



Like Bees to Honey

“We the beekeepers have learnt how to think from ‘I’ to ‘We’ and how to expand the business. We have made our lives out of honey. Beekeeping is a business where no one goes in to loss. My training in beekeeping by the LPH has changed my whole view and perspective about beekeeping.”

Muhammad Yaqoob khan, beekeeper, village Mainki Banda, District Karak.

Honey has made my life sweeter. As the president and founding member of the ‘Karak Honey Association’, I believe I am now, at the age 65 years, entitled to a sweeter life indeed. My interest in beekeeping started when I worked for a man named Jalil, an Afghan businessman dealing in beekeeping. Jalil was a skilled and sharp businessman and I learnt good-business tactics from him. He served as an inspiration for someone young like me who dreamt of starting something on his own, something big. As I had a little bit of knowledge about honey so I realized this is to be my profession. There was a huge demand for honey, hence in 2002 I bought 14 boxes for PKR 53,000. But the beekeeping business was easier said than done. I learnt through practice, failing and losing money but knowing everything starts that way.

As a teenager, I worked as a daily wager along with my brothers and father. There was hardly enough to eat in the house. My heart wrenches when I recall many occasions when my mother would go to bed on an empty stomach. But on asking, she’d say she had eaten while we were at work. Six siblings and 2 roomed fragile mud constructed house, and then poverty looming overhead, it was not an ideal

life. Despite this, I passed higher secondary school in 1970 from district Multan. I was an excellent student, displaying an extraordinary interest in Math and Urdu.

I live with my wife and our 3 sons and 3 daughters in Mainki Banda, Karak. In 2009 and 2010, I was trained by the LPH in different aspects of honeybee keeping which changed my whole perspective about beekeeping, says Yaqoob. This training helped me increase my work and income. I still keep in touch with the trainers and would contact them whenever I faced any problem or needed advice. After the trainings, the LPH floated the hugely welcomed idea of forming a Karak Honey Association. 'Collective Thinking' was a completely ground-breaking concept for the beekeepers. Working together whether to decide sale prices (of honey) or to introduce and practice new techniques in bee keeping has given us strength. The membership has increased from 29 to 215 and the communities have developed an interest in beekeeping business. People from other districts also buy honey from me and other members of the Association. Last year the people dealing in beekeeping earned PKR 1.3-1.4 million in this area and the Association now seeks export possibilities.

I have invested PKR.102,000 in order to increase bee boxes from 14 to 33 and then later added 19 more boxes. Now I own 200 boxes and my income has increased from PKR.20,000 to 80,000. For me, beekeeping is now a family-run business. My wife and children help in managing and cleaning the boxes. There is no loss in beekeeping but sheer use of skills as adulteration is out of the question. I have re-built and expanded my house from two to four rooms with a shed for my domestic animals. I own my own transport. My eldest daughter has done her masters in Botany and is looking forward to do her M.Phil. My son is proceeding with his graduation and is also learning the business from me. I have told them that without education they shall remain blind forever

