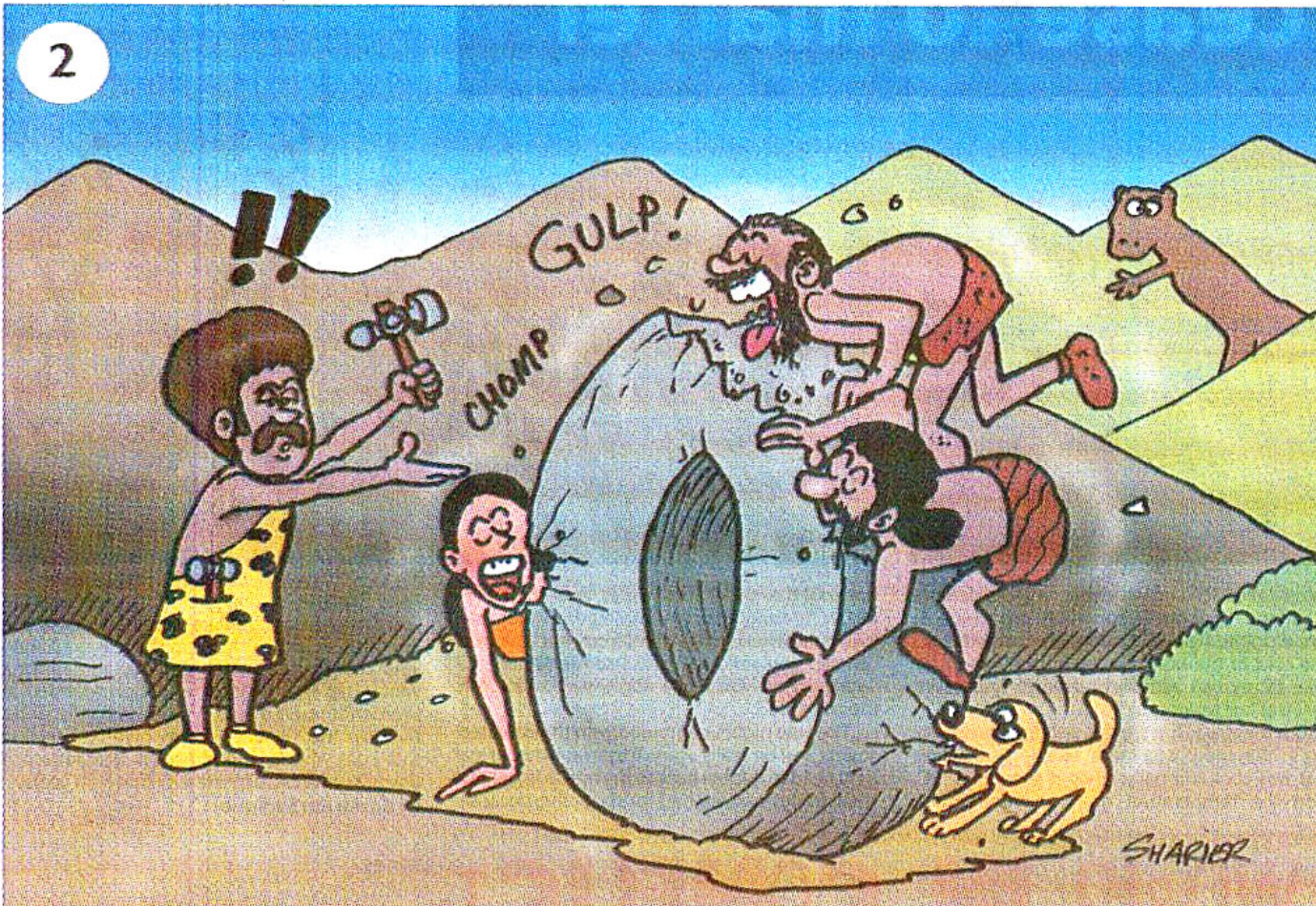
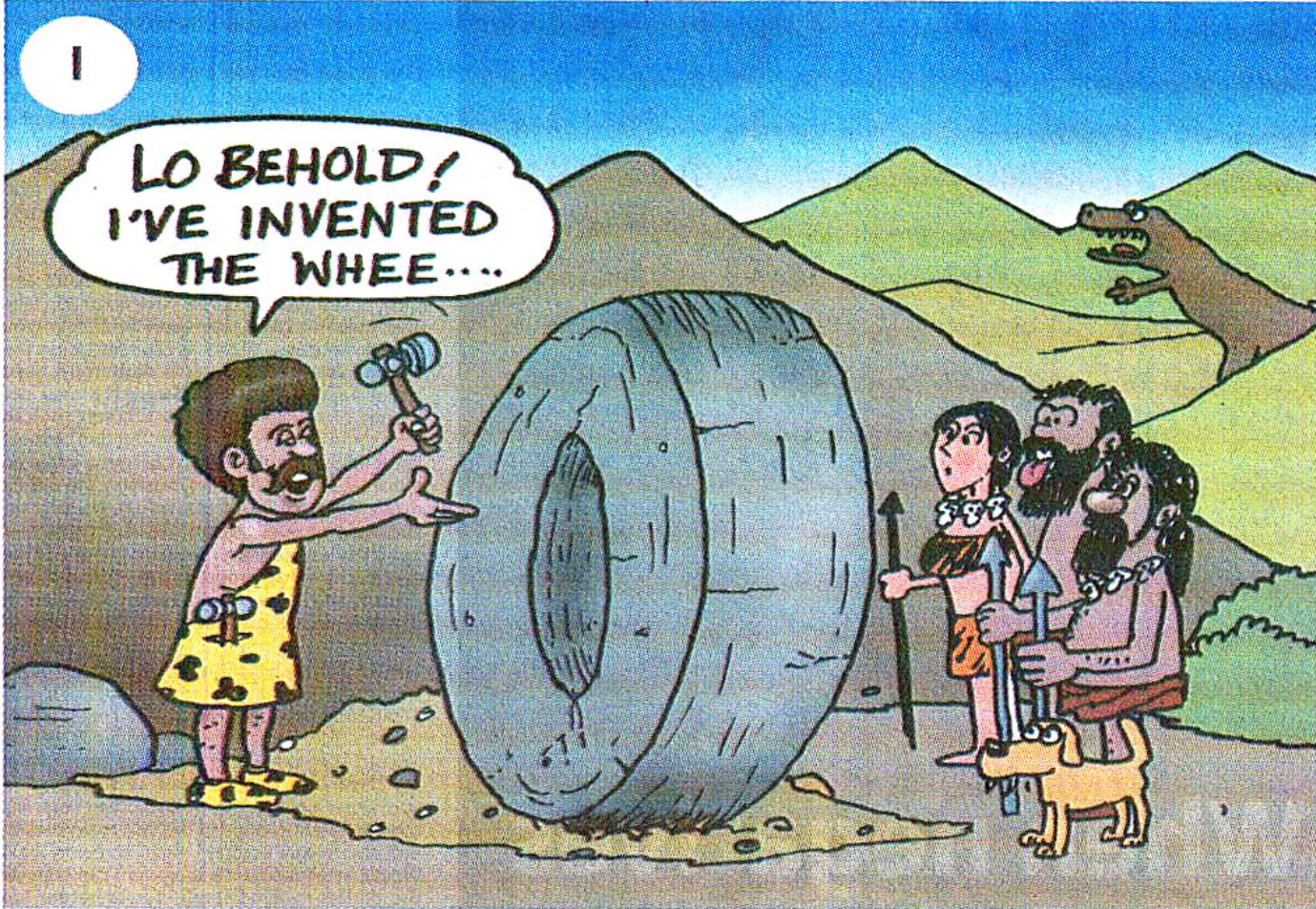


The inventor

Sharier



Matter of public interest

THEY were walking down the street, father and daughter. He, a big burly man, sour face, scraggly beard, and she in her paisley frock and pigtails. She was two paces behind him, being unceremoniously dragged by the hand across the gravel. Her face was scrunched up. It would be that she was squinting in the glare of the sun. Or it could be that she was crying.

By the looks of it, it was definitely the latter.

The father kept marching ahead. It was mid-morning, around ten o'clock. The street was lined on either side by cars. There were university students scurrying by, hawkers peddling their ware to harried pedestrians. The regular alms-seekers were lounging on the pavement, waiting for the traffic signal to turn red. Cars swept by, bored faces looking out the window. In this crowd, on this typical city morning, that father and daughter pair seemed very unremarkable.

They joined the handful of people heading towards the foot over-bridge. The father jerked his daughter roughly across the pavement. The daughter stumbled and fell, and skinned her knee.

Now she started crying for real. Wailing at the top of her lungs, as kids do. Her father stopped and bent over her. I thought he was going to pick her up, maybe carry her home, but what he did left me flabbergasted.

He took his daughter's face in one hand, and gave her a resounding smack with the other. Right across the face.

The daughter blinked stupidly in the



sunlight. Even she was too stunned to cry.

The father wouldn't stop. He kept hitting her and hitting her, across her face, on her back, raining blows on her fragile torso. His daughter started shrieking, her high pitched whinny cutting through the smoggy city air like a knife. She was writhing, too, rolling his way and that on the ground, her pretty paisley frock gathering dust. But try as she might, her father had her in his vice-like grip, and he wasn't letting her go.

The people trampling up and down the over-bridge stopped in their tracks to look. They stared blatantly. Some pointed. A woman on the pavement nudged the boy next to her and said, 'Look at that. Silly girl making a scene.'

The traffic on the road was slowing down, too. Farther off, the traffic sergeant glanced over his shoulder to see what the commotion was about. Then he shrugged, and turned away.

Soon the little girl's skin was covered in angry red patches. Her hair had come undone from the pigtails. Her frock was a mess. Her voice tapered off, the screaming and the shrieking trailing away. Now she had her face buried in her hands, to protect it from the blows. She might have even stopped crying.

A few minutes later the father finally let up. He wiped the perspiration from his forehead (he was red-faced, too, but for entirely different reasons), yanked his daughter to her feet and said, 'That will teach you not to waste my time.'

And once more, like nothing had happened, he took her hand in his and proceeded to walk up the over-bridge.

The bystanders started to scatter. Some people stared at the retreating backs of the duo. Most bore disgusted expressions.

Not because the father was a cruel, insensitive jerk. Oh, no.

But because the daughter had wasted his time.

'Girls nowadays,' the Nudge Lady muttered to her companion, 'When will they ever learn to behave?'

By Shehtaz Huq

BOHEMIAN APOLLO

BY SADAT

