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Prince Ahmed Bin Salman



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## 'No One Is Taught but Everyone Is Learning'

P.J.J. Antony, Arab News

JUBAIL, 20 October 2007 — When did I first come across Toastmasters? I don't recall the exact date but it was soon after the formation of Jubail Toastmasters, Jubail's first Toastmasters' club. It was one of their annual contests, probably the club's first or second. It impressed me, but I was mystified and amused by the adolescent-like enthusiasm of grown ups for speech competitions. Soon the demystification took place when I joined Arabian Toastmasters, the second club from Jubail.



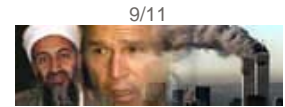
Officials of Periyar Toastmasters seated from left are P. Biju, P.J.J. Antony and K.K. James. Standing from left are: Paul Alappatt, Girish Varma, Seju Davis and Sayed Muhammad.(AN photo)

It was something like a revelation for me. A fraternity wholly and enthusiastically dedicated for developing an individual's communication and leadership skills. It was certainly nothing less than sheer amazement. Instantly I fell in love with Toastmasters, lock, stock and barrel. There was no looking back. Though I have been a public speaker for over a quarter of a century, the Toastmasters presented me communication and leadership skills with a wonderful aura of its own. I learned the finer nuances of speech craft without attending any classes. Meetings were fun and filled with camaraderie at all levels. Boring lectures and long sittings were things of the past. One way or another every member participated and every meeting was a learning opportunity.

Winston Churchill once said that most people are willing to learn all the time but seldom ready to be taught. With Toastmasters we never have to be ready to be taught by an all-knowing mighty teacher. It is truly an incredibly magnificent educational fraternity. No one is taught, but everyone is learning.

The whole Toastmasters program is conceived with great understanding of human mindset. "Encourage and Build" is the inherent and indivisible motto of every Toastmasters club around the world. All that a person is required of is to take that bold step to join a club with the right attitude and the rest is creative clockwork in action. From there onward, like the ticking of a pendulum, a steady progress of each member is guaranteed. After a few meetings, a Toastmaster himself is at awe at his own improvement, he is amazed by his own growth as a communicator and leader.

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Indeed, the Toastmasters program will bring out the best in you.

Community clubs are common in Western countries. Spaniards, Italians, Chinese, etcetera, have community clubs. Many Keralites and Keralite organizations have taken the lead to form Toastmasters clubs, but a community club for Keralites is hitherto unknown.

Periyar Toastmasters Club hence created history in a unique way. Initially there were apprehensions about the viability of such a club but the sheer number of Keralites in Jubail silenced that argument. The enthusiastic and wholehearted support Periyar received from the Eastern Province's Toastmasters Fraternity is the ample proof of its relevance and acceptability.

Considering the magnitude of Keralites living in the Kingdom and the considerable number of professionals among them, it is obvious that they have not embraced Toastmasters program in any big way. I am confident that the formation of Periyar Toastmasters Club will sow the seeds of Toastmasters among the community in a big way. I am sure this noble initiative will herald a new era of Toastmasters activity among the community — at home and around the globe — and pave the way to develop more and more Shashi Tharoor and Arundathi Roys from our midst in the near future.

Current Toastmasters Division Governor Abdullatif Al Harthi of Dammam rightly put it: Toastmasters encourage their members to overcome all kinds of barriers and use their educational tools to improve themselves and in turn help others to improve and thereby nurture the whole community to grow. Indeed, Toastmasters International has a universal appeal with a universal mission to have a world sans boundaries and barriers created by lack of effective communication.

(P.J.J. Antony is the president of Periyar Toastmasters Club in Jubail)

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