

Calcutta

Contributed by Administrator
 Thursday, 17 September 2009
 Last Updated Thursday, 24 September 2009

People - working horses harness between the drawbars rickshaw. Based on their shoulders the burden of two-wheel vehicle plus the weight of a passenger or cargo. Run barefoot on the asphalt street - the closer the slower end of the day. And the rhythm of their feet stamped on the permanent fixture in the landscape of Calcutta. Although once again the city authorities are trying to change, and such human rickshaw ban.

He was the guru. Pitch-black, wiry. There is no way to guess if he had years. Numerous furrows, wrinkles, gray hair contrasting with exhaust fumes and dust and his face betrayed the street, how many survived. When I saw it the first time pulled rickshaw, on which sat a little boy dressed in uniform. Sure him home from school - a task which can not be entrusted to just anyone. Rickshaw driver was wearing a thin cotton undershirt and checkered Doti. It looked like the average inhabitant of Calcutta. However, his behavior something intrigued me. Attracted the eye. I went after him. Pulled rickshaw with his head raised, smoothly maneuvering shafts more than 50-pound vehicle. Every now and then shouted at him the way taxis and motorbikes. He took the boy home. But do not go to the stop at the corner of that moment and breathe like the others. Urging passers-by, went ahead in search of another customer streets, very striking when the bell of the drawbar only in the visual field was a potential passenger. Bell rickshaw driver ... Indispensable attribute and customers. Hallmarks and companion, which adds comfort. Rickshaw driver without a ring - it's not unthinkable. And no matter that his harsh tone, however, has little chance to break through the din car horns. Incantation is more than a warning. Rickshaw driver intrigued me. I caught up on this, walking the streets of the old part of Kolkata looking for his eyes. On the eve of departure from the city I realized that I could not go talk to him. It has become for me a symbol of Calcutta. Then as I read, the main reason for which the city authorities want to revoke licenses in all things lawful and overtake the streets of illegal. No matter that even during the monsoon, officials use these rickshaws, because only they can break through the flooded streets. Despite this, the authorities want to change the image of modern Calcutta. I also make longer be associated with poverty. I decided to find the rickshaw driver. And as is usual in such cases, it was not anywhere. Wandering around the area in the hope that sooner or later our paths to intersect. Finally, he gazed at the end of one of the streets. Fearing that in the last minute he was a passenger from a distance waving his hand to him. Come up to me with the air, which reveals that not quite know what I mean. Rickshaw driver intrigued me. I caught up on this, walking the streets of the old part of Kolkata looking for his eyes. On the eve of departure from the city I realized that I could not go talk to him. It has become for me a symbol of Calcutta. Then as I read, the main reason for which the city authorities want to revoke licenses in all things lawful and overtake the streets of illegal. No matter that even during the monsoon, officials use these rickshaws, because only they can break through the flooded streets. Despite this, the authorities want to change the image of modern Calcutta. I also make longer be associated with poverty. I decided to find the rickshaw driver. And as is usual in such cases, it was not anywhere. Wandering around the area in the hope that sooner or later our paths to intersect. Finally, he gazed at the end of one of the streets. Fearing that in the last minute he was a passenger from a distance waving his hand to him. Come up to me with the air, which reveals that not quite know what I mean. - You need a rikszo Madam? - Says the extremely broken English. Head and regretfully concluded that his English does not go beyond a few basic words. - How much per hour ride? - I asked, pointing a finger at the sky. - 50 rupi - said ii he and I we realized that it was too much. Of course, as the Indian conditions. Because in Poland who agreed to by pulling rickshaw for less than £ 5? Even so, this sum is in no way was adequate to earn invested in the effort. I had no conscience to bargain. - OK - I said, and he courteously pointed out to me a rickshaw seat and leaned drawbars of asphalt that was easier for me to enter. On the hard, red plastic-upholstered seat. He looked at me in his eyes I read the question - where?. Waved her hand, stumbling around what was supposed to mean - all the same. He nodded, smiling shyly. Just hand pointed at me - OK.? - He asked. I smiled, nodded and we went. Wooden wheels of concrete. The street was uneven, holes here and there, and because the rickshaw had no spring, after a while I began to wonder how I stand this hour ride. Immediately afterwards I felt stupid, so I thought. Because I was sitting here like some British you tired of jumping a rickshaw and my weight carries on his shoulders the man who does not even know when he ate ... Something was wrong here ... We passed very narrow street, where the cooks, one of them is claiming that its dishes. - Are you hungry? - I asked. He looked at me not quite understand what I mean. I repeated again, having a hand in the bowl and the other using a spoon and pretended to eat. I pointed head man preparing for a huge, hot plate noodles with vegetables. Nodded. We sat on a wooden bench. I ordered two dishes, and while I wondered if there with him along. India Wooden wheels of concrete. The street was uneven, holes here and there, and because the rickshaw had no spring, after a while I began to wonder how I stand this hour ride. Immediately afterwards I felt stupid, so I thought.

Because I was sitting here like some British you tired of jumping a rickshaw and my weight carries on his shoulders the man who does not even know when he ate ... Something was wrong here ... We passed very narrow street, where the cooks, one of them is claiming that its dishes. - Are you hungry? - I asked. He looked at me not quite understand what I mean. I repeated again, having a hand in the bowl and the other using a spoon and pretended to eat. I pointed head man preparing for a huge, hot plate noodles with vegetables. Nodded. We sat on a wooden bench. I ordered two dishes, and while I wondered if there with him along. I passed one more simple question - Are you from Calcutta? Did not understand. - He does not speak English. It is tea- unexpectedly came to help me type masala tee. - It's the beginning ask whether it is drank? - I laughed for an entrepreneurial kid. And I was ready to drink a liter of this - otherwise wonderful blend of spices, tea and milk, if only for one do not go fast. Thus, drinking tea from tiny earthenware cups started to talk. Rickshaw driver was 55 years old and came from Bengal. He was a farmer, but drought forced him to

leave his native village and to Calcutta. At the beginning wandered the streets. He was lucky because I found a job and a roof over your head, next to the Temple of Kali and adjacent Mother Teresa. As a rickshaw driver is already over 20 years, and yet he can not afford to bring his family here. He sends them money, and how he could earn more is going to visit them. The question how many children proudly replied that the three sons and two daughters. Until three sons! In India, a great fortune and blessing.

He says that I thank the gods that they are healthy and can work. And hopes that will not have to pull a rickshaw as he. We finished eating, and the boy got tired of tea seller, a translation because I began to wriggle impatiently on the bench. But at least now I knew the outline of the story. We drove on in silence. I got out around the corner. And at parting from him I bought a bell. Suspended yellow cord. I wanted to take a piece of history of home. And for the second time that day, salty and overpaid. The political and joy to me. Good times overpay.