242925 - He feels uncomfortable about wearing the ihram garments

the question

My question is about the ihram garments, as I feel uncomfortable about wearing them, especially as the possibility of the body becoming uncovered is greater, especially the upper part of the body, and I feel embarrassed by that, and also uncovering the right shoulder in tawaaf. The reason for this problem is that the fact that women's seeing the man's body may be a cause of fitnah (temptation), and men seeing one another may also be a cause of fitnah, especially since some of them – may Allah guide them – do not care whether their bodies are covered or not, so they are content to wear the waist wrapper only. Some of them are old and some of them are young. I hope that you can help me to deal with this problem.'

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Ihram is prescribed as a demonstration of the individual's humility before his Lord, by appearing dishevelled and avoiding any means of adornment that may generate feelings of pride and superiority. When the muhrim (pilgrim in ihram) wears the two ihram garments, he feels humbled and it dispels any feelings of pride and conceit that happen when one wears fine clothes. It is well-known that adornment and fine clothes are things that make one feel proud, conceited and arrogant. Al-Bukhaari narrated in his Saheeh (3485) from Ibn 'Umar that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whilst a man was letting his izaar (waist wrapper) drag out of conceit, he was swallowed up by the earth, and he has been sinking into the earth (and will continue to do so) until the Day of Resurrection."

Muslim (2088) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Whilst a man was walking, admiring his long hair and his fine cloak, the earth swallowed him up and he will continue to sink down into the earth until the Day of Resurrection."

Hence wisdom dictates that the muhrim should take off his ordinary clothes and put on the ihram garments that are worn by all people alike, rich and poor, old and young, black and white, masters and slaves.

It says in Fataawa al-Lajnah ad-Daa'imah (11/129):

There are many reasons why it is prescribed not to wear stitched garments during Hajj and 'Umrah, including the following: to remind us of how people will be on the Day of Resurrection, for on that Day they will be raised barefoot and naked, then they will be clothed. Reminding people of the hereafter offers an important exhortation and lesson. Another reason is so as to subdue the nafs (self) and make it feel humble, and purifying it of the taint of pride, and so as to highlight the principles of closeness, equality and minimalism, and to keep away from ostentation, and to show empathy with the poor and needy… And these objectives may be attained by performing Hajj in the manner prescribed by Allah and explained by His Messenger (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). End quote.

Whatever Allah, may He be exalted, has prescribed for the believer, he should do it without any hesitation or embarrassment. This is the condition of faith and the sign of surrendering to the rulings of the Lord of the Worlds. Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

"But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission"

[an-Nisa' 4:65].

So not feeling any resistance (or embarrassment) towards the ruling of Allah, may He be exalted, and the ruling of His Messenger is a condition of faith.

Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said in as-Saarim al-Maslool 'ala Shaatim ar-Rasool (1/37):

Allah, may He be glorified, swears by Himself that they can have no faith until they make him (the

Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) judge in all disputes between them, then find no resistance in themselves against his decision or verdict; rather they accept his verdict both outwardly and inwardly. End quote.

Ibn al-Qayyim said in at-Tibyaan fi Aqsaam al-Qur'an (652 – 'Aalam al-Fawaa'id edition):

Allah swears by Himself to affirm that people do not truly believe or have faith until they make His Messenger judge in all disputes that arise among them, concerning both fundamentals and minor issues and rulings of sharee'ah, and believe all that He has told them about the resurrection, the divine attributes, and so on.

Their faith is not proven by merely making His Messenger judge in such cases, unless they no longer feel any resistance, which means discomfort or hesitation, and their hearts become fully at ease with his decision or verdict, and they accept it completely and wholeheartedly.

Their faith is not proven thereby, until there is added to it acceptance of his decision or verdict with complete approval and submission, with no dispute or objection. End quote.

He also said in as-Sawaa'iq al-Mursalah, refuting the Jahamis who denied the divine attributes (1/266 – Adwa' as-Salaf edition):

Allah, may He be glorified, swears by Himself that we will not truly believe until we make His Messenger judge in all disputes that arise among us, and accept his decision or verdict wholeheartedly, so that there is no resistance or hesitation concerning it, and we submit fully to his decision or verdict, and do not object to it on the basis of some argument, personal opinion, whims and desires, or anything else. End quote.

Hence you will realise that the discomfort that you feel in your heart towards this Islamic teaching (of wearing the ihram garments) is something that must be fought until you feel comfortable and at ease with the command of Allah, may He be exalted, and until your desires are in accordance with what was brought by the most truthful one (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

Allah, may He be exalted, also says (interpretation of the meaning):

“It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed in a plain error”

[al-Ahzaab 33:36].

Ibn Katheer (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This verse is general in meaning and applies to all matters, because once Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter, no one has the right to go against it or have a choice concerning it, or any different view or opinion, as Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“But no, by your Lord, they can have no Faith, until they make you (O Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) judge in all disputes between them, and find in themselves no resistance against your decisions, and accept (them) with full submission”

[an-Nisa’ 4:65].

According to the hadith: “By the one in Whose hand is my soul, no one of you truly believes until his desires are in accordance with what I have brought.” Hence Allah speaks sternly about going against that, as He says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed in a plain error”

[al-Ahzaab 33:36].

This is like the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And let those who oppose the Messenger’s (Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)) commandment (i.e. his Sunnah legal ways, orders, acts of worship, statements, etc.) (among the sects) beware, lest some Fitnah (disbelief, trials, afflictions, earthquakes, killing, overpowered by a tyrant, etc.) befall them or a painful torment be inflicted on them”

[an-Noor 24:63].

End quote from Tafseer Ibn Katheer (6/423)

Ibn al-Qayyim (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

This indicates that if it is proven that Allah and His Messenger have decreed a ruling concerning any matter, or have told us something (about matters of the unseen, past or future), then no one has the right to choose for himself anything other than that ruling and choose anything contrary to the decree of Allah or believe anything contrary to what He has told us of matters of the unseen, because no believer, male or female, has the right to do that in the first place, because doing so is contrary to faith.

End quote from ar-Risaalah at-Tabookiyyah (36).

With regard to what you mentioned about fitnah (temptation) being caused for some women or men because of that, this is easily remedied and dealt with. Whoever adhere to the ruling of Allah, may He be exalted, to lower the gaze, avoid pushing and shoving, and avoid dubious situations, will be safe from fitnah, in sha Allah.

Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.). That is purer for them. Verily, Allah is All-Aware of what they do.

And tell the believing women to lower their gaze (from looking at forbidden things), and protect their private parts (from illegal sexual acts, etc.) and not to show off their adornment except only that which is apparent”

[an-Noor 24:30, 31].

And Allah knows best.