

RUMINATIONS FROM ROME

As Long as the Colosseum Stands . . .

by Neeman A Sobhan

To many, Rome is the Vatican and to some, Rome is the Colosseum. For me this last is quite true.

When I have been away from Rome, the first thing that makes me feel that I am back, is the reassuring sight of the Colosseum, unceremoniously parked right in the middle of the busy thoroughfare.

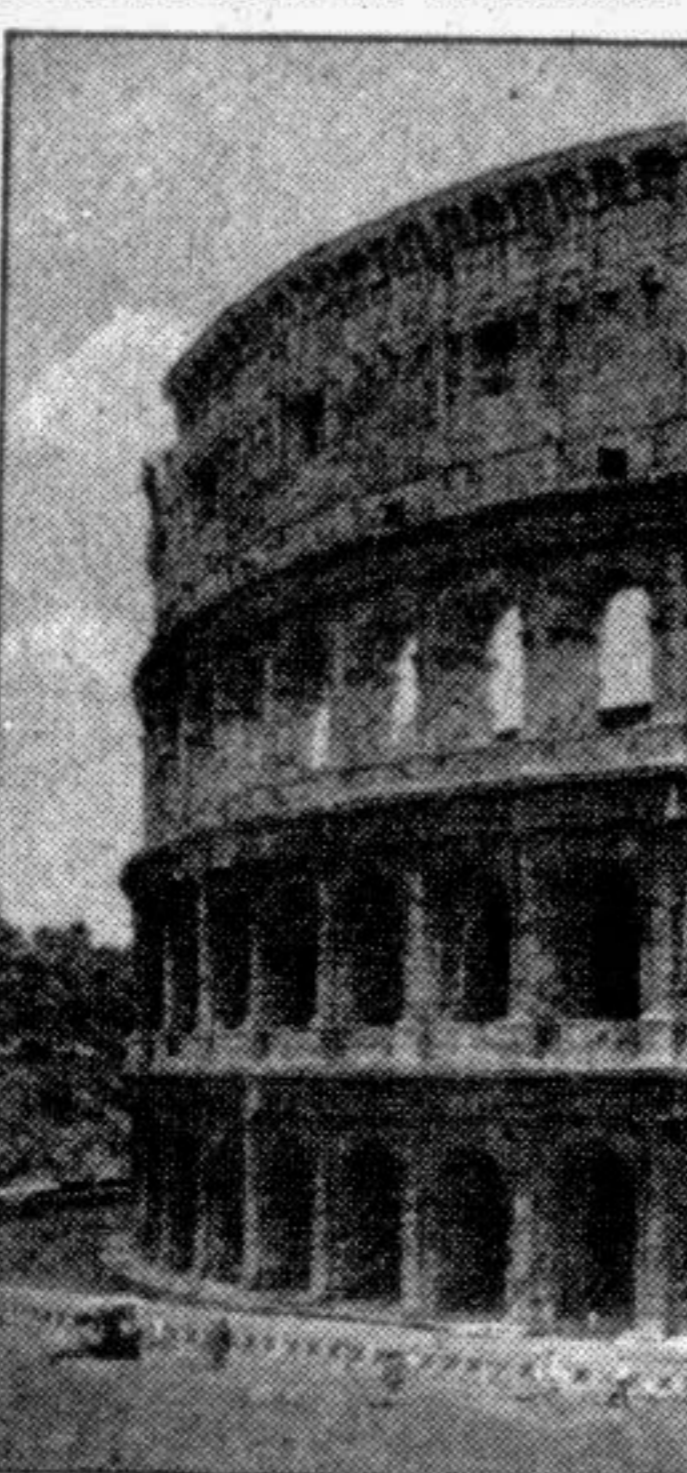
Having said that, I do find it ironic that this barbaric temple of butchery, this coiled python of a building, which has swallowed so many lives, and now sits contented in the Roman sunshine, should have become the symbol, even a touchstone, of the eternity of a great civilisation.

The conventional reaction to the Colosseum is normally two-fold. The initial one is of immediate awe and admiration of the size, magnificence and design of the structure.

ties of man against man while peace, like some Christian martyr of old is torn to pieces by forces as feral and senseless as wild lions.

The wise have always exhorted that one should never judge the morals of one age by the morals of another. So if, instead of imposing our values on the Romans, we take an objective stance and examine the psychology of what appears to be a barbaric people,

lack of moral responsibility or compassion for the tortured, the degraded, the oppressed, like our Roman counterparts.



from here one has a good view of the physical aspects of this great pile. We have touched upon the moral implications of the place, now let us spend some time on its general aspect and physical structure.

Although in its decrepit stage it has inspired much artistic enthusiasm, one can but speculate what we would have thought of it had it come down to us in its intact form.

of 527 metres and a substructure of corridors and cells. In the arena men fought with animals and with each other. The famous gladiatorial fights were only one kind of entertainment that was provided at the Colosseum, but they were the most popular.

would be something like this: The emperor, his entourage and other wealthy and prestigious people would take their seats in the reserved area, closest to the arena.

handkerchiefs, the emperor turned his thumb upwards, and the life was spared. However, if they cried 'Iugula' or kill him, then the emperor turned his thumb down and the fighter would be killed.

ment and political manipulation. Seen like that, the Colosseum is a symbol of what men are reduced to when they exchange their political options and freedom for the gratification of their basic needs, for mere "bread and circuses".

The complete phrase of Bede was that as long as the Colosseum stands, Rome stands; when the Colosseum falls, Rome falls; and when Rome falls, the world falls.

FROM THE CORRIDOR OF MEMORY

Personality Profile

Tamizuddin Khan

by A K M Jalaluddin

T HE year was 1953; and Moulvi Tamizuddin Khan, President of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, was visiting his hometown: Faridpur. He was there in connection with a family marriage.

So we turned up in full strength. Tamizuddin Khan received all the guests personally. My father introduced me (his eldest child) to him and asked me (as was our family practice) to touch/kiss his feet ('Kadam Buzi' in Bengali) which I did.

Moulvi Sahib sensed the situation and told my father smilingly, "Mannan Sahib, your son is right." And turned to me and said, "I am a mere President of the Assembly. I have no power of my own to do anything. If the members choose to be inactive, I am to preside over their inactivity."

But the long chat did not take place. When I met him in 1960 — he was living in a modest house in Purana Palton and was in poor health.

He could, however, be very strong in matters of principle. It is now a matter of history how stubbornly he fought the legal battle against the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly (in the Sindh Chief Court, later the Pakistan Federal Court).

Both Moulvi Tamizuddin Khan and my father were surprised at the virulence of my language (which was actually a quote from Musafir — a master of political sarcasm). My father thought that I was discourteous and I saw his red eyes.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Life through the Eyes of Children

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

FOR ten year-old Falan, which means thrown away, life is hard enough as a 'tokai'; yet it does not stop him from noticing the suffering of people around him.

Shahidul Alam, Drik's Managing Director and the project's creator. With the help of the camera the children have been able to express their innermost thoughts in a creative yet very real way.

The Kids with Cameras project is part of a larger scheme of Drik's, to promote photographers and writers from the Third World and give them the opportunity to portray their people and culture through their own vision rather than through foreign eyes.



Getting in touch with nature — on the way to Sonargaon.

They certainly were and soon a group of children photographers were formed with a pinhole camera made from a milk can and a room with a tubewell in the children's school to serve as a makeshift dark room.

Although the project was to have ended after six weeks, the children's enthusiasm and seriousness about photography prompted Dr Alam to carry on with the project with the support of UNICEF and Arkelton Trust.

With very clear ideas of what they want to photograph, these children have put together photo essays that, says

Alam, convey very powerful messages. Rabeya, 12, for example, would like to take pictures of children crushing bricks, 'tokais' who work in the street, malnutrition of children and the hard work of women.

There are also happy events they would like to capture in their camera lenses: children playing in the rain, flower gardens, a baby taking a bath and 'tall, tall boys who go to college.'

Alam hopes to spread this awareness not only in Bangladesh but to other countries as well. An exhibition of the children's photographs is being arranged by Drik to expose their work to the general public.

empowerment process, the project has been a 'tremendously educating and revealing experience'. It was not just about taking photos but also dealing with complex problems, the amount of freedom they have, my relationship with them and their families.

The Kids with Cameras project is an attempt to recognize the fact that children need more than just food, clothing and shelter; they need self-respect and the ability to have some control over their lives.



Dr Shahidul Alam with his young photographers — enjoying the Durga Puja festivities in Sonargaon.

Away from the city's chaos — tranquil countryside.

Kamalapur Railway Station — architecturally exciting.

All photos: Courtesy — DRIK

— Self-timer photo

— Picture taken by Mollit

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