



Behind the Hijab

WITH THE MISCONCEPTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH BEING MUSLIM, THREE SENIORS SHOW WHAT IS REALLY BEHIND HIJIB AND THE TRUTH ABOUT ISLAM.

By Meredith Johnson

“I was not forced to wear it, it is my choice to wear it,” Senior Tanzeem Malek said. “Some people think that they will wear it when they are ready. When they feel they know more about their religion, they will wear it then.”

Malek is referring to a hijab, or head scarf, that is a component of her Muslim religion. While hijabs are often portrayed as being misogynistic or sexist, Malek said hijabs show devotion to religion and are worn entirely by choice. It is what is behind the hijab that matters, morality and modesty.

When Malek began wearing the hijab her junior year, she said she was worried people’s perception of her would change. However, most people at BVNW were accepting and recognized her even with her hijab.

While Malek said she is a hijabi, someone who wears a hijab, other Muslim girls wear burkas, coverings that veil their entire bodies and sometimes even cover their eyes with a sheer piece of fabric, and other girls do not even wear hijabs. According to Malek, the decision depends on people’s different interpretations of

the Quran, or holy book.

Senior Nadia Nawabi said she does not wear the hijab because she is still learning more about her religion.

Hijab comes from the heart and having respect for oneself, and Nawabi said it is not necessarily just a head covering.

“Islam is all about intention,”

Nawabi said. “So if you have intention in your heart to be modest and ... not do bad things, then you’re a hijabi, whether you have the head covering or not. I do [consider myself a hijabi]. Although I don’t cover my hair and most people would tell me I’m wrong, I still feel [I’m a hijabi.]”

Nawabi said she shows the same modesty and character as other Muslim women who wear a hijab. She still wears long-sleeves and long pants to demonstrate her devotion to piety.

“[Being Muslim is] more than just covering your hair ... it’s a way of life,” Nawabi said. “It’s being just a good person and seeing life and embracing life, and not seeing challenges but opportunities in life.”

Other than wearing a hijab, Malek said being a Muslim does not really impact her daily life. She admits,

however, that her life would be different if she was still living in India. Malek said she feels less self-conscious if she wears American clothes, even though she would normally wear traditional Indian attire. Malek’s mom, Shaheen Malek, said that Malek is very confident in her religion.

“Wearing a hijab comes from your heart and you’re not forced or anything,” Shaheen said. “You submit yourself to that religion and God and you want to do anything for that god. You show your modesty, and cover yourself, which is recommended for Islam. She decided on her own to do that. She is happy doing it.”

Malek said the hijab is a positive thing in her life. It is part of her identity, and makes her who she is. Even so, Malek’s religion comes with some restrictions.

These limitations extend beyond the daily wardrobe. According to Malek, she is not allowed to be in the same room with a boy alone or have any physical contact with the opposite sex. Sometimes, Malek said this cannot be avoided because of a school activity. In this instance, it is tolerated.