



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

Ways to achieve your resolutions in 2021

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

On January 1, everyone seems to have an idea about what their new year will look like, from healthier habits to learning new skills. But we have all made resolutions that we have broken. Once that “new year” feeling is gone, and you slip back into your old routine, it is harder to stay committed to your goals. Welcoming the new year may feel a bit different this year, given the challenges of 2020. Nonetheless, here is a list of ways to actually achieve your new year’s resolutions.

KEEP THEM REALISTIC

It is crucial to understand how much and which goals you can actually achieve. Coming up with practical resolutions is the first step towards accomplishing them. Refer to your previous habits and draft a list that you can easily follow on a daily basis. Resolutions are sup-

posed to be fun, so don’t overwhelm yourself.

WRITE THEM DOWN

Before you start, write down your resolutions somewhere easily accessible, preferably a diary. Use bright colours when you write them down. You can categorise them into your long-term and short-term goals. Plan things ahead of time and execute it over the next twelve months.

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR PROGRESS

For this, you can break down a resolution into monthly attainable goals. At the end of the first three months, check how far you’ve arrived. This would also act as a source of motivation. Instead of hurrying up, go slow and steady, ticking off things as you continue. Monthly planners are a good way to maintain records and there are several apps and websites that can help you keep track.

GIVE YOURSELF REMINDERS

Most of us tend to forget our plans and aspirations by the middle of the year. Reminders are an effective way of pushing yourself towards your goals. When you keep track of your progress, set up flexible deadlines and try to accomplish them. Apps like Microsoft To Do and nTask are helpful in this regard. This would ensure that you do not neglect your resolutions.

REWARD YOURSELF

Once you start accomplishing your goals, make it a point to reward yourself. For example, if you have accomplished your reading goals, treat yourself to a good book adaptation or binge watch a show. Rewards will keep you motivated throughout the year.

The author likes to read her way through life, and you will always find her scribbling and planning. To send recommendations and help, write to her at mislammonamee@gmail.com.



YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

An Essay Competition on ‘What Liberation Means to Me?’

We understand that “Liberation” can mean different things to different people, places and contexts. In 1971, for us “Liberation” meant getting freedom from the genocidal regime and establishing Bangladesh as a valorous and independent country. As we look back and contemplate, we want to ask you the following question: What does the word “Liberation” mean to you – the youth of Bangladesh?

Submit your answer in the form of an essay to participate in the “What Liberation means to me?” competition, which is organized by Youth Opportunities in collaboration with the High Commission of India, Dhaka. The competition gives you a platform to share your vision and idea of “Liberation” with the whole nation.

DEADLINE: January 10, 2021 | Competitions



Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships 2021 – Second Cycle

Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships give talented students from anywhere in the Commonwealth the opportunity to gain a Master’s degree while developing new skills, experiencing life in another country, and building their global networks. Scholarships are for students committed to creating change in their communities and contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The scholarships are named in honour of Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth and ACU Patron, and are fully funded and supported by numerous Commonwealth governments.

DEADLINE: January 18, 2021 | Scholarships

Green Institute Sustainability Internship 2021 (Grant of \$1000)

The Green Institute Internship is a 6-month innovative virtual program for garnering knowledge, skills and experience in the field of sustainability. The program aims to nurture college students and fresh graduates (not more than two years), thereby bridging the gap between education and career development. It does this by offering on-the-job-training and experience for effective employee development.

DEADLINE: January 19, 2021 | Internships

SARA KABIR

In 2013, a group of seven boys, all from different backgrounds, who left behind their friends and family to follow their dream of becoming K-pop artists, were about to debut. But soon afterwards, their hopes were crushed as the bad press from the media, internal strife and lack of proper finance forced them to almost disband multiple times. But they kept on fighting for their dream, even if that meant living in one cramped dorm room and having to beg people to come to their concerts. These boys had very humble beginnings – one of the members, Yoongi, recently had a surgery to repair a torn shoulder labrum. The tear was related to an injury that occurred in 2012, when the performer was hit by a car during one of his delivery-boy shifts.

Flash forward to years later, that same group of boys from South Korea, Bangtan Sonyeondan (BTS), are now one of the biggest boy bands in the world. Among other outstanding achievements, they have multiple No. 1 albums in the US Billboard Hot 100, 15 Guinness World Records and over 300 awards. BTS are the youngest recipients of South Korea’s Order of Cultural Merit award and the first ever K-pop act to receive a Grammy nomination. They are changing the world and the face of K-pop forever, paving the way for others.

For years, BTS struggled to get their music heard. They were not an overnight success, like some people might believe. But because of their struggles and despite of it, they became worldwide superstars and South Korea’s pride and joy. BTS refuse to be confined within the boundaries of the “K-pop” industry, instead often experimenting with different, versatile styles and musical genres like Hip-Hop, Jazz, EDM, R&B, Latin pop, Ballad, Country and Rock among others. Each of the seven members embody various roles and positions in the group, such as dancer, vocalist, leader, rapper, producer, choreographer, and more.

BTS’s music transcends language, time and cultural barriers; their raw and relatable lyrics resonates with people, going through different stages of life. The healing power of their music does not discriminate. The majority of their self-written and self-produced songs discuss socio-political issues found in contemporary society such as mental health, toxic-masculinity, women’s empowerment, self-love, capitalism, burn-out and the struggles of growing up among other things. Most of their topics are still taboo in the culturally-conservative Asia and are often brushed away as non-existent.

The Korean music industry is known for their “manufactured” and “engineered” sound, where the artists themselves have no say in what they are singing about,



PHOTO: COLLECTED FROM THE BTS OFFICIAL FACEBOOK PAGE

BTS’ official music video photo sketch for ‘Dynamite’.

but instead, have their music written and produced by a group of professionals fit for the industry standards. BTS breaks all those preconceived rules by having a voice in their own music. They have started a new trend for Korean singers to explore more complex and impactful themes.

These motifs are often seen in both their studio albums and individual mixtapes. In their latest album “BE”, which was released on November 20, 2020, BTS shared their experiences and hopes during the pandemic, as they embrace “Be”-ing in this new reality. The relatable lyrics and catchy beats in titles like “Fly to my Room”, “Dis-ease”, “Stay” and “Telepathy” are contrasted with the raw, emotional ballads like “Blue & Grey” and “Life Goes On”.

This album also features their first ever completely English language song, “Dynamite”. It consoles anyone struggling with their mental health during these times and is a beacon of hope for listeners that everything will be okay and life goes on. To me, this album feels like a warm hug from a loved one on a cold winter morning.

BTS’s fans, known as ARMY (short for Adorable Representative MC for Youth) are a group of passionate and creative individuals, from all walks of life, who stand by BTS and each other through thick and thin. Shehrin Tabassum Odri, a digital marketer and an ARMY since 2018, shared her story of how much of an impact BTS has had in her life. “When I was at my loneliest, having hit rock bottom and losing the will to live, BTS was there for me. It was the day they released their ‘Life Goes On’ music video,” she says. “The song was like a wakeup call. It made me realise how many future oppor-

tunities and loved ones I will be losing if I give up now and that I’m not the only one feeling this miserable and lost, the members of BTS have gone through this phase too. If they have found a way to stay hopeful for the future to change and better times to come, maybe I should hold on a bit longer too. BTS gave me the hope to keep living.”

“In conservative countries like ours, masculinity is associated with tall, bearded men with deep voices,” mentions Sumaiya Islam, a Nuclear Science and Engineering student. “In a society where men struggle to be vulnerable and be seen as ‘manly’ enough, BTS breaks the gender norms by wearing makeup, jewellery, gender-neutral clothes, and long, colourful hair. They have completely changed my viewpoint on Asian men.” Sumaiya has been an ARMY since 2018.

Atanu Roy Chowdhury shared that the band makes him feel “seen”. “Mental health is affecting our lives, but people don’t want to talk about it. BTS is using the universal language of music to tell the world how important mental health is,” he says. “One of my closest friends died by suicide in 2012, and there are times when it still breaks my heart thinking that I will never see her or talk to her again. Songs from BTS albums help to ease the pain. Having my favourite musicians talk about such issues makes me feel more connected to them.”

By breaking down age-old, ignorant ideas like “men don’t cry” and “only girls can wear makeup”, openly talking about their struggles and sharing their emotions, BTS are showing the world that gender does not have to confine anyone and there should be no one standard of being. Group

members Min Yoongi (Suga), Kim Namjoon (RM) and recently, Kim Taehyung (V) and Kim Seokjin (Jin), are known for being open about their struggles with anxiety, depression and burn-out. “I have been called ‘girly’ because I like cooking, cleanliness and keeping my hair long. Even the way I walk has been criticised. Terms like ‘girly’ and ‘gay’ are so easily used as insults, when they should not be,” adds Atanu. “Toxic masculinity is so ingrained in us, and it affects people of all ages. BTS is fighting a difficult fight, and kudos to them for that!” Seeing someone like BTS’ Jungkook be named “Sexiest International Man Alive 2020”, in a sphere usually dominated by white men, can do wonders for brown, Asian men worldwide, giving them an ideal person they can actually relate to. Another ARMY, Niaz Ahmed, shared that messages from the band to “Love Yourself” (a trilogy of their albums in 2018) resonated with him. “Their music was eye-opening, and helped me to start thinking that being happy with who I am is very important,” he says.

Subyeta Sarwar mentioned how being a part of the BTS fandom in Bangladesh has helped her connect with other ARMYs easily, creating deep bonds and long-lasting friendships. Going to different events such as the BD Korean Festival, hosted by BD K-Family, has helped her socialise and meet fellow ARMYs. Since there is a lack of K-pop concerts in Bangladesh, these events are the closest fans can get to experiencing them.

For fans who have been with BTS for a couple of years like myself, it feels like we are growing up with them, experiencing the highs and lows of their lives and career alongside them, not as a distant fan, but as a close friend. There is a popular saying in the fandom, “If you are not a fan of BTS now, it’s because you’re not at a point where you need them yet. Just wait, they’ll find you and come to you when you need to be healed, never too early or too late.”

In the pop-dominated culture we live in, BTS have successfully utilised their music platform to spread the message of social inequality and injustice, which the youth often face. By speaking up about these issues, BTS are not only breaking the preconceived societal stereotypes and creating awareness, they are also urging their fans to do the same. To quote the group’s leader, Kim Namjoon (RM), from his UNICEF speech at the United Nations in 2018, “No matter who you are, where you’re from, your skin colour, gender identity: speak yourself.”

The author studies English Literature in North South University. She is often found raving about her favourite books, songs and movies. Find her at @scarletfangirl on Instagram.