

ON BECOMING 21

THE START TO ROWING YOUR OWN BOAT

MADIHA KHAN

For obvious reasons, becoming 21 is a very big deal in some parts of the world. But here in Bangladesh, it's kind of different. You're finally fully grown up. Being 18 or 19 doesn't really count because those were the last stages of your angsty teenage years. Even being 20 is like a trial period; imagine dipping your pinky toe in the pool to test the temperature before finally jumping in. That is what turning 21 is all about - taking that leap.

So congratulations to me and everybody who's made it this far in life. Here are a few things I wanted to talk about as I don the outfit of this heavy age.

Highway to success

You're not a kid anymore and life will make sure you know it as you hurtle through a bombardment of questions you know nothing about like, "When are you graduating?", "What are your career plans?", "Masters after this or marriage?". The best you can do is stare silently and comment on the growing number of blackheads on their faces. However, as intrusive as these questions may be, sometimes I believe their concerns stem from good intentions. Or they just need to fill the air with sounds of their own voice. Regardless, you'll be regularly reminded that you're no longer messing around and you're officially on the highway to success, wherever and whatever that might be.

Responsibilities

This one's real. Chances are, by this time, you'll have had a small part time job or at least a definite amount of



pocket money coming from your parents. You're officially responsible for satisfying your random food cravings, trips to the movie theatre, friends' birthdays etc. Money is a small part of it and I'm told if you're not paying your own rent, your real struggle hasn't started yet. It's also true that becoming 21 won't magically add new responsibilities to your plate, like organising your room, buying your clothes, paying your tuition fees etc. It's a steady build-up of responsibilities. So buckle up and stay

alert. Missing the last date of paying registration fees is not a jocular matter.

Adult club

One of the coolest realisations of becoming a part of the adult club is finding out that nobody actually has all their stuff figured out. What happens to most people is that they get thrown into a river of uncertainty and they let the current take them to their destinations. It's interesting to be in the shoes of the adults who seemed like they had life figured out. But it's also scary because you have to decide whether you want to let the current guide you or you want to resist it and go along a different path.

Unfinished journeys, flings, and heartbreaks

Now that you're here, surely you'll have left some unfinished ordeals in your past. You'll have had dabbled in certain areas, only to forget why you even bothered at all. You might have envisioned yourself in one career path only to be suddenly wanting something else.

There might be certain skills that you wanted to learn, as well. A stint at learning French, two months of piano lessons etc. They were basically ways to pass your time and now you have your eyes on other things.

Many people say birthdays are just an excuse to make people feel special. Nothing magical is going to happen on the certain 365th day of your life and it's true. But with every step in life, you need to look around sometimes to realize how far you've come. Being 21 is just one of those steps.



BUYING GIFTS FOR CHILDREN

ZARIN RAYHANA

A few months ago, I was given the responsibility of buying a birthday gift for an eight-year-old who lives two blocks away from me. Quite clueless about what little boys are interested in nowadays, I ended up buying a pink coloured box of crayons coupled with a Dragon Ball Z action figure set, something that unfortunately didn't turn out to be very popular these days. I was pretty embarrassed of my faux pas. To prevent such further embarrassments of looking very outdated (and I'm still a teen), I decided to ask some random children their favourite kinds of gifts, and here are the results:

Ages 3-4

Girls: This is obviously the age of playing with dolls, but things kids these days tell me are shocking. While the majority stuck with traditional favourites such as dollhouses, Barbies and toy kitchen accessories, some expressed their love for makeup boxes, nail polish and lipstick (including my cousin).

Boys: Disney Cars toys, Transformers figures, electric motorbikes, cricket gear were the

top wanted. Since this is the stage when complex cognitive functions start developing in the brain, some of the kids (both girls and boys) seemed interested in jigsaw puzzles.

Ages 5-6

Girls: The love for makeup continued while the demand for Lego sets and colour pencils were on the rise. Doll Makeover and DIY Jewelry kits, clothes, Disney movie DVDs, and backpacks were recurrent. Android tabs (!!) were also a demand. Some girls wanted electric pianos.

Boys: They shared the interest in Lego sets, board games, and Android tablets, but you can't find a boy who doesn't love remote control cars and helicopters. Most of them spoke of this remote control stunt car that spins and flips. Star Wars toys, Beyblades and Pokemon Cards were less common even though during my time, boys would secretly skip lunch at school to play with them.

Age 7-8

Girls: I'm amazed by how a lot of girls wanted bicycles but complained about how there is less space for them to ride. Many of them took interests in poster

paints, story books and cameras. Makeup was mentioned less but jewelries such as bangles were loved. A couple of girls wanted video game CDs, and I can relate with them since I loved playing video games at this age. (Age of Empires 2 and GTA: San Andreas were my favourite and still are.)

Boys: The huge demand for a PlayStation 4 and video games started from this age group. Many of them yearned for electronic gadgets such as smart watches and drones, while others took the traditional approach and wanted board games such as Monopoly Junior or toys such as Nerf guns. Small pool tables and Sony headphones were also asked for.

Now that things have been made easier, you could go with the affordable options or the pricey ones according to your wish, but either way you are going to love being the reason behind a toothy grin on a cute little face.

Zarin Rayhana is a self-aggrandizing ambivert who ponders over philosophical epiphanies during rainy evenings and waits for her crush to jump straight out of her favourite