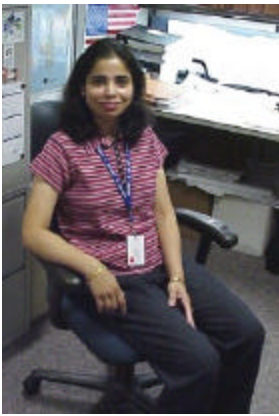


## Toastmasters Treasures...Profiles in Performance

by Peggy Lynn, CTM/CL, PR Reporter



Here's a lady who packs a powerful punch! Booma! Even the name sounds explosive! Actually Booma means "the planet earth" and symbolizes "patience" in the language and culture of India. District 22's **Booma Venkataraman**, CTM, may represent more of the consistent push of an "earth-QUAKE" as much as anything else as you might see!

Born and reared in the "City of Joy" - Calcutta, India, of parents who started that push, Booma brought it to the USA in 1997. Education was of primary importance to her parents, especially being "good in English and Math." Of course, as the dutiful daughter, Booma complied and took a certain amount of pride in her command of English as a second language, that is, until she reached America!

"I landed in (Maryland) USA, as a trainee for Bechtel Corporation. On my first day at work, my supervisor (who was Indian-American) introduced me to my colleague Matt Campbell. Matt said a few words to me. To my utter horror, I did not understand one word of what he said! I thought I was doomed, my pride took a big hit! But I gathered up courage to talk to my supervisor almost in tears about the incident. My supervisor was nice, he reassured me. He led me back to Matt, and told him, 'Look Booma is from India, please speak slowly to her.' I was surprised to see that Matt was so accommodating. Over the next few days, I came to understand him slowly and he came to understand me. Later on I came to know that Matt is from West Virginia."

Whether Americans are from Maryland, West Virginia, Kansas, Missouri or anywhere, Booma learned quickly that MOST are accommodating,

helpful and even nurturing of her desire to do well. However, the value of essential and effective communication has impacted her life tremendously from that particular "Day One" in the States. "Seek to understand first" and then, "to be understood," says Booma, who subsequently resolved to improve her own skills and help others as well. Enter Toastmasters International.

Booma is with us today as a product of outsourcing. Originally hired by Bechtel-India, the story of her first day took place while on temporary training in the USA. In January, 2000, Overland Park's Black and Veatch offered her permanent placement as an Electrical Engineer. She has ten years of experience in the field of Power projects. "During these 10 years, I have worn several hats from design engineer to field construction engineer and had the opportunity to work on many projects around the world."

Along came the opportunity to wear yet another hat in our world of Toastmasters. Recalling her resolution "to improve" and "help others," Booma says, "It is this resolve that drew me to Toastmasters." Via the **Quemasters** Club at B&V, Booma LEAPed to join TI in July, 2000. "It has been an ecstatic and rewarding journey since. It has been a journey of personal growth and enrichment. Not only has it boosted my confidence and improved my speaking skills, it has also opened the doors to new challenges like leadership roles in the Area."

Most Toastmasters realize that the benefits of TI participation can be endless and, oftentimes, helping to create the impetus for new ventures. During Booma's stretch with her first ten speeches to CTM, the Competent Toastmasters Award, the motivation to research, prepare and compete was "intense" A believer in contests, Booma states, "Competition is the essence of improvement." Taking that thought seriously, Booma's Club voted her "Best Speaker" with nine out of her first ten CTM speeches! She vows that "this was just

the beginning. At every step there is something to look forward to, improve upon with new goals to meet!" (Can we feel the tremors of an earthquake?)

Booma credits her club, Quemasters, as a "fundamental, strong asset" in her quest to succeed. According to Booma, "The biggest help to any newcomer is encouragement and opportunities." Club stalwarts like 15-year veteran Toastmaster **Al Voorhees**, DTM, "always takes time to help new members," she says. Booma cherishes the fact that Al gave her "useful tips at the conclusion of [her] speeches- everyone of them!" Booma's Mentor **Joan Wilk**, CTM, has also been a great help.

Leadership roles erupted in 2001, as Booma became the Club's VP Membership. "Powered by the training at TLI (Toastmasters Leadership Institute), armed with fresh ideas, we went from a club of 6 members to a swashbuckling 27 in a matter of a few months. Our club is strong and dynamic today." The push continues as Booma is currently Club VP Education.

Encouraged by Al and Division S Governor **Diana Kovac**, DTM, Booma is now serving as S4's Assistant Area Governor. Enjoying the fruits of her endeavors, Booma continues saying, "I see myself in more leadership roles in the future." First, however, she will complete her Masters Business Administration in Finance from UMKC this summer.

"I thought I should develop some cross-functional skills to help my career." She also serves as an Executive Board Member for the Pratchi Club, a non-profit organization promoting Indian art and culture in Kansas City. In spare time, Booma tends to other civic service-minded events like ACS Relay for Life and Christmas in October through B&V.

Recapping, "The benefits of Toastmasters are multifold. It does offer you the tools, motivates you to set your goals but helps you to work at your own pace. And I can't emphasize it any more," Booma conveys. Fondly recalling her foundation, "My parents are visionaries." Their vision of the successful offspring, instilled with a work ethic and tireless drive in this daughter they wanted, as the name inspires, "to be a patient person" has emerged. Booma admits, "Patience is certainly a virtue," but she also now favors a somewhat contradictory phrase from Robert Frost: "And miles to go before I sleep." Whether Booma Venkataraman pits patience with restlessness, sleeps before an explosion of activity or lies dormant awhile like a future earthquake, we, in District 22, TREASURE this gem within our midst and look forward to benefiting in whatever fine way she chooses to erupt for us!

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