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Addressing Intellectual Stagnation in Light of the Prophetic Tradition

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Abstract: Intellectual stagnation among some scholars has become a significant barrier hindering adaptation to updated matters faced by the Muslims today. This study highlights the importance of referring to the Prophetic tradition (Sunnah) to understand its stance on intellectual rigidity. The study identifies three main causes of stagnation: (1) the belief that reformism in the religion contradicts Islamic teachings that I countered by evidences extracted from the Sunnah supporting renewal; (2) blind imitation leading to superstition, moral deviation, and innovation; and (3) ignorance of Shariah's objectives, which are crucial for a correct understanding of the Sunnah and the overarching goals of Islamic rulings. Additionally, the study outlines the Prophetic approach to overcoming intellectual rigidity, including the parameters such as learning from other civilizations in ways compatible with Islamic law, utilizing the expertise of specialists for the benefit of Islam, aligning with the customs of other faiths to facilitate missionary work, endorsing independent reasoning in the absence of explicit texts, encouraging free expression through advice.

Keywords: Hadith, Intellectual Stagnation, Reformism, Independent Reasoning (Ijtihād), The Prophetic Method.

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Nebevî Sünnet Işığında Fikrî Durgunlukla Mücadele

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Öz: Fikrî durgunluk Müslümanların yaşadığı yenilikler konusunda bazı âlimlerin eskiden beri önlerinde gördüğü engellerdendir. Dolayısıyla Sünnet-i seniyye ışığında yeniliği ve fikrî donuklaşmayı ele almak gerekmektedirBu çalışma fikrî durgunluk ve sebeplerini, sünnetin bu sebepler hakkındaki tavrını ve hükmünü ele alan bir çalışmadır. Fikrî durgunluk bu çalışmada üç temel neden etrafında ele alınmıştır. Bu nedenlerden ilki yeniliğin -tecdid- şer'î öğretiler ile çeliştiği iddiasıdır, ancak nebevî sünnetten delilleri zikrederek bu iddiayı ele aldım. Sahibini bidat, hurafeler fikrî ve ahlâki sapkınlıklara sürükleyen körü körüne taklit ise ikinci sebep olarak zikredilebilir. Üçüncüsü ise şeriatın maksadını, şer'î hükümlerde ve sahih sünnette yatan gizli, ulvi mânaları ıskalamak bu hataya düşmeye sebep olan etkenlerdir. Ayrıca bu çalışmanın ikinci kısmında nebevî metodun fikrî donuklaşmayla nasıl mücadele ettiğini, şerî hükümlerin muhalifi olamadığı müddetçe diğer medeniyetlerden nasıl istifade edildiğini, İslam'ın ve Müslümanların faydasına olacak tecrübelerden nasıl destek alınacağını, diğer din ve düşüncelerin bazı âdetlerinin davet başlığı altında kolaylaştırmak adına nasıl kabul edileceği, nassın olmadığı yerde içtihadın kabulü, düşünce özgürlüğü, başkalarının düşüncelerine saygı gibi parametreler de analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hadis, Fikrî Durgunluk, Yenilik, Nebevî Metot, İçtihad.

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Introduction

Intellectual stagnation, a phenomenon with which God has tested some scholars, stands as a significant cause of the crises that affect the Muslim community, whether political, economic, or social. The persistence of this stagnation hinders progress in keeping pace with rapid civilizational advancements and obstructs the development of appropriate solutions to emerging issues. Since the Prophetic tradition (Sunnah) encompasses all that is beneficial for individuals and society, it is essential to refer back to the Prophet's (peace be upon him) approach to see how he addressed intellectual stagnation. He guided his Companions towards openness, rejected rigidity, and encouraged renewal. This study aims to present the primary causes of this stagnation and the key aspects of the Prophetic method in combating it.

Islamic law (Sharīʿah) is a comprehensive, divinely revealed system that is suitable for all times and places. Among the necessary implications of this perpetual applicability is the imperative to confront intellectual stagnation, which can obstruct the proper understanding and practical application of Sharīʿah in the lives of Muslims. The transformations witnessed in contemporary Muslim societies, along with the emergence of new realities and challenges, necessitate the formulation of appropriate rulings and legal responses. This in turn requires abandoning the rigidity associated with certain rulings whose true legal objectives have not been correctly understood—objectives which aim to promote human welfare and prevent harm. Engaging in independent legal reasoning (ijtihād) to address novel issues in a manner that responds to the needs of individual Muslims and the broader Muslim community underscores that legitimate intellectual dynamism lies at the heart of Sharīʿah. Conversely, remaining confined to outdated juristic interpretations that may no longer be relevant to present-day contexts can create the false impression that Islamic law is incapable of addressing new and unprecedented circumstances. Disciplined renewal, however, reflects the breadth and flexibility of Sharīʿah. In this context, the present study endeavors to address key questions related to intellectual stagnation, such as: What are the primary causes of intellectual stagnation? What are the Prophetic solutions for overcoming such stagnation? And what are the defining features of the Prophetic methodology in confronting intellectual rigidity?

The importance of this study lies in identifying the main causes of intellectual stagnation among some scholars and in benefiting from the Prophetic method in limiting this stagnation, applying these methods practically in contemporary life.

The nature of this study necessitated the use of the inductive method, which was employed in surveying authentic Prophetic traditions (ḥadīth) as recorded in the six canonical collections, in addition to the Musnad of Imām Aḥmad, and the Mustadrak of Imām al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī. These traditions elucidate the causes of intellectual stagnation and the Prophetic methodology that emphasized openness and the rejection of rigidity. The study also examined ḥadīths that demonstrate flexibility and openness in dealing with contemporary issues, drawing on selected examples that serve the central focus of the research and have been deemed authentic by leading ḥadīth scholars. Furthermore, the study employed the descriptive-analytical method to describe and analyze these selected ḥadīth texts in a manner that aligns with and supports the objectives of the research.

After thorough research, no study specifically focused on the causes of intellectual stagnation and its confrontation through the Prophetic tradition was found. The available literature only discusses intellectual stagnation in general without centering on the Prophetic tradition. Notable

studies include a master's thesis titled "Intellectual Stagnation and Self-Regulation as Predictors of Non-Suicidal Self-Injury Behavior among a Sample of School Adolescents," by Manal Bouaqa and Fayza Saadawi, which addresses intellectual stagnation from an educational perspective among adolescents and does not address the Prophetic perspective or the causes of stagnation. Another study, titled "Intellectual Stagnation and Its Relation to Modernization: A Field Study on the Attitudes of a Sample of Female Students at the Faculty of Education, Al-Zawiya University," by Dr. Samir al-Mukhtar and Dr. Al-Taher al-Arabi, is also educational in nature and does not address the Prophetic tradition or outline the Prophetic method for confronting intellectual stagnation.

The study is divided into two sections: The first to clarify the causes of intellectual stagnation, which includes three primary causes, and the second to outline the Prophet's method in addressing intellectual stagnation, detailing five specific approaches.

1.Causes of Intellectual Stagnation

While the causes of intellectual stagnation are diverse, certain factors have become particularly prevalent in Islamic societies. Among the most significant causes are:

1.1. Failure to Distinguish Between Legitimate and Illegitimate Renewal

One of the common pitfalls is the failure to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate forms of renewal. Allah, Glorified be He, has endowed Islam with immutable foundations that are not subject to alteration or change. These include the fundamentals of Islamic creed, the pillars of faith and Islam, all matters pertaining to divine oneness, as well as aspects of worship and transactions upon which there is scholarly consensus. Islam categorically rejects any legislation that contradicts the teachings of Allah and His Messenger. These are firmly rooted and enduring values; thus, it is impermissible to distort the meanings of religious texts to suit personal inclinations, to abolish Islamic penal laws under the pretext of modernity, or to call for the dismissal of definitive scholarly consensus in the name of freedom of opinion. Nevertheless, Islamic law does not advocate stagnation nor oppose renewal. Rather, development and renewal are inherently compatible with the constancy of foundational principles; they do not contradict or undermine them. Reinterpreting religious texts and applying them to contemporary realities in a manner consistent with the general principles and objectives of the Sharīʿah—while safeguarding its fixed tenets and avoiding any transgression against definitive scriptural texts—does not compromise the permanence of Islamic fundamentals. This essential distinction is often overlooked, leading some to characterize Islam as rigid or outdated. On the contrary, the juristic efforts (ijtihād) of scholars in addressing contemporary economic issues, or in responding to emerging medical and environmental challenges, represent necessary and beneficial forms of renewal that serve the interests of the Muslim community.

Evidence supporting the legitimacy of development and renewal includes the following:

1.1.1.The Hadith on Renewal Every Century

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said, "Indeed, Allah will send to this Ummah every hundred years someone who will renew its religion for it."[1]

[1] Sulayman ibn al-Ash'ath al-Sijistani Abu Dawood, *Sunan Abu Dawood*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut and Muhammad Kamil Qara Billi (Beirut: Dar al-Risalah al-'Alamiyyah, 2009).

This noble ḥadīth constitutes a foundational basis for the legitimacy of renewal (tajdīd) in Islam. Its purport encompasses the elimination of religious innovations (bidʿah) and deviations that have been introduced into the religion due to misinterpretation or misunderstanding, the dissemination of the true and virtuous teachings of Islam, and the removal of accumulated distortions that have affected Islamic principles as a result of the conduct of some Muslims. It further entails the revival of neglected practices derived from the Qurʾān and the Sunnah. The Prophet of mercy—peace and blessings be upon him—gave glad tidings of the emergence of individuals who will renew the religion for the Muslim community when it is overtaken by stagnation, decline, and deviation from the correct path. These reformers would teach the people the tenets of their faith, distinguish Sunnah from religious innovation, revive spiritual awareness, stimulate thought and independent reasoning (ijtihād), and inspire in the community a renewed resolve to confront emerging challenges.

1.1.2.The Hadith on the Preservation of Knowledge through Scholars

Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-As narrated that the Prophet said, "Indeed, Allah does not take away knowledge by removing it from the people, but rather He takes away knowledge by taking away the scholars, until when He leaves no scholar, people will take ignorant leaders who will be asked and will give rulings without knowledge. They will go astray and lead others astray."[2]

The Prophet clarified in this hadith that ignorance leads to misguidance, and true guidance can only be achieved through knowledge and removing ignorance by correctly understanding Islam, its rulings, and their application to contemporary issues.

This implies that the absence of qualified scholars in a given time leads to ignorance and misguidance. Continuous scholarly effort is essential for knowledge and guidance, ensuring the rulings of Islam keep pace with the emerging issues in the Muslim community. Conditions and circumstances differ across time periods, which necessitates the application of Islamic principles to address new challenges effectively.

1.1.3.The Growth and Decline of Faith According to Context

The majority of scholars agree that faith fluctuates—it increases and decreases. A believer may experience moments of weakness or laziness, during which their actions may diminish and their determination weaken. Islamic teachings encourage individuals to compensate through renewed effort and increased worship, resisting the temptations of Satan and restoring their spiritual vitality by engaging in good deeds. This process helps the believer continuously develop, grow, and adapt to changing circumstances.

Evidence of this is found in the Quranic verses:"...and it only increased their faith, and they said, 'Allah is sufficient for us, and He is the best disposer of affairs'" (Ali 'Imran, 173), and "When His revelations are recited to them, it increases them in faith" (Al-Anfal, 2).

The Prophet thus considered the believer's reflection and participation in gatherings of remembrance (dhikr) to be expressions of faith, through which the believer's reward and merit increase, even when worldly distractions and pleasures occupy him.

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[2] Al-Bukhari - Muslim, "Ilm," *Sahih Al-Bukhari*.

Imam Muslim dedicated a chapter in his Ṣaḥīḥ titled "Clarification that Forbidding Evil Is Part of Faith, and that Faith Increases and Decreases," emphasizing the dynamic and cumulative nature of faith in Islam.[3]

Therefore, given that faith can grow and diminish, a believer requires continual development and renewal, rejecting stagnation that may weaken faith.

Based on this body of textual evidence, it can be asserted that reason itself necessitates renewal and development for the following reasons:

First, no form of progress can occur without renewal. It is in the very nature of human beings to evolve continuously—from the beginning of creation until today—in all social, economic, and political aspects. This ongoing development requires a renewed intellectual framework capable of nourishing the human mind and soul, responding to changing needs, and addressing emerging realities. A well-established legal maxim among Muslim jurists affirms that "legal rulings change with the change of time." Accordingly, scholars have continually endeavored to renew jurisprudence in a manner consistent with the era in which they live. In our contemporary period, this is evident in the diligent efforts of modern jurists and fiqh councils to apply Islamic law to newly arising issues and reassess interpretive rulings that may be subject to change due to temporal factors.

Second, every society encounters its own unique set of challenges. These may pertain to religious neglect, distortion of foundational principles, or the introduction of unorthodox practices. Such circumstances necessitate a renewed intellectual effort aimed at either solving these problems or identifying legitimate alternatives. A prime example of this is the emergence of Islamic banking as a response to the problems inherent in conventional banking systems, particularly the widespread use of usurious practices (riba). The establishment of Islamic financial institutions represents a significant and meaningful renewal in addressing such critical concerns.

Third, combating intellectual stagnation is not possible without the presence of a renewal-oriented mindset—one that maintains adherence to foundational principles while demonstrating a deep understanding of contemporary realities. This balance is one of the defining characteristics of Islamic law: its capacity for flexibility and its relevance to all times and places.

1.2.The Types of Imitation and Their Impact on Intellectual Stagnation

Imitation, in general, is not inherently negative; rather, it can be praiseworthy or blameworthy depending on its nature. Imitation that aligns with truth, evidence, and valid reasoning is commendable and reflects a person's adherence to sound evidence rather than mere imitation. This is common among laypeople who lack the ability to analyze evidence independently. Such individuals cannot differentiate between strong and weak arguments and are unable to derive legal rulings from sources.

Imam Al-Shawkani (d. 1250 AH) noted, "In the time of the Companions and their followers, those who were less knowledgeable would ask scholars about issues that arose, and the scholar would narrate a text from the Qur'an or Sunnah as a response. This was not blind imitation but rather a form of seeking God's ruling on a matter by asking for the legal evidence."[4]

What is truly blameworthy is the form of imitation known as blameworthy imitation (taqlīd madhmūm), often referred to as blind imitation (taqlīd aʻmā). This involves following a particular

[3] Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, n.d..

[4] Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Shawkani, *Al-Sayl Al-Jarrar Al-Mutadaffiq Ala Hadaiq Al-Azhar* (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, n.d.).

individual without evidence or justification, merely because it reflects the practice of one's forefathers, despite one's own capacity to examine the evidence and engage in critical reasoning. Allah the Exalted condemned such behavior in the Qur'an, saying: "And when it is said to them, 'Follow what Allah has revealed,' they say, 'Rather, we follow that which we found our forefathers upon.' Even though their forefathers understood nothing, nor were they rightly guided?" (al-Baqarah 2:170).

This verse clearly criticizes the uncritical acceptance of inherited practices when sound evidence is available and accessible.

Imam Al-Shatibi (d. 790 AH) says, "Persisting in following customs, even when they are corrupt or contrary to the truth, as seen in following what the forefathers and elders practiced, constitutes blameworthy imitation." [5]

Among the forms of blameworthy imitation is when a scholar or a qualified mujtahid blindly follows another mujtahid despite having reached a new legal ruling through his own ijtihād. This practice is impermissible, as there is scholarly consensus that a mujtahid, once a new ruling becomes clear to him through independent reasoning, is not allowed to imitate the opinion of another."[6]

Blind imitation leads to intellectual stagnation, as the imitator becomes rigid, refusing to consider alternative perspectives, even if supported by strong evidence. Such individuals become followers without independent insight or critical thinking, as cautioned in the hadith of Hudhayfah ibn Al-Yaman, in which the Prophet said, "Do not be a mere follower who says, 'If people do good, I will do good; if they do wrong, I will do wrong.' Rather, discipline yourselves: if people do good, you should do good; and if they do wrong, do not wrong others."[7]

This form of imitation may lead to adopting un-Islamic practices and superstitions that conflict with a correct understanding of Islamic beliefs. It can also result in ethical and behavioral deviations, such as imitating non-Muslims in their customs and lifestyles, which falls under the warning of the Prophet in the hadith narrated by Abu Sa'id: "You will certainly follow the ways of those before you, span by span, and cubit by cubit, to the extent that if they were to enter a lizard's hole, you would enter it as well." When asked, "O Messenger of Allah, do you mean the Jews and the Christians?" he replied, "Who else?"[8]

The ḥadīth alludes to the consequences of intellectual stagnation, particularly the tendency to imitate without a clear methodology or convincing evidence. It serves as a warning against falling into a state of mental rigidity that causes the ummah to replicate the experiences of others uncritically, without discernment or thoughtful evaluation.

1.3. Ignorance of the Objectives of Shariah

The science of Shariah objectives (Maqasid al-Shariah) plays a crucial role in understanding religious texts and deriving legal rulings. Islamic law does not solely rely on extracting judgments from textual sources; it also considers the objectives and their fulfillment. This consideration is vital in independent reasoning (ijtihad), deriving contemporary rulings, and understanding the

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5 Ibrahim ibn Musa ibn Muhammad al-Shatibi, *Al-I'tisam*, ed. Salim ibn Eid al-Hilali (Saudi Arabia: Dar Ibn Affan, 1412).

6 Muhammad al-Amin ibn Muhammad al-Mukhtar al-Shanqiti, *Adhwa' Al-Bayan Fi Idah Al-Qur'an Bil-Qur'an* (Riyadh: Dar Atatat al-Ilm, 1441).

7 Muhammad ibn Isa ibn Sawrah al-Tirmidhi, "Sunan Al-Tirmidhi," *Sunan Al-Tirmidhi* (Egypt: Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi Press, 1395), Mustafa al-Babi al-Halabi Press.

8 Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari - Muslim, *Al-Jami' Al-Musnad Al-Sahih*, ed. Muhammad Zuhair ibn Nasser, *Sahih Muslim* (Beirut: Dar Tawq al-Najat, 1422).

underlying aims of Shariah texts. Those who fail to grasp these objectives risk intellectual rigidity, diverting them from truth and accurate rulings.

Dr. Muhammad Al-Zuhaili describes knowledge of Shariah objectives as "illuminating the path when deriving rulings, preventing the mind from stagnating on superficial or literal meanings isolated from other texts that clarify the secrets and general aims of Shariah. This helps determine the intended meaning of texts and favor interpretations aligned with the objectives." [9]

Misunderstanding or superficial interpretations of the Prophetic Sunnah, isolated from contemporary contexts, often lead to challenges today. Shariah objectives provide essential tools for understanding the Sunnah accurately and identifying the higher aims of Shariah rulings, helping address modern issues and challenges.

There are numerous examples from the Prophetic Sunnah which, if not understood in light of their underlying objectives (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah), may lead to a rigid and deficient interpretation. This narrow approach confines the Muslim to the literal meanings of texts, resulting in intellectual stagnation and an inability to derive appropriate legal solutions for evolving realities. Such a failure ultimately undermines the wisdom of Islamic legislation and portrays Islam as a static tradition, disconnected from the dynamics of time and place. Among these texts are:

1.3.1.The Hadith of Lady ʿĀʾishah

The hadith of Lady ʿĀʾishah states that the Prophet Muhammad said to her: "Were it not for the fact that your people have only recently left the state of ignorance (Jāhiliyyah) — or he said: disbelief (kufr) — I would have spent the treasure of the Kaʿbah in the cause of Allah, brought its door down to ground level, and incorporated the Ḥijr area into it."[10]

This noble ḥadīth reflects the Prophet's careful consideration of one of the highest objectives of Islamic law (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah): endearing people to the religion and avoiding actions that might lead them to turn away from it. Although reconstructing the Kaʿbah in accordance with its original foundation would have been valid, the Prophet refrained from doing so out of concern that such a move would be rejected by those newly entering Islam from idolatry, thereby giving Satan a means to stir doubt in their hearts. His decision exemplifies his foresight and his commitment to preventing a greater harm by forgoing a lesser benefit — a clear demonstration of the principle of prioritizing public interest and the objective of attracting hearts to Islam.

Imām al-Nawawī (may Allah have mercy on him, d. 676 AH) commented on the benefit achieved by the Prophet's decision not to demolish the Kaʿbah, saying: "This ḥadīth demonstrates the importance of winning over the hearts of the subjects, treating them with care and gentleness, and refraining from anything that might alienate them or drive them away — as long as such refraining does not involve neglecting a religious obligation." [11]

Accordingly, failing to grasp the legal objective (maqṣad sharʿī) underlying this ḥadīth leads to rigidity and intellectual stagnation, as well as a lack of consideration for circumstances, interests, and potential harms. The ḥadīth could be misinterpreted as suggesting that the Prophet abandoned a religious act merely out of sentiment or courtesy, whereas in fact, his decision was a form of ijtihād aimed at realizing a greater legal interest — namely, the prevention of fitnah (civil

[9] Muhammad Mustafa al-Zuhaili, *Al-Wujayz Fi Usul Al-Fiqh Al-Islami* (Damascus: Dar al-Khayr for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, 1427).

[10] Muslim, "Hajj," *Sahih Muslim*.

[11] Yahya ibn Sharaf al-Nawawi, *Al-Minhaj Sharh Sahih Muslim Ibn Al-Hajjaj* (Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Turath al-Arabi, 1392).

discord). Similarly, one might erroneously conclude that anything likely to provoke public resistance or cause social discomfort may simply be avoided; however, Islamic law dictates that public interests and harms must be assessed according to precise and objective legal principles, not personal whims. Foundational religious rulings remain fixed, but the context and condition of people are taken into account in matters that are open to ijtihād.

1.3.2.The Hadith of Jabir

The Prophet said, "No town dweller should sell on behalf of a nomad. Leave people to receive provision from Allah."[12] Abu Al-Abbas Al-Qurtubi (d. 656 AH) noted, "The purpose is that urban people should benefit from rural people without causing apparent harm to the latter." [13]

The Prophet clarified in this ḥadīth the rationale behind the prohibition of the town-dweller selling on behalf of the Bedouin, highlighting its underlying objective: to facilitate people's access to goods at fair prices without the interference of brokers, which often leads to price inflation. Based on this noble purpose, a jurist or muftī is justified in prohibiting any financial transaction that contravenes this aim, without being restricted solely to this specific form of trade. Any practice that disrupts market accessibility or undermines public interest is therefore deemed objectionable according to the intended objective of the text. The wisdom of the ḥadīth lies in safeguarding price freedom and preventing monopolistic behavior or market manipulation. Accordingly, if the jurist comprehends this objective, they will apply the ruling to numerous modern financial practices—for instance, today's intermediaries must not monopolize goods sourced from farmers or rural producers, nor should they prevent direct sales to consumers. Likewise, companies or individuals may not enter into exclusive arrangements with small-scale producers or suppliers to restrict them from selling except through specific channels. Brokerage firms today must be licensed and governed by transparent regulations, ensuring they do not cause artificial price increases; otherwise, they would be in violation of the ḥadīth's intent. This prophetic guidance promotes the notion of a free and ethical market where transactions proceed without artificial interference that distorts economic balance, offering a superior principle to many modern commercial economic theories.

2. The Prophetic Approach to Combating Intellectual Stagnation

The message of the Prophet Muhammad was distinguished from previous revelations by its comprehensive nature, flexibility, and capacity to address emerging issues. It emphasized the rejection of intellectual rigidity and opened a wide space for the human mind to reflect, derive rulings, and exert effort in keeping up with new developments. This principle is supported by numerous hadiths that reflect this dynamic and adaptive approach.

2.1. Benefiting from Other Civilizations in Accordance with Islamic Teachings

Prophet Muhammad did not hesitate to adopt beneficial practices from those of other faiths, provided these practices aligned with Islamic principles and did not contradict the core tenets of the religion. Through this openness, the Islamic state thrived, using external innovations that served the Muslim community's needs. This approach reflects the wisdom and flexibility of the

[12] Muslim, "Al-Buyu' (Sales)," *Sahih Muslim*.

[13] Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Qurtubi, *Al-Mufham Lima Ashkil Min Talkhis Kitab Muslim* (Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathir, 1417).

Prophetic methodology, which encouraged the adoption of beneficial practices regardless of their origin, as long as they supported the welfare of the Muslims.

2.1.1.The Hadith on *Gheelah* (Conception During Breastfeeding)

Jadamah bint Wahb al-Asadiyyah reported that she heard the Messenger of Allah say, "I had thought of prohibiting gheelah [14] until I remembered that the Romans and Persians practice it, and it does not harm their children."[15]

In this hadith, the Prophet explained that he initially intended to forbid ghīlah—a practice whose exact meaning is debated among scholars—but ultimately refrained from doing so. The hadith highlights how the Prophet reconsidered his judgment based on empirical observation: seeing that the non-Muslims practiced ghīlah without apparent harm. This real-world experience served as decisive evidence that overruled his initial ijtihād (personal reasoning), since empirical proof—once verified—has a stronger indication than speculative reasoning. The hadith thus establishes an important principle in Islamic law: a conscious openness to external knowledge and practical evidence, as long as it does not contradict the principles of the Shariah. It rejects blind imitation and intellectual rigidity, showing that Islam supports well-informed, experience-based reasoning even when its source lies outside the Muslim community.

2.1.2.Hadith of al-Mughīrah ibn Shuʿbah: "The Prophet wore a Roman cloak with narrow sleeves."[16]

This hadith indicates that the Prophet benefited from products made by non-Muslim civilizations. When he received a cloak from the Roman lands, he wore it without objection, showing no rejection of goods not produced in Muslim lands. Through this, he established an important principle: it is permissible to benefit from other civilizations in worldly matters as long as it serves a legitimate interest and does not violate Islamic law. At the same time, the Muslim should preserve their identity and authenticity. Therefore, openness to the experiences and expertise of others is not a betrayal of Islamic identity, but rather a form of civilizational intelligence.

2.2. Seeking Expertise from Knowledgeable Individuals

Prophet Muhammad frequently relied on the expertise of knowledgeable individuals in worldly matters if it served a beneficial purpose for Islam and the Muslim community. This approach is seen in several instances where he sought guidance from skilled people, regardless of their faith, showing a practical openness to their expertise as long as it aligned with Islamic goals.

2.2.1.Seeking Guidance from Abdullah ibn Uraiqit

During his migration from Mecca to Medina, the Prophet hired Abdullah ibn Uraiqit, a skilled guide who was, at the time, a polytheist, due to his expertise in navigating the desert routes.

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[14] The term ghīlah, as explained by Imam al-Nawawī quoting Ibn al-Sikkīt, refers to a woman breastfeeding her child while she is pregnant. (See: al-Nawawī, al-Minhāj, 10/16)

[15] Muslim, "Al-Nikah (Marriage)," *Sahih Muslim*.

[16] al-Tirmidhī, "al-libās", 30 (raqm 1768), Wa-qāla : Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ.

Aisha reported: "When the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) left the cave migrating with Abu Bakr, and along with them was Amir ibn Fuhayrah, Abdullah ibn Uraiqit led the way from beneath Mecca."[17]

In one narration: "The Prophet (peace be upon him) and Abu Bakr hired a man from the Banu Dail, and then from the Banu Abd ibn Adi, a guide, who was skilled in guiding—al-Khirit: the expert in guiding. He had previously sworn an oath of allegiance to the family of Al-As ibn Wa'il and was upon the religion of the disbelievers of Quraysh. They entrusted him, and they gave him their two camels." [18]

The hadith clearly shows that the Prophet ﷺ prioritized competence, trustworthiness, and expertise when he chose a polytheist to assist in the crucial worldly task of the Hijrah. This was done to fulfill a higher objective—preserving the message and its messengers. It also demonstrates trust in the skills and discretion of such individuals when needed.

Furthermore, the hadith strongly rejects rigid thinking that limits interactions based solely on religious affiliation, even in worldly matters. This runs contrary to the objectives of Islamic law, which support the principle that expertise and capability should be recognized wherever they are found—so long as they do not contradict any clear Islamic text or lead to harm.

2.2.2.Adopting the Defensive Strategy Suggested by Salman al-Farsi

In the Battle of the Trench (al-Khandaq), Salman al-Farsi proposed a tactic inspired by Persian military strategies: digging a trench around Medina to fend off the enemy. The Prophet valued Salman's experience and adopted his suggestion, a pivotal decision that contributed to the Muslims' victory over the confederate forces.[19]

The hadith narrated by Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) states: "The Messenger of Allah went out to (the site of) the trench, and found the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār digging in the cold morning. They had no servants to do that work for them..."[20]

This shows that the Prophet valued and utilized the Persian military expertise brought by Salman (may Allah be pleased with him), which was accepted by the Muslims for its benefit. It clearly demonstrates that the Prophet embraced beneficial knowledge and experiences from other nations when they aligned with the greater good. This principle of utilizing valuable human experiences is an established foundation in Islamic law.

2.2.3.Engaging the Agricultural Expertise of the Jews after the Conquest of Khaybar

Bukhari narrated from Abdullah bin Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) who said: "The Messenger of Allah gave the Jews of Khaybar the land to work and cultivate, and they were entitled to half of the produce."[21]

Imam al-Bukhari categorized this hadith under "Chapter on Sharing with Dhimmis and Polytheists in Agriculture," signifying that it is permissible for Muslims to engage non-Muslims in agricultural partnerships without involving allegiance or support against Muslims.

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17 al-Hakim Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Naysaburi, *Al-Mustadrak 'ala Al-Sahihayn (The Collected Hadith Supplement to the Two Sahihs)* (Beirut: Dar al-Risalah al-Alamiya, 1440).

18 al-Bukhari, *Al-Ijara (Rental/Lease)*, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, n.d.

19 Al-Waqidi, *Al-Maghazi (The Campaigns)*, n.d.

20 al-Bukhārī, "al-jihād wa-al-siyar", 33 (raqm 2679).

21 al-Bukhari, "Al-Shurut (Conditions)," *Sahih Al-Bukhari*.

This hadith demonstrates the flexibility, rationality, and openness of the Prophet, who clearly distinguished between matters of religion, where no compromise is allowed, and worldly affairs, where benefits can be taken from any source. Despite the Jews being religious adversaries, the Prophet did not reject their agricultural expertise, seeing no problem in adopting beneficial practices as long as they adhered to Islamic guidelines.

By analogy, in the current age, many organizational and administrative programs have emerged, offering valuable human expertise. Although these programs may come from different cultural backgrounds, there is no harm in benefiting from them, as long as they align with the interests of Muslims and do not contradict the core principles of Islam.

2.3. Conforming to the Customs and Traditions of Other Religious Communities

The prophetic mission of Prophet Muhammad often required him to align with the customs and practices of people from other religions, especially in matters that did not contradict Islamic teachings. This approach helped facilitate the acceptance of the message and eased the propagation of Islam. Below are examples of how the Prophet conformed to certain traditions, provided they were not in conflict with Islamic principles:

2.3.1. The Use of a Seal

In a hadith narrated by Anas ibn Malik, it is mentioned: "*The Prophet (peace be upon him) wrote a letter - or intended to write a letter - and it was said to him, 'They do not read any letter unless it is sealed.' So, he took a silver ring and had it engraved with 'Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah.' I could almost see its brightness on his hand.*"[22]

This act of using a seal, a practice commonly associated with the Persian and Roman monarchs when sending official correspondence, was adopted by the Prophet as it was not contrary to Islamic principles. The seal served as a form of authentication and protection for important documents. It also made the letters more acceptable to the people who were accustomed to receiving sealed letters. This instance reflects the Prophet's pragmatism and ability to adapt to beneficial practices that facilitated communication and the spread of Islam.

2.3.2. Following the Practices of the People of the Book

The hadith from Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) states: "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) used to let his hair down, while the polytheists would part their hair, and the People of the Book would also let their hair down. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) liked to follow the People of the Book in matters that had not been explicitly forbidden by revelation. Then the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) parted his hair."[23]

This hadith shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) sometimes preferred to follow the practices of the People of the Book in certain customs, provided they did not contradict the Islamic law. The phrase "in what he was not commanded about" clarifies that this was only in matters that did not oppose the teachings of Islam.

Ibn Hajar stated: "The phrase 'in what he was not commanded about' means in matters that do not contradict his Shari'ah, because the People of the Book in his time were still holding on to

[22] al-Bukhari - Muslim, "Al-Ilm (Knowledge)," *Sahih Al-Bukhari*.

[23] al-Bukhārī, "al-manāqib", 23 (raqm 3558) ; Muslim, "al-faḍā'il", 24 (raqm 2336).

remnants of the divine laws, and their practices were closer to the truth than those of idolaters. Hence, the Prophet (peace be upon him) preferred to agree with them over idol worshippers."[24]

It is evident from Ibn Hajar's explanation that the Prophet (peace be upon him) favored the People of the Book because they were closer to the truth, believing in prophethood, divinity, and the revelations, unlike the polytheists who were further from the truth. When the majority of polytheists accepted Islam and the People of the Book remained in disbelief, the Prophet (peace be upon him) preferred to oppose their practices. For example, he eventually parted his hair, differing from the People of the Book.

The important point in this discussion is that agreeing with the practices of other religions is permissible as long as it does not contradict Islamic principles.

2.4. Approval of Ijtihad

Imam al-Shatibi (d. 790 AH) defined ijtihad as "the exertion of effort in obtaining knowledge or forming an opinion regarding a legal ruling."[25]

It is evident from this definition that ijtihad involves significant effort and energy, striving to arrive at a legal judgment in the absence of a fixed text. This exertion is no less important than the efforts involved in other acts of worship such as fasting, prayer, and pilgrimage, and it requires the application of intellect and thought, thereby moving away from mental stagnation and rigidity. The Prophet Muhammad was the leader of the Mujtahids, endowed by Allah with insight and wisdom, and he encouraged his companions, may Allah be pleased with them, to exercise their intellect in matters where there was no specific text. He even left room for them in the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an.

Al-Shatibi, may Allah have mercy on him, said about the Prophet's interpretation of the Qur'an: "He left much that could be understood by the scholars of ijtihad through their own reasoning; thus, not all interpretations of the Qur'an were strictly prescribed."[26]

Islam, being a religion of tolerance and openness, not of stagnation and rigidity, permits scholars to use their intellect in areas where there is no explicit text. Indeed, granting the mind this authority holds immense benefits for both religion and the worldly affairs. Legal texts are limited, and therefore, ijtihad, based on correct reasoning, is necessary to bridge the gap between these texts and the ever-evolving realities. The Prophet Muhammad approved of the ijtihad of many of his companions, knowing that ijtihad is essential in addressing new matters as they arise.

Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH) said: "The companions of the Messenger of Allah used to make ijtihad in new issues, and they would apply analogical reasoning, comparing one ruling to another and considering similarities."[27]

One of the most prominent evidences from the Prophetic tradition regarding the approval of ijtihad and the encouragement of intellectual work is the following narration:

a. The narration of Mu'adh ibn Jabal, may Allah be pleased with him: "When the Messenger of Allah sent him to Yemen, he asked: 'How will you judge if an issue arises?' Mu'adh replied: 'I will judge according to the Book of Allah.' The Prophet asked: 'And if you find no guidance in the Book of Allah?' He replied: 'Then I will judge according to the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah.'

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[24] Ibn Ḥajar, *Fatḥ al-Bārī, 6/574.*

[25] Ibrahim ibn Musa al-Shatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat (The Conformities)*, ed. Mashhur bin Hasan al-Salman (Cairo: Dar Ibn Afan, 1417).

[26] al-Shatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat (The Conformities).*

[27] Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr ibn Qayyim al-Jawzi, *I'lam Al-Muwaqqi'in 'an Rabb Al-'Alamin (The Notification to the Signatories from the Lord of the Worlds)* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1411).

The Prophet then asked: 'And if you find nothing in the Sunnah of the Messenger of Allah?' Mu'adh replied: 'I will exert my opinion and not spare any effort.' The Prophet struck his chest and said: 'Praise be to Allah who has guided the Messenger of the Messenger of Allah to what pleases the Messenger of Allah.'"[28]

This noble hadith clearly shows the Prophet's approval of Mu'adh's response when he said he would exercise ijtihad in the absence of explicit texts. This ijtihad could apply to both worship (ibadat) and transactions (mu'amalat), as Mu'adh, may Allah be pleased with him, was sent to govern an entire region. The Prophet did not restrict him to any specific laws or teachings but instead allowed him to use his intellect and prioritize the common good in any matter where there was no direct text.

Muhammad Abdul Ghani al-Majdidi (d. 1296 AH) stated: "Had it not been for this matter, where people are judged by their ijtihad in their issues, they would have perished and their livelihoods would have been ruined."[29]

b. The Hadith: A man came to Umar ibn al-Khattab and said: "I became impure and could not find water." Ammar ibn Yasir said to Umar: "Do you not remember that we were on a journey, and as for you, you did not pray, and as for me, I rubbed myself in the earth and prayed. I mentioned this to the Prophet, and the Prophet said: 'This is sufficient for you.' The Prophet struck the earth with his two hands, blew into them, then wiped his face and hands."[30]

The Prophet approved of the ijtihad (independent reasoning) of Ammar and Umar when they could not find water. He did not instruct them to make up for the prayer but instead taught them the rulings of tayammum (dry ablution). Ammar did not wait for a detailed text but used his intellect and made an effort based on his understanding of tayammum. This incident establishes an important principle in the absence of a clear text: the legitimacy of intellectual ijtihad. It fights against intellectual stagnation and negative complacency. It teaches us that correcting ijtihad does not mean rejecting ijtihad itself, but rather guiding and completing it in accordance with the spirit and objectives of Shari'ah.

c. In the hadith of Amr ibn al-As (may Allah be pleased with him), he mentions that during the Battle of Dhat al-Salasil, he became junub (in a state of sexual impurity) on a cold night. He feared that if he performed ghusl (ritual purification), he would harm himself, so he made tayammum (dry ablution) and prayed the Fajr prayer with his companions. When this was reported to the Prophet (peace be upon him), he asked, "Amr, did you pray with your companions while being junub?" Amr explained that he feared for his life and recalled the verse (Surah An-Nisa: 29) that forbids self-harm, and the Prophet (peace be upon him) laughed and did not say anything further.[31]

This hadith shows the Prophet's approval of Amr ibn al-As's ijtihad, as he did not instruct him to repeat the prayer. His ijtihad reflects his understanding of the flexibility in Islamic law and his ability to go beyond a literal interpretation of the text. His reasoning, which the Prophet (peace be upon him) affirmed, prioritized the preservation of life over the obligatory ghusl in cases where life might be at risk.

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[28] Ahmad ibn Hanbal - al-Tirmidhi, "Al-Musnad (The Musnad)," *Al-Musnad* (Unknown: Dar al-Tirmidhi), Dar al-Tirmidhi.

[29] Muhammad Abdul Ghani al-Majdidi, *Injah Al-Hajah Sharh Sunan Ibn Majah (The Fulfillment of Need: Explanation of Sunan Ibn Majah)* (Karachi: Qadeemi Kitab Khana, n.d.).

[30] al-Bukhari, "Al-Tayammum (The Dry Ablution)," *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Unknown: Dar al-Bukhari), Dar al-Bukhari.

[31] Aḥmad, al-Musnad, (raqm 17812), 29/346 ; Abū Dāwūd, "al-ṭahārah", 121 (raqm 334), wa-isnād al-ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ.

When comparing this hadith with that of Ammar ibn Yasir (may Allah be pleased with him), we see two forms of ijtihad: Ammar's ijtihad was in the method of purification (how to perform it), while Amr's was in the decision to avoid ghusl to prevent harm. Both were accepted by the Prophet (peace be upon him) with gentle guidance, without undermining the spirit of ijtihad and intellectual engagement.

2.5. Freedom of Opinion

Allah, the Almighty, has granted humans rights that enable them to live in this world with dignity and honor, free from rigidity or constraints imposed by others. One of these rights is the right to express one's opinion, a right affirmed by the prophetic tradition (Sunnah). Indeed, it is certain that diverse opinions exist in Islamic society, reflecting the intellectual diversity and currents it enjoys. Since the Sunnah fought against intellectual stagnation, it allowed freedom of opinion. The Prophet and his companions would listen to the opinions of other Muslims, and even non-Muslims. Examples of this include:

2.5.1. Offering Advice to Others

Tamim al-Dari narrated that the Prophet said: "Religion is sincere advice. We said: 'To whom?' He replied: 'To Allah, His Book, His Messenger, to the leaders of the Muslims, and to their common folk.'"[32]

Undoubtedly, offering advice to others is a form of expressing one's opinion in a manner that the speaker intends, in order to achieve what is necessary, even if the matter is not explicitly stated, as long as it involves truth, honesty, and benefit to the people. The Shari'ah acknowledges and accepts it, and sometimes even commands it when it serves a necessary benefit.

Imam al-Nawawi stated: "As for the advice to the general Muslims—other than the leaders—guiding them to their interests in both their worldly and religious affairs, preventing harm from them, teaching them what they do not know of their religion, assisting them in action and word, covering their shortcomings, preventing harm to them, bringing benefits to them, enjoining what is good and forbidding what is wrong with gentleness and sincerity... and other matters concerning them, both in word and deed.[33]

An important indication of the freedom to express an opinion is advising the ruler when they act unjustly or oppress others. An example of this is the Hadith narrated by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri in which the Prophet said: "The best jihad is a word of justice spoken in the presence of a tyrannical ruler."[34]

The Prophet regarded speaking the truth as the greatest jihad due to its courage, patience, and the benefit it brings to others.

This hadith is considered a foundational text for responsible freedom of expression in Islam. It illustrates that resisting oppression with truthful words is a religious duty and a great form of jihad. This reflects that Islam is a religion that opposes intellectual stagnation and blind submission to authority.

2.5.2. Respecting Opposing Opinions

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[32] Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, "Al-Iman (Faith)," *Sahih Muslim* (Unknown: Unknown), Unknown.
[33] Al-Nawawi, *Al-Minhaj (The Path)* (Unknown: Unknown, n.d.).
[34] Abu Dawood et al., "Al-Malahim (The Battles)," *Sunan Abu Dawood* (Unknown: Unknown), Unknown.

The Prophet demonstrated respect for the opinions of those who disagreed with him, without attacking or objecting to them, reflecting his openness to others. This is an indication that he did not monopolize opinions or impose rigid views, but allowed space for others to express their thoughts. Even the hypocrites during his time enjoyed the freedom to express their opinions on Islam, the Qur'an, and the Prophet. The Prophet showed tolerance towards them and would even seek forgiveness for them despite their insults to the Prophethood.

One such instance is when Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, the head of the hypocrites, said: "By Allah, when we return to Medina, the more honorable will expel the humbler from it." When this reached the Prophet, Umar ibn al-Khattab said: "O Messenger of Allah, let me strike the neck of this hypocrite." The Prophet responded: "Leave him, lest people say that Muhammad kills his companions."[35]

Thus, the Prophet allowed him to express his opinion freely, demonstrating that Islam does not restrict views nor impose intellectual stagnation.

2.5.3. Respecting Women's Opinions

Contrary to claims that the prophetic tradition deprived women of many of their rights and excluded them from participating in decision-making, historical events show that the Prophet granted women the right to express their opinions, believing in their competence and ability to make sound decisions. It is not from Islam to ignore or exclude a woman's opinion. Anyone who does so is intellectually and mentally rigid. The Prophet gave women the right to make decisions, as demonstrated in several instances, including the right to choose in marriage and divorce, as indicated in numerous texts.

An example of this is the Hadith narrated by Abu Huraira where the Prophet said: "A widow should not be married off[36] until she is consulted, and a virgin should not be married off until she is asked for permission. They asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, how is her consent to be indicated?' He said: 'By her silence.'"[37]

Al-Hafidh Ibn Hajar explained: "The guardian needs to seek her explicit consent for the marriage contract. If she expresses her refusal, it must be respected, whereas the consent of a virgin is indicated by silence because she might be too shy to speak openly."[38]

Furthermore, the Prophet granted women full freedom in matters such as divorce. Aisha said: "The Messenger of Allah gave us the choice, so we chose Allah and His Messenger, and that did not bring us any harm."[39]

Imam al-Nawawi commented: "These Hadiths indicate the view of Malik, al-Shafi'i, Abu Hanifa, Ahmad, and the majority of scholars that if a husband offers his wife the choice, and she chooses him, it does not count as a divorce and does not lead to separation."[40]

The Prophet even sought the counsel of some of his wives and acted upon their advice, as exemplified during the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah when his wife Umm Salamah suggested that he should leave and shave his head without speaking to anyone, which he did immediately.

Bukhari narrated the incident in which Umm Salama said: "O Prophet of Allah, do you love that? Go out and do not speak to any of them until you sacrifice your camels and call your barber

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35 al-Bukhari - Muslim, "Al-Manaqib (The Virtues)."
36 Ibn Hajar, *Fath Al-Bari (Opening of Al-Bari)* (Unknown: Unknown, n.d.).
37 Muslim, "Al-Nikah (Marriage)."
38 Hajar, *Fath Al-Bari (Opening of Al-Bari)*.
39 Al-Bukhari - Muslim, "At-Talaq (Divorce)," *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Unknown: Unknown), Unknown.
40 al-Nawawi, *Al-Minhaj (The Method)*.

to shave you." So, he went out and did not speak to any of them until he did that: he sacrificed his camels and called his barber to shave him. When they saw that, they stood up and sacrificed their camels. [41]

2.5.4. Adopting the Principle of Consultation (Shura)

One of the most notable features of the freedom to express opinions granted by the Prophet to his companions is the principle of Shura (consultation). Had the Prophet been rigid, he would not have sought the advice of his companions. But, due to his belief in the importance of consultation for the advancement of nations and the pursuit of justice and equality, he consulted his companions, especially in difficult situations involving their enemies.

For example, during the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah in the sixth year of the Hijrah, when he learned that the Quraysh had gathered to confront him, the Prophet said: "O people, what do you think? Should we approach them and engage them in battle, or should we leave them be?" Abu Bakr replied: "O Messenger of Allah, you came out intending only to visit the House, not to fight anyone, so proceed as planned. If they prevent us, we will fight them."[42]

This illustrates how the Prophet acted upon the advice of Abu Bakr, choosing to avoid conflict and continue his pilgrimage as initially planned. Despite being the Prophet, the Messenger of Allah did not monopolize the decision but valued the advice of his companions, exemplifying the importance of consultation in decision-making.

The hadith also indicates the Prophet's keen concern for building a free and conscious collective awareness within the Muslim community. It affirms that Islam encourages fighting intellectual rigidity through consultation (shūrā), embracing diverse scholarly opinions, and opening the door for participation by all qualified individuals—rejecting monopolization of opinion or intellectual authoritarianism.

3.The Role of the Prophetic Sunnah in Offering Solutions to Contemporary Issues

In modern times, many pressing human concerns have emerged that require a clear Islamic legal stance. Scholars have therefore turned to the Prophetic Sunnah to find foundational guidance, enabling them to frame appropriate jurisprudential responses. This reflects the Sunnah's intellectual flexibility and openness to new developments, confirming its relevance across all times and places. Notable examples of contemporary issues addressed through the Sunnah include:

1. The Emergence of the Modern Interest-Based Banking System

The Prophetic Sunnah has offered practical alternatives to interest-based financial systems, which have been adopted by modern Islamic banks. These institutions rely on forms of Islamic financing that were approved and practiced by the Prophet, such as: muḍārabah (profit-sharing), istisnāʿ (manufacturing contract), salam (prepaid sale), murābaḥah (cost-plus financing), shirkah (partnership), and ijārah (leasing)[43]. Each of these methods has textual support from the Sunnah, granting Islamic banks legitimate and effective tools for financial growth and investment, free from the impurities of interest (ribā).

2. Prayer in Regions Without Clear Time Indicators

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41 al-Bukhari, "Al-Shurut (Conditions)."

42 Al-Bukhari, "Al-Maghazi (The Expeditions)," *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Unknown: Unknown), Unknown.

43 Yanẓur : ʻAlī Aḥmad al-Sālūs, al-iqtiṣād al-Islāmī wa-al-qaḍāyā al-fiqhīyah al-muʻāṣirah (Bayrūt : Muʾassasat al-Rayyān, D. ṭ), 1/1736.

In some areas of the world, residents cannot determine prayer times based on sunrise and sunset due to extreme and prolonged daylight or darkness. Upon consulting the Sunnah, scholars have drawn upon the ḥadīth concerning the emergence of the Dajjāl (Antichrist), in which the Companions asked about prayer during a day as long as a year. The Prophet replied: "No, estimate its timing."[44]

Based on this, jurists ruled that people in such regions should estimate prayer times in relation to the nearest location with distinguishable time periods, thus ensuring the performance of prayer according to a calculated approximation.[45]

3. Online Shopping

Online shopping has become increasingly widespread, offering a fast and efficient means of acquiring goods. In most cases, the purchased item is either absent or not yet in existence, though it is described in detail.

According to the majority of jurists, the conditions for a valid sale include: the existence of the item at the time of the contract, that it be a valuable asset, owned by the seller, deliverable, and clearly known to both contracting parties.[46] The concern with online shopping lies in its apparent contradiction with the ḥadīth of Ḥakīm ibn Ḥizām: "Do not sell what you do not possess."[47]

However, upon examining the context and various narrations of this ḥadīth, scholars concluded that if an item is absent at the time of sale but described precisely, the transaction is permissible. They drew an analogy to salam and istisnāʿ contracts in the Sunnah, where goods not yet in existence are lawfully sold based on detailed specifications.[48]

This demonstrates that the ḥadīth “Do not sell what you do not possess” is not an inflexible rule applied without context. It primarily forbids sales that involve risk (gharar) or injustice. When harm is absent, the Sunnah allows for flexible transaction models, thereby opening the door to legitimate modern financial innovations.

4. Martyrdom Operations (Suicide Missions in Warfare)

One of the contemporary issues in jihad is the permissibility of martyrdom operations, where an individual detonates themselves among enemy forces, causing harm to the enemy while also dying in the process. This practice has sparked debate among scholars. Those who prohibit it cite the verse: “And do not kill yourselves” (al-Nisāʾ: 29).

However, many contemporary scholars permit it, drawing parallels with Prophetic reports—such as the story of the boy in the narrative of the believing youth and the tyrant king. The boy guided the king on how to kill him by saying: “In the name of Allah, the Lord of the boy.”[49] His death led to mass belief in Allah.

Ibn Taymiyyah commented that the boy ordered his own death for the greater good of spreading faith. This act reflects how the Sunnah supports non-traditional means of conveying the truth when the intent is noble and the method is secure.[50]

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[44] Muslim, "al-fitan", 20 (raqm 2937)

[45] Qarārāt al-Majmaʿ al-fiqhī al-Islāmī, qarār raqm (2/12)

[46] Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-al-Shuʾūn al-Islāmīyah, al-Mawsūʿah al-fiqhīyah, ṭ2, (al-Kuwayt : Dār al-Salāsil, D. t), 9/14-15

[47] Aḥmad, al-Musnad, 3/509 (rqm15290) ; al-Tirmidhī, "al-buyūʿ", 19 (raqm 1232), Wa-qāla : Ḥadīth Ḥasan.

[48] al-Mawsūʿah al-fiqhīyah al-Kuwaytīyah, 9/16-17.

[49] Muslim, "al-zuhd wa-al-raqāʾiq", 17 (raqm 3005).

[50] Aḥmad ibn Taymīyah, Majmūʿ al-Fatāwá (al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah : Majmaʿ al-Malik Fahd li-Ṭibāʿat al-Muṣḥaf al-Sharīf, 1425h / 2004M), 28/540.

Furthermore, the boy acted on his own reasoned judgment, without explicit instruction, and the Prophet did not reject his action but instead narrated it approvingly. This illustrates that the Sunnah embraces intellectual reasoning and practical flexibility in the service of higher moral and religious objectives.

Conclusion

This study has presented the primary causes of intellectual stagnation and explored the Prophetic approach to combating it. The key findings include:

1. The social and cultural transformations within the Muslim world—alongside emerging developments—necessitate abandoning intellectual rigidity and instead activating reason to derive suitable rulings and solutions.
2. Renewal that responds to real-life developments does not contradict adherence to foundational Islamic principles. However, some who claim religious knowledge fail to recognize this, leading to the false accusation that Islam is rigid or outdated.
3. Numerous Prophetic texts affirm the legitimacy of renewal and progress while rejecting stagnation and regression—such as the ḥadīth regarding the sending of reformers in times of decline, the praise of religious "strangers" who restore the faith, and warnings against ignorance and its consequences.
4. Blind imitation—following someone without evidence or understanding, merely because it reflects ancestral practice—is a key factor in intellectual stagnation. The Sunnah criticizes such imitation, as it fosters innovation (*bidʿah*), superstition, and moral and behavioral deviations.
5. Understanding the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* (higher objectives of Islamic law) is crucial to correct comprehension of the Sunnah and in formulating rulings that address contemporary challenges. Those who neglect the maqāṣid are prone to literalism and intellectual rigidity.
6. The Sunnah reveals that the Prophet frequently considered the higher aims of the Sharīʿah—whether encouraging people to embrace the religion, easing financial transactions, or preserving individual privacy.
7. The Prophet's engagement with people of other faiths and his strategic use of their knowledge for the benefit of Muslims reflect an enlightened intellectual openness. He utilized experiences from other civilizations and consulted experts—even non-Muslims—when it served communal interests and did not violate Islamic principles.
8. The Prophet endorsed the use of reason in situations lacking explicit revelation and encouraged ijtihād. He affirmed the independent reasoning of several Companions—including Muʿādh, ʿUmar, and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir—in both devotional and transactional matters.
9. One of the key Prophetic strategies in combating intellectual stagnation was permitting responsible freedom of opinion. The Prophet welcomed diverse viewpoints, including opposition, without harshness. He acknowledged the voices of women and non-Muslims, affirmed their capacity to contribute to sound decision-making, and practiced mutual consultation, especially in critical circumstances, underscoring the role of *shūrā* in refining judgment and ensuring sound governance.

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Nebevî Sünnet Işığında Fikrî Durgunlukla Mücadele

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Genişletilmiş Özet

Bazı ilim ehlinin maruz kaldığı düşünsel donukluk, Müslüman toplumların karşılaştığı yeni meselelerin ele alınmasında önemli bir engel teşkil etmektedir. Bu çalışma, düşünsel durgunluk karşısında Hz. Peygamber'in (s.a.v.) sünnetinin tutumunu incelemeyi, bu durgunluğun nedenlerini tespit etmeyi, Hz. Peygamber'in bu duruma karşı geliştirdiği yöntemi ortaya koymayı ve sünnetin çağdaş problemlere nasıl çözüm sunduğunu açıklamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Araştırmada düşünsel donukluğun üç temel nedeni tespit edilmiştir:

1.Meşru ve gayrimeşru yenilik (tecdit) arasında ayrım yapılmaması: Bazı sabit esaslar vardır ki, bunlar değiştirilemez; örneğin İslam akîdesinin (ʿaqīdah) temel esasları, iman ve İslam'ın rükünleri ve ibadetler ile muamelata dair alimler arasında ihtilaf bulunmayan hükümler. Bu sabiteler, kişisel arzularla yorumlanamaz ve anlamları bozulamaz. Ancak bu, meşru yeniliği (tecdit) engellemez. Bilakis, meşru tecdit, şeriatın genel ilkelerine ve amaçlarına (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah) uygun bir biçimde, metinlerin çağdaş bağlama uygulanmasını ifade eder. Böyle bir yaklaşım, sabitelere aykırı olmadığı gibi, onların çağın şartlarına göre yeniden yorumlanmasını sağlar.

2.Körü körüne taklit (taqlīd): Düşünsel donukluğun ikinci sebebi, delile dayanmayan, bilinçsizce yapılan taklittir. Taklit mutlak olarak kötü değildir; halktan kimselerin, dinî delilleri değerlendirme yetisine sahip olmayanların, ehil bir âlimi taklit etmesi meşrudur. Ancak, delile ulaşabilecek ve değerlendirebilecek bir kişinin sırf gelenek veya otoriteye dayanarak taklit yapması, fikrî gelişimi engeller ve bid'at, hurafe ya da ahlâkî sapmalara yol açabilir.

3.Şeriatın maksatlarının bilinmemesi (maqāṣid al-sharīʿah): İslam hukuk sistemi sadece nasslardan hüküm çıkarmaya dayanmaz; aynı zamanda adalet, maslahat ve hikmet gibi yüksek hedefleri gerçekleştirmeyi de amaçlar. Bu maksatları bilmeyenler, hüküm çıkarmada dar bir çerçeveye hapsolur ve metinleri çağdaş sorunlara uygulamakta zorlanır. Oysa maqāṣid bilgisi, yeni durumlara uygun çözümler üretme konusunda önemli bir araçtır.

Araştırmanın ikinci bölümünde, Hz. Peygamber'in düşünsel donuklukla mücadele yöntemi ele alınmıştır. Bu yöntem şu başlıklarda incelenmiştir:

1.Başka medeniyetlerden faydalanma: Hz. Peygamber, şeriata aykırı olmadığı sürece, diğer toplumların tecrübelerinden istifade etmiştir. Örneğin, gebelik sırasında emzirmenin (ğīlah) yasaklanmadığı, çünkü başka topluluklarda bu uygulamanın zararlı olmadığı tecrübe edilmiştir. Bu, Hz. Peygamber'in deneyimsel bilginin değerini takdir ettiğini ve bu bilgiyi içtihadının önünde kabul ettiğini göstermektedir. Yine, Rumlardan gelen bir elbiseyi giyerek gayrimüslimlerin ürünlerini kullanabileceğini göstermiştir.

2.Ehliyetli kimselerin uzmanlığından yararlanma: Hz. Peygamber, İslam'a ve davetine hizmet edecek her tür bilgiyi dikkate almıştır. Hicret esnasında müşrik olan Abdullah b. Uraykıt'ın yol bilgisine başvurmuş, Hendek Savaşı'nda Selmân el-Fârisî'nin önerisini dikkate alarak hendek kazdırmış, Yahudilerin ziraat tecrübelerinden faydalanmıştır.

3.Kültürel açıdan nötr uygulamaların benimsenmesi: Davetin etkinliğini artırmak için, bazı geleneksel uygulamaları benimsemiştir. Örneğin, mektupların mühürlü olmadıkça okunmadığını öğrenince, diğer toplumların geleneğine uyarak "Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh" yazılı bir mühür edinmiştir. Aynı şekilde, bazen Ehl-i Kitap'ın saç tarama şekillerini benimsemiştir. Bu tür uygulamalar, tebliği kolaylaştırmak ve muhatabın kabulünü artırmak amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir.

1.İçtihada izin verilmesi: Hz. Peygamber, nass bulunmayan konularda sahabenin akıl yürütmesini teşvik etmiş ve bunu onaylamıştır. Bu, düşünsel dinamizmi ve metinlerin çağdaş problemlere uygulanmasını mümkün kılmıştır. Kur'ân âyetlerinin yorumlanmasında dahi sahabenin görüşlerine yer vermiştir.

2.Fikir beyan etme özgürlüğü: Sünnet, düşünsel donuklukla mücadelede ifade özgürlüğünü esas alır. Sahabenin fikirlerini açıkça söylemesine, kadınların görüş beyan etmesine ve eleştirinin dile getirilmesine alan tanımıştır. Şûrâ ilkesini uygulayarak kolektif aklı teşvik etmiştir.

Çalışmanın son bölümü, sünnetin çağdaş meselelere çözüm üretme gücünü ele almaktadır. Modern dönemde insan hayatını doğrudan etkileyen birçok yeni mesele ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu durum, şer'i hükmün belirlenmesini gerekli kılmakta ve ulema bu bağlamda sünnet kaynaklarına yönelmektedir. Bu, sünnetin zihinsel açıklığa dayandığını ve zamanlar ötesi uygulanabilirliğe sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Sünnetin çözüm sunduğu çağdaş örnekler arasında faiz esaslı modern bankacılık sistemi, kutup bölgelerinde namaz vakitleri, çevrim içi alışveriş ve fedai eylemleri yer almaktadır. Bu örnekler, sünnetin statik değil, canlı ve dinamik bir yönü olduğunu kanıtlamaktadır.Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma sünnetin, düşünsel donuklukla mücadelede ve çağdaş problemlere çözüm geliştirmede etkin bir metodoloji sunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Temel nasslara bağlılığı koruyarak akıl yürütmeyi, bağlamsal farkındalığı ve maslahat esaslı düşünceyi benimseyen Peygamberî yaklaşım; İslam düşüncesine denge, esneklik ve canlılık kazandırmakta ve onu her çağda geçerli kılmaktadır.

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