**Journey to the Toastmasters** 16th March 2017

While sitting in a room with my colleagues and other officials one day, I wondered what is the objective of this meeting, why am I in this room, should I raise my voice and ask question on the objectives, ask some challenging questions or add few important points. Well I kept thinking about it and very soon the meeting got over and I had task list in my hand. I felt frustrated again as I couldn’t speak up and I kept thinking about speaking however couldn’t formulate my message and couldn’t think on my feet. I just kept wondering, whether what I am going to speak really will be appreciated, accepted or even well received. This became pattern of my life in most of the engagements in groups and meetings. I kept wondering what should I do to change it, where’s the solution and answer to my challenges. The more I focused on quickly fixing my inner challenges, the stronger it became.

I started to read many books; listen to audios, even went for yoga classes to find the answers. May be I need to be in peace to structure my thoughts, may be I need to be more knowledgeable, may be I need to feel good about myself and so on. However I could never figure out what I really needed to do. I kept on struggling and more I worked to quickly fix my inner challenges, they stronger it became.

One day my friend told me about Toastmasters and I really couldn’t understand what he was talking about. My friend also had just heard about it and he asked me to go for a meeting. I joined him for the meeting and I liked the way people were supportive and encouraging each other. However my sense of being audience quickly vanished when one person came on stage and could pick up any one to come to stage to speak. I felt very nervous as in the “Table Topics” you can be suddenly called on stage to speak on something. I really prayed that hopefully they don’t call my name on the stage as I struggle to formulate my thoughts and I will be caught right in the center of this meeting and people will joke about me. Some prayers aren’t always answered and I was called on the stage. The walk from my chair ten feet away to the center stage seemed like earthquake and almost everything inside me was shaking.

Now I stood on the stage and looked around the room and I connected back to my pattern “I can’t structure my thoughts” and in the mean time the topic was read out loud. I looked at the person reading out the topic and asked “I am sorry what is the topic…” and I still couldn’t concentrate and was working on getting my senses under control. The topic was read again and the topic was “Struggle is path to Success”. Something clicked inside me and I immediately connected with the topic and my struggle inside. Immediately I realized that if I am able to keep moving with my struggle someday I will be successful and then I can share the story.

So on the stage I spoke as if I have struggled with my pattern all my life and finally took the courage to face it one day and change it. My own words connected something deep inside me and I started to experiment to give positive suggestions to myself such as “I am good in structuring my thoughts” and “I feel comfortable in the meetings” and also I started to imagine the perfect image.

Soon the world around me started to change and before I realized I completed ten Projects of my Toastmasters speech and I couldn’t believe one day when I opened by old diary page where I had mentioned how I couldn’t fix my pattern and not being able to structure my thoughts. Here I was after ten speeches telling people how they can structure their message and story.

The transition from struggler to becoming excited to talk happened slowly but naturally and I began to participate on many forums and started to feel comfortable sharing my opinions and suggestions.

I am still grateful to my friend who introduced me to Toastmasters because if it was not for him, I would have not written this article telling you that whatever your communication challenge or pattern be, just being in an encouraging and supportive environment you can let go the past struggles and evolve as new person. The new person who can dream, inspire and most importantly can make a difference in others life and in this world.

Live your dreams, let go what’s holding you and become a Toastmaster and find better and probably hidden best self of yours.

Every journey begins with first step.