

# THIRD EYE

AMITY SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION, LUCKNOW

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*Lucknow's tonga*

## WHEELS OF MISFORTUNE

# WHEELS OF MISFORTUNE

*for Lucknow's tongawallahs*

**B**ack in the days when the roaring sound of motor engine didn't take over the roads, it was the melodious sound of anklet bells tied to the wheels of the horse carriage that indicated someone is travelling. Earlier, due to absence of fuel driven vehicles, horse pulled carts were widely used in India for many centuries.

Ikka, Tonga, Bagghi and Khadh-khadha are all different forms of horse-drawn carriage, which were popular mode for transporting humans and goods in the Indian subcontinent. The difference between these is very interesting. Like today not all four-wheelers are considered the same, horse-drawn carriages also had very distinctive differences. Ikka is one or two-seater horse driven cart whereas Tonga is a multi-seater. Since nawabi era and colonial times, both these rides were widely used to commute. Ikka still had some privacy while tongawas a shared ride. Bagghi, a four-wheeled horse driven cart with spacious and comfortable seating arrangement along with good leg spacing was considered a royal and luxurious ride. During the era of Nawabs, Bagghi was used to transport anyone from the royal family or even the ruler. Khadh-khadha was used to transport luggage or material.

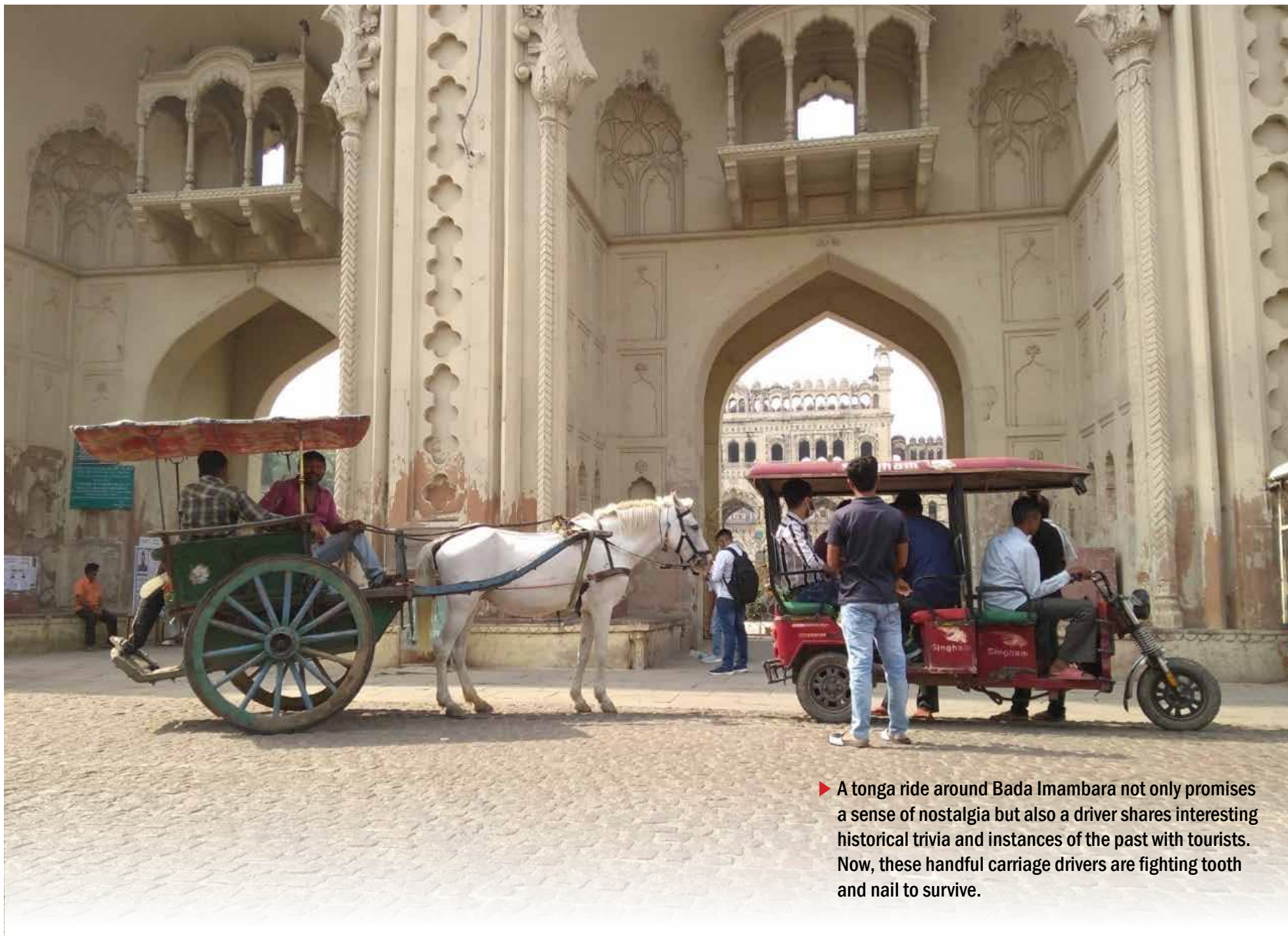
In Lucknow, one could still see these vehicles. Ikka and Tonga can be easily spotted near Bada Imambara and Charbagh. Bagghi is a popular choice in marriages. Khadh-khadha is widely used for transporting goods, construction materials and raw materials as it is cheaper than fuel driven vehicles. With the passage of time, this traditional transportation industry has been left in a fix.





## Unsaid war between horse-carriage and modern vehicles

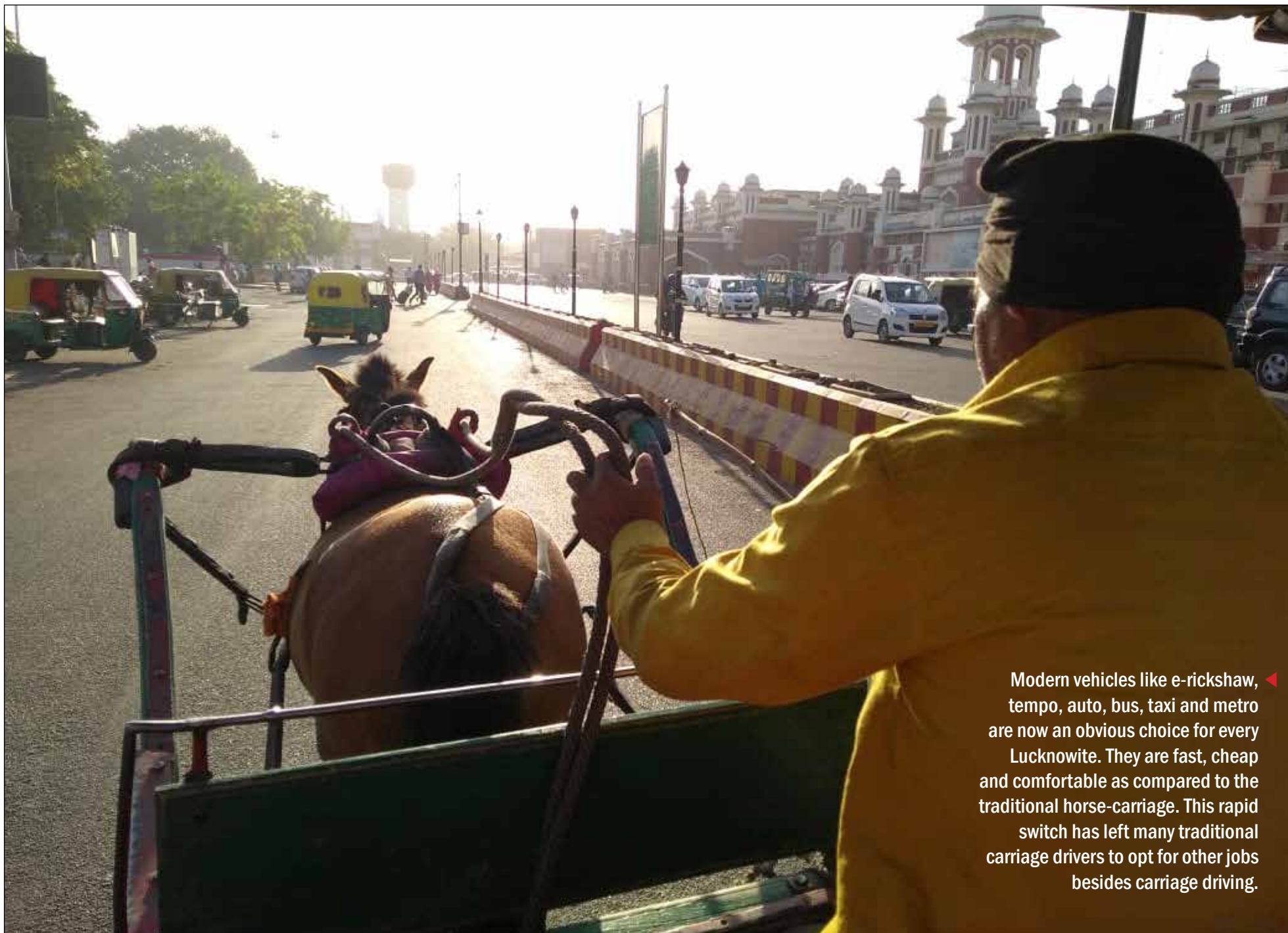
In the 1960s, Lucknow was home to more than hundred horse-carriage drivers. One could spot this ride anywhere in town. The old-school charm of this ride is now only seen as a tourist attraction.



- A tonga ride around Bada Imambara not only promises a sense of nostalgia but also a driver shares interesting historical trivia and instances of the past with tourists. Now, these handful carriage drivers are fighting tooth and nail to survive.



► Earlier, people from around the city opted for tonga and Ikka, which made this a stable profession. But now, the main source of income are tourists and it is not enough to meet the expenses of tonga drivers year round.



Modern vehicles like e-rickshaw, tempo, auto, bus, taxi and metro are now an obvious choice for every Lucknowite. They are fast, cheap and comfortable as compared to the traditional horse-carriage. This rapid switch has left many traditional carriage drivers to opt for other jobs besides carriage driving.

# Real stories, real struggles of tongawallahs of Lucknow



## ► JAMALUDDIN, AGE 59

He hails from a family of tongawallahs. At a very young age Jamaluddin decided to take up horse-carriage driving as a profession. In the early days he had prestige and satisfaction. After spending forty-seven years in this profession, he now feels a dissatisfaction and an emptiness, which he never felt before.

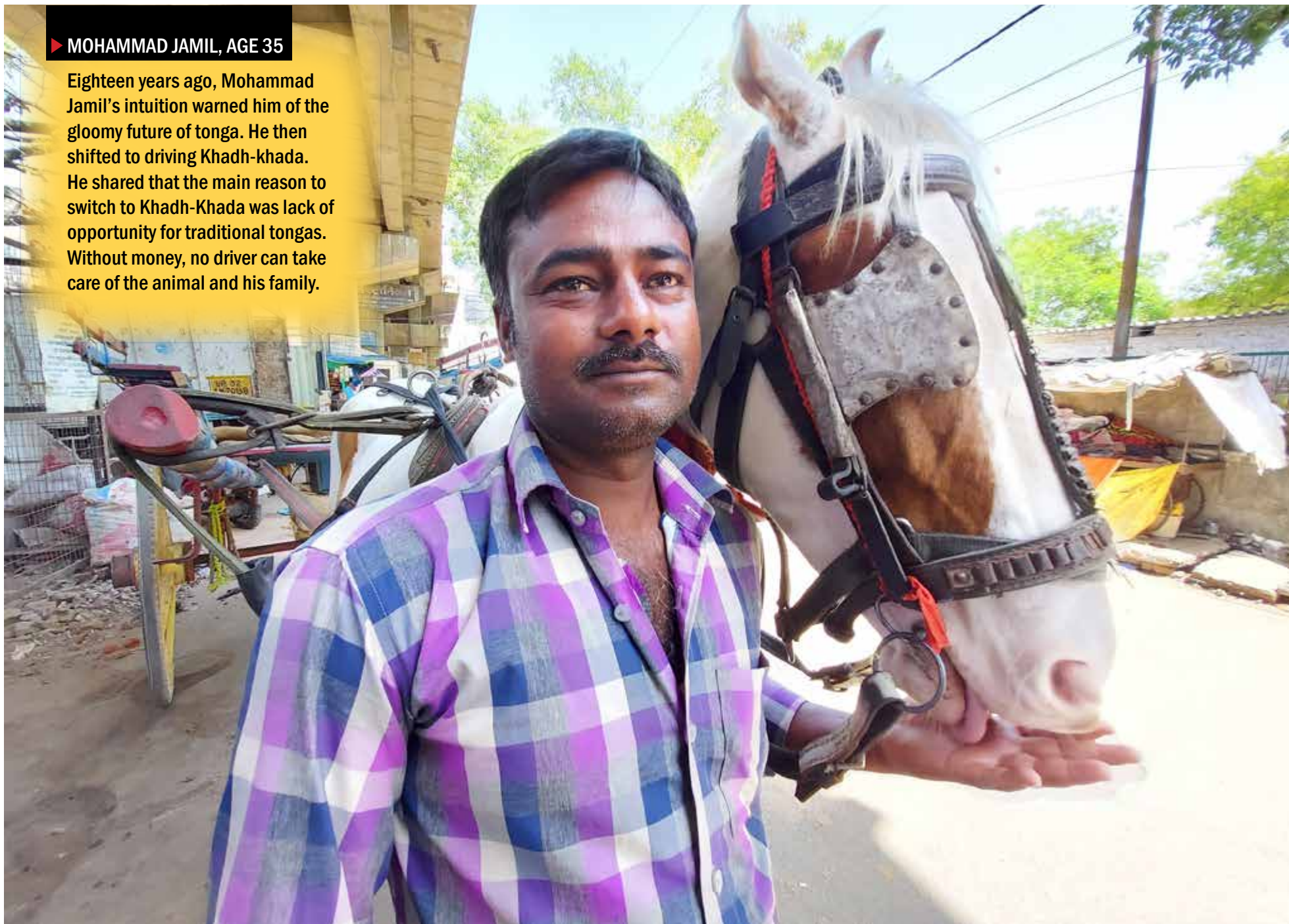
► **MOHAMMED SHAKEEL, AGE 62**

Everyday Shakeel takes his carriage to Bada Imambara with hopes of getting some tourists. Some days are good when four-five tourists opt for a ride in his carriage to heritage sites. Shakeel has devoted forty-five years of his life to this profession. Since the very beginning he has been doing this job. During summers he also sold ice to make some extra money. But, besides horse-carriage driving he knows nothing. His limited skillset has now become a major cause of concern.



► **MOHAMMAD JAMIL, AGE 35**

Eighteen years ago, Mohammad Jamil's intuition warned him of the gloomy future of tonga. He then shifted to driving Khadh-khada. He shared that the main reason to switch to Khadh-Khada was lack of opportunity for traditional tongas. Without money, no driver can take care of the animal and his family.





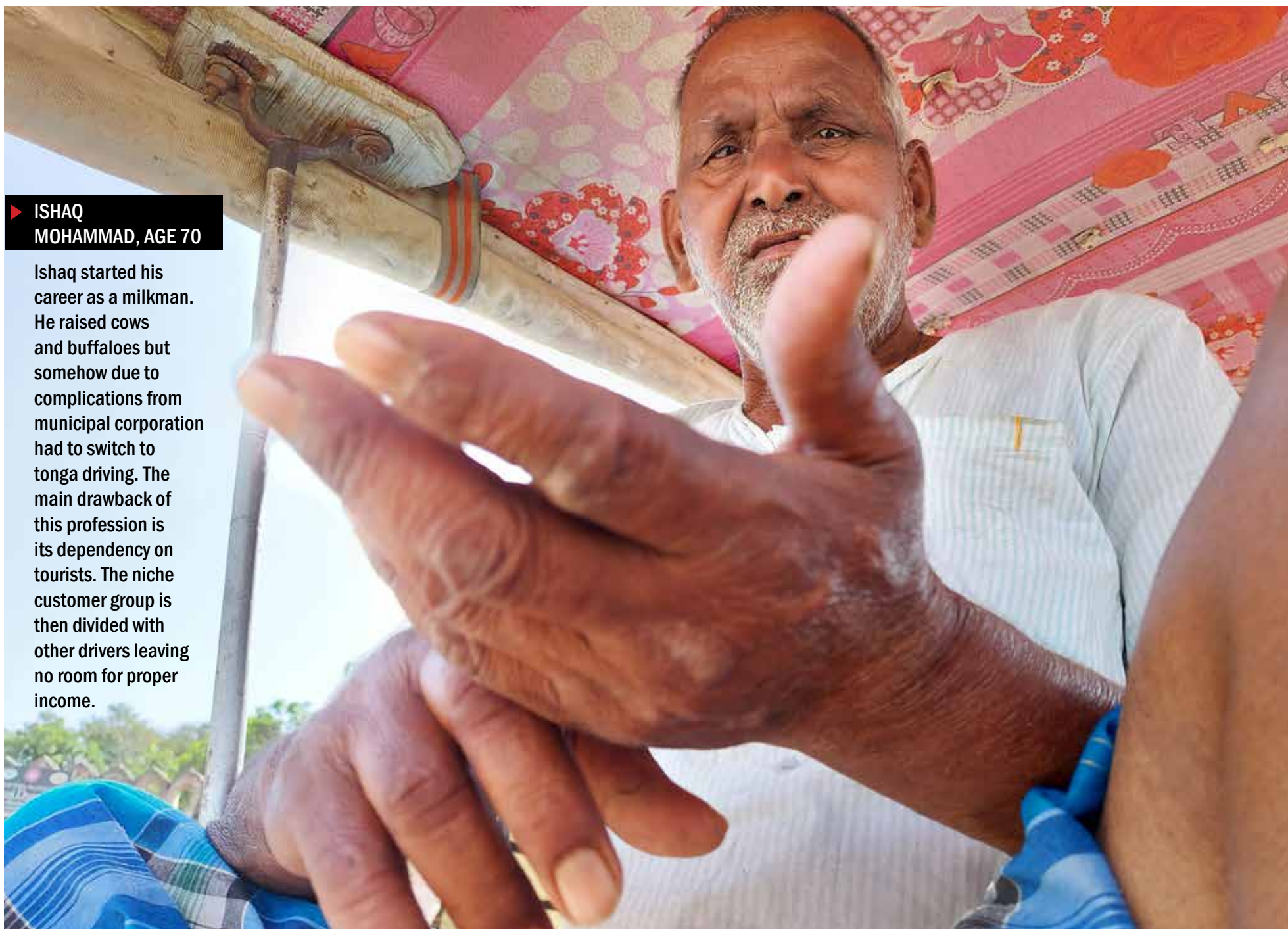
► ABDUL ALI, AGE 62

Unlike his fellow drivers, Abdul Ali only prefers rides from Charbagh Railway Station. At a very young age, Abdul decided to take the reins in his own hands. Taking on this family profession gave him satisfaction but now it is hard to make eke out a living driving a tonga. Abdul who has four children and a wife has to take care of their needs as well as of his mare 'Bahu Begum'.

► **IMRAN KHAN, AGE 18**

Imran started driving tonga at the age of 10 years. Giving his teen years to the profession, Imran now knows that the life ahead looks gloomy. To make ends meet is a day-to-day struggle. When he looks at the unfair competition tonga is facing with e-rickshaw, he feels that it is the government who is not making any sincere efforts to save this profession.





► **ISHAQ  
MOHAMMAD, AGE 70**

Ishaq started his career as a milkman. He raised cows and buffaloes but somehow due to complications from municipal corporation had to switch to tonga driving. The main drawback of this profession is its dependency on tourists. The niche customer group is then divided with other drivers leaving no room for proper income.

► RIYASAT ALI, AGE 67

Riyasat Ali has been in this profession for thirty-five years. He has seen highs and lows before, but now even he feels there is no income left in this profession. Now, Riyasat has started to give his mare for weddings to make ends meet. "After being in this profession for so long it is now impossible to learn something new and quit this one," says Riyasat.



## Horse-drawn carriage manufacturers are now almost out of work



**COVID-19 Lockdown: The  
last nail in the coffin for  
tongawallahs in Lucknow**



# A CENTRE FOR MEDIA STUDIES *initiative*

Amity School of Communication, Lucknow



**Prof (Dr) Sanjay M Johri**  
Director  
Amity School of Communication,  
Lucknow

The Centre for Media Studies (CMS) which is part of Centre of Excellence program with due approval of Hon C-6 promotes inter-disciplinary approaches to study, understand, bring about co-operation and provide consultancy service to the industry by regular research and assess the evolution, role, relevance and impact of media in India and around the world.

This centre of excellence not only takes up different projects related to research and consultancies but also keeps a vigilant eye on the impact, influence and functioning of the media and create documents within the institution involving students.

Some of the projects/consultancies undertaken by CMS are 'National TB Control Campaign' and came out with 'Photography Excursion and Video Documentation' sponsored by Mamta; Project on Road Safety, Quarterly data based graphical analysis document-Repertoire, Documentaries for Sparc India.

A Special Project was undertaken on MahaKumbh 2019 at Prayagraj( Allahabad) wherein we made a short Documentary and created content in the form a Booklet by covering different stories.

An MOU with Water Aids( UK Based Trust) and Amity School of Communication with former being the Knowl-

edge Partner is in the final stages of execution.

Two Short Term Research Projects are in the final stage of being executed including a field study being given to us from I-Next (Jagran Group) on the Consumer Behaviour of the Newspaper Readers, outcome of which will be published in the leading Hindi daily of India.

One of the striking features of CMS is that it involves students of master's & bachelor's Programs who are not only exposed to the basic foundations of mass media reasoning and thought but are also to the inter-disciplinary application of the Journalism and Mass Communication.

