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DECEMBER 2014

TRAVANCORE FLASH

Quarterly Newsletter of 'Travancore Toastmasters Club'
Club Number – 01376605, Area - H3, Division – H, District 92



WHERE LEADERS ARE MADE
www.toastmasters.org

For more information:
www.travancoretoastmasters.org

Dr. Ralph C. Smedley
Founder of Toastmasters International

“Leadership is the capacity to look ahead, think ahead, plan ahead, and then influence other people to go ahead on the plan.”



About Toastmasters International

Toastmasters International is a world leader in communication and leadership development. Our membership is 292,000 strong. These members improve their speaking and leadership skills by attending one of the 14,350 clubs in 122 countries that make up our global network of meeting locations. Membership in Toastmasters is one of the greatest investments you can make in yourself. At \$36 every six months (club dues may vary), it is also one of the most cost-effective skill-building tools available anywhere. Through its member clubs, Toastmasters help men and women learn the art of speaking, listening, and thinking – vital skills that promote self-actualization, enhance leadership potential, foster human understanding, and contribute to the betterment of mankind. A Toastmasters club is a “learn by doing” workshop in which the members hone their public speaking skills in a comfortable, mutually supportive atmosphere.

About Travancore Toastmasters Club

Travancore Toastmasters Club is one of the Toastmaster clubs in Kochi. We meet at Petro House, Kundanoor, Kochi on every Sunday at 2:45 PM. We welcome guests. Please feel free to contact the following officers if you need more information:

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Club Mission

We provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.

Travancore Toastmasters Club, Petro House, Kundanoor, Kochi.



Editor's Note



October-November was the period of awards and rewards. Evaluation and Humorous Speech contests were held from Club to District level and the best were duly recognised. One thought that crosses my mind is – what does an award, reward or a simple token of appreciation do to an individual? Be it a first-timer who is immensely excited to receive the award, or a celebrity whose name is figuring in every Award List, there is a feeling of elation that happens, though varying in degrees and dimensions. Many amongst us

with all humility may say that we do our best without expecting any such accolades, but it is a fact that everyone feels good when his/her name is called out in appreciation of their deeds. Even a purely selfless volunteer committed to social service will definitely get more inspired when his/her actions are lauded and recognized by others. So awards and rewards are facts of life and they always remain one of the vital motivating forces that keep us going.

Even as 'Travancore Flash' brings out its second issue, there is growing awareness among members that it is a powerful new medium to communicate with. The increase in number of articles received from members for publication itself is a point in proof. It has just doubled from 7 in the first issue to 14 in this second one! Not that number is everything. Look at the level of professionalism, variety and depth of subjects handled. For instance, this issue brings to you an Interview with an expert, a traveller's diary, a poem, inspirational writings, humour, linguistic tips and an article from a DTM abroad, in addition to the usual columns. Being a wholesome forum to share ideas, get advice, stay connected and keep abreast of events across the division, 'Travancore Flash' truly reflects the spirit of Toastmasters, which is what makes it so popular! Do keep this spirit alive by contributing articles, feedback and more..

Here we have made a humble effort to present the creative best of our members along with a bouquet of information on all our actions and events at Travancore Toastmasters Club. Let us stay creative, let us stay informed!

Wishing you a merry season of festivities leading to a great New Year ahead!

With Warm Regards,
T.K.Kurian (ACB, ALB)
Editor

We would love to hear your feed-back and suggestions on Travancore Flash. Like always, it is your evaluation, suggestions and criticism that will help us grow. You could provide a feedback using the link given below.

http://eSurv.org?u=Travancore_Flash

Or you could send us a mail on your thoughts to
ttcflash@gmail.com.





From the President's Desk

“Man’s mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions” – Oliver Wendell Holmes.

What is true of the mind is also true for communication. How much are we able to stretch it? There is a certain level of organic growth that is guaranteed for every member once he joins a Toastmasters club, provided he or she is regular and takes up speaking roles inside the club. You slowly shake off your trepidation and nervousness, start to derive inspiration and energy from the most appreciative audience you



can ever have. But how fast we grow in our communication skills will be determined by how much we stretch ourselves, how much we are determined to launch us outside of our comfort zones!

The next time you do a speech, do that in a way that is not your typical self. If you feel timid about body language, do something that greatly amplifies body movement. It might look odd, greatly uncomfortable. If you are accustomed to speaking in your natural voice, because that is what naturally comes to you, that is what you are most comfortable at, decide to speak differently. Start your speech high pitched and at a high volume, shock the audience! No, they are not going to be bemused at seeing an unnatural you, they will discern your intention to shed your old skin and get into a new mold! And you would have crossed a threshold doing that. It is always when we gather that courage to free ourselves from the pull of the past, the way we have always done things, that we enter a higher orbit, freeing ourselves to do even greater things, equipping ourselves with a higher vision.

So friends, every role that you take up, look at ways and means of differentiating you from the old familiar comfort zone that you have been accustomed to. Remember the words of Henri Bergson – “To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself, endlessly”.

Jaikumar C. Pillai (ACB, ALB)
President

Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower. – Steve Jobs



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Past Presidents of Travancore Toastmasters Club



**Founder President
2008 - 09
V.J. Jose (ACS, CL)**



**2009 – 10
M.P. John (ACB, ALB)**



**2010 – 11
Dr. Lisamma Joseph (ACS, ALB)**



**2011 – 12
V. Sasheendran (ACS, CL)**



**2012 – 13
Dr. Murugesh Sukumar (ACB)**





Good, Better, Best! Become the Consummate Toastmaster

**"Good, better, best
Never let it rest,
Until good is better
And better is BEST!"**

- Craig Harrison (DTM)



Past District Governor of Oakland California's Lakeview Toastmasters (2767-57) is also a former board member of the Storytelling Association of California. He founded

Expressions of Excellence!™ to provide sales and service solutions through speaking. He is a professional Trainer, Entertaining Keynote speaker and authored books just for Toastmasters. He is also a frequent contributor to *Toastmaster* magazine.

Are you a *good* Toastmaster? Are you striving to be *better*? How will you become the *best* Toastmaster that you can be?

Continuous improvement holds the key!

PREPARATION

GOOD : Showing up on time each week to your club meeting.

BETTER : Showing up to your club meeting a few minutes early each week to help coordinate last minute changes and chat with members informally.

BEST : Showing up early enough to welcome first-time guests at the front door and help your Sergeant-at-Arms set up the meeting room.

In every situation you can be good. In order to be better you must seek to improve. Yet, to be the best you can be takes a commitment to excellence, a dedication to mastery. And it never ends.

PERFORMANCE

GOOD : Delivering your speech flawlessly from your script.

BETTER : Delivering your speech expertly, just from an outline.

BEST : Honing the ability to deliver your speech, as intended, with no notes at all.

GOOD : Answering the Table Topic with a cogent response within proscribed time limits.

BETTER : Giving a Table Topic response that has a beginning, middle and end and is also entertaining, educational or thought-provoking.

BEST : Responding in a way that ties into the day's theme, energizes the membership and leaves everyone who heard it touched, moved and inspired!

Best doesn't happen the first time out. Or even the second or third time. But *Better* can! Each time out, you can strive to be better than the last time. When you make that your goal, it becomes foremost in your mind. Best happens over time, through repetition, dedication and diligence.





Continuous Improvement

"After 32 years, I am still learning. I still have areas in which to improve after all these years. Doesn't everybody?" So says Marion Keibel, DTM, past District 57 governor and 26 year member of Confidence Builders in Concord, CA (3972-57).

Marion embraces the concept of continuous improvement. Whether she accepts new challenges (like being part of the team rebuilding AdPro (400-57) as a weekly club), whether she continues to hone her mastery as a speech evaluator, even after winning multiple District evaluation competitions, she always finds room for improvement. And we can too. This is the spirit of *kaizen*, the Japanese concept of continuous improvement. As Toastmasters, when we dedicate ourselves to continuous improvement, we become KTMs—Kaizen Toastmasters.

A Tiger Among Us

Keibel's example of continuously improving as a speech evaluator, even after winning her District's contest, raises the bar for the rest of her District. You see, in any endeavor, to BE the best, you have to BEAT the best! Both Marion and her District competitors improve when they compete head-to-head in their semi-annual contests.

Consider the greatest golfer his era, Tiger Woods. He was so far ahead of the field, the field had to raise its game just to remain in the hunt. And so they did! They become better to compete against the best. And Tiger benefits from the improving competition and raises his golf game still further.

Whether you strive to be best of class, or strive to achieve your personal best, your quest is never-ending.

SUPPORTIVENESS

- GOOD : You always agree to speak when your name comes up on the agenda scheduler.
- BETTER : You also agree when you're asked to be Timekeeper or "Ah" Counter.
- BEST : You fill in at one minute to starting time when asked, to cover a vacated role due to a no-show.

This concept of continuous improvement applies to every aspect of our meetings. Consider the role of mentoring:

MENTORING

- GOOD : You agree to mentor a new member and invite your mentee to call you whenever he or she has a question.
- BETTER : You establish regular opportunities to meet and review the progress of your mentee and answer any questions that arise.
- BEST : You not only answer questions posed, but also suggest new opportunities, future roles and additional challenges that you know exist "over the horizon." In this way, you chart a course for their matriculation through the Toastmasters curriculum.

COACHING OTHERS

- GOOD : You are praiseworthy in your official evaluation of the speaker at club meetings.
- BETTER : You blend praise with recommendations for growth, constructively phrased.





BEST : You blend praise with recommendations, shared publicly, while withholding sensitive suggestions for sharing privately with the speaker.

Sometimes our best efforts are actually found below the waterline. Consider the iceberg. We see the tip of it above the surface. Yet 90% of its mass is found below the waterline where few can see it. As leaders, the public often sees the small percentage of our efforts while the other 90%, our blood, sweat and tears devoted to excellence, is invisible.

Consider all the time and effort that goes into planning a District conference. Rather than judge a conference by how well the conference chair speaks from the platform, consider all the many facets that went into creating the optimal event for everyone.

PLANNING EVENTS

GOOD: A Fall or Spring District Conference where attendance is high, the business meeting is conducted efficiently, and the conference runs on time.

BETTER: A conference where first-timers want to come back, contests are stirring, keynotes memorable and the Communication and Leadership award winner's speech inspires others.

BEST: A conference in which the standard for excellence is raised, members buzz about it for years (like the 2008 opening ceremonies of the Olympics in Beijing), and the momentum from the conference fuels excellence in the entire District's critical success factors that year and beyond.

Kaizen Complements Toastmastering

Continuous improvement is a concept near and dear to Toastmasters' hearts. We don't just devote a week or month a year to improvement. A third of *every* meeting is devoted to analyzing what we did well, what we can do better and how we can, as a group, achieve greater results for our club and its members. This, in its essence, is the Japanese concept of Kaizen—continuous improvement.

According to Chuck Reaves, CSP, CPAE, CSO, and author of *Kaizen for Sales* and *The NANOSECOND Salesperson*, "Continuous improvement in every endeavor, especially in speaking, is a worthy pursuit. Words are powerful tools that can create, improve or destroy, depending on how effectively they are deployed. As you speak and lead more effectively this year than last, and better next year than this year, your successes will grow resultantly."

Most improvement doesn't come from quantum leaps. It comes from incremental improvements over time. A little better today than yesterday, over time, leads to great improvements, whether in speaking, leading, learning or life.

When you commit to continuous improvement it permeates everything you do and infuses how you live your life. Vow to make each act, each event, each effort your best yet. Then you know, in your heart, that your best is yet to come!





Area and Division Contest

The Area Level contest for Division G & H was conducted on 18th October, 2014 at KMA Hall, Panampilly Nagar, Kochi. Solomon Mathews & Appu Menon represented TTC for the Evaluation Contest. Madhu K P and Swaminathan M contested for the Humorous Speech. Jaikumar C Pillai represented Kochi Toastmasters for the Evaluation contest. Rahul M and Baiju Gopinath served as the contest master for the Evaluation contest and Humorous Speech respectively.

Confluence 2014, the division level contest for Evaluation and Humorous speech was conducted on 30th October at Riviera Suites, Kochi. The winners of Area level competition, Solomon Mathews, Appu Menon, Jaikumar C Pillai, Madhu K P & Swaminathan M represented TTC at Confluence 2014. Solomon Mathews and Madhu K P, the winners for Evaluation and Humorous Speech contest respectively, went on to represent TTC at District Level Conference, Jamboree, held at Mysore.



Competing at the highest level is not about winning. It's about preparation, courage, understanding and nurturing your people, and heart. Winning is the result. - Joe Torre



An Interview with a Storyteller

DTM Craig Harrison, describes himself as a storyteller. On his recent visit to Kochi, we had the privilege of having him as a guest, for the 284th meeting held on 14th of December 2014 at Travancore Toastmasters Club. It was an inspiration to have him in our midst. And taking on the role of a General Evaluator for that meeting was the highlight of the meeting. He was highly effusive of the whole show and perhaps a little cautious in pointing out our flaws. But there was great bonhomie and all the members interacted with Craig long past the meeting was over. He obliged us with an interview into his journey as a very active Toastmaster and master storyteller. The responses that we got were remarkable, thought provoking and invaluable. More than that, we got a glimpse of how a shy, self-conscious person who could not express ideas, went on to become a DTM. Here are the excerpts of the interview.



"The skilled communicator opens doors, builds new relationships, serves others effectively and enhances one's own leadership." What does it mean to be a "Skilled" communicator?

The skilled communicator listens as well as speaks, initiates contact with strangers to build rapport, trust and understanding, and combines communication skills with leadership to shape our world. When you can listen to what is said, what isn't said, what is implied and become in sync with others, as well as express your own thoughts, ideas and intentions, you can partner with others for success.

Skilled communicators blend substance with style in their communication. They connect on a heart level as well as intellectually with their conversation partner. They can convey visions, inspire others, move mountains and make the impossible not just possible, but fun to achieve.

What was your motivation to become a TM? How did you get into Toastmasters and how long did you take to get to DTM?

As an adult I was shy, self-conscious, and unable to express my ideas effectively in work

or social situations. I was a fumbling, bumbling, mumbling mess who was afraid to give others eye contact and was nervous in public. I needed Toastmasters but didn't know it. Like most who join, I sought help for communicating with confidence. I had no idea about the leadership track, or that I could pursue both simultaneously. I fell into club leadership by accident, after joining in July, 1992, filling the void of president within 6 months of joining. Was I ready? NO. Did others work with me? Thankfully!!! Leadership, the track less traveled in Toastmasters, gave me many opportunities to apply communication lessons I was learning. I kept saying "Yes" to Area Governor, Division Governor, entering contests when asked, and more, and found rewards for each. I became a DTM and District Governor as I entered my 4th year as a member. Toastmasters changed my life. It helped me break into management, change careers, get published, write books and ultimately start my own company. And it can for you too, whatever your ambition.

We all know that being a Toastmaster has its advantages, challenges and opportunities. Having got to the pinnacle, what is it that you consider as the



most important impact / influence TM had on yourself?

As I've matriculated through Toastmasters I became less "self-centered" and more other-centered. When I put others first and advocated for their success, mine came too. Servant leadership has served me well, as I've empowered others I've grown in stature as well. I came to realize the pleasures of giving to others, empowering them, helping them break through barriers, launching them into leadership, is really gratifying.

I don't consider myself "at the pinnacle." Each year I complete another CC for my clubs. My relationship changes each year with the organization and my clubs as I change roles from achiever to mentor, champion to coach, speaker to strategist, grooming others, coaching incoming leaders, conceiving of exciting conference formats and the like. I try to bring value to my club, district and others through articles, informal and formal coaching, nurturing the spark in others to nudge them into leadership.

What would be your message to a would be Toastmaster?

Become a Competent Communicator, work both the Communication and Leadership tracks simultaneously, select a Mentor and commit to excellence, and write down and share your professional and personal goals with your club and district leaders. When you go public with your goals you find the world will rise up to support you in your quest for success. In time each milestone of yours, once achieved, becomes a stepping stone to future goals. Whether you want to start a company, run for office, write a book, win the World Championship of Public Speaking or build new Toastmasters clubs for your community or organization, it's all within your reach. (On my Toastmasters www.SpeakAndLeadWithConfidence.com site, you can find handouts on achieving your bucket list of goals; on my Articles page of ExpressionsOfExcellence.com you can read about turning milestones into stepping stones, mentoring, the value of serving roles a second time and about how to go from Good to Better to Best!)

Did you start your journey in Toastmasters to become a storyteller? Or was that an accident?



"TTC Members greet DTM Craig Harrison".



A little of both! Our district had a storytelling club filled with past district governors which became my second club. In my family, dad told the jokes and mom was a storyteller, sharing stories her mom told her about life in Romania. So it was in my roots. As I worked the advanced manuals on storytelling and interpretive reading, I saw how through story I could connect with

strangers in a different way. I interviewed an esteemed professional storyteller in my community who then recommended me to their board of directors (because of strong leadership skills developed in Toastmasters!) You can visit my storytelling site for more of my backstory: www.HackinBoo.com.



Club Events & Achievements

- ❖ Club level Humorous Speech and Evaluation contests held on 12th Oct 2014.
- ❖ Madhu K P & Swaminathan M represented TTC in the Area level Humorous Speech contest.
- ❖ Solomon Mathews, Jaikumar C Pillai and Appu Menon represented TTC in the Area Level Evaluation contest.
- ❖ Madhu K P and Solomon Mathews represented TTC in the Division level contest for the Humorous Speech and Evaluation Contest respectively.
- ❖ Three of our club members were contestants at Jamboree 14', the Semi-Annual District 92 conference. Madhu K P was a contestant in the Humorous Speech while Solomon Mathews and Jaikumar C. Pillai were contestants in the Evaluation Contest
- ❖ Joint Meeting with Refinian Toastmasters was held on 30th Dec 2014.

Upcoming Events

- ❖ New Year Celebrations on 11th Jan 2015.

New Face @ TTC - Jostin Lukose

Jostin, Son of Veteran Toastmaster Lukose Joseph, is doing Engineering. In a short span of two months Jostin has proved that he can compete with his father in delivering humor. His "poker faced" anecdotes, usually has all laughing, even long after the joke has been said. He started his Toastmasters journey with the Gavel Club, constituted by some of the senior Toastmasters to promote Public Speaking skills among school children.





Winning Your Own Oscar

Solomon Mathews



One day, while in office, I got a call from my Chief Operating Officer. “Great news! We have been selected to the Finals of the Sun Awards!”

I asked, “What is Sun Award?” He said, “It is like an Oscar award! It is instituted for recognizing the best performers for their ‘Outstanding Achievement’ from among the companies in the ADITYA Birla Group, world-wide!” Idea Cellular Kerala, where I work was part of the Aditya Birla Group.

He continued, “It happens in Mumbai, Grand Hyatt Hotel. There are three companies qualified for the final, including ours. If we make an impactful presentation, we could win the Sun award.” As soon as I heard it, pressure started building up inside me like in a pressure cooker!

The reasons were quite obvious! The distinguished audience consisted of Managing Directors, CEOs and Executive Presidents of all the Aditya Birla Group companies from all around the world – from US to Australia, Singapore to South Africa and Indonesia to India. My boss, his boss, his boss, and his boss...Mr. Kumaramangalam Birla, the Chairman of the group would be there. The presentation had to be made in front of these

awe-inspiring top-brass in business suits, which made the air very formal. Imagine 600 “Evaluators” sitting in a big hall!

Let me introduce to you the real ‘Evaluators’, the jury members, who would be judging our presentations and declaring the winners:- The Chairman of Kotak Mahindra Bank and the Managing Directors of Hindustan Uniliver, Microsoft India & Bata India.

Another pressure point was the aura created by the high profile speakers invited for the conference which comprised of Mr. Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary General, Mr. Jimmy Wales, the founder of Wikipedia and the tennis legend Steffi Graf. We would be using the same stage from where they delivered their speeches!

And then the stage - I had never seen a stage of that size! It would take at least a minute to walk from one end to the other!

The weight of expectations from the team, back in office was unbearable. One of them said just before we were leaving for Mumbai, “Our performance of two years, has been gift-wrapped like a Christmas gift and given to you. You need to just go and deliver it”. I told him, “How simple!” I knew the risks. It is a big occasion. A failure on stage was going to be fatal on my career.

The ‘D’ day came. The presentation was loaded. The stage was brightly lit. The spotlight was on. There were two big screens in the hall on which the presentation slides were shown. The programme was broadcasted live across the world through internet for all the employees to watch.

I got up and walked confidently to the podium and started with a bang. The opening lines came off quite well. Then, I became quite comfortable and began enjoying my



speech. Then a magical moment was born, while I was speaking about our business achievements. The audience responded unexpectedly with an applause. I took a pause, cherished the moment and acknowledged their good gesture.

After the presentation, a lot of people came up and said, "Great presentation!"

The next day evening was the Sun Awards Ceremony. We were seated in the last rows, from where the stage was hardly visible. The interest and

anticipation had reached a feverish pitch. I asked myself, "Will we get the Sun tonight?" Then, I turned to my colleague who was sitting next to me and asked, "Will we get the Sun tonight?" He said, "Don't worry. If you do not get the Sun tonight you will surely get the Sun, tomorrow morning"

Then the award was announced. "The Sun award goes to ...**Idea Cellular Kerala!**". We leapt up and screamed, Yeeeeeaaah! Yes! I had won my Oscar!

Then I realized, it was not me, but the Toastmaster in me who has won the award. I



consider my achievement as a triumph for all Toastmasters.

One may join a Toastmasters club with a modest goal of being able to just stand in front of an audience without stage fright and speak a few words. But, after joining the club, one would be surprised with the progress he makes, which would be far higher than he could possibly think of. The learning and development that you get at the club will help you excel in many areas of your professional work and social life.

Before going to Mumbai, I had given a test speech at Travancore Toastmasters club. The members gave a very useful feedback on how to refine my speech. Toastmaster Jaikumar, who was my evaluator, helped me with his invaluable tips.

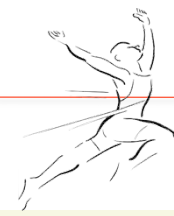
I would like to thank all Toastmasters of our club for the coaching and support given to me during the last two years, to be able to rise up to the occasion.

Toastmasters, with Toastmastering, you can win Your Own Oscar!

Birthdays

<i>Varun Ramesh</i>	<i>15th January</i>
<i>Raji Paul</i>	<i>21st January</i>
<i>Swaminathan M</i>	<i>12th February</i>
<i>Appu Vinod</i>	<i>19th February</i>
<i>A G Sojan</i>	<i>26th February</i>
<i>V Saseendran</i>	<i>3rd March</i>
<i>Jose V J</i>	<i>13th March</i>





Solomon Mathews

Wins the Oscar...



Idea Cellular, Kerala, whose marketing function was headed by Solomon Mathews received the Sun Award for outstanding achievement. The Sun Award is instituted by the Aditya Birla Group of Companies, as recognition for Organizational Excellence. The fact that this presentation was made in front of a distinguished audience such as CEOs & Executive Presidents, Kofi Annan (Former UN Secretary General), Jimmy Wales (Founder of WikiPedia) & tennis legend Steffi Graf is an achievement in itself. We all have known and have heard Solomon at the Toastmaster meetings. We take exceptional pride that; one among us has taken the skills imbibed from the Toastmaster meetings to a different level. And that too, was able to reach the pinnacle of success, by receiving the award. In his own words, it is an "Oscar".

Suprabha Valson

Completes CC



Ph.D in Nanotechnology, engaged as a Professor in SNGCE. Has been with Toastmasters for the past 2 years. With her perseverance and dedication to push herself beyond the obvious she has proved that there is always something more to be learnt.

Govind Sekhar

Completes CC



Chartered Accountant by profession. Has been with Travancore Toastmasters for the past 2.5 years. Joined Toastmaster to "learn and unlearn the do's and don'ts of public speaking." He is at his best when giving speeches on topics that is close to his heart and connects to the audience very easily. With his thoughtful speeches he entertains in a way that is memorable and touches us.

Sasheendran V



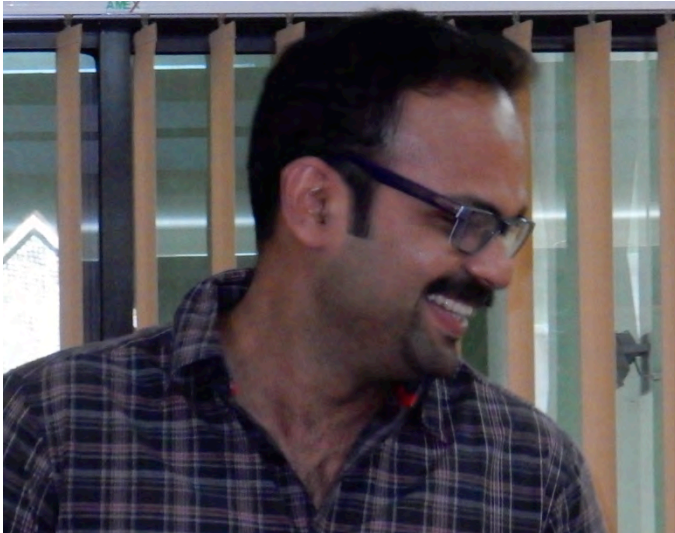
Sasheendran_V completes Executive MBA Program (General Management) from one of the world's most prestigious Universities – 'MIT Sloan, Boston'. He is humble enough to admit that it was his association with Toastmasters fraternity that motivated him to look beyond the ordinary and chase his dream of an International MBA. He has proved that one's achievements are limited only by his ability to dream and the preparedness to work steadfastly towards achieving that dream.

Congrats, Sasi!



Flue Free Fried Chicken

Joseph Antony



It's been a couple of weeks since bird flu started spreading in Kerala. Two major people whom I know that have been highly affected by this unexpected tragedy are Georgettan, a Poultry farm owner and of course ME!! I am a guy who goes for chicken almost every single day, starting from Chicken Biryani to Chicken curry to Grilled chicken to Chicken Shawarma.... (I even risk my life!). Never could I resist the mouth-watering chicken delicacies... or its enchanting aroma... But ever since the news of bird flu started trickling in, there were strict orders from my family that I should never touch or even think about chicken! It was like asking Bill Gates not to use or think about 'Windows'! 'Hey, I live on this thing ...!' But no, I could see no way out of this predicament. Since my parents had never compelled me to quit Shawarma in spite of knowing that someone had passed away after eating it, I thought that this time around it is some serious stuff and decided to distance myself from my favourite dish at least for a while.

It was a Saturday and I woke up around

11:00am and I went to the gym because I had already paid them. After the workout I felt hungry not because I worked out very hard, but because I had skipped my breakfast. And when I am hungry the only thing that appears in front of my eyes is 'Chicken Biryani'. Without even thinking I went to the nearby restaurant "Biryani Hut", parcelled the Biryani and drove back home. As soon as had I opened the parcel, my phone started ringing. It was my Mom! All of a sudden I recollected the bird flu thing she had so seriously warned me of. I felt really bad and with tears in my eyes and a vacuum in my stomach, I threw the whole packet of hot Chicken Biryani away. I can't believe that I could do that, but I did it!

In the afternoon, one of my old friends came down to Kochi for his personal work. Once he had finished, I picked him up and was taking him around in my car, when a mutual friend called up. The guy was so excited about the guest's visit to Kochi and said he also wanted to join us. He asked me to wait near Palarivattom junction. I was driving and started looking for a place to park my car. The whole place was jam-packed except for the parking lot of one shop and the board of the shop read: "Fried Chicken Center". No, not even a beggar was in front of it. Only the owner and five of his uniformed staff were there. I parked my car right in front of the shop. The owner was happy, but in a couple of minutes he figured out that we were not going to buy anything; however he did not utter a word probably because of the beggar thing I mentioned earlier. After waiting for 5-10 minutes I bothered to look inside and saw that they were selling

"There are always three speeches, for every one you actually gave. The one you practiced, the one you gave, and the one you wish you gave." Dale Carnegie



cool drinks as well! I went inside and asked for a Pepsi. He asked one of his staff to get one and all the five rushed in to get that. They appeared as if I was the lone client who broke their monotonous day. In the mean time I asked the owner "Sir, I think your business is heavily affected by this bird flu thing, you won't believe I threw away a full Chicken Biryani this afternoon". He stared at me quizzically and said "Who said that my business is affected?" With a soft voice I replied, "I see no one around". He continued "There were lot of Arabs

here this afternoon". In my mind I thought "Sure, Arabs do not know Malayalam; so they might have got in by mistake". The owner said "I can guarantee you that the chicken we serve will never have bird flu". I was curious and I asked him "how?". He said, "Son, when do you think the bird flu started?" I replied, "4 or 5 days back, maybe". He said "You are wrong, it is a week!" and then he continued "We only serve chicken at least 3 weeks old!!! We never serve fresh chicken!" and then he asked me "Shall I get you some Fried Chicken?"



The Art of Making Bonsai

Rani Alex

The word 'Bonsai' is formed from two words 'BON' meaning tray or dish and 'SAI' meaning plant or tree, finally it is tree planted in a dish. The art of Bonsai was developed in the Far East and they had to wait thirty to fifty years to make a real Bonsai. The Indian Bonsai lovers have found out a short-cut method for making Bonsai. I have tried it out and was successful .

Plant a tree in a large pot with 20 inch depth. Nourish and manure it as much as possible for 5 years. Do not allow it to grow up. Trim it to get a good shape. In five years' time you can shape out a great bonsai and transfer it to a tray or a dish.

Cultivating a Bonsai tree requires much care and attention but as its reward it brings tranquillity to the mind, a feeling of being refreshed and inner composure.





Human Thy Creation

Appu Menon

A heart fraught with anguish, angst and agony
built a deluge of wrath on his days.
I, the ego he pampered never showed its origin.
Murmuring seconds and babbling nature reiterate
the question, why a human is built so?

Pointing You I said "Unfair", not noticing how fair
am I.

I, the other word of irritation, manifested as the
son of inhibition
You, the synonym of prudence, the stigma for
covered absence

We met in the walkway while Creator blessed the
Milky Way
God desired calling me Adam, and a useless me!
Stared at him lest he named you Eve!
Where is my lost spine; laughing in front in pain!
Elusive pain losing my bone Perhaps future calls it
"Emotion"

Twitching heart taught me a pain; the holy papal
called it Love
Lingering angels fondling us Showering the
confetti of lust
Curse! he showered breaching his rule;
It is Human to infringe, Where "not"

Listening him, I lived for sterlings; Loving me, you
lived for siblings
Incarcerating us, our kids grown Taking the ablution in their names
How! How my Goodness we castigate them
Alright! It is Human, thy creation.



Spoonerism

A.G. Sojan (ACS, ALB)

Spoonerism is a mistake made when speaking in which
the first sounds of two words are exchanged with each
other to produce an un-intended and usually funny
meaning. This often happens accidentally in slips of
the tongue or (tips of the slung) as spoonerism is often
affectionately called.

Example: 'The Lord is a shoving leopard' instead of



BON VOYAGE

TM Appu V Menon moves to USA to pursue higher studies at LAMAR University, Bleaumont, US. During the short span he was associated with TTC, he has created a niche for himself in the club with his creativity. He leaves behind an indelible impression in our minds about his versatility as well as powerful delivery of thoughtful speeches. TTC wishes him all the very best.





'Lord is a loving shepherd'.

Spoonerism is named after Rev William Archibald Spooner (1844-1930) Warden of New College Oxford who was notoriously prone to this mistake. He used to produce spoonerisms such as "a scoop of boy trouts" instead of what he meant to say - "a troop of boy scouts".

Given below are a few examples:

Tease my ears (Ease my tears)
A lack of pies (A pack of lies)
It is roaring with pain (It is pouring with rain)
Wave the sails (Save the whales)

Here is a selection of funniest spoonerisms:

Bad salad (Sad ballad)
Plaster man (Master plan)
Chewing the door (Doing the chore)
Beeping sleauty (Sleeping beauty)
The pea little thrigs (The three little pigs)

It is said that most of the quotations attributed to Spooner are apocryphal. Most spoonerisms were probably never uttered by William Spooner himself but rather made up by colleagues and students as a pastime.



Word Play

Jack and Mark are walking back from religious service. Jack wonders whether it would be all right to smoke while praying.

Mark replies, "Why don't you ask the Priest?"

So Jack goes up to the Priest and asks, "Father, may I smoke while I pray?"

The Priest replies, "No, my son, you may not! That's utter disrespect to our religion."

Jack goes back to his friend and tells him what the good Priest told him.

Mark says, "I'm not surprised. You asked the wrong question. Let me try."

And so Mark goes up to the Priest and asks, "Father, may I pray while I smoke?"

To which the Priest eagerly replies, "By all means, my son, by all means. You can always pray whenever you want to."

Collected by Swaminathan M.



Fall from Paradise!

Basil Joseph



It was like a long cherished dream coming true! My wife Lovely and I had meticulously planned our visit to the exquisite paradise of tourists – the Golden Land of Kashmir - during September along with our immediate circle of closest family friends. The news of air ticket confirmation arrived by then, filling us with a streak of excitement. After the exhaustive hustle-bustle of packing up, we soon found ourselves at the airport, ready to take off. As we touched-down the ‘Golden City’ of Srinagar, we could feel a friendly warmth that instantly made us comfortable. Everyone was excited. Now is the time to explore the Heaven on Earth! Its beautiful lakes and gardens are a photographer’s delight! God himself had decorated Srinagar with his best designed flowers!

On the first day after arrival, we stayed in a beautiful house-boat in the vast yet calm ‘Dal’ lake. How can I forget the brightly coloured ‘shikaras’ floating their way amongst the uncountable pink and white lotuses, as far as human eyes could see! The sight will surely leave anyone mesmerised! The clouds smiled at us through the Lake.

On the second and third days, the sky was more or less cloudy. Our plans to proceed to Pahalgam and Gulmarg (both in different

directions) on these days had to be called off, since the vehicle could not proceed as the roads near these hill stations were flooded. We were stuck up in the hotel. By noon on the fourth day, we changed hotel as per the tour plan to ‘Center Point Hotel’ near ‘Dal’ lake. There, we observed that water level in the lake was gradually going up hour by hour. Many lower plains and smaller buildings were slowly being flooded with water. Strangely enough, there was hardly any rain in Srinagar area! On enquiry, we came to understand that a river called ‘Jhalam’, was flooded with water from its Pak catchment area where there was continuous heavy rain. A bund had also broken somewhere.

We were relieved that the immediate premises around ‘Center Point Hotel’ where we stayed had no sign of any flood whatsoever; everywhere we could see dry roads. We thought that we were safe. By evening, things changed. There was an unprecedented buzz. Local people were gathering in the streets and ‘murmuring’ and talking in ‘hush-hush’ voices about some imminent danger. With a shock we realised that something bad was going to happen. Local residents including ladies and children rushed out of their homes carrying their baggage looking for safer places. Obviously, people were in panic! By 6 PM, flood water surged like a silent terminator and surrounded our hotel. By midnight, it submerged the lower floor of the hotel and the generator stopped working. Power supply tripped. Next moment, the entire communication system with outside world snapped abruptly and we found ourselves totally isolated in the pitch darkness of night. We were gripped with fear and anxiety.

Totally scared, we gathered in my room on the 4th floor and discussed for hours on various options to escape from the hotel and Kashmir valley. Meanwhile, torrent water was





swelling higher and higher. We soon understood there were dozens of other Malayalee families under different tour operators, besides the six of us. A total of 72 people were trapped in our hotel including 2 Polish, 3 Japanese and few North Indian families besides the hotel staff. Next day morning we saw the 'Reception Counter' of the hotel floating in water! Cars and jeeps were immersed in water.

Thanks to the hotel staff, entire provisions and cooking gas were shifted to the first floor the previous night. Malayalee ladies from Calicut led by one Mrs. Thampi took control of cooking. While serving food, I made an announcement on the necessity of controlling water and provisions, because we had to survive on whatever we had. We can survive for one week without food, but not without water! I also convinced people not use flush in the toilet. Even a single drop of water was precious and had to be preserved. Two persons were assigned to strictly regulate the water supply. We took stock of provisions and served "brunch" and only light dinner for the next two days. 'Chapattis' and curry were given in bare hands to avoid washing of plates to save water. My leadership experience gained at 'Reverberations 2012' helped me coordinate the activities better.

In the nearby buildings, almost all the people stood on the roof top showing red flags for helicopters help. We also started crisis management. Room No.102 was converted into a control room. Mr. Lijo (TCS) took control over the communication department and stood almost all day and night on the roof-top water-tank to get the mobile signals to seek any possible help from Delhi or Kerala.

Stock of provisions and water diminished to critical levels by 3rd day. By noon we got a small boat and one Mr. Jony from Tripunithura, bravely oared it to reach the main road. He came back with a new enthusiasm and

explained that if we could walk about 7 kms towards 'Rajbhavan' on the nearby hill, we could get Army helicopter service to Srinagar. Immediately hotel owner brought a "Shikkara" (country boat) and evacuated all people through the 1st floor window. Ladies and children were evacuated first followed by senior citizens. I was one of the last persons to vacate the hotel after ensuring that all the families and their luggage had safely reached the main road.

What I explained was only an episode. When we reached Rajbhavan walking all the way, the scene was even more heart-rendering. The long serpentine queue of men, women, babies and pregnant women extending to several kilometers!! This was controlled by Army, BSF, CRPF & Air Force personnel. For the first time in my life I could see the discipline and efficiency of our armed forces at its best! Like at the warfront, Jawans with fully loaded heavy machine guns were patrolling the area in armored vehicles where thousands of people were waiting so patiently, braving the hot day and chilling night without shelter or even toilet facilities! We came out from the queue, searching for a shelter to stay, but there was no hope. Then the miracle happened! I saw a heavily protected CRPF MT workshop compound where a young Jawan stood guard in front of the gate. He was a Malayalee - Unnikrishnan from Calicut! . He empathized with us and took us to an abandoned CRPF truck parked outside. We stayed for next 2 days in the truck. That, we felt, was indeed like a 7 star facility for us, compared to thousands of people squatting on the roadsides and under the trees! God had mercy on us!! Unnikrishnan was kind enough to give us blankets and food for 2 days from their mess. He took special permission from his officer to allow us to use one toilet in the camp.

On the third day we flew to Srinagar by an MI 17 chopper arranged by the Army authorities. From Srinagar we were transported to





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Palam Air base by an IAF AN 32 Military aircraft. While waiting in the helipad, I volunteered to lend a helping hand to unload food packets intended for the relief operation from the chopper along with BSF Jawans. That humble gesture was an indirect expression of my sincere thanks and gratitude to our CRPF, BSF, Indian Army and Indian Air Force personnel for their unmatched service in the relief operation which alone made our escape from the valley possible! Long live Indian forces!!

- from Lovely and me - for the prayers, concern and affection shown to us during this ordeal, which kept our spirits high during those desperate moments! Your inspiring words were fuel for recharging ourselves. I'm proud to be part of this exquisite group and glad to be back to tell you this story of our 'Escape from Paradise'.

But the stark contrast of the picturesque scenes of the first two days of the trip, with the harrowing experience of the remaining seven days, still haunts me!

Finally a 'thank you note' to you, Toastmasters!! Please accept our sincere thanks and gratitude



A few snaps taken by Basil while he & his family were in Kashmir.





JAMBOREE 2014 AT MYSORE



22nd November 2014 was a day to remember as Toastmasters from Kerala and Karnataka descended to Mysore for the first Semi-Annual District Conference of newly formed District 92. The conference was held for two days on 22nd and 23rd November 2014 at the Palace City of Mysore with great fun and frolic, infused with knowledge and celebration. The function was hosted at the newest 5-star hotel at Mysore - 'The Radisson Blu'. The highlight of the conference was the District Level Humorous Speech and Evaluation Speech Contests.

The Conference began with a sumptuous lunch at the Hotel followed by the Evaluation Contest. There were 8 contestants including two from our



own Club – TM Jaikumar C Pillai and TM Solomon Mathews. Both performed exceedingly well.

After the contest, there were two brilliant Educational Sessions. The first was handled by Prof Chandradeep Mitra, IIM Faculty from Calcutta. Prof. Mitra, who is a Media and Advertising Expert with extensive experience in Marketing Communication, spoke on the importance of emotions in communication. The second session was conducted by Dr. Sandeep Shastri, Pro Vice Chancellor of Jain University who sent the entire audience into repeated peals of laughter with his highly entertaining speech. He spoke on the necessity to have trust



in oneself to succeed in life, citing examples from his own personal life experience.

The Inaugural Session was scheduled in the evening. This was preceded by a Ceremonial Procession in which all the District Council Members participated. The Inaugural session started with the lighting of the lamp by the Chief Guest Jim Key, the 2003 World Champion of Public Speaking. Dignitaries including the Chief Guest spoke. Various cultural programmes including folk dances were presented. Toastmasters of 10 years standing were honoured during the session. The Inaugural session was followed by a scintillating 'FUN NIGHT', with high decibel music, dance and entertainment which sent the members' spirit sky-high!

On day 2, we had the opportunity to listen again to Jim Key at length. He gave a highly





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informative educational discourse in which he shared his experiences at three International Speech Contest Finals, where he had contested. First and second time, the championship evaded him, but third time he won it! He shared the disappointment of the two attempts, but then explained what earned him the title next year. He inspired the audience with his take on what made speeches award-winning and how to reach for the stars.

In the District Humorous Speech Contest held in the afternoon, there were 8 contestants



including two from Kerala – our member TM Madhu KP and TM George Mathai. Both gave Brilliant presentations, which entertained the entire audience.



From Kerala, nearly 25 Toastmasters participated in the conference. Food, accommodation and logistics were excellent. The conference was an excellent opportunity for learning, camaraderie and networking in an atmosphere of fun and entertainment. Overall, the conference was 'Simply Amazing'!

One of the high points of the event was that, out of 16 contestants in the Finals of the District contests in two events, three were our friends from a single club – 'Travancore Toastmasters Club'! Yes, our club! From out of a total of 80-odd clubs in the District! Shouldn't it make us proud?



True leaders embody a spirit of excellence. Never content to give just the bare minimum, they are always looking for opportunities to be better, serve better and give generously of their time and talent. A true leader is never intimidated by the excellence of others, but instead is eager to partner with it and draw it out of those who don't yet recognize it in themselves. Accountability and integrity are interwoven into the spirit of excellence and a true leader embraces these characteristics and inspires others to do the same. If called to do so, a true leader would willingly sacrifice position, status and money if it ultimately meant a better outcome for the majority of those involved. - la Jimenez





A Time to Change

Baiju Gopinath



Every year, knowingly or unknowingly, we look back and “evaluate” on how we did that year. And every year, we see a few resolutions that we took very ambitiously and with great aplomb, remaining as resolutions with very little progress. Most of these resolutions would have probably lasted a few days! My resolutions would have lasted only a few hours!! For the more perseverant minority, it might have lasted a few months. How many of our resolutions actually lasted the whole year, or which of these resolutions did meet its purpose? In Toastmasters parlance, most of these would be like a speech with a fabulous beginning, which never even got to the middle, let alone have a decent closing!! For reasons unknown, we believe or choose to believe that a resolution for change should coincide with a great event. And which event could be better than New Year? That moment, when the clock strikes 12 at midnight on December 31st, with a glass of spirit to motivate us, feet touching the ground yet you hardly aware of it, in an inebriated ecstasy, we cajole ourselves to take *that* decision. And when we wake up the next day, with a heavy hangover, we scratch our heads and ask ourselves “What was *that resolution* I took yesterday?”

Rain does not wait for the rainy season. On the contrary, when it rains, we call it the rainy season. Change does not wait for any season,

event or day. When it is time for a change, it happens. Nature has it that things cannot remain static or unchanged. Everything around us changes and grows by its predestined cycle of change. (Darwin called this evolution, humans try to resist it). Every growth or change will prompt further growth and change. You and I are a part of the cycle whether we realize it or not. What we do not realize is that you and I have this unique capability of choosing our own change unlike any other animal in the universe. Perhaps, it is because we are created in the image of the supreme, with the divinity to choose our own destiny. But, do we exercise this choice with wisdom? When we have a glass in our hand, when we hear the clock chime to ring in the New Year, is that choice made with proper thought?

Ask a woman, did she choose the time and day when she became a mother? When that change happened, that day became most auspicious for her, not because of the date or time. She would have prepared for this in anticipation. Nature would have prepared her for this change. She would have gone through anticipation, doubts, uncertainty and pain. And when the change happened, that time and that date turned out to be most auspicious for her. Not because of a resolution, or a decision to make a change on that day; but because she is prepared for that change. The male can argue that he caused this change. In the whole scheme of that change, perhaps any other male could have done that role! And agreeably, it is a very minor role!

Think about the time when one got married (those who are not married can think about the day they will get married!). We were waiting in anticipation, we were anxious, we were preparing ourselves, expectations and excitement in the air. In short, we were choosing the change very consciously. We were exercising our capability to choose. (Or at least we think we have a choice, although after that day, a lot of choices are made *for us*, and we accept them even when we do not like them!!) And when that happened, we kept the



day as the turning point in our life. A time when we found our better-half, or maybe, we became the better-half of someone else. Do we remember that day because of the uniqueness of that *day & time* or because of the uniqueness of the *change* that happened on that day? Well, 10 years down the line, with a few kids, mortgage etc, the story may be different. We may then be thinking, "How did I let that happen?" Nevertheless, the change did happen because of a conscious choice and action towards fulfilling it.

In fact no change happens until we consciously make a start and are ready to face its challenges fair and square. It has nothing to do with day or time. Preparation, mental anticipation, uncertainty, shedding of the old and embracing the new, all of these go with the process of change. Are you waiting for the right moment to make the change? The right moment is *now and not tomorrow or the New Year eve*. The vital questions to be answered before

making resolutions for change are: a) Are you ready to prepare yourself sufficiently before the change? b) Are you willing to go through the uncertainty that is inherent in any change? c) Are you willing to shed the old for the new and embrace the new? d) Are you willing to take the pain of the change? e) Are you willing to risk the possibility of failing and still push yourself to move forward to achieve success?

Change does not favor the strongest or the smartest; it favors the one who is prepared for the change. So the next time you want to make a change, ask yourself the above questions and evaluate the strength of your own intent, motivation and readiness for change. Once you are ready, make that choice of *starting right away* rather than waiting for the most auspicious time. The moment you start, it will become the most auspicious moment because you are the author of that change. Other wise, a year from now, you will still be wishing you had started a year back!



New Face @ TTC - Joseph Antony



IT professional in UST Global, Kochi. The fresh sense of humor that Joseph brings in is like a cool wind on a sunny day. The candid icebreaker that he did, will be etched in all our memories as one of the most humorous icebreakers in the recent times.





Office Bearers - 2014-15



President
Jaikumar C. Pillai (ACB, ALB)



VP Education
Madhu K.P. (ACB)



VP Membership
A.G. Sojan (ACS, ALB)



VP Public Relations
Baiju Gopinath



Secretary
Geogy Sabu Jose



Treasurer
Roopchand C. R.



Sergeant at Arms
Rani Alex





KALEIDOSCOPE

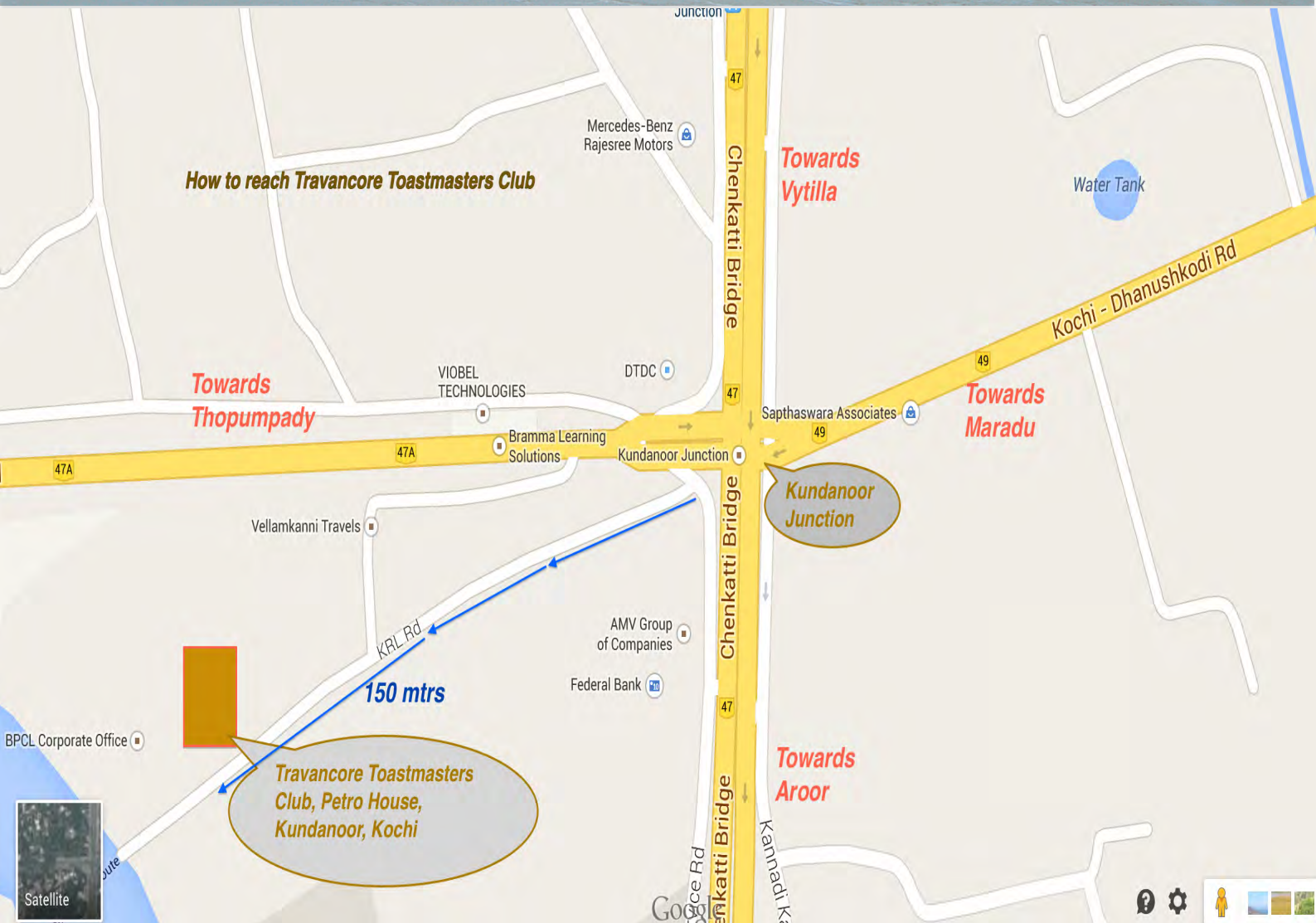


HOW TO REACH OR CONTACT TRAVANCORE TOASTMASTERS CLUB

We meet at Petro House, Near BPCL Corporate Office, Kundanoor, Kochi on every Sunday, at 2:45 PM. If you think you could be benefited from Toastmasters movement, you are most welcome to be part of our weekly meeting as a guest. There you could get a first hand experience as to how we conduct our meeting. You could also contact one of the Office-bearers of the club to get more details or additional help you may need:

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Web page – www.travancoretoastmasters.org



Travancore Toastmasters Club, Petro House, Kundanoor, Kochi.