The Prophetic Approach in Overcoming Obstacles Facing Women's Creativity

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ABSTRACT

This study looks at the role played by the Prophetic *Sunnah* in overcoming the obstacles and constraints that may face women's creativity. The study starts by giving a general idea about creativity in chapter one, Chapter two shows how women's status differed tremendously after Islam compared to their status before Islam. Chapter three defines Sunnah and stresses its importance, and states the positive factors which affect creativity and Sunnah's way of implementing them. Chapter four shows that by applying the Prophetic Sunnah Muslim women in the early Islamic era overcame the negative factors or obstacles to creativity which they had suffered from before Islam. And the last chapter tackles the modern day Muslims' conditions regarding creativity, and the right way to reawaken and make use of it.

Keywords: Hadith of the Prophet, Women, Creativity.

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to developed civilizations throughout history, the Islamic nation (Ummah) was in the lead for many centuries. However, it lagged behind in the past two centuries and has been suffering and struggling ever since. As a result, creativity among the Muslims in modern times is little heard of, and the phenomena of 'imitation' on the one hand and 'cultural closure' on the other hand have replaced all aspects of creativity that the Muslims had been known for in the past. As part of any society, women are both influenced and influential in the overall condition of societies. Their creativity is therefore either positively or negatively affected by those conditions. This research studies those conditions and women's role in development in the light of the guidance of the prophetic Sunnah.

This research proves that in order for Muslim nations to gain back the passion for knowledge and creativity, and to advance and build a developed and civilized nation, they should hold on to the divine sources, namely: Quran and Sunnah, and use them as means for science and development, creativity and freedom.

Questions and problem of this research

What is the status of women in the prophetic sunnah, how women's status differed after Islam, how does the prophetic sunnah support creativity and overcome obstacles face it, what are the positive factors which affect creativity and Sunnah's way of implementing them, how does the prophetic sunnah help Muslims to gain back the passion for knowledge and creativity,

Importance of this Research

This study will examine whether Islam overcomes obstacles to women's creativity or is the cause for those obstacles, in order to help the readers understand the current status of backwardness in the Muslim nations today and its relation to the obstacles to creativity, in addition to the position of Islam in regards to the general conditions of creativity.

Objectives

The goal is to defend Islam against false accusations that are raised by the callers for secularism, and to encourage Muslim women to adhere to their religion and identity, rather than blindly imitate the West in some of the demeanor and behavior that are considered disliked, immoral or forbidden on different levels in Islam. And the goal is to remind Muslim men and women of the greatness of our religion and the greatness of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Sunnah, as well as remind them that the objective of Islam is to work the mind and reconstruct the earth, and to do it all for the sake of God with excellence.

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Methodology

This is a library-based work which mainly focuses on the comparative approach.

The historical, descriptive and analytical methods are also used and applied wherever it appears possible and suitable.

1. Chapter One

1.1 Definition of Creativity

Literally speaking, creativity can be defined as "Having the skill and ability to produce something new, especially a work of art." [1] A better clarification for the meaning of creativity shows that it is "the essential source of all invention and innovation, and is derived from imaginative thought rather than from rational thought." [2]

In Islamic Terminology, and in a rather general view, creativity depends mainly on personal tendencies and emotional and mental abilities which enable the person to produce ideas. [3] Muslim scholars agree that creativity is "the process of realizing, applying or elaborating Divine Principles and Ideals at any given time or place, to meet the challenges that arise, in all spheres of life." [4] The focus here is clearly on the importance of the realization and application of Divine Principles of Islam in the creative process, which is definitely a factor and sometimes purpose of creative works by committed Muslims, which constitutes a crucial turn in the quality and outcome of their works, and has a major influence on society and civilization.

Based on the aforementioned, a more specific definition of creativity in Islam may be determined as: The motivated and conscious intention to employ one's innate mental and emotional abilities to acquire legitimate education and experience for the purpose of serving noble causes and achieving noble objectives in reference to Divine Principles by producing something new and original, or by improving something existent, or by adapting a certain situation in order to serve the public interest.

1.2 Types of Creativity

When making a distinction between different types of creativity, two main categories must be outlined:

1.2.1   Creativity in Worldly Matters:

People have different physical, psychological, mental and emotional characteristics which may govern and direct their preferences and choices in life. This diversity is considered one of God's blessings, and it certainly helps in enriching life in all areas, whether social, political, economic, scientific, or literary. Innovative ideas or practices which bring forth technological progress, crafts, building projects, urban development and the like [5] are of this category, and are very much encouraged in Islam.

1.2.2   Creativity in Religious Matters:

When implementing innovative ideas and practices in religion, however, two types can be noted. The criterion for such differentiation is Sharīʿa (Islamic laws and principles). If the innovative idea complies with Sharīʿa, then it is highly encouraged due to its positive effect on the Ummah (Nation). If it contradicts with a basic Islamic principle then it is highly discouraged due to its negative impact. These two types are:

1.2.2.1   Ijtihād:

ʾIjtihād means to make great effort in looking for solutions to something that is not mentioned in the Qurān and Sunnah. [6] "By nature, ʾijtihād is empowering, forward-looking, and creative. It is a process and methodology for arriving at judgments about new challenges by means of utmost intellectual inquiry." [7] The Prophet (peace be upon him) promised the person who performs ʾijtihād, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, rewards: "'If a judge passes judgment and strives to reach the right conclusion and gets it right, he will have two rewards; if he strives to reach the right conclusion but gets it wrong, he will still have one reward."[8] There are certain conditions and qualifications for the person performing ʾijtihād. These conditions were defined by jurists as follows:

- An adult, knowledgeable Muslim, male or female.
- Full Command of the Arabic language. Because the two main sources of Islam are the Qurān and Sunnah, and both are in Arabic.
- Knowledge of the Qurān and Sunnah sciences.
- Knowledge of Islamic Jurisprudence.

1.2.2.2   Bidʿah:

The word bidʿah is usually translated as heresy. In Islam, however, bidʿah may have a positive or a negative connotation, but mostly it is used to refer to a negative, un-Islamic and alien kind of novelty that is to be ruled out and avoided. [9] Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him) said: "The truest of word is the Book of Allah and best of guidance is the guidance of Muhammad. The worst of things are those that are newly invented; every newly-invented thing is an innovation   [in religion] and every innovation is going astray, and every going astray is in the [leads to] Fire." [10]

"Still it is not a categorical prohibition of innovative ideas or practices but a warning to stay within legal parameters in accepting or rejecting them." [11]

1.3 Conditions of Creativity

However, in order to be accepted by God as an act of worship, and awarded by Him accordingly, creativity in Islam should be subjected to two main conditions:

1.3.1 ʾItqān (Literally means excellence, mastery, or perfection): A Muslim is obligated to devote as much time and effort to perfect as much in his/her power and ability any work that he/she does, with the intention of pleasing God: (And you see the mountains, thinking them rigid, while they will pass as the passing of clouds. [It is] the work of Allah, who perfected all things. Indeed, He is Acquainted with that which you do) (Quran 27:88). The prophet (peace be upon him) said: "try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded."[12]

1.3.2 ʾIḥsān: an Islamic virtue considered a higher level of faith and a result of it. As in the ḥadīth, ʾiḥsān means: "to worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (take it for granted that) Allah sees you." [13] This is a clear indication that what makes any creative act even more creative and qualifies it to be an act of worship is to associate it with ʾiḥsān and the honest intention to please God. In doing so God promises to inspire and guide: ﴾And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good﴿ (Quran 29:69).

1.4 Basic Principles of Creativity in Islam

The basic principles on which creativity in Islam is realized and expressed are presented by Dr. Samih al-Karasneh and Dr. Ali Saleh of Yarmouk University In their research "Islamic Perspective of Creativity". [14] These principles indicate that any act of creativity should abide by the following:

1.4.1 Sincerity (i.e. for the sake of pleasing God)
1.4.2 Conformity with Sharīʿa
1.4.3 Beneficial Products
1.4.4 Usage of Lawful Means
1.4.5 Ethically Acceptable
1.4.6 Original (i.e. No Imitation)

2. Chapter Two

2.1 Status of Women Before Islam

Before Islam, women in Arabia had no rights whatsoever. They were considered shameful and demeaning to the status of men. A lot of men used to feel humiliated when their wives gave birth to a girl, and a lot of them would even infanticide their daughters in fear of shame or poverty or bad fortune! God almighty says: ﴾And they attribute to Allah daughters - exalted is He - and for them is what they desire! ◯ And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief! ◯ He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide﴿ (Quran 16:57-59). Women had no financial rights, nor were they allowed inheritance. When their husbands died, they would be inherited by the male heirs just like furniture or cattle. Most women were illiterate, and were not allowed to eat meat. Many men forced women into practicing prostitution. [15] ﴾And they say, "What is in the bellies of these animals is exclusively for our males and forbidden to our females. But if it is [born] dead, then all of them have shares therein." He will punish them for their description. Indeed, He is Wise and Knowing ﴿ (Quran 6:139).

2.2 Status of Women in Islam

When Islam came, it demolished all unjust practices that prevailed in the past. For example the infanticide of girls was forbidden, ﴾And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked ◯ For what sin she was killed﴿, (Quran 81:8-9). ﴾And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin ﴿ (Quran 17:31).

Also, men were forbidden of inheriting their fathers' wives after their fathers passed away ﴾And do not marry those [women] whom your fathers married, except what has already occurred. Indeed, it was an immorality and hateful [to Allah] and was evil as a way﴿ (Quran 4:22).

Using women for prostitution was also forbidden ﴾…And do not compel your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity, to seek [thereby] the temporary interests of worldly life… ﴿ (Quran 24:33).

In addition to all that Islam gave women the right for inheritance ﴾For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much - an obligatory share﴿ (Quran 4:7).

The Prophet (peace be upon him) declared men and women equal. He said: "Woman are counterpart of men". [16] Men were ordered to treat women with kindness and

respect. God says: (And live with them in kindness) (Quran 4:19). The prophet (Peace be upon him) said: "The best of you is the one who is best to his wife", [17] and he said: "'I enjoin good treatment of women", [18] and he said: "You have rights over your women and your women have rights over you". [19]

In general, Islam granted women all the rights that would guarantee them an honorable life and status.

"The effect of this moral and legal reform was that the woman attained such a high status in the Islamic society that it has no precedent in history. The Muslim woman indeed has the right to attain the highest place of honored advancement materially, intellectually and spiritually, both in religious and mundane spheres open to the Muslim male. Her sex does not stand in her way at any stage." [20]

Prophet Muḥammad (peace by upon him) always prompted men to take special care of women. Both men and women have rights and duties toward each other. They are created equal, God says: ﴿O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted﴾ (Quran 49:13). And in another verse God says: ﴿And their Lord responded to them, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another…﴾ (Quran 3:195). God also says: ﴿Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do﴾ (Quran 16:97).

God in His mercy and wisdom has devoted a whole chapter in the Quran (Chapter 4, called "al-Nisa'", or "Women") to protect women and their rights, and to teach men how to deal with women.

3. Chapter Three

3.1 Sunnah's Meaning and Significance

Sunnah means Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) sayings, deeds, decisions, silent approvals, ethics and qualities. It is the second source of Islam (the first being the Quran which is God's words). Sunnah was a source of inspiration and admiration to all of those who were blessed enough to have witnessed the Prophet's (peace be upon him) glorious life, and to all Muslims who came afterwards. Sunnah has explained, clarified, and added rulings to the Qurān. Being so very thorough and comprehensive in nature, Sunnah has covered matters concerning all aspects of life. This miraculous revelation is a true blessing and mercy for humanity, and should be studied, understood and applied.

God has described His Messenger (peace be upon him) in this verse: ﴿Your companion [Muhammad] has not strayed, nor has he erred ◯ Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination ◯ It is not but a revelation revealed﴾ (Quran 53:2-4). God also told people: ﴿… And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from …﴾ (Quran 59:7), thus making it mandatory to follow the teachings of Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). People were aware of his honesty and trust-worthiness throughout his life, and when the message of Islam was revealed unto him, people's lives were transformed tremendously in a record time.

3.2 Positive Factors Which Affect Creativity and Sunnah's Role in Implementing them

Based on numerous psychological tests and research, it has been proven that there are shared natural characteristics between all creative individuals, regardless of race, color, language, religion or background. These creative personality traits have been described by many psychologists in different ways but almost all have similar and even identical meanings. In brief they are:

- Fluency: The ability to produce as many creative ideas as possible in a considerably short period of time.
- Flexibility: The ability to change one's mental state according to circumstance.
- Sensitivity and Alertness: The ability to sense problems that may occur from a certain situation and think of creative ideas to help avoid them.
- Originality: The ability or skill to think 'out-of-the-box', come up with new, practical and fascinating ideas, and do common things uncommonly well.
- Tolerance: The ability to focus on the problem at hand and not allow obstacles or distractions to get in the way. [21]
- Curiosity: The need for answers and the hunger for knowledge.
- Risk-Taking: To be self-confident and not to allow negative judgments to cloud one's thoughts or affect one's actions.

Other tests and research have shown that creativity is

not only reserved for the naturally gifted, but that it is attainable and possible to acquire through careful techniques and processes which could help grow and teach creativity skills and creative thinking to anyone and everyone interested. These techniques have been considered immensely valuable for the advancement of some societies and businesses, and therefore have been included into educational systems and staff training programs as a taught material and as an applied skill. Such societies have been labeled as 'Creative Cultures'; a term indicating an environment that encourages, supports, protects and nurtures creativity and creative ideas for further development and growth. [22] There are various techniques taught by schools and businesses today to improve creative skills. [23] The following is a list of these techniques and examples on how Sunnah preceded psychologists more than fourteen centuries ago in applying the most practical techniques for enhancing the level of creativity:

- Establishing Purpose and intention. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended." [24] He (peace be upon him) was very eager to plant the seeds of free will in the personalities of all men and women, and in showing the right path and leaving the choice for them to make.

- Building basic skills. The Prophet (peace be upon him) encouraged education and building basic skills in saying: "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim." [25] In the Quran, the word knowledge and its derivatives have been mentioned 750 times, stressing the importance of acquiring education: ﴾Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees﴿ (Quran 58:11). ﴾Say, "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding﴿ (Quran 39:9).

- Building motivation, especially internal motivation. God says: ﴾So for this let the competitors compete﴿ (Quran 83:26).

- Encouraging confidence and willingness to take risks. God says: ﴾It is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip [others] therein﴿ (Quran 23:61).

- Providing balance. Balance in everything is the basis on which Islam was built. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately." [26]

4. Chapter Four

4.1 Negative Factors Which Affect Creativity and Sunnah's Role in overcoming them

Obstacles to creativity are simply the opposite of the positive factors mentioned above. The following are traits that distinguish uncreative individuals, and Sunnah's way of dealing with those traits:

- Blockage: The opposite of fluency. It is the inability to produce even the minimum number of ideas in the needed time. If one suffers from blockage, the Prophet (peace be upon him) teaches us to recite verses from the Quran such as the one in Sūrat Ṭaha: ﴾[Moses] said, "My Lord, expand for me my breast [with assurance] ◯ And ease for me my task﴿ (Quran 20:25-26), meaning give me comfort and widen my receptiveness to inspiration.

- Single-Mindedness or Narrow-Mindedness: This person is stubborn, not open to new ideas, strongly adheres to stereotypical thinking and refuses different opinions. He/she is happier in their comfort zone and daily routines and does not like to be challenged. The Prophet (peace be upon him) taught us that: "A believer is not stung twice (by something) out of one and the same hole." [27] Meaning, if one method or way of thinking does not work, or in fact causes more harm than good, then find another; and do not stick to the one and same useless and harmful pattern.

- Apathy & inattentiveness: This person tends to be unaware of likely problems and overlooks possible threats. As a treatment for this type of person the Prophet (peace be upon him) says: "Go away from this place of yours where inadvertence took hold of you." [28] He also said: "If anyone prays at night reciting regularly ten verses, he will not be recorded among the negligent," [29] as an encouragement to stay alert.

- Dependability: This person relies too much on other people's ideas, suggestions and solutions instead of trying to come up with something new. He/she would rather follow routine or imitate others than think and innovate, sometimes out of laziness and sometimes out of habit. The Prophet (peace be upon him) strongly criticized dependency and laziness, to the extent that he used to pray to God with this saying and teach it to his companions: "O Allah! I seek refuge with You from worry and grief, from incapacity and laziness, from cowardice and miserliness, from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by

(other) men." [30] He also warned and predicted: "You will follow the wrong ways, of your predecessors so completely and literally that if they should go into the hole of a mastigure, you too will go there." We said, "O Allah's Apostle! Do you mean the Jews and the Christians?" He replied, "Whom else?" (Meaning, of course, the Jews and the Christians.) [31]

- Impatience: Creative thinking needs a lot of patience and tolerance, a person who lacks these qualities is more likely to give up and be easily distracted. The Quran is full of treatments for the problem of impatience. God says: ﴾O you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful﴿ (Quran 3:200). And to further encourage people to be patient He says: ﴾…Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account ﴿ (Quran 39:10).

- Indifference & Neutrality: The usual condition of this person is to be unengaged with others in crucial situations, unaffected by change, and does not find much joy, inspiration and satisfaction in Knowledge of the various sciences and arts. God says in Sūrat al-Tawbah, criticizing those indifferent and neutral at times of trouble: ﴾And when a surah was revealed [enjoining them] to believe in Allah and to fight with His Messenger, those of wealth among them asked your permission [to stay back] and said, "Leave us to be with them who sit [at home]﴿ (Quran 9:86), then He tells his Messenger (peace be upon him) in a previous verse: ﴾say, "You will not go out with me, ever, and you will never fight with me an enemy. Indeed, you were satisfied with sitting [at home] the first time, so sit [now] with those who stay behind ﴿ (Quran 9:83).

- Fear & Cowardice: The main characteristic of this personality is the lack of self-confidence. This person is quickly influenced by negative affirmations and criticism, and is fearful of change and failure. Fear is a very common problem, though should not be allowed to cloud one's thinking or actions. God reminds the believers that: ﴾And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. ﴿ (Quran 2:38).

- Negligence & Loss of Time: When a person is too preoccupied by daily life and unimportant things, time passes by quickly and before they know it, it is too late to do something creative or of importance.

Wasting time also becomes a habit. [32] To warn people of the danger of wasting time, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "There are two blessings which many people lose: (They are) Health and free time for doing good." [33]

- Arrogance: If a person thinks learning stops at a certain point in time, or is complete with obtaining an academic certificate, then he/she is too lazy and arrogant to further their knowledge and widen their prospects. [34] Arrogance can be avoided by contemplating the hadith: "If anyone travels on a road in search of knowledge, Allah will cause him to travel on one of the roads of Paradise. The angels will lower their wings in their great pleasure with one who seeks knowledge, the inhabitants of the heavens and the Earth and the fish in the deep waters will ask forgiveness for the learned man. The superiority of the learned man over the devout is like that of the moon, on the night when it is full, over the rest of the stars. The learned are the heirs of the Prophets, and the Prophets leave neither dinar nor dirham, leaving only knowledge, and he who takes it takes an abundant portion." [35]

The previous were personality traits of the uncreative individuals and Sunnah's role of defeating them. Influential Factors, on the other hand, include Physical and mental disabilities, as well as environmental elements that affect creative individuals. Physical disability may be an obstacle, unless careful measures are taken by parents, educational system and environment to overcome the challenges and help the disabled excel in areas of their interest. Mental disability is more difficult to overcome, although in some cases not impossible. The environmental elements include:

- Breeding: [36]

Strictly conventional, passive and rigid upbringing may have disastrous outcome on any person. Some parents may deny their children the right for education, or for the opportunity to explore their potentials. Others would allow them those rights but with illogical reservations. Others may be ignorant or tardy towards their children's creativity, causing it to fade away. If one has a strict and unsupportive family, the Prophet (peace be upon him) advises: "Allah is kind and lenient and likes that one should be kind and lenient in all matters." [37]

- Culture: [38]

Some cultures are not open to receiving constructive beneficial knowledge from other cultures. That can be

devastating for the innately and potentially creative and talented individual and for the culture itself. A culture which is not open for improvement and learning is influenced by rigid thoughts, misunderstanding of religion and false practices. People living in such cultures are bound to become extremists; something the Prophet (peace be upon him) highly criticized, no matter how much they argue that they are on the right path, they clearly are not, and the proof is the Prophet's saying: "And beware of going to extremes in religious matters, for those who came before you were destroyed because of going to extremes in religious matters." [39]

- Misconceptions: [40]

Some societies may have misconceptions about certain areas of life, causing limitations in the flow and spread of creativity. For example, some may think that success is only realized through financial capacity. As a reply to that mentality, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Riches does not mean having a great amount of property, but riches is self−contentment." [41] Others may think that true strength lies in muscle power and rule authority. The Prophet (peace be upon him) corrects that definition by saying: "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger." [42]

- Academic Education: [43]

One of the most important and influential factors besides the home. If the educational system depends on the traditional method of teaching alone (indoctrination and memorization) with no regard to interactive methods which teach students how to think for themselves critically and creatively, then failure is most likely bound to accompany those students throughout their lives, unless they take deliberate action to alter their way of thinking. A valuable advice for educators is given by the Prophet (peace be upon him): "Make things easy for the people, and do not make it difficult for them, and make them calm (with glad tidings) and do not repulse (them)." [44]

- Socio-Economic Conditions: [45]

Poverty negatively affects the creative person. In some cases, like in separated parents or a divorced woman, especially if she's a single mother, or in the case of unsupportive husband or wife, the potentially creative may be psychologically and emotionally affected and not able to care about or have the will to be creative. In these conditions, the Prophet (peace be upon him) says: "…and he who relieved a Muslim from hardship Allah would relieve him from the hardships to which he would be put on the Day of Resurrection," [46] creating a sense of unity in society and the responsibility of each Muslim to help his/her fellow Muslim in any circumstance. Expelling a hardship can include eliminating a debt, sponsoring a project, donating money, giving charity, paying for academic expenses, housing, etc. All of these acts would help a creative woman who is impoverished to overcome her problems and be more productive.

- Security: [47]

A country at war, under siege, suppression or suffering from general instability certainly has a negative effect on creative individuals. One only has to be reminded of the one true power, the power of God: ﴾Say, "O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent ﴿ (Quran 3:26).

- Media: [48]

The media is like a double-edged sword. It may be a powerful resource of meaningful and guided knowledge and improvement, or a destructive tool in the hands of the wicked and greedy for the evil goal of misguiding the masses. The media as we know it today was a bit different in nature and means back in the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Poets were known to be the source of news. Many of whom would give false news for financial gain or a wicked purpose (Much like the media today). God says: ﴾O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful﴿ (Quran 49:6). God also affirms that: ﴾Whoever intercedes for a good cause will have a reward therefrom; and whoever intercedes for an evil cause will have a burden therefrom. And ever is Allah, over all things, a Keeper﴿ (Quran 4:85).

- Negative Criticism & Affirmations: [49]

A creative person may be subjected to destructive criticism and harsh ridicule. One of the most devastating things for a creative woman (since she is usually very emotional) is the negative criticism that she may get from insensitive and unappreciative people. God says: ﴾O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do

not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers⟩ (Quran 49:11).

- Lack of Encouragement and Recognition: [50]

Encouragement may be financial and/or morale. In addition to ridicule, a creative person may be neglected and his/her creative ideas or achievement may not be recognized or encouraged. A Muslim woman needs to know that if no one cared about her creativity, or gave her enough recognition and encouragement, God tells her that He does, and that the Prophet (peace be upon him) does and that true believers do: ⟨And say, "Do [as you will], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so, will] His Messenger and the believers⟩ (Quran 9:105). That alone should give her a fair amount of encouragement.

- Lack of Motivation: [51]

Having no purpose or goals in life or in any aspect of life can be devastating and kills creativity or misguides the creative ability toward unwanted things. If the environment or society does not encourage the individual to set legal and positive goals, he/she may waste their lives on unimportant - or worse - evil matters; as Malcolm X said: "If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything". [52] God therefore encourages people to have purpose and motivations by saying: (So race to [all that is] good) (Quran 2:148) and He also says: (So for this let the competitors compete) (Quran 83:26)

5. Chapter Five
5.1 Condition of Ummah and Women Today

The Islamic Ummah was highly advanced in all areas of life for more than twelve centuries, while the West was living in total ignorance, known as the 'Dark Ages'. Women's creativity thrived, and their accomplishments realized and documented. Taking a glimpse into the lives of the early Muslims proves how Islam changed people's bad mannerisms and replaced them with the graceful practices of Islam. It is obvious how Islam fashioned their way of thinking by washing the drains of their souls and elevating their aspirations, hence giving them purpose in life.

The early Muslim women set astonishing examples for both men and women of all ages on how to be a truly balanced, liberated, religious, creative and inspirational person; which is quite amazing, knowing that they were marginalized not long before that, and that their entire existence in the Time of Ignorance was summed up in

their sexuality and household duties. The Muslim society was the true embodiment of 'Creative Culture'.

Muslim women strongly believed in God and his Messenger (peace be upon him), and understood their role as vicegerents on this earth, [53] along with their fellow men, as they are partners and equals in humanity, each in their own realm and in accordance with their different roles and natures. That is why women engaged in all aspects of life; giving everything they do complete focus, pure intention and full capacity. Their contribution to Literature, Islamic Sciences and Jurisprudence, Medicine, Charity, and other areas has survived until this day as witness to their creativity.

Muslims today, however, suffer from: [54]
- Defection in the Application of Islamic Teachings
- Flawed Morality and Mentality
- Ignorance and Illiteracy
- Financial Underdevelopment
- Weakness of Creativity
- Dividedness of Muslim Nations
- Cultural Discord
- External Challenges
- Weakness of educational System
- Distorted Image of Islam and Muslims in Western Media

The negative conditions of the Muslim world today are due to many different factors, none of which have anything to do with Islam as a religion and a way of life. However, a lot of people, especially in the West, still fail to see that. Many are convinced that Islam is the main reason for the Ummah's backwardness, and subsequently for the ill-manifestation and representation of women's creativity and rights. So, a lot of people suggest that 'Secularism' or the 'Secularization' of Islamic nations is the solution to all of the problems facing the Muslims today, including the situation of women. This claim suggests that in order for women to gain rights and be equal to men and have more opportunities for their creativity to prosper and manifest, then a secular state is the perfect atmosphere for that to happen.

Clearly, secularism in the Muslim world is not effective on all levels. Islam is not only a religion of spiritual and ritualistic worship, but it is a comprehensive way of life which regulates human existence on this earth. Without Islam, life is corrupted. True Muslims know the true purpose of life, and that is to be and act as God's vicegerents on earth, by God's law. This Divine law is perfect and comprehensive, and when applied

correctly it assures a fully developed and prosperous life now and eternal bliss in the Hereafter. Someone might say that this is not true and that the recent situation of Muslim nations are evidence that Islam is not fit to rule and regulate people's lives, at least not at this time and age. This view is deficient because the situation in the Muslim world today does not in any way reflect Islam. If anything, it actually reflects the anti-Islamic view, mixed with residues of colonialism and occupations, in addition to secularism and dictatorships. On a lower level it reflects tribalism and ignorance. But it certainly does NOT reflect Islam, even if some nations or people claim that it does. One has to go back to the real sources of Islam, the Quran and Sunnah. Misinterpretations of these two sources and differences among Muslims concerning certain interpretations or rulings are not and should not be used as evidence.

5.2 Solutions to Reawakening Creativity

Islam as practiced and partly understood today is not the Islam that will solve any problem. What I am calling for is a revival *('Iḥyā')* of Islamic sciences and thought, and a renewal (*Tajdīd*) of its ways and practices without causing any dispute or contradiction to its laws and values for the betterment of modern day living. A renewed commitment to Islamic values and practices as a means to achieve development and progress is a crucial necessity and need. That alone will restore dignity and greatness to Muslims, and that alone will solve all persistent problems today. Islam is not an ancient religion whose torch is extinguished and whose values are worn out. Islam sure has the dynamism, ability and flexibility to deal with changing circumstances, anywhere and at any time. [55]

What Muslims really need today is to be unified, and to work on serious political, economic, educational, and legal reform, and to regain public awareness of the position of women in Islam, thus awarding them back their God-given rights.

Conclusion

Modern day psychologists in the East and in the West have made countless research on the matter of creativity. All of them have agreed on the same reasons for creativity, obstacles to creativity and techniques to be learned which can enhance or lead to creative thinking.

After studying the Sunnah's role regarding building a Creative Culture and how the teachings and proper applications of Islam made a remarkable change in the lives of people, and after comparing those changes with psychologists findings in regards to creativity, it has become quite clear that the Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Sunnah has made the following accomplishments regarding creativity in modern day terms:

1. He implemented all of the reasons and means for creativity.
2. He demolished the obstacles to creativity, and the Muslim culture and community learned how to apply human rights, which in term helped women overcome the obstacles that were present before Islam.
3. He empowered women by giving them their rights. And men's mentalities were changed, and as a result, their treatment to women was changed.
4. He added even more reasons and techniques to improve or stimulate creative thinking.
5. He planted the seeds of a creative personality by teaching parents the right and Islamic way of raising their children, and teaching the Muslim community as a whole to abide by Islamic rules, rights and ethics.
6. He encouraged women to learn, excel and be creative.
7. He guided the actions of men and women, and redirected their goals and intentions, giving them purpose and promise of a better life here on earth and everlasting happiness in the Hereafter.
8. He showed them the basic principles on which they should rely and abide by in order to live up to their full potential and be creative enough to improve the quality of life, all according to Islamic rules and teachings.
9. He taught them to do all of that with the satisfaction of being closer to the Creator Himself.

Therefore, and based on these facts, it can be concluded that the Sunnah surely does have the ability to overcome the obstacles to women's creativity in modern age. It has been done before, and it can certainly be done again. It is the Creative Islamic Culture which the prophet (peace be upon him) has built that should be followed and imitated today; not any other culture or nation or philosophy.

Recommendation

Based on the findings stated above and the situation of the Muslim Ummah today I recommend the following:

1. Activating the role of the media to focus on the importance of the role of women in pushing forward the wheel of development, and emphasizing their legitimate rights, and to make these programs as

modern and innovative as possible in order to reach the largest possible segment of Muslims.

2. The need to focus efforts and encourage investment, charity and endowment to support research centers,

and build more of them.

3. Building bridges between the West and the Muslim nations, and encouraging more communication, understanding, tolerance and interfaith programs.

NOTES

(1)   Refer to Safar, (2004), Al-Islam wa America wa a Hdath September, p.14. *refer to appendix no VI, p.133.

(2)   http://www.defence.pk/forums/general-images-multimedia/113073-islam-western-media.html.

(3)   See Zaqzouq, (2008), Islam and West, http://www.isesco.org.ma/english/publications/journalislamtoday/25/P4.php.

(4)   See Amara (2003), Fee Fiqh Al-Mwajaha bain Algarb walIslam, p.185.

(5)   Refer to appendix, p. 33.

(6)   See Amara (2003), Fee Fiqh Al-Mwajaha bain Algarb wal Islam, p. 137.

(7)   Refer to al-Banna (2003), Sina'at al-'Ada` lel Islam, p111.

(8)   See Ibn Manzour, Lisan AlArab, ch, 4, p. 663.

(9)   Sunan of Abu-Dawood, 3/315/3635. Hadith is sound by al-Albani.

(10) AlTirmidhi, 28/15/1924, p. 548. Hadith is sound.

(11) Al-Jami' al-Sagheer, 7964, Hadith is sound, p. 503.

(12) See Al-Zuhaili, (1991), Al_Tafseer Al-Muneer, p. 145.

(13) See Ridha, (1999), Tafseer Al-Manar, ch, 7, p. 548.

(14) See Al_Sibaa'ie (2005), Civilization of Faith, translated by, Nasiruddin al-Khattab (1999), p. 123. "These are the principles of religious tolerance in Islam, on which our civilization is based. These principles oblige the Muslims to believe in all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah, to speak of all of them with respect, not to mistreat their followers, to deal with them all in a good and gentle manner, speaking kindly to them, being a good neighbor to them, accepting their hospitality, and marrying from among them so that the families and bloodlines will be mixed. Islam oblige the Muslims state to guard their places of worship and not to interfere in their beliefs or rule against them unfairly; they are to be treated equally with Muslims in term of rights and obligations; their honor, lives and futures are to be protected just as those of the Muslims are to be protected…, this tolerance remained the way of the Islamic civilization from the time its foundations were laid by Muhammad (P.B.U.H) until it began to decline, when these principles were lost and forgotten, and people became ignorant of their religion, and they abandoned this noble religious tolerance.

(15) Essa and Ali, (2010), Studies in Islamic Civilization, p.1.

(16) See Chaudhry, (1991), Women's Rights in Islam, p.14.

(17) AlBukhari, Kitab AlNikah /81/5186, p.314.

(18) See Al-Banna (1997), AlGharb WalIslam, p.277.

(19) It was said that the uninformed readers of the Western media can, at times, be forgiven for confusing the terms "Muslim" and "terrorist." A major factor, which contributes to Islamic stereotyping in the West, is due to the media's ignorance of selecting their words that describe Muslims. Some common names heard or seen in the news about Muslims are "extremist" or "terrorist". These words are misleading in different ways. Another factor was writing affirmation about this religion and its adherents without any proof or by using doubtful references. This affirmation is put in a very direct way so that the reader may not even ask for proof. The problem does not end with the selection of authentic sources but it continues to the point where these sources are also misquoted especially with regard to the Qur'an and Hadith; the truncation if the Qur'an and Hadith are not mentioned as a whole and interpreted by including the necessary contexts, the end result may indicate the opposite of what is really meant. The experts or the "communities of interpretations" play a crucial role here to highlight the most important concepts and realities that lie behind the quotations and texts. http://www.islamonline.net/en/IOLYouth_C/1278407316992/1278406711626/Covering-Islam--Muslims-in-the-Western-Media

(20) Refer to Haddad (1997), Al-Urdun walSiahah: Mushkelat wa Humoum, p, 57and58.

(21) In 1966 the UN passed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, expanding its prior statement to address the manifestation of religion or belief. Article 18 of this Covenant includes four paragraphs related to this issue: 1. everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his [her] choice, and freedom either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his [her] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. 2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair his [her] freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his [her] choice.3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or belief may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are

necessary to protect public safety, order, health, morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions. Also in 1981 adopted without a vote the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/edumat/

(22) http://www.dccd.dk/dccd/cku.nsf/images/forside1/$file/alreport.pdf.

(23) See Safar, (2004), AlIslam waAmerica waHdath september, p.70 and73.

(24) See Amara, (2003), Fee Fiqh Al-Mwajaha bain Algarb walIslam, p.186.

(25) See Daniel Pipes and Mimi Stillman (2002), http://www.danielpipes.org/90/the-united-states-government-patron-of-islam

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المنهج النبوي في التغلب على المعيقات التي تواجه الإبداع والابتكار عند المرأة

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ملخص

يناقش هذا البحث الدور الذي تلعبه السنة النبوية في التغلب على معيقات إبداع المرأة، حيث يناقش الفصل الأول مفهوم الإبداع ويعطي فكرة عامة عنه، ويبين في الفصل الثاني الاختلاف الكبير بين حال المرأة قبل الإسلام وبعده، وفي الفصل الثالث بيان مفهوم السنة والعوامل الإيجابية التي يمكن توظيفها في مجال دعم الإبداع، ويناقش الفصل الرابع أهمية تطبيق السنة النبوية للتغلب على معيقات الإبداع، وذلك من خلال المقارنة بين ما عانته المرأة قبل الإسلام وما تتمتع به من حقوق في الإسلام، ويلقي الفصل الخامس الضوء على واقع المسلمين اليوم وعلى واقع الإبداع عند المرأة في الوقت الحالي.

الكلمات الدالة: الحديث النبوي، المرأة، الإبداع.