term that shows widespread diversity of interpretation, just as has been the case in South Asia. One can find a Nepalese mela in the USA, or a Bengali mela in London, such as the Baishakhi Mela. For many it is a wider intercultural (though mainly Asian) festival incorporating music, dance, food and other aspects of mainstream culture.

Since the 1980s an increasing number of *melas* have regularly been held in larger towns outside south Asia, especially in the UK and North America. The larger *melas* tend to be those with larger ethnic minority populations, but many *melas* are held in communities with small South Asian diasporas. Community ownership of these *melas* is important to the south Asian communities who see them as opportunities to share their cultural heritage with the mainstream. They are opportunities for bridge building and community building and can perform a strong socially cohesive function.

For centuries, festivals have been a part of intangible cultural heritage that communities have built along with their values. Starting from early times, people have always held ceremonies or festivities shaped by their culture in order to express their happiness, sorrow and joy, and their successes in acquisition of food and clothes, and achievements.

India is a land of cultural and geographical diversities where the different fairs and festivals form a part of the intrinsic cultural fabric of the society as well as the continuation of its heritage. While there are numerous festivals held in all the corners of India, some significant festivals are mentioned here:

- **Tarnetar Mela** is a tribal fair held every year in the village of Tarnetar in Gujarat. This festival is fascinating for the simple reason that it is one of the largest “marriage marts” or *swayamvars* in India where tribal men come to the fair dressed eloquently carrying the most elaborately and beautifully embroidered umbrellas in the world. The woman folk choose their prospective husband based on the umbrella they find the most beautiful.



Figure 2. Tarnetar Mela

- **Pushkar Mela** is arguably the biggest fair in the state of Rajasthan and one of the biggest livestock fairs in the world; a fascinating coming together of the nomadic culture. It is primarily a place where the buying and selling of camels and livestock takes place



Figure 3. Pushkar Mela

- **Kumbh Mela** is the biggest gathering of people on the planet at a particular place held every three years. The most important and largest religious event in the country, the Kumbh Mela is a festival of mammoth proportion but also full of colors as the *Naga Sadhus* from



Figure 4. Kumbh Mela

various parts of the country travel with their *Akhadhas* to the site of the Mela. The festival is held in Allahabad, Banaras, Haridwar, and Ujjain. Hindus from all over the

world come to take a dip in the holy river and listen to sermons from the various *sadhus* at the mela site. It is considered to be one of the most spiritually enlightening festivals in the world.

- ***Hemis Festival***, a festival of colors, beauty and worship, is held in the northernmost corner of the country amidst the cold deserts of Ladakh. The festival which takes place to commemorate the death of Swami



Figure 5. Hemis Festival

Padmasambhava is a great place to understand the culture of Ladakh and about Buddhism. The festival is held every year in June or July in the famed monastery of Hemis Jangchub Choling in Leh. The festival's highlight is the masked dance performed by lamas who dress themselves in colorful costumes and wear dragon masks.

- ***Sonepur Mela***, the largest cattle fair in Asia, has been a festival which has continued for over two thousand years since the times of the Mauryan Empire. The fair is essentially meant for the sale and purchase of various kinds of livestock



Figure 6. Sonepur Mela

such as birds, dogs, goats, buffaloes, donkeys and horses. But the main attraction of the fair is the Elephant market which sees hundreds of elephants lined up on the shores of River Ganga for sale. Besides this, there is musical and dance performance by famous artists of the region. The festival is a spectacle unlike any other and allows you travel back in time to understand how ancient people traded.

- Poush Mela** is a unique festival which signifies the end of the harvesting season in Bengal. Celebrated at the behest of Devendranath Tagore at Shantiniketan, *Poush Mela* is in a way the coming together of the urban and rural sides of Bengal. The mela which sees the celebration of Bengali culture through Bengali folk music especially *Boul Sangeet* as well folk dances, is a place for peace and love. Rural artists from around the state gather here with their work and put it out for sale.



Figure 7. Poush Mela

- Hornbill Festival** is a unique folk festival celebrated in the North-eastern state of Nagaland. A region with rich tribal heritage and traditions, the Hornbill Festival is an



Figure 8. Hornbill Festival

- effort on part of the Nagaland tourism department to bring to the world the culture and beauty of Nagaland.

- Floats Festival** of Madurai is a very old festival which has been celebrated in the city for a long time. The festival sees the god and goddesses of the Madurai temple being taken for a boat ride in the lake of the city, a tradition started by a 17th century Tamil king. But before the ride, the gods and goddesses are taken out of their temple at dawn in a procession followed by thousands of devotees and then placed on a *mandap* at the banks of the



Figure 9. Floats Festival

lake where devotees can offer their prayers. Later the gods are taken on a boat ride across the lake. (Fairs and Festivals of India - holidify.com, n.d.)

1.4 About Jonbeel

Jonbeel mela is a Five Hundred-year-old indigenous fair in the historical grounds of *Dayang Belguri* in the Morigaon district of Assam. The fair has been in observance since the early 17th century, although some accounts trace its origin to the 15th century. A three day festival organized by the *Tiwa* tribe of Assam, every year in the month of January, a week after the *Magh Bihu* festivities of the state, the *Jonbeel Mela* is unique in that it is the only event of its kind in the world where the barter system is still in practice as an integral part of an annual phenomenon. The three days of the festival attract people in hordes, especially from the *Tiwa*, *Karbi*, *Jaintia*, *Khasi* and *Rabha* communities. It is also that time of the year when the *Tiwa* community, which has, otherwise, been maintaining the split into the Hill and Plain factions over the years, comes to celebrate the harvest unitedly in the common pursuit of community fishing, cockfights, dance and music. The *mela* boasts of harmony and brotherhood also among the innumerable tribes and communities scattered throughout the length and breadth of Northeast India.

Groups of families from different hill towns and villages of the region — all in a festive mood — travel in hired trucks to the venue of the event. The journey is not an easy one as the passengers have to carry all their essentials and supplies for the entire period of their stay there, in addition to all that they intend to sell/barter at the venue.

It is quite an experience for the unaccustomed visitor from the city to witness the much-awaited barter beginning early in the wintry morning before sunrise on the second day. Those from the hills bring with them such commodities as ginger, turmeric, taro, chilly, wild fruits and berries, among other things that grow primarily in higher altitudes. Although most food items grown in the plains are now available in the hills as well, the barter system here

features items representing the harvest in lower climes, viz., *pitha* and other items made of flour, different breeds of rice and rye along with a few varieties of dry fish.

On the second day, members from every *Tiwa* family and few other communities of the region gather to catch freshwater fish from the *beel*. Everyone comes out more for frolic than fish, being certain that it would be unlikely for the *beel* to afford fish for all.

With the setting of the sun and the advent of evening, the festival changes its color and transforms itself into what is more typically understood of the term '*mela*' in common parlance. As giant wheels, mini carousel, food stall et al and a change of crowd come to replace everything that was seen during the day, the 'traditional' character of the *mela* too undergoes a change.

The festival has also kept the relevance of the tribal kings alive. It sees the *Gobha* King's visit on the final day who holds a *darbar* and listens to the people's complaints. *Gobha* King Deepsing Dewari is the current leader of the *Tiwa* community. He became the king at the age of six after his father's demise. The *Gobha* king has had to follow a long list of traditions to win the respect of his people, including several restrictions, such as not having a day job. The present King is also the first one to be a son of another king. Until his father's turn, the *Tiwa* tribe observed the



Figure 10. Gobha King

unique custom where the son of the king's sister, *hari kuwari*, succeeded the ruling leader.

“The festival is now bigger than it ever was before, partly because of its growing popularity outside our region and partly owing to government help,” the King says. The magnitude of the fest is only a reflection of multiple other customs that have evolved, including the graduation from an elephant to a car as the king’s preferred mode of transport.



Figure 11. Community Fishing

2 Literature Review

A literature review helps in being aware of the different approaches and the work done on similar lines. It also aids in deciding different ways to explore depending on previous attempts and learnings from them. Reviewing different photographers and their journey help in understanding the various ways of shooting, styles of composition and the visual language adopted by them to suit their specific theme. It is a good way of understanding and eventually developing one's style.

2.1 Reviewing Photographers

While there are many great photographers to get inspiration and ideas from, the following documentary photographers have been reviewed for this project:

2.1.1 August Sanders

"I hate nothing more than sugary photographs with tricks, poses and effects. So allow me to be honest and tell the truth about our age and its people".

August Sander was born on the 17th November 1876, in the German village of Herdorf, to Justine and August Sander. Ranked as one of the greatest socio-historical documentarians, Sander's oeuvre is typically defined by its homogeneity and the sheer scale of its ambition. Rejecting all forms of expressionism and romanticism, Sander's portraiture is



Figure 12. Young farmers (1914)

associated with the rise of the New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit) movement that gained momentum in German artistic circles during the inter-war years. However, that observation, though quite correct, rather belies the fresh artistic and humanist quality Sander brought to photographic portraiture that had been defined hitherto in its relationship to painting, and

by the way it 'described' its subject with the help of flattering backdrops and secondary objects (or 'props').

August Sander is acclaimed for a life-long undertaking known as *People of the Twentieth Century*. Though it was realized as one single volume only posthumously (through the efforts of his son) his career-defining mission gave rise to the greatest portrait collection of the 20th century. Sander's goal was to produce a comprehensive photo-sociological document of the cross-section - from land workers to factory workers; to artistic and professional elites; to the frail and the elderly - of German society as it unraveled during his own lifetime. (Contributors, 2018)

2.1.2 Henri Cartier-Bresson

“To me, photography is the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of the significance of an event as well as of a precise organization of forms which give that event its proper expression.”

To tell Henri Cartier-Bresson’s story and to unravel his work is essentially to tell the story of a look. Throughout the 20th century, he has captured the fascination of Africa in the



Figure 13. Canteen for workers building the Hotel Metropol, Soviet Union, Moscow, Russia, 1954

1920’s, crossed the tragic fortunes of Spanish republicans, accompanied the liberation of Paris, caught a weary Gandhi just hours before his assassination, and

witnessed the victory of the communists in China. Henri Cartier-Bresson was also Jean Renoir's assistant on three major films, an artist who sees himself an artisan but who nevertheless established Magnum, the most prestigious of all photo agencies, and who immortalised his major contemporaries : Mauriac in a state of mystical levitation, Giacometti, Sartre, Faulkner or Camus, and as many more all taken at the decisive moment, all portraits for eternity (Biography - Fondation Henri Cartier-Bresson, n.d.).

His street photography or life reportage style that was coined 'The Decisive Moment' has influenced generations of photographers who followed. With his small 35mm camera, he unobtrusively photographed people's lives around the world. The work was solely responsible for bridging the gap between photojournalism and art. He has published more than a dozen books of his work. The greatest museums in the world have shown his work. His work has glorified the decisive moment in images of unique beauty and lyrical compassion.

2.1.3 Sebastião Salgado

"I'm not an artist. An artist makes an object. Me, it's not an object, I work in history, I'm a storyteller."

Salgado was born on February 8, 1944 in Aimorés, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He chose to abandon a career as an economist and switched to photography in 1973, working initially on news assignments before veering more towards documentary-type work. Salgado initially worked with the photo agency Sygma and the Paris-based Gamma, but in 1979, he joined the international cooperative of photographers Magnum Photos. He left Magnum in 1994 and with his wife Lélia Wanick Salgado formed his own agency, Amazonas Images, in Paris, to represent his



Figure 14. Rwandan refugee camp of Benako. Tanzania . 1994

work. He is particularly noted for his social documentary photography of workers in less developed nations.

Salgado's respect for his subjects and his determination to draw out the larger meaning of what is happening to them, has created an imagery that testifies to the fundamental dignity of all humanity while simultaneously protesting its violation by war, poverty and other injustices (Sebastião Salgado | City Arts & Lectures, n.d.). He uses strong lines to create compositions and lead the viewer's eyes. His work is quite opposite from minimalism while still having the aesthetics with rich details from a greater perspective.

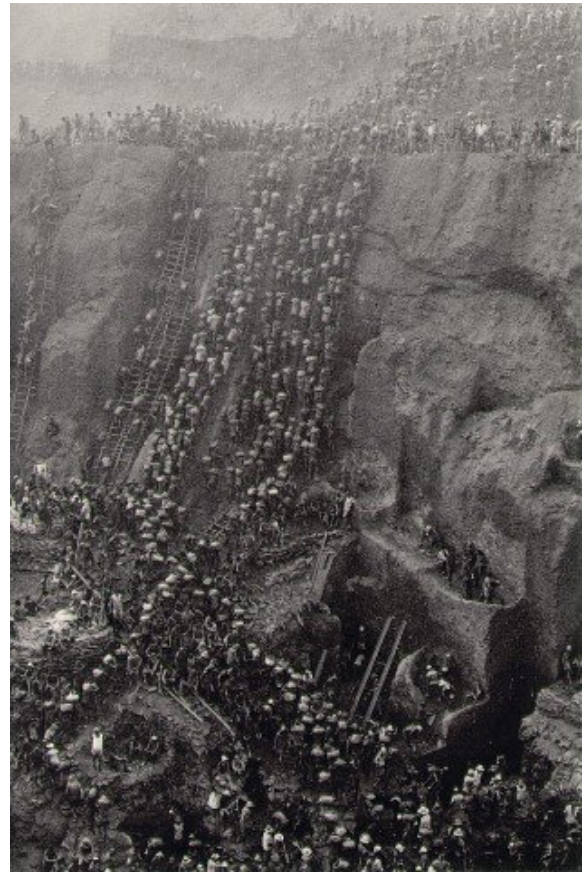


Figure 15. Full view of the Serra Pelada gold mine



Figure 16. Sugar cane cutters. Province of Havana, Cuba . 1988

2.1.4 Sunil Janah

Sunil Janah, Indian photographer (born April 17, 1918, Dibrugarh, Assam, British India—died June 21, 2012, Berkeley, Calif.), documented the Bengal famine of 1943 and other significant events in Indian history, in addition to photographing Indian political leaders and tribal peoples. Janah studied at St. Xavier's College and Presidency College, Calcutta, but abandoned his educational pursuits when P.C. Joshi, the general secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), persuaded him to document the famine that was then devastating Bengal state. The disaster eventually caused more than a million deaths, and his horrifying images of hunger and despair, which were published in the CPI's journal *People's War* and widely distributed, brought Janah international renown. He then worked alongside *Life* magazine photographer Margaret Bourke-White, further recording the famine in 1945 as well as the unrest surrounding the 1948 assassination of Mohandas K. Gandhi. The CPI expelled Janah in 1947. He worked until 1979 as a freelancer, often traveling to remote areas of India to photograph the local residents. The Indian government in 1972 awarded Janah the Padma Shri for his achievements.

Janah's majority of work is focus on covering the lives of the tribes of India. Living with them for many days and experiencing the simplicity of 'primitive' societies, he photographed their exciting visual stimulus of costumes and natural beauty of the people. He lived among them as an untrained observer, having none of the technical qualifications of an anthropologist. He photographed them like he is one of them and not with an outside view.

While many of his photographs reflect aspects of India that seem timeless, Janah also captured India in transition. He recorded many tumultuous and critical events that changed history, as well as ways of life that have, unfortunately, become history.

His skills as a photographer brings the warmth and personalities of these individual human beings to life, as it were. It is worth noting that he was one of the first photojournalists to turn his camera from the rich and famous of India towards the common people, and to portray them with affection and respect as individuals.



Figure 17. Garos fishing from a dugout canoe.



Figure 18. Muria belusha of Binjli ghotul, Bastar, Chhattisgarh, 1950's.

2.1.5 Raghbir Singh

Raghbir Singh, a pioneer of color street photography, worked and published prolifically from the late 1960s until his sudden death in 1999. Raghbir always had one eye cocked on modernism and the other on rural cosmopolitan cultures thriving on India's river banks (Inside the world of Raghbir Singh, pioneer of colour ..., n.d.). In *"The Ganges"* he captures the essence of the river's many different stages and moods, its strange and stunning beauty, its turbulence and ferocity during the monsoon, and the intimate daily lives of the people who live alongside it. To read his introductions to each area or aspect of the Ganges and



Figure 19. Ganapati Immersion, Chowpatty, Bombay, Maharashtra, 1989



Figure 20. Fruit Seller and a Boy with a Child at Zaina Kadal Bridge, Jhelum River, Srinagar, Kashmir, 1979

then to look at the fascinating and infinitely various photographs one can see that what he notices with his mind is replicated to a fantastic degree in a visual image. His early work is more on the geographic and social anatomy of cities and regions of India.

His work shows how to document rural life and culture with a contemporary styled approach.

2.1.6 Gauri Gill

Gauri Gill is an Indian contemporary photographer. Gill's series *Balika Mela* and *The Americans* are the set of pictures which revolves around performance and portraits; some spontaneous and some posed in collaboration with their subjects. In most of her pictures, she tried to create great dramas of life and death, love and longing, growth and change, which are presented with unadorned humanity rather than maudlin sentimentality. Her pictures are a fine blend of documentary and art.



Figure 21. From the series 'Balika Mela'



Figure 22. From the series 'The Americans'

Gauri Gill constructs her images like a careful essayist, recording the urban metropolis in transition. In her urban landscapes, her subject is the city in states of transition. In divesting her subject of people and colour, she sets up a psychological debate with her viewer, an investigation into the nature of desire and its uncertain outcome.

2.1.7 Dayanita Singh

Dayanita Singh was born in New Delhi, India, and studied Visual Communication at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad and Documentary Photography at the International Center of Photography. Her inspirations are wide-ranging and include the film directors Guru Dutt and Satyajit Ray, the painter Ravi Varma, the tabla player Zakir Hussain, and authors such as Italo Calvino. While she is still best known for her black and white portraits of India's urban middle and upper classes, over time she expanded her scope to include empty spaces in Mumbai, the eunuch Mona Ahmed, and night landscapes. Singh also has embraced color photography, creating photographs saturated with intense color.



Figure 23. *WHERE COMFORT REIGNS* Samara Gupta, Pooja Mukherjee, Deen Dayal, Delhi 1996



Figure 24. *From Myself* Mona Ahmed

2.2 Learning

Images play a significant role in defining how the history, culture and traditions of different communities and places are understood. The review of work provided the intimate knowledge of various aspects of the visual language that has been used before for capturing similar events since the early days.

For this project, a documentary style approach had been decided to be the most suitable in order to bring out the essence of the festival visually. The pictures have not been staged and any interference with the usual routine of the festival has been kept to the minimum while still following a visual language. This helped in keeping the aesthetic appeal and reduce any artificiality.

3 Methodology

The project is to bring out the essence of the *Jonbeel Mela* through photographs presented in a sequence in the form of a photobook. While several photographers, literature and documentaries have been reviewed in order to get to a suitable photographic style, it was also essential to visit the location before the festival to have a visual representation of the place in mind. A visit was also made to a village where the *Tiwa* community resides in order to understand their history, evolution and present way of life. This helped in making conscious decisions about composition and other aspects within the visual language while being present on site and capturing the festival, to best represent the festival and be able to bring out its true essence.

3.1 Field Work & Research

In order to get a better understanding of the *Tiwa* tribe and the *Jonbeel Mela*, it was helpful to be in touch with Mr. Jursing Bordoloi, who helped with certain in-depth understanding about the tradition of the community and also the *mela*. A visit was also made to *Daborghat* village where the way the *Tiwa* families lived and how things have changed over time could be experienced; their houses have changed from the traditional mud houses to modern concrete ones.



Figure 25. Traditional Tiwa house



Figure 26. Tiwa woman preparing the local rice beer



Figure 27. Women performing traditional weaving



Figure 28. An old Tiwa man narrating folk tales from early days

3.2 Photography On Site

It was essential visiting the location of the fair a day before it began to do a quick survey of the area in order to be prepared and have a mental visualization of the area and be aware of what to expect. The Hill tribes started arriving since day zero and setting up their sheds. A small lodge, few kilometers away from the location, was used to sleep for the nights while early morning till night was spent exploring and capturing moments from the fair. While on site, proper conduct had been maintained and moments were captured as they occurred and not be specifically planned or staged. It has definitely been a great experience to witness a gathering of this sort and capturing moments from it.



Figure 29. Early morning scene in the fair



Figure 30. Capturing the community fishing

3.3 Book Design

Multiple photobooks have been referred to in order to better understand the different styles and layouts used by other artists to suit their theme. Following are a few of the questions that were focused upon before designing the photobook:

- What is the format?
- What is the intended look of the book?
- What type of page layouts are to be used?
- How are the images grouped/sequenced?
- What design/layout element should be used?

- Do the design and layout enhance the viewing experience?

Planning a photobook starts with determining the theme, which was more of a documentary style with a focus on aesthetics. All pictures were captured in RAW format in order to have good resolution and details in the images which would help in post processing of the images. The different steps followed while designing the photobook are discussed below.

3.3.1 Image Sorting

Initially, there were approximately a set of thousand images from the fair. In the first round, the technically faulty and similar images were eliminated which got down the numbers to around eight hundred images. For the next round, images were sorted based primarily on their composition, aesthetics and visual appeal. After this step, four by six inches prints were made for physically sorting the remaining images. The images were laid out and segregated based on categories and further sorted within the categories.



Figure 31. Laying out for sorting

3.3.2 Image Sequencing

Sequencing plays an important role which contributes to the viewer's ability to comprehend what they see. Simply scattering photos onto the pages will cause viewers to flip through the pages and speed through the book. The images can be sequenced in a number of ways such as chronologically, thematically, geographically, etc. For this project, a thematic approach has been taken into consideration for sequencing the images which is well suited to aesthetic or documentary purpose. It starts with the arrival and journey of the people followed by the different activities and ways of living during the three-day period of the fair.

The first image of the photobook, often called the "lead image", should grab the viewer's attention and lead them into the book. An expressive image has been used for this purpose, to guide the viewer's eyes further into the book. The final image ends the journey through the photobook while making a statement. The picture may also guide viewers back in toward the book, thereby completing the circle and making it more harmonious and well-executed from a conceptual standpoint.



Figure 34. Image sequencing

3.3.3 Layout

The way the pictures in a book are laid out affects the viewer's movement of the eyes. The initial layout has been done in the physical form by paper cutting and pasting the photographs on them. The final stage of layouting has been done digitally using Adobe Indesign.

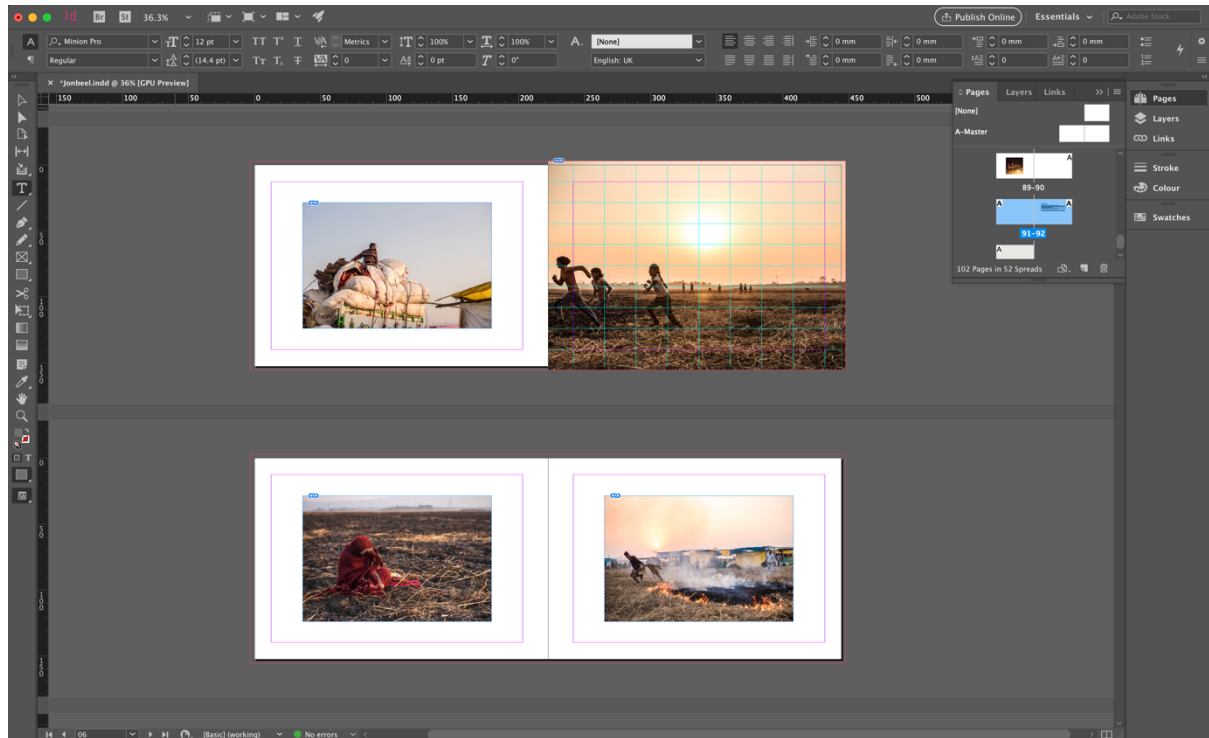


Figure 35. InDesign

The book maintains a handy size in order to carry and store it easily. It has a horizontal orientation to implement longer photographic perspectives. The photobook being more of a visual medium has minimal use of text. Text has been used only in the preface, briefly explaining the content and theme of the photobook, while maintaining a consistent layout and an easily readable sans serif font. No text has been used along with the pictures in order to let the focus be more on the aesthetic and flow of the images.

Different rhythms have been used within the book in order to reengage the viewer. Single page spreads have been used in places to enhance the flow and pace of the book, which might also let the viewer stop and focus on one image. Some images are within a square grid,

especially the portraits of people living in their own space, to bring a feeling of being within a compact space. For few double pages, about a 60-40 split of the image across the spread has been used following the golden ratio. These proportions provide a well-balanced guideline and also bring in a sense of harmony. A balance of empty space has also been maintained so as not to bore the viewer with too much of it nor overwhelm them by putting too much content on each page.



Figure 36. Layouting



Figure 38. Digital layouting

3.3.4 Printing

The photobook is given a handy size with a landscape orientation which people can easily carry along as a souvenir/collective. After experimenting with various kinds of papers, 170gsm matt paper for the body and 250gsm lustre paper for the cover was chosen.

Multiple test prints have been made to experiment with the various color profiles in order to achieve the accurate screen to print color matching. Several test prints were also required for the perfect alignment for both side printing.



Figure 39. Color Matching

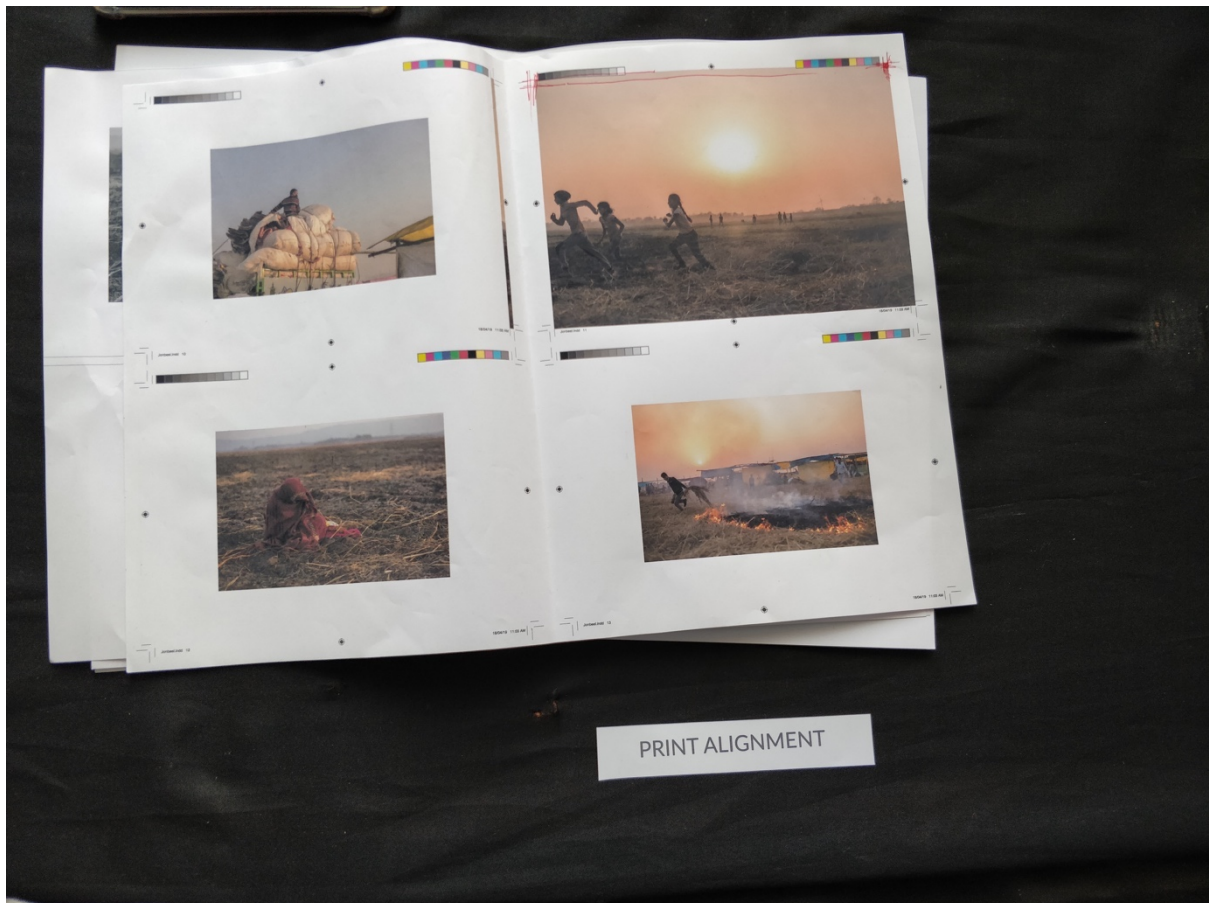


Figure 40. Print Alignment

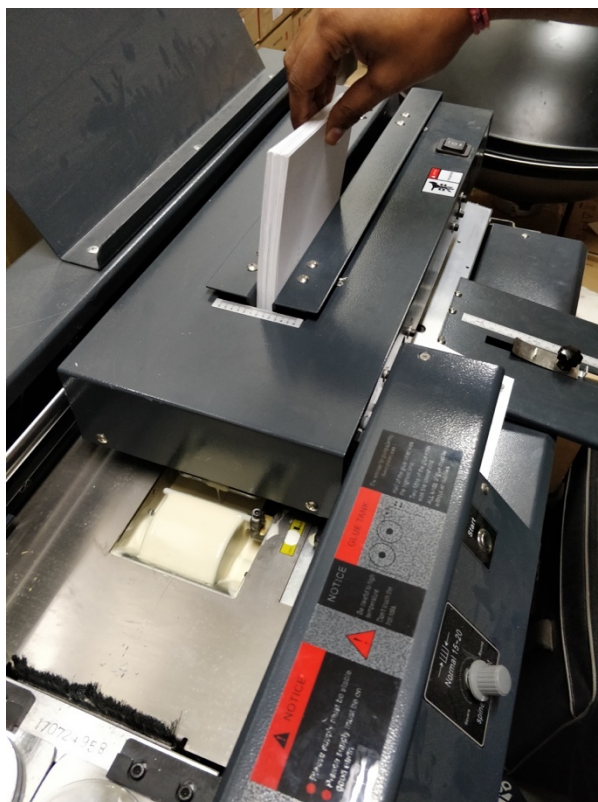


Figure 41. Binding

4 Learning & Experience

The whole experience of doing this project has been extremely fruitful from learning and unlearning things across various subject matters, developing skills, critical thinking abilities to understanding the way of life of the tribal communities and the importance of preserving their culture and traditions.

Visiting the villages, talking to the locals and experiencing their way of living has helped in understanding the history of the communities and realizing the minute and greater differences between traditions and cultures across different places. Understanding the history and importance of the *Jonbeel Mela* has further helped in the process of representing it in a visual form.

Reviewing various works of photographers, watching documentaries and reading other literature on them has helped in improving the utilization of visual language and in the development of a strong visual style.

The process of book design led to the exploration of various ways of layouting using grids. It helped in understanding the importance of sorting and sequencing the images and their impact on the viewers. Exploring with different papers also gave an exposure to the varieties of papers available, its different usages and how it affects the quality of printing.

5 Scope of Future Work

The *Tiwa* community in itself has a long history of cultures and traditions. It is necessary to preserve them. A thorough documentation of the community in various ways of representation is possible across a longer period of time with proper access and logistical help. While this project showcases moments from the *Jonbeel Mela*, a more in-depth documentation can be presented. The whole journey of the hill tribes to the plains and back can be an added part to it as well. The journey of the *Gobha* King and his role in the festival can also be represented along with it.

Acknowledgment

I thank Dr. Deepak John Mathew for his continuous support and his invaluable guidance, without which the accomplishment of the task would have never been possible.

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With love to my brother, Ritwik Sharma, and to my parents, Dhiraj Sarma and Piya Sarma, for their endless love and for always encouraging and inspiring me to be my best at what I am and what I do.

Contact Sheet of Images from the Photobook



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ISO 200



DSC_4069.jpg
f/4.5 1/1250
ISO 200



DSC_4082.jpg
f/4.5 1/3200
ISO 200



DSC_4043.jpg
f/4.5 1/1000
ISO 200



DSC_4100.jpg
f/3.2 1/800
ISO 200



DSC_4123.jpg
f/3.2 1/800
ISO 200



DSC_4139.jpg
f/5.0 1/1250
ISO 200



DSC_4141.jpg
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ISO 200



DSC_4151.jpg
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ISO 200



DSC_4159.jpg
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ISO 200



DSC_4174.jpg
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ISO 200



DSC_4180.jpg
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ISO 200



DSC_4213.jpg
f/4.5 1/2500
ISO 200



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ISO 200



DSC_4232.jpg
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ISO 200



DSC_4251.jpg
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ISO 200



DSC_4260.jpg
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ISO 200



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ISO 200



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ISO 200



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ISO 200



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ISO 200



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ISO 200



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ISO 200



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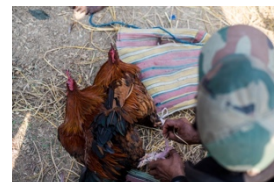
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DSC_4792.jpg
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ISO 200



DSC_4794.jpg
f/4.5 1/2500
ISO 200

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