

MY HIJAB DOESN'T ONLY SYMBOLIZE MY FAITH, BUT IT'S ALSO A SYMBOL OF STRENGTH AND INDEPENDENCE.

— MARYAM



sneakers. The simplicity of the subtle colours makes her strong red lipstick pop even more.

"My favourite store is Weekday and my favourite item must be the long coat. It covers up the parts of my body I don't want exposed and it adds the minimalistic yet modest touch I like. I started wearing the hijab almost three years ago and it must be the most valuable decision I have ever made. One of the many thoughts that were circling in my head was 'why worry about how society tells you to dress when you should be worried about how you should dress for God.' It was a way for me to get closer to God. Wearing it, I'm constantly reminded of God and I have him in my thoughts everywhere I go. The hijab is my freedom of choice and it is something that makes me feel peaceful and happy. I have never felt so content before in my life, and it is something that has strengthened me as an individual."

"A couple of years ago if a girl was wearing a hijab she wasn't following fashion, but now mixing fashion with it is very fresh and new," says Setareh, a 24-year-old economy student who runs a cake-baking operation on the side and does a lot of volunteering in her spare time.

The blue room at Blå Lotus feels very fitting when Setareh walks in wearing a bright blue hijab with a matching turquoise necklace. She looks exquisite, with her striking eye-makeup, rings on almost every finger, and a Marc Jacobs gold watch – a gift from her brother.

"I've always been a person who wears unique clothes, like I was the one who would wear pink pants in the middle of winter. I basically wear the clothes I want to wear. I was wearing more different colours and patterns before, but as I've become older I've changed my style and prefer more subtle colours. I would say my favourite item is a pair of black pants; it really matches with everything. And I shop in all the usual stores: H&M, Zara, Mango. It's really all about how you combine items yourself to create outfits."

"A few years ago you wouldn't see scarfs at normal stores and it was really hard to find them. But a couple of years ago I read an article in Metro where they had asked big stores in Sweden if they would start selling more scarfs, but they said they didn't want to define themselves as selling clothes related to religion. But about a year later there were a lot of scarfs in stores, like big ones that you could wear as a hijab."

"I've been wearing hijabs since I was nine and it means everything to me. My whole life is about the hijab, because it defines my faith and I'm very proud to show what religion I belong to. I've seen some girls being unsure about it and having to struggle with wearing it, but it has never been that way for me, and I'm very happy for that."

Born and raised in Iran, Setareh moved to Sweden when she was ten. "There's a lot of Mipsterz in Iran who are combining restrictions with their own personal styles, which is very interesting to see. Things are very different there from ten years ago, and are becoming much freer in some ways and there have been noticeable improvements lately."

Back in Iran, Setareh's mother was a reputable carpet weaver – one of the best in the country, according to her daughter – and