



The Change Makers of Lacchapatti

Stories of Dharmendra and Gulshan have inspired others in Mirzapur to take up entrepreneurship as a reliable livelihood path

Walking in the village of Lacchapatti, you will not miss the Computer Service Centre (CSC) run by Gulshan Bind and videography centre operated by Dharmendra Bind. Their stories are a hot topic of discussion among all the villagers and have inspired the youth to take up entrepreneurship as a reliable livelihood path. Their centres are always surrounded by people as they wait for Gulshan and Dharmendra to attend to their demands. The services provided by them are exclusive as no one does that in the radius of twenty kilometers.

Gulshan was the first one in his family to complete his undergraduate studies. Through his family support and a scholarship from college he was motivated to set-up a computer service centre in his village. It was in 2015 that he started with his business by renting out one small shop in the shopping complex of his village with one computer. A few days later the government launched the CSC scheme and Gulshan applied to become a CSC agent. To provide diverse services to the villagers he got trained in providing information on public utility services, welfare schemes, financial and agricultural services. Unlike most of the youth in the village, Gulshan never wanted to migrate to the city. He believes in the fact that the right information can bridge the gap between cities and villages. In May 2018, Gulshan started attending community meetings under the Work 4 Progress (W4P) programme of la Ciixa foundation. He discussed several issues that he was facing like low capital and limited access to service portals. By June 2018, some ideas started coming up; he got registered as an agent on government websites for providing more information on government schemes. He also got connected with a scheme to get a technology grant and bought a printer. Gulshan income has increased by 30%.

In order to encourage others to take up entrepreneurship, he started keeping an information booklet on the same at his centre.

It was through Gulshan, Dharmendra got to know about the entrepreneurship as a means of livelihood. Born and brought up in a poor family, Dharmendra dropped out of school and took up a small job at his uncle's photo studio. Initially he did errand jobs like carrying the equipment and handling lights. Slowly he got interested in the field and over the next five years he developed skills in videography and photography. Dharmendra was now interested in establishing his own enterprise and joined Gulshan to attend community meetings organised by Work 4 Progress programme of la Ciaxa foundation. With support from his family and friends, he started his enterprise with a second hand computer and a camera in September 2018. Dharmendra's income has increased by 20%. In order to cater diverse demands from his customers, he also attended an animation and video editing training in Delhi.

Within 10 months of starting the business, Dharmendra has already shot 20 wedding films while his neighbor Gulshan has provided information to over three thousand customers. Their bond continues to narrate the power of peer-to-peer mentorship.