

Radio is incomplete without listeners

Community radio Alfaz-e-Mewat listener, Islam, is a rapid-fire winner at recalling the names of programs aired on community radio. Islam, a resident of Mohammadbas, district Nuh, Haryana, listens and remembers almost all the program names and can talk at length about programs, from *Tohfa-e-Kudrat: Jal, Jungle, Zameen* (a program on agriculture) to *Tere Mere Mann Ki Baat* (listeners' feedback program), *Nazmein* (songs), or *Kisse Kahaani* (stories). A farmer by profession, Islam lives with his wife and adopted six-year-old son. He shares that he has witnessed many positive changes with the coming of radio, especially in improving agriculture in the region. One of the episodes of *Tohfa-e-Kudrat* talked about farming brinjals, and the expert was constantly emphasizing the importance of using good quality seeds for increasing the crop yield. "We took his advice and used the recommended brand of seeds, along with other agri practices shared. The results turned out to be quite satisfactory."

When asked about what sort of improvement he saw in his crop production, Islam said, "Earlier, we were able to harvest only about 200 bags (One bag carries about 30–32 kgs of brinjals) from one acre of our land. Now that has increased to 300 bags. The quality of our crop has improved remarkably. This has helped increase our income as the produce gets sold at a much higher rate than what it used to earlier and is often the first to get sold too."



Islam (center) tuning in to Alfaz-e-Mewat for his favorite program

"At the community level, information on topics such as water saving and using the right manure have helped a great deal. We have come to know of new concepts, including rainwater harvesting. Through the radio programs, I have also learned that plants are extremely important for human beings' own survival as they maintain the ecological balance. If we keep our fields leveled, the crop yield will be better. Alfaz-e-Mewat is an excellent medium to increase people's awareness about all these issues," added Islam.

Islam has many trees on his land that seemed only three or four years old. These trees tell the tales of change brought about by Alfaz-e-Mewat. When asked about his income, he said, "I have managed to acquire land on mortgage from the same proceeds of the crop, which has increased my total field size. Now, with a bigger field size, I will be able to produce more and hence my income will automatically rise."

Islam specifically likes programs that have a live call-in facility that enables listeners to interact with experts in the studio. He regularly calls in asking questions about agriculture, government schemes, etc. He shared that since the phone lines are busy; he is sometimes unable to connect with the station. He shares the example of All India Radio FM Gold, which has a phone-in program where the phone calls are

recorded for broadcast. We asked Islam whether he felt that people of the community would be able to make such a contribution to the programs as listeners, because they sometimes misinterpret the beep that plays for recording the messages and often say, "They are asking us to *write* the message. If we were literate, we could have done that ourselves, etc."

The radio team intends to come up with easier ways for listeners to contribute and hear more from people like Islam.

(This is the translation of a story written by Fakat Hussain, senior reporter, Alfaz-e-Mewat FM 107.8)