

Press Key, Meri Awaz Suno

by Arindam Mukherjee

LESS THAN A DECADE AGO, VOICE WAS THE ONLY FEATURE ON MOBILE AND OTHER handsets. Subsequently, technology enabled text inputs and, later, SMS or short messaging service became one of the biggest revenue-earners for mobile service providers. Now, it's time for another paradigm shift. A new technology enables mobile users to send and receive SMS messages not in text, but in the user's real voice. It works on all handsets and networks and is like having an answering machine or a voicemail on the mobile phone.

At present, the technology has been deployed in just three countries—Singapore, Malaysia and Bangladesh. In the next 4-6 months, it is expected to be introduced in India by Kirusa Inc through the various service providers. What makes it an exciting proposition is that, being voice-based, it's language-neutral. After all, a major problem with text SMS is that it's supported by only a few languages in the world. That way voice SMS can even reach rural areas across the globe. Also, it is platform-independent and can be used by anyone, whatever may be the mobile phone one is using.

In countries where it has been introduced, the technology has been a sensational success because recording a spoken message is more convenient than typing an SMS on a tiny keyboard. In Malaysia, it has led to over 2,50,000 users a day. Listening to a message, similarly, is easier than reading specially when one is driving. And of course, recording a personal message is more fun than a dry text input. The negative, though, is that voice SMS, or SVMS (short voice messaging service), can burn a huge hole in the user's pocket, as the cost per message is higher than text SMS. But then, prices may crash in the near future. ■



Do you find texting SMS too dry? Here is a new technique where messages can be sent and got in the user's voice.