

TEENS and TWENTIES

Heaven or Hell? A Dhaka University Hall

by Fyyaz Shahnoor

If you have a habitual inclination towards playing cards or hanging out till 4:00 O'clock in the morning, if you have an ardent belief that being woken up at midnight and being asked by friends if you would like to have a cup of tea is the most natural thing in the world, if drinking 'dal' seems God send to you and if waiting in line for almost eternity to go to the bathroom until you almost burst in anticipation and anxiety; is your way to start a morning. Then most definitely a Dhaka University hall is the place for you.

Some say a University hall is actually hell disguised as heaven, some believe the opposite is true. But whichever way you look at it undoubtedly living in a hall is an unique experience.

Rumour abounds that the worst experience a boy may have in the hall is in the dining room. As in most cases this particular rumour is unfortunately true. It is here that the mind and the body of a person come into direct conflict. Whereas the mind knowing as most learned people do that a staple diet is mandatory for improved performance of the body (especially the abdominal area) consciously foreseeing what it is about to receive in these dining halls, the mind stridently disagrees.

The wafer thin pieces of fish cut with the expert precision of a maestro will make even the most efficient surgeon blush in shame. The humiliation and degradation that the silent blobs of meat must feel swimming about in an unknown toxic substance would have been enough to bring about resounding protests from Green Peace.

And the 'dal', the less said about it the better. The rooms of a hall are mini metropolises. It is a place where stray animals from all walks of life graze in quite desolation; among the jumble of books, clothes and

when at one corner of the room his friends are making casual observations about the alluring yet socially relevant subject of girls with religious ardor while at another corner his room partner has just become a fanatic mem-

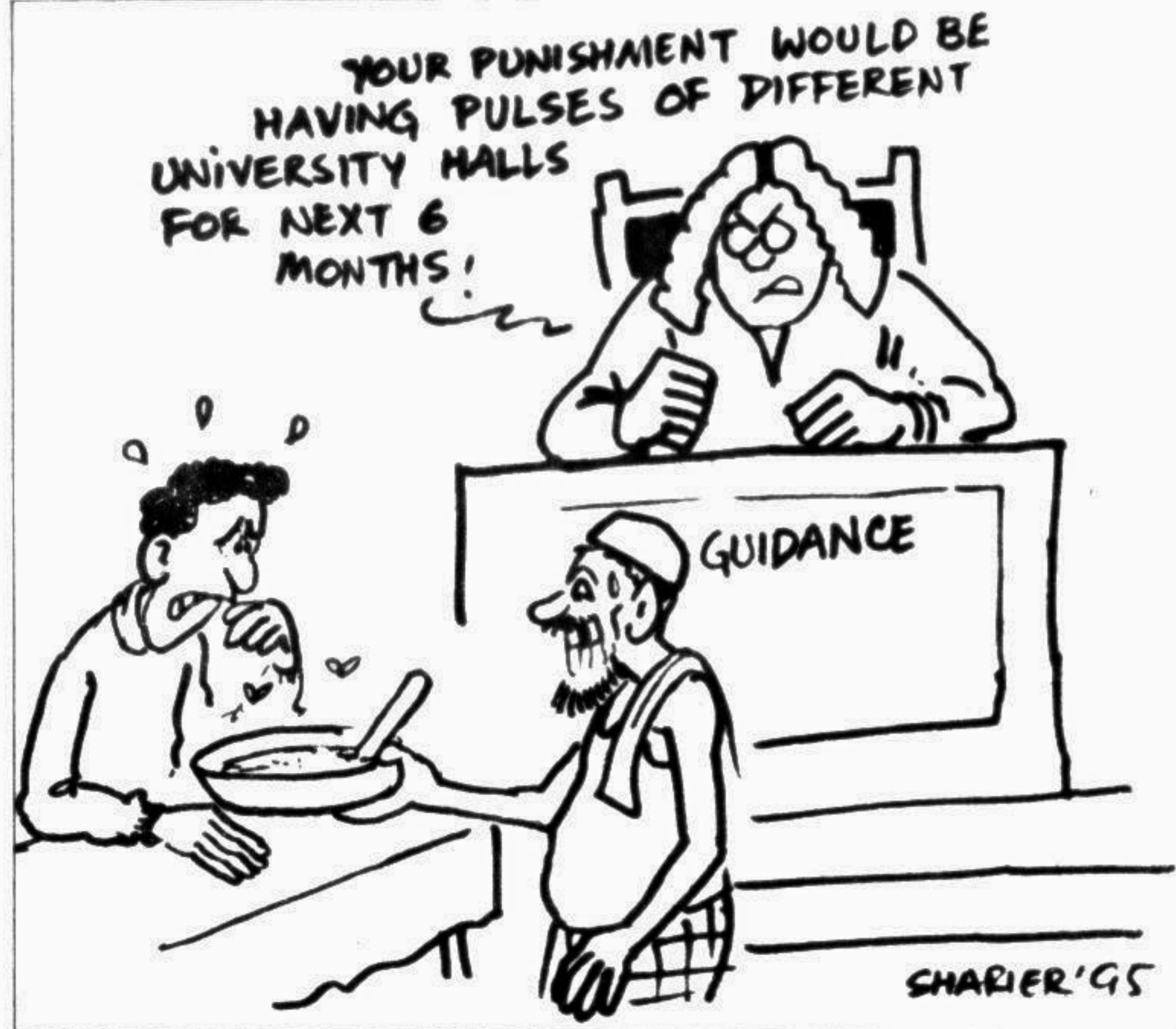
mad dash to catch an important class. Rumour has it that a student had lost his mother once in his room only to discover her two years later. In the mean time his youthful father had re-married. Another crucial aspect of

The creatures living in a hall can be divided into three main categories: the Flirt, the Alert and the Dirt. As the name suggests the Flirt's sole ambition in life is to be the center of attention among the opposition sex. In spring his thoughts turn to love as it does in all the other months of the year. He is stuck with the notion that women find him irresistible. Unfortunately, however, girls find him as much attractive as President Bush would find Saddam Hussain.

The Alert on the other hand is a different species altogether. He is the socially conscious male who believes a certificate marked 1st class will solve all global problems, endear him to mankind and in the process land him with a good job and fat salary to squander. He studies meticulously and follows teachers around with an intense regularity. He is the type of person who is more appropriate in the role of a son-in-law than a friend.

The Dirt are rugged individualists who like to push around other individuals smaller than them. They have a fond inclination towards slapping dining-hall boys around and wetting their pants when confronted with a larger individual standing in a threatening posture. These persons tend to make awful room-mates because usually they make gurgling sounds in their sleep and mumble 'mama' ever so often.

However even after these negative reflections of hall life I would like to say that it is a once-in-a-lifetime-everyone-should-have-roller-coaster experience. My advice? join the party, enter into the unknown, come live in a hall.



bits and pieces of furniture. Originally theorists may have had the idea that it is here in a quite and peaceful atmosphere that students would forcefully pursue their studies in a bid to enrich their minds. As always the theorists were wrong. One may find concentrating on studies a bit difficult

ber of the guitar culture and is practicing away with a devil-may-care attitude. A room is often referred to as a jungle, you never know what's around the corner. If you thought trying to find a needle in a haystack was difficult, try finding a pair of socks when you have only five minutes to make a

the halls that need careful scrutinising it's bathrooms. But as this particular subject may ignite the fragile sentiments of my more genteel readers I have decided not to go into the more gruesome details. Instead let us move on to a more sublime subject, the inhabitants of a hall.

A Step Behind! Ju's Archaeology Department

by Siraj-us-Saleheen Lovell

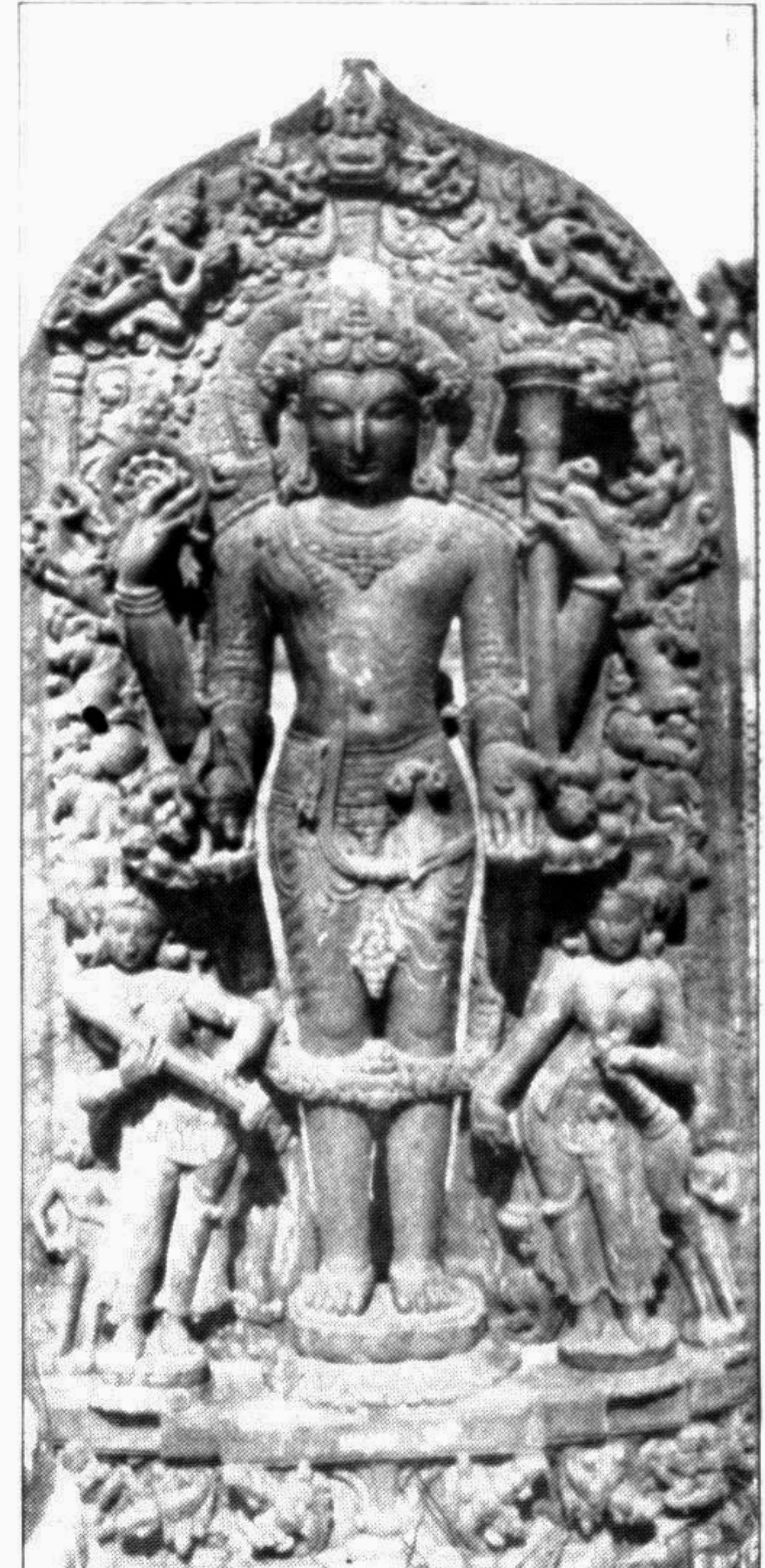
FROM ultra modern technology to medieval dominions, I'll bet anything that each of you out there have had at least the slightest notion of experiencing, bodily, the time when kings and queens ruled the world.

Normally, it would seem impossible without the aid of some type of time-machine. But the question is, where will you get such a thing? Have no fear, cause not so far away, is the Department of Archaeology of the Jahangirnagar University, which provides the knowledge and experience to help one to be as close as to the real experience of being at those good old days. Now let's see what this Archaeology Department is all about.

Mainly, in 1991, this department came into being. Before that, from 1984, the subject 'Archaeology' was just a course in the Masters Degree of the History Department. The 1991-92 session (the first session) of Archaeology started with only 12 students. Now it has flourished as a full fledged department with a total of 75 students (combining 1st year, new 2nd year, 2nd year and 3rd year). It has a total of six teachers, all of who have excellent higher degrees. Most of them are working on unique Archaeological projects.

Shortly — Dr A K M Shah-nawaz (Ph D from Yadabpur University); Study on Ancient Inscriptions and Coins; Dr Sayed Md Kamrul Ahsan (Puna University); Study on Geo-Archaeology (Site Formation Processes); Dr Md Mozammel Haque (Puna University); Study on Pre-History and Proto-History; Mr Shah Sufi Mostafizur Rahman (M A in JU) Going to complete Ph D degree on Ethno-Archaeology; Mr Ashit Baran Paul (M A in JU); Going to complete Ph D on Ancient Coins and Inscriptions; Dr Mostafizurrahman Khan; Completed his Ph D degree from Calcutta University.

With such a highly qualified teaching staff this department has caught the attention all around the educational perspective as the most up-growing amongst the newly opened subjects. Unlike other departments, Archaeology gives more attention to the practical type classes (field works) conducted as expeditions frequently, rather than theory classes. Students of all years conduct frequent study tours under the guidance of any teacher. During the three year long honours course, students are taught subjects on Archaeological basics, techniques and methods, history of Bengal as well as the world, Archaeological her-



A blackstone Vishnu of 10th century... I walk the corridors of time, an eternal traveller... Courtesy — Noazesh Ahmed and Naibuddin Ahmed

itage of Bangladesh, history of civilization, epigraphy and numismatics, medieval arts and even anthropology. In the M A students study a more advanced level of the subjects including Computers in Archaeology, Environmental Archaeology, Hindu and Buddhist Iconography and of course a thesis paper for the more meritorious ones.

The prospect of students passing out from archaeology is definitely superb. Because of its uniqueness and recentness, the students of archaeology have a huge opening to a great many jobs. For example, they may get jobs at the national as well as international museums, in various archaeological institutes, folk lore museums, the Barendra

Research Society, Asiatic Society, Parjatan (Tourism Department) and various jobs offered by the Cultural Ministry. But their main objective is to use the method of survey and excavation to approach in field to reconstruct past history.

So, what do you think? Wouldn't it be fascinating to be a student of such a marvelous dept. Why not try your luck? You need only 50% of your HSC marks obtained, and wallah! a chance in the Archaeology Department. Just think about it.

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The Beginning of Elvis

by Rasiul Hamid

In a survey, a Chinese was asked to name the most famous Westerner. The answer was Elvis, the greatest hero of rock 'n' roll. He is still the king of Rock 'n' Roll, and entertainment world's prime money-maker, Elvis ranks first among dead artists. He has sold millions of records — in fact, more than anyone in the history of recorded music.

In June 1992, when RCA boxed a set of his songs at about \$90 a shot, 500,000 were spoken for before they reached the stores. But why he is so popular still now? Why he still looms over our music and shapes our fantasies?

Because besides his songs, get-up and dance, he weaves stories that touch our deepest concerns or emotions — school, cars, young love. He did not invent Rock 'n' Roll. But he became its symbol and a super-star by bringing together white country music, black blues, gospel, pop and uninhibited values that were his alone.

Suddenly he was reshaping the contours of our lives, giving teen-age America an idol, a leader, a lifestyle. He appeared into the music world just like a comet.

Elvis Aaron Presley was born in the hard-scrabble farm country of north-eastern Mississippi in 1935, in a tiny farm house without electricity. His father took what blue-collar jobs he could find, often going long stretches without work.

The Presleys were Pentecostal Christians, and the church was one of the first places where Elvis heard music the tried to sing along when he was still too young to know the words, but he had no trouble carrying a tune. For his 12th birthday, Elvis' mother got him a \$12.95 guitar. He rarely let it out of his hands.

One summer day in 1953, no one really knows why, Elvis went to sun records, put \$4 on the counter and said he wanted to cut two sides. He was 18, wearing deep side burns and working in a local mechanic's shop.

When the office assistant, setting voice levels, asked what kind of singer he was, he replied, 'I sing all kinds.' She looked up, 'well, who do you sound like?'

'I don't sound like nobody,' he said. Before Elvis had finished the first side, the assistant was scurrying to make a tape for her boss, Sam Phillips, a man forever on the lookout for new talent.

Phillips almost missed Elvis Presley. Months passed before he called him, and Elvis had gotten a job driving a truck. But then, so the story goes, Phillips called, put the telephone down, looked up — and saw Elvis standing there, out of breath but ready to sing. He sang one dreamy ballad after another while Phillips, listening for the sound of a hit, kept shaking his head no. Frustrated, Elvis took it out on

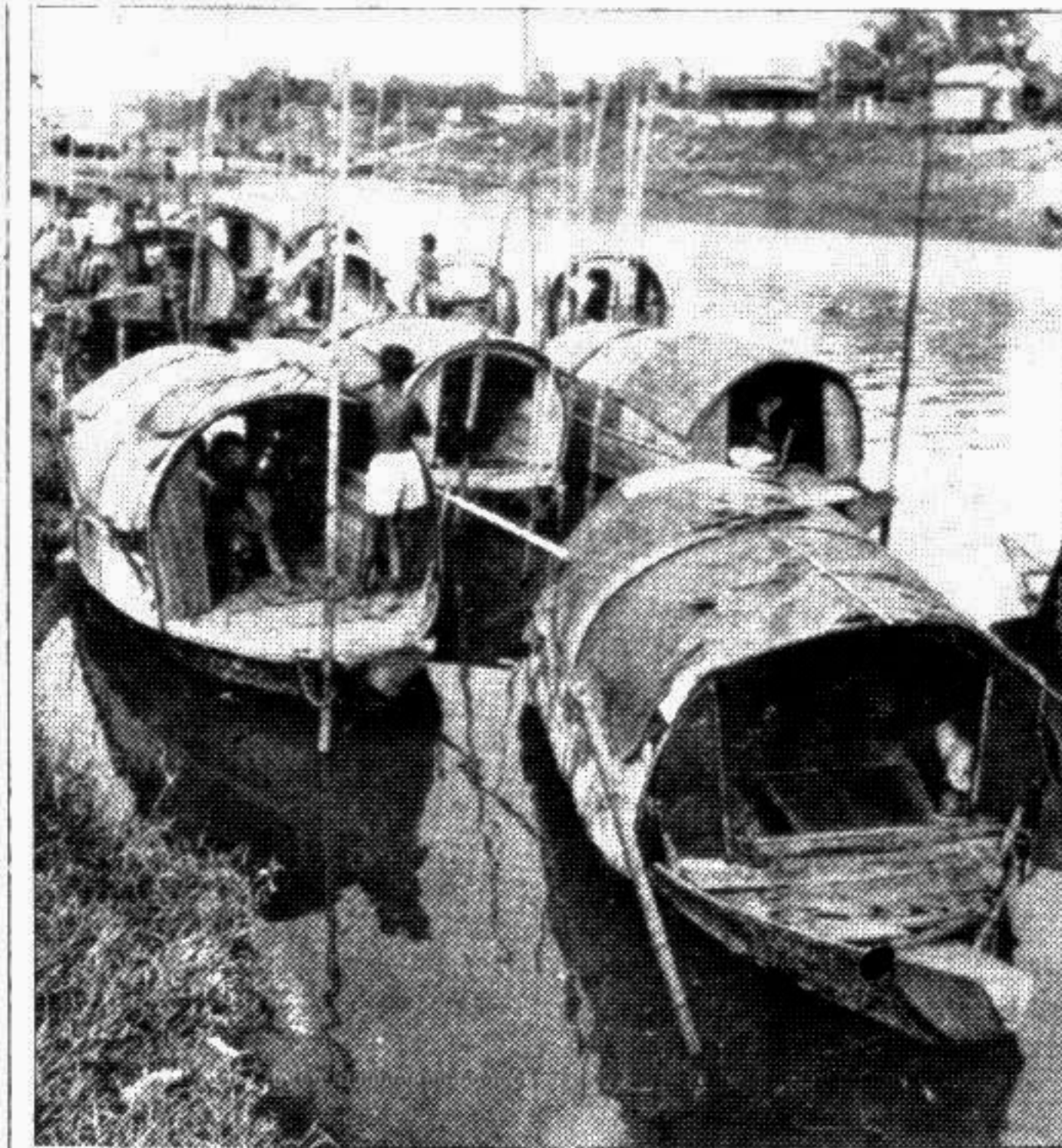
his guitar during a break in the corridor slamming it like a drum and yowling an express-train-fast version of a rhythm-and-blues number called 'That's all right.' Phillips came bolting out of the control room shouting, 'Yes!'

Phillips recorded the song and rushed it to a local radio station. The disc jockey got so many calls he played it 13 times in a row.

A week later, 'That's All Right' was in the stores, and by month's end it was fourth on the Memphis Country & Western chart and American popular music was never the same again.

Such was the beginning of this great music hero, whose 149 songs took place on the pop charts of Billboard, the industry bible, 18 went to No 1, for a total of 80 weeks.

Source: Reader's Digest.



... I shall come again with love to these rivers and fields, to this land of Bangla to its sorrowful green shores washed by waves of the Jalangi river. Courtesy — Noazesh Ahmed and Naibuddin Ahmed

Lets Be the Ones to Start It!

by Libra

IT is the silent killer which has been around for one of the longest periods of time. Never have we been able to find any remedies to overcome, or even actually fight this, yes, its the age-long dowry system.

Its the one system which has claimed the life of many young girls, destroyed so many families and reduced so many others to the streets. Lectures have been given and laws have been made and yet somehow, it still lingers around, as shrewd and harmful as ever.

But wait a minute what dowry system? In our present urban life, such a thing doesn't exist, or does it? Surveys and seminars do tell us how drastically the problem has been reduced among the literate households. Then, just what is the problem today? Our dowry system (I am referring in general to our present urban life), has been ABOLISHED, in the sense that its title has been abolished. No one asks for dowry anymore. All the bridegrooms side (Bor pokha) asks is for the girl to be 'decorated' according to the ability of her parents or guardians.

The definition of ability is something that should be revised in our language academy because 'Ability' to-

day means *tolas* of gold, piles of sarees, sofa sets, refrigerators, colour TV, stereo-system, cars and according to very recent fashion trends, a flat. This list is revised very regularly.

Where does a Man's pride go when he accepts dowry and where goes the bride's voice? So many couples run away from home and elope, for their parents wouldn't consent to their wedding, but how many did ever stand up in protest of dowry and resort to the Kazi's office?

After new laws were made, not very many people are warned about it anymore, or at least, they don't voice their opinions anymore. But like a silent prowler, the problem creeps along the alleys and roads alike, in the darkness, known yet unacknowledged by most — wrong, yet rightly (?) made use of, by most.

Some time ago, I went to visit a friend who was to be married very soon, wow! Her house was full of new furniture. I thought that they were redecorating her house for the wedding. Her father had died of cancer a year ago and

they had spent a miserable period. Their old sofa set (dating back to when she was in Class III/IV) was reduced to its wooden frame and I was pretty glad to see the new one.

And then she told me rather proudly, that all of these were for her wedding. She said that her mother had spent over a lakh on gifts alone (her husband — to — be was a doctor at one of our leading hospitals). I was thunderstruck! And this was my friend, accepting all these and gladly showing off to me?

I went to visit another friend who got married very recently. Surely her parents were better educated and so I could expect something better here. As I viewed through her wedding pictures, there were snaps of furniture being loaded on to carts. To my enquiry she replied that these were what her father had given, and yes she flipped over the pages to show me that he had also given her a refrigerator, TV etc. Of course, why shouldn't he, if he can afford it? But then, we are not supposed to 'hijack' money from a person just because he has a lot of it? However, what I am thinking of is, how can any girl agree to live with such a man

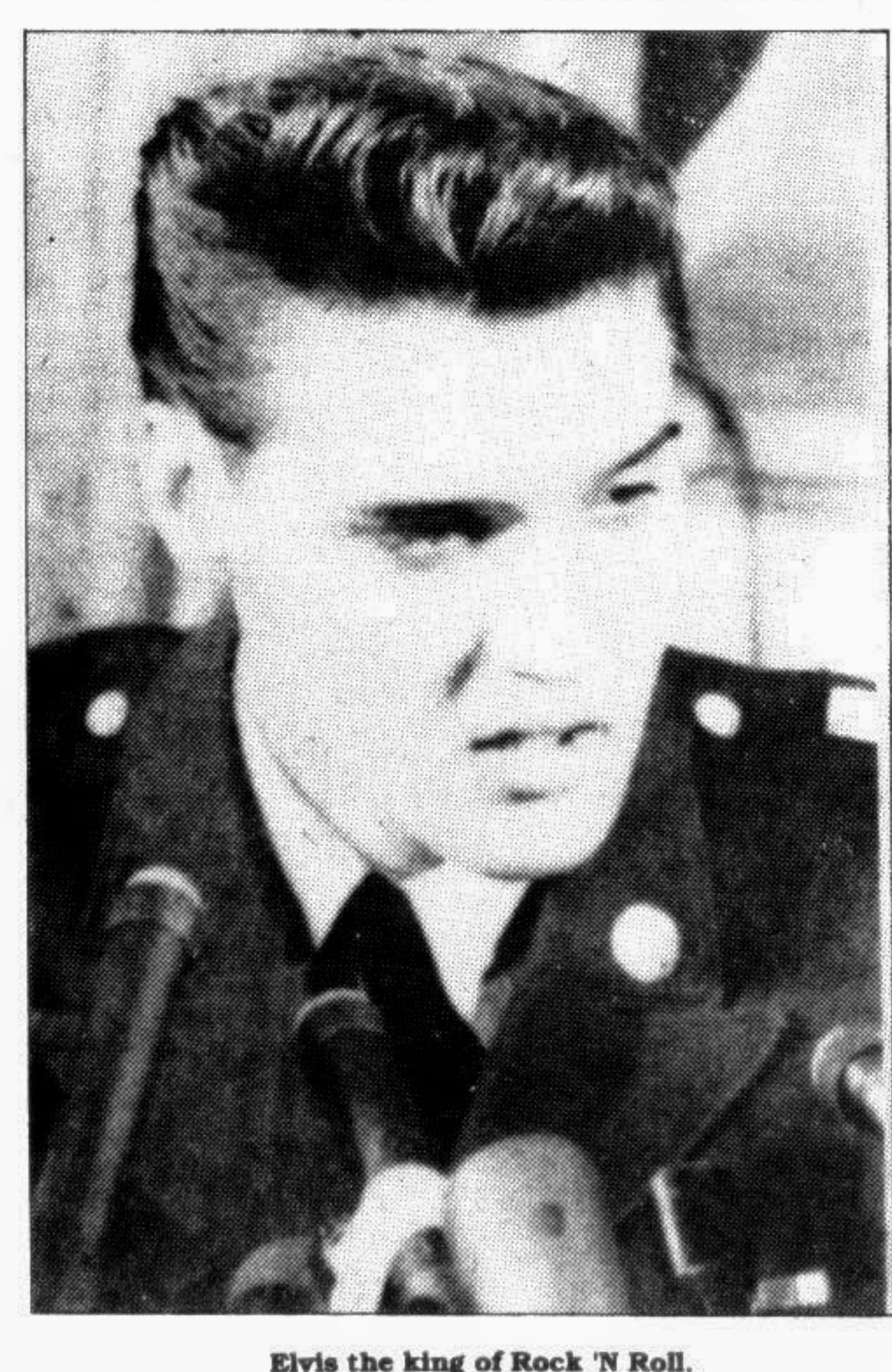
who can ACCEPT such so-called 'Gifts' from the father in law. Every self respecting person would stand up against it. But they don't, in reality.

Being dutiful daughters, they accept it as part of nature itself. Fathers somehow manage these Presents/Gifts for their daughter's wedding because they want their daughters to be happy in their in-laws house. A Groom's father accepts these because..... well even

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eryone takes them, don't they? 'Its tradition', they say — tradition indeed whose tradition? By the way, if I may ask?

I know this topic does not have a real solution, or conclusion. Its been around for ages and perhaps will be around for ages more. What everyone wants is global solution. But may I adapt J F Kennedy's famous line and say, 'Ask not what everyone else will do? Ask what you yourself can do!' The well to do families,



Elvis the king of Rock 'N' Roll.