

AL-BUKHĀRĪ, THE CREATIVE GENIUS AND *AL-JĀMI' AL-ṢAḤĪḤ* IN THE LIGHT OF CREATIVITY

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Abstract

This research paper investigates the unique personality of Imām Al-Bukhārī beginning with his childhood, discussing the stages of discovering his remarkable talents, and detailing the constituent factors of his creative talents. Furthermore, this research studies the creative written product, the book of Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (*The authentic collection*), from the perspective of creativity, looking at its illustrious novelty, peerless cogency, the omnipresence of its outstanding influence and its highly commendable universal social and academic significance. Its stages of ingenious authoring are closely investigated, as the paper delves into Al-Bukhārī's well-executed nurturing of pioneering ideas, beginning with the original evolution, the subsequent fermentation and finally the production and verification of his perceptions. Examinations are thus made of his extraordinary components of imaginative brilliance, his cognitive fluency, flexibility, originality, sensitivity to problems and elaboration. Lastly we look at why his works can be considered creative, including their highest degree of accuracy, their deep elucidation of the text during analysis and the proportionality in the order and coherence of the books, chapters and individual *ḥadīth* in *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

1. Introduction

It is without doubt that the art of creativity is essential to all aspects of life.¹ According to Arthur Cropley, there are three key aspects of creativity: *novelty*, an idea or a product that departs from the familiar; *effectiveness*, the idea or product that achieves some end—it works; and *ethicalness*, the concept that creativity is not used for selfish or destructive behavior.²

Imām Al-Bukhārī's methods used in writing his book, *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (*The authentic collection*), can be easily considered as perfect examples of creativity. Inarguably, a preserved collection of the *sunnah* of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), free from corruption and faults, demanded a level of creativity never before seen. It is no

surprise then, that his works are often credited as being the greatest creation in the history of the Muslim *ummah*.

Shaykh Al-Mubārakfūrī has said, “Even now the civilized nations use the same methods laid out by Imām Al-Bukhārī, which demonstrates the very extent of his influence. His methodological laws proved more suitable and effective with time, and more and more governments began to implement them nationally in order to provide peace and security for their citizens.”³

We have divided this paper into the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Imām Al-Bukhārī’s creative attributes
 - 2.1 Methodology of discovering his creative attributes
 - 2.2 Descriptions of Al-Bukhārī’s creative attributes
 - 2.3 Exceptional personal qualities of Al-Bukhārī
 - 2.4 Factors that contributed to the formation of Al-Bukhārī’s creativity
 - 2.5 Personal after-effects of Al-Bukhārī’s creativity
3. *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* from a creative perspective
 - 3.1 Portrayal as a product of creativity
 - 3.2 Creative stages of authoring of *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*
 - 3.3 Components of creative thinking in *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*
 - 3.4 Areas of creativity in *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*
4. Conclusion

Our research will follow an analytical approach through studies of the biographies of Imām Al-Bukhārī and what has been published regarding *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* from the point of view of creativity.

2. Imām Al-Bukhārī’s creative attributes

2.1 Methodology of discovering his creative attributes

Scholars have mentioned that there are a few methods to assess creativity, namely nomination by teachers and colleagues, and tests for the discovery of talent, in this case being an extraordinary memory.

2.1.1 Nomination by teachers

This is the most common method used in assessments.⁴ While investigating the biography of Al-Bukhārī it became clear that there were many among his teachers who assessed his creative talent, predicting him to be a pioneer of creativity even from an early age. This is exemplified in the words of Abū-Ḥafṣ, who has been noted for saying, “This young man will have a famous name in the future.”⁵ Furthermore, it was reported by Ḥāshid bin Ismā‘īl that when Sulaimān bin Ḥarb observed Al-Bukhārī he said, “One day, he will have a voice.”⁶ Al-Bukhārī himself said, “I used

to visit the jurists whilst I was a young boy. In my visits I recall being shy upon greeting them. One of them asked me of how many *ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet, p.b.u.h.) I had memorized. I replied, 'Only two.' The people present then laughed at me. Their shaykh said to them, 'Do not laugh at him; perhaps one day he will laugh at you.'"⁷

2.1.2 *Nomination by colleagues*

This is the second part of an assessment of a person's creative aptitude.⁸ Here we shall mention the fellow students of Al-Bukhārī who witnessed his significant inventive talent. Muḥammad bin Abi-Ḥātim al-Warrāq reported that Ḥāshid bin Ismā'īl said, "Imām Al-Bukhārī, myself and others used to attend circles in Baṣrah. We used to take notes, but Imām Al-Bukhārī did not take notes. One day we asked him why this was so. He replied, 'Read to me what you have written.' We read to him fifteen thousand *ḥadīth*. After we did this, he asked us to listen, and then he repeated all of them by heart. Thereafter we adopted the practice of verifying our notes against his memory. Thus we admitted that there could be no one more talented than him."⁹

2.1.3 *Tests that discover talent (by examinations of memory)*

Al-Bukhārī sat many exams that were set for him by the scholars of *ḥadīth*. One such test that gained considerable fame was held by the scholars of Baghdad when they altered the chains and texts of many *ḥadīth* by mixing them up with details taken from many other *ḥadīth*. They selected ten men, and to each one of them they gave ten different *ḥadīth* whose narrative chains and texts had been modified in this manner. They fixed a date to test Al-Bukhārī, and these ten men came, each one of them reporting their ten modified *ḥadīth* to Al-Bukhārī. Upon hearing every one of them, Al-Bukhārī repeated that he did not recognize the *ḥadīth* being said, throughout all one hundred *ḥadīth* narrated to him. After they had finished, Al-Bukhārī corrected all one hundred *ḥadīth* with regard to their narrative chains and texts, every single one being rendered back to its original and correct form, all from his memory.¹⁰ With regard to this test, Imām ibn Ḥajar remarked, "The feat of awe is not that Imām Al-Bukhārī rectified the mistaken chain and texts, but truly the feat of awe is that he memorized the incorrect chains and texts and *then* he rectified them."¹¹ Abū al-Azhar stated, "In the city of Samarqand, four hundred students who were seeking the knowledge of *ḥadīth* met together wanting to test Imām Al-Bukhārī. They reported some *ḥadīth* to him but they mixed up the chain of the people of Syria with the chain of the people of Iraq, the chain of the people of Yemen and the chain of the people of the two Ḥarams (Makkah and Madinah). He rectified each of the incorrect *ḥadīth* to its respective original narrative chain and text and he did not make any mistake in his rectification."¹²

2.2 Descriptions of Al-Bukhārī's creative attributes

It is logical to assume that though even the most gifted individuals could have many creative attributes, it would be impossible to find an individual who could boast possession of all of the encompassing attributes of creativity.¹³ When studying the biography of Imām Al-Bukhārī one cannot help being convinced that his persona possessed an abundance of features, all of which contributed to his ingenious temperament. Such features are given in the following paragraphs.

2.2.1 *Intelligence and initiative*

Research has proven that there is a direct correlation between intelligence and creativity. Though intelligence is irrefutably a requirement for creativity, it is not sufficient on its own; not every intelligent individual is creative, but every creative person is intelligent.¹⁴ Al-Bukhārī is irrefutably one of the most intelligent individuals in the history of the Muslim *ummah*, in terms of his memorization, wide knowledge and general acumen.¹⁵ Imām Al-Dhahabī in his book, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'* (*Biographies of the noble scholars*) provided innumerable evidence for this.¹⁶

2.2.2 *The power of focus*

A creative person must have the power of concentration when solving a problem, being able to tackle a task with utmost focus until completion. The strength of focus and length of time of such concentration has important bearing on any task's completion.¹⁷ Muḥammad bin Yūsuf al-Bukhārī once said, "I stayed one night with Imām Al-Bukhārī in his home and I counted more than eighteen times him getting up during the night, lighting a light and writing some notes on *ḥadīth* he remembered whilst going to sleep."¹⁸ Muḥammad bin Abī Ḥātim al-Warrāq further reported, "We used to travel with Al-Bukhārī. He used to get up at night between fifteen to twenty times, light his lamp, make a note of a certain *ḥadīth* that he used to remember during his sleep and mark them."¹⁹ Al-Ḥussain bin Muḥammad al-Samarqandī said, "Al-Bukhārī had three main qualities. He used to speak little, never be jealous of others and not bother with others' private affairs. His main work was seeking knowledge."²⁰

2.2.3 *The power of memory*

The knowledge of talented students runs both wide and deep and they are able to retain large quantities of information.²¹ Imām Al-Bukhārī was a miracle in his own right; his ability to memorize was on a level never seen before. He used to say, "I have to memorize one hundred thousand sound *ḥadīth* and two hundred thousand *ḥadīth* that were not sound."²² Abū Bakr al-Kulthānī said, "I never saw anyone similar to Imām Al-Bukhārī. He was able to memorize an entire book after reading it only once."²³ Because of the strength of Al-Bukhārī's memorization people used to think that he took medicine to strengthen his memory. This was until one day when one of his teachers asked him, "Is there any medicine one can take to strengthen memory?" Al-Bukhārī replied, "I don't know, but there is nothing that benefits memory except courage and continuous reading."²⁴ Hence Al-Bukhārī constructed an educational method in order to improve memorization that encompassed high motivation and continuous reading.

2.2.4 *A serious scientific spirit and mental adeptness*

Al-Bukhārī once said, "I never did anything without first knowing what I was doing, ever since I became an adult." This ethos was thus adopted by Imām Al-Bukhārī in all of his actions. Muḥammad bin Abī Ḥātim al-Warrāq asked Al-Bukhārī while he was writing the *tafsīr* (exegesis) of the Qur'ān why he was lying down and not sitting. Al-Bukhārī replied, "Because we are tired from studying the *ḥadīth* earlier. And I am still writing although I am tired, as I do not want to leave any area open for criticism

against Islam.”²⁵ Imām Al-Nawawī mentioned this story as an example of Al-Bukhārī’s enthusiasm for seeking knowledge.²⁶ A talented person should have the mental capacity and flexibility to tackle any problem.²⁷ Imām Al-Bukhārī had an ample supply of manifold mental skills, which we will further discuss in Section 3 of this paper.

2.2.5 *An impulsive spark of resolve*²⁸

An inventive person is able to grab any opportunity that they see or hear, and build upon this initial spark of intuition. Once Imām Al-Bukhārī was sitting in a circle held by his senior teacher, Shaykh Ishāq bin Rāhawaih, and a participating student asked the shaykh why he never collected the sayings of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) in one book. Al-Bukhārī said with regard to this proposal, “Upon hearing this idea, I decided in my mind that I should actuate it.”²⁹ Imām Al-Nawawī and Imām ibn Ḥajar reported the same incident and remarked that this was the start of Imām Al-Bukhārī’s mission in gathering the *ḥadīth* in the book called *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ (The authentic collection)*.³⁰ Though there were many students present in this educational circle, only Al-Bukhārī had the audacity to take the actual resolve to act upon the idea, resulting in the production of a book second only to the Qur’ān in authenticity. Al-Bukhārī even reported that he had a dream in which he saw himself standing before the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) holding a hand-fan that he was using to swat away flies from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). Upon asking a person for an interpretation of this dream, he was told that he would be the one to remove all the misinformation from the sayings of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.).³¹

2.2.6 *Promptitude*³²

Another aspect of optimum creativity is the characteristic of performing things with agility. Aḥmad bin Ḥamdūn said, “I saw Al-Bukhārī at the funeral of Sa‘īd bin Marwān while Muḥammad bin Yaḥyā al-Thahlī asked him about the names of the chains of many *ḥadīth* and Al-Bukhārī recited them as if he was reciting from the short *sūrah* in the Qur’ān, *Al-Ikhlāṣ* (Qur’ān, *Al-Ikhlāṣ*:112).”³³

2.3 Exceptional personal qualities of Al-Bukhārī³⁴

2.3.1 *Independence*

Another distinguished quality of the inventive individual is the natural tendency to be independent, based on a desire not to be reliant on others.³⁵ Imām Al-Bukhārī used to correct his teachers whenever they made a mistake. An illustrating example would be when Al-Bukhārī rejected a *ḥadīth* that was said on behalf of his teachers Imām Yahyā and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal by Abī Rajā al-Baghlānī. Al-Baghlānī thereupon said to Al-Bukhārī, “Oh Abū ‘Abdullāh (a name of Al-Bukhārī), this is what the people of Baghdad reported with the approval of Imām Yahyā and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, so I cannot alter it.” Al-Bukhārī corrected the *ḥadīth* and said, “I have reported this *ḥadīth* on the authority of many such as Yaḥyā bin Bakr and Ibn Abī Maryam and Al-Laith.”³⁶ Al-Bukhārī rejected the incorrect *ḥadīth* although it came from his own teachers and accepted the *ḥadīth* that came from a different chain of authority.

2.3.2 *Gallantry*³⁷

A further feature of an exceedingly creative student is a certain penchant for adventurous courage, with attention to appropriate conduct and politeness. Shaykh Al-Dakhīlī was giving a talk and Al-Bukhārī, ten years old at the time, attended this talk. The shaykh made a mistake in the *ḥadīth*, and he rectified the shaykh. Although the shaykh openly reprimanded Al-Bukhārī, he insisted upon his rectification but with politeness. Another incident can be cited when his shaykh, Ishāq bin Rāhawaih, was sitting on a bench giving a talk and he made a mistake. Al-Bukhārī corrected him in a polite manner.³⁸ Another famous story demonstrating his courage was when the Prince of Bukhara, Khālīd bin Aḥmad al-Thahlī, asked Al-Bukhārī to come to him and bring his two books, *Al-Jāmi‘* and *Al-Tārīkh* and teach the Prince from the books. Al-Bukhārī replied, “I will not humiliate the knowledge. And I will not carry it to the door of the people. If you wish to seek the knowledge, then you should attend my talk in the mosque or at my home. If you are not happy with my decision, then you can prevent me from giving these talks, so that I may have an excuse on the Day of Judgment that you prevented me from teaching; for I know the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said, ‘Whosoever keeps the knowledge away from the people, Allah will put a bridle from Hellfire on his mouth.’”³⁹ This incident created a tension between Al-Bukhārī and Prince Khālīd.⁴⁰ A similar incident occurred when Al-Bukhārī had a debate with his shaykh, Bakr bin Abī Shaybah regarding *Ḥadīth Sufyān* (which was reported by Sufyān), and Al-Bukhārī mentioned about two hundred *ḥadīth* that were not known to Bakr. Abū Bakr then said, “This young man is very hard.”⁴¹ Imām Al-Dhahabī later explained that the word “hard” used by Abū Bakr was with reference to Al-Bukhārī’s firmness, bravery and wide knowledge.⁴²

2.3.3 *Self-reliance*⁴³

Al-Bukhārī said, “When I became sixteen I had already memorized the books of Shaykh Ibn al-Mubārak and Shaykh Ibn al-Wakī‘, then I went with my mother and my brother Aḥmad to Makkah. We performed *ḥajj*, they returned home, but I stayed in Makkah seeking knowledge.”⁴⁴ One can only admire Al-Bukhārī’s level of autonomy at such an early age; such boldness is only rarely seen in this day and age.

2.3.4 *High self-confidence*⁴⁵

Imām Al-Bukhārī possessed strong confidence in himself, without arrogance. He realized how important self-confidence was in creativity. He once said, “I have written my book, *Al-Tārīkh (History)* three times and my teachers know not what is in it,”⁴⁶ which meant he was confident that his writings were accurate even without seeking the approval of his teachers. He won the worthy respect of his teachers, which he was only happy to gain. His shaykh, Ishāq bin Rāhawaih, once took Al-Bukhārī’s book, *Al-Tārīkh*, to Prince ‘Abdullāh bin Ṭāhir and said, “O Prince, shall I show you something magical? A young boy wrote this book in history, with authentic information.” Upon looking at the book, the Prince was both pleased and impressed.⁴⁷ Furthermore, Al-Bukhārī used to announce his talents and abilities without being arrogant. For example, he once said, “I have memorized two hundred thousand *ḥadīth* from my shaykh, Ishāq bin Rāhawaih.”⁴⁸ He also once said, “The way I authored my *ḥadīth* book is not the same way that my teachers authored theirs. Whenever any man

reporting a *ḥadīth* came to me, I would not accept it unless I asked his name, his title, his family branch, his ancestors and from whom he heard the *ḥadīth*. If he had the *ḥadīth* in writing, I would ask him to show me what was written. Hence my way was not like the others, who sometimes did not pay great attention to the method of collecting *ḥadīth*.”⁴⁹ Additionally, Al-Bukhārī said, “On any occasion when I wanted to seek knowledge, I used to find myself benefiting the one I sought from more than him benefiting me.”⁵⁰

2.3.5 *Strength of motivation*

Both physical and mental motivation is essential for any inventive individual to perform work with ample supplies of energy.⁵¹ The motivation that encouraged Imām Al-Bukhārī was his sincerity to Allah and his love for the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.), and the desire to defend the *sunnah* of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.). He said, “I have completed writing down the *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ* while I was sixteen as a proof that I work for the sake of Allah alone.”⁵² We mentioned earlier about Al-Bukhārī’s dream in which he saw himself swatting the flies away from the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.).⁵³ Al-Bukhārī was once teaching his student Muḥammad bin al-‘Abbās al-Faraibri and Muḥammad felt exhausted after some time. Al-Bukhārī said, “Do not worry. The people of the coffee shops will be in the coffee shop. The people of manufacturing are with their products. The traders are with their businesses. And you are with the Prophet (p.b.u.h.).”⁵⁴

2.3.6 *Open-mindedness and respect for the ideas of others*⁵⁵

We know Imām Al-Bukhārī was from the school that relied on text in laying out legitimate terminological rules. Despite this, he was open-minded towards other schools of thought, especially the school that relied on intellectual reasoning for laying out rulings. Imām Al-Bukhārī combined the two schools of thought.⁵⁶

2.3.7 *Unprecedented working hours*⁵⁷

Al-Bukhārī used to wake up at night more than twenty times to study the *ḥadīth* and write notes. He, in fact, sacrificed the majority of his life for the sake of knowledge. Muḥammad bin Yūsuf said, “I, a few others, and Al-Bukhārī were once in Syria. We were eating *al-tūt* (berries),⁵⁸ but he was studying.”⁵⁹ He said, ‘I came here to study from the scholars, not to waste my time.’”⁶⁰

2.4 Factors that contributed to the formation of Al-Bukhārī’s creativity

It seems that the following factors contributed to Imām Al-Bukhārī’s creativity.

2.4.1 *Allah’s special bounty*

The bestowal of the bounty of Allah is one of the most important gifts, since Allah gives inventive power to whomever He wishes and He can take away such bounties if He so wishes. However this does not mean that the creative person makes no physical contribution; rather his or her own assiduous efforts and diligent self-application entwine with the blessing of the Almighty and together form the roots of monumental work. This is contrary to Plato’s hypothesis that creativity comes from

divine inspiration alone.⁶¹ Imām Al-Bukhārī himself considered his own inventive talents to be a gift from God. He said, “Knowledge is sustenance from Allah; He gives it to whom He wishes.”⁶² During an incident of dispute with another person, Al-Bukhārī remarked, “This man is jealous of what Allah has bestowed upon me.”⁶³

2.4.2 *A creative environment*⁶⁴

Al-Bukhārī lived in the third century AH (ninth century CE), in a dynamic and profound Islamic environment in which inventive endeavours were acknowledged and respected. This century is often considered as one of the most flourishing centuries in the history of the Muslim *ummah*, in terms of the development of scientific methodologies, especially in the science of *ḥadīth*. Regarding this century, Dr. Diya Akram al-Umari said, “The scholars consider the third century as one of the happiest centuries of the *ummah*. In its peak, the six books of authentic *ḥadīth* were collected and written down. Scholars travelled freely throughout the Muslim lands actively seeking knowledge and combining both the scribed and mental documentation of *ḥadīth*.”⁶⁵

Imām Al-Bukhārī gained the highest status of respect and honour from his scientific community, which is why the scholars gave him admirable descriptions. The environment in which he was living was positive, with limitless opportunities for talented individuals to distinguish themselves by their contributions.⁶⁶

We can summarize the above three factors in an integrated diagram showing their interaction producing creativity (Fig. 1):

2.5 Personal after-effects of Al-Bukhārī’s creativity

Imām Al-Bukhārī’s meritorious creativity resulted in numerous positive effects.

2.5.1 *Recognition by the scholars*

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal said, “No one has ever come from Khurāsān similar in greatness to Al-Bukhārī.”⁶⁷ ‘Alī bin al-Madīnī, Al-Bukhārī’s shaykh, said, “I have not seen a person like him.”⁶⁸ Imām Al-Nawawī remarked, “It was enough for himself that famous scholars were impressed by him.”⁶⁹ Al-Bukhārī once said, “I travelled to Al-Baṣra in Iraq and participated in the gathering of Muḥammad bin Bashār bin Bandar, who had heard of me, but had never met me. When he saw me, he asked, ‘From where did you come?’ I replied, ‘From Bukhārā.’ Bin Bandar said, ‘How could you leave behind Abū ‘Abdullāh?’ (i.e. Al-Bukhārī). Someone sitting in the circle told him, ‘Oh Shaykh, he is Abū ‘Abdullāh al-Bukhārī.’ After hearing this, the shaykh stood, embraced me, and said, ‘I welcome the person I have been proud of for years.’”⁷⁰

2.5.2 *His teachers learned from him*

One of Al-Bukhārī’s teachers, ‘Abdullāh bin Munīr said, “I was one of his students, and he is my teacher.”⁷¹ As we mentioned earlier, Aḥmad bin Ḥamdūn once said, “I saw Al-Bukhārī in the funeral of Sa‘īd bin Marwān while Muḥammad bin Yaḥyā al-Thahlī asked him about the names of the chains of many *ḥadīth* and Al-Bukhārī recited them as if he was reciting from the short *sūrah* in the Qur’ān, *Al-Ikhlāṣ*

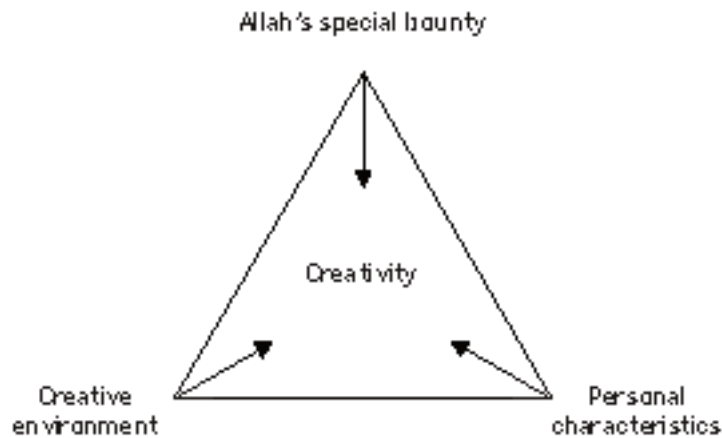


Fig.1 Three factors leading to creativity

(Qur’ān, *Al-Ikhlāṣ*:112).⁷² Ibrāhīm al-Khawwāṣ said, “I saw Imām Al-Bukhārī’s shaykh, Abū Zur’ah, sitting in front of Al-Bukhārī like a child sits before his teacher, asking him about *ḥadīth*.⁷³ Another of Al-Bukhārī’s teachers, Ḥāshid bin Ismā‘īl, reported that the students of Al-Baṣra used to chase Al-Bukhārī and beg him to sit and teach them the knowledge.⁷⁴ Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad bin Salām said, “The top scholars of *ḥadīth* such as Sa‘īd bin Abū Maryam, Na‘īm bin Ḥamad, Al-Ḥumadī, and others, all were unsettled whenever a gathering joined them with Imām Al-Bukhārī.⁷⁵ Imām Al-Bukhārī became the main source of reference for giving verdicts on *ḥadīth*. Muḥammad bin Salām, one of the teachers of Al-Bukhārī, said to him, “Read my books. If you find a mistake or an unauthentic *ḥadīth*, let me know so that I may remove it.”⁷⁶

3. *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* from a creative perspective

3.1 Portrayal as a product of creativity

What do we mean by a ‘creative product’? Most scholars classify creativity as a production having certain qualities that distinguish it from other products. Such qualities are then classified according to the following criteria: practicality, novelty, effectiveness, continuous impact and the ability to gain public satisfaction.⁷⁷ Wallace, in 1985, defined creativity as work producing results not previously known or produced before,⁷⁸ and defined a creative product as either something new or something that successfully solves an unsolved problem.⁷⁹ Let us look at these criteria and apply them to *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*:

3.1.1 Novelty

Most scholars have stated that Imām Al-Bukhārī was the first person to collect the authentic sayings of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) in a single book. Imām Al-Nawawī said, “*Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* is the first documentation combining only the authentic *ḥadīth*.⁸⁰ It was further reported that Ibn Ḥajar said, “The first person to collect the sound

ḥadīth was Al-Bukhārī, then it was Imām Muslim.”⁸¹ All the books of *ḥadīth* beforehand combined all types of *ḥadīth*, sound, weak, etc.⁸²

3.1.2 *Effectiveness*

Telling lies about the Holy Prophet (p.b.u.h.) regarding something which the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) never said or instructed was the main problem faced by the scholars of Al-Bukhārī’s time. They therefore laid down certain rules and laws for verifying and accepting a reported *ḥadīth*, with regard to both the chain of *ḥadīth* and the text. Al-Bukhārī himself set certain laws for verifying *ḥadīth* and in collecting the authentic *ḥadīth* in his book *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Al-Bukhārī filtered all the known sayings of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), accepting only the authentic ones, and rejecting the weak and false. This is related to the famous interpretation of his dream, which we have mentioned earlier.⁸³

3.1.3 *Public satisfaction*

Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ gained public satisfaction from among all the Muslims of Al-Bukhārī’s time, even until now: an honour which has not been gained by any other book written by a man.⁸⁴

3.1.4 *Continuity of impact*

Since the time Al-Bukhārī wrote the book until now, the impact of *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* can be seen and felt. It is the undisputed haven from which Muslims learn only the distinguished authentic *ḥadīth*. It is trusted even to the extent that it is sufficient for scholars to quote, “it was reported by Al-Bukhārī.” Therefore we can consider *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* as a creation of remarkable standard.⁸⁵

Imām Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥakīm once said, “May Allah have mercy on Imām Al-Bukhārī. He wrote for us his collection of *ḥadīth* and any book written afterwards relies on his book.”⁸⁶ Furthermore, Imām Muslim praised and dignified Al-Bukhārī and even once wrote, out of respect, “Oh my teacher, let me kiss your feet; you are the scholar of scholars, the master of the *ḥadīth* narrators and the curer of the *ḥadīth* from its illnesses.”⁸⁷

3.2 Creative stages of the authoring of *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*

Any process of creativity has many phases before completion, phases such as the creator’s initial interest in the conditions around him. Subsequently, an imaginative spark of enlightenment directs the creator to contemplate the problem deeply, in order to find the solution.⁸⁸ One of the earliest models of the creative process is credited to Graham Wallas. Wallas (1926) proposed four phases in the creative process:⁸⁹

3.2.1 *Preparation (definition of issue, observation and study)*

A product of creativity is seldom completed without thorough preparation and the accurate mastery and integration of both the information available and previous experience, when he or she plans to solve a problem. The creator will mentally collect all his or her raw knowledge before carefully mapping out the known information, in order to gain a clear understanding of the problem.⁹⁰ Al-Suroor has described this

initial stage as one of the gathering of information and knowledge available, while pondering over the problem from differing angles.⁹¹ Scholars sometimes meet huge challenges, and Imām Al-Bukhārī was no different. In his aim to gather the *ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth* he faced a massive challenge, mainly because a great number of people at his time purposefully told lies about the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), and his job was to distinguish and gather the authentic *ḥadīth* from the unauthentic. This was his main mission. His efforts in this initial stage of preparation assisted him greatly in reaching a superb solution for preserving the *sunnah*. Al-Bukhārī once said, “I have written on behalf of one thousand and eighty men, all of them having a career in *ḥadīth* only.”⁹² In another saying he stated, “I have produced this book (i.e. *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*) from approximately six hundred thousand *ḥadīth*.”⁹³ He further said, “I have memorized one hundred thousand sound *ḥadīth* and two hundred thousand unauthentic *ḥadīth*.”⁹⁴ Clearly, Al-Bukhārī’s preparation of information was on a monumental scale; this enabled him to easily gather his book in later stages.

3.2.2 Incubation (laying the issue aside for a time)

In this phase the creator has not yet found the solution, and so does not think about the problem deeply, but lets the idea ferment, occasionally remembering and pondering over it from time to time.⁹⁵ Over time however, the creator begins to delve into the problem more and more, until it becomes a constant point of contemplation in his mind. Preserving the *sunnah* thus became an obsession for Al-Bukhārī, but something he could not yet solve, demonstrating this period of incubation. A remarkable evidence of this obsession exists in the well-known dream of Al-Bukhārī, specifically in his vision of seeing himself swatting the flies away from the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), which was later interpreted as his removing all the lies from the *sunnah*.⁹⁶ As time passed, he was eventually illuminated with a dawning idea, which took him to Wallas’ next phase of creativity.

3.2.3 Illumination (the moment when a new idea finally emerges)

After a long time of preparation and incubation of the issue, a spark of intuition finally arrives, paving the way for the problem to be solved. This is found to be extremely satisfying after the long periods of searching for a solution. This illumination can neither be predicted nor rushed.⁹⁷ Some deem this moment of inspiration as a ‘flash of creativity,’ assuming a connection between the stage of incubation and the stage of illumination.⁹⁸ We mentioned earlier the exact moment of Al-Bukhārī’s illumination, i.e. when he was participating in Shaykh Ishāq bin Rāhawaih’s class and one of the students suggested a collection of *ḥadīth* in the form of a book. With regard to this moment, Al-Bukhārī said, “I grabbed this idea, and started working in my mind that I would write *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.”⁹⁹

3.2.4 Verification

In studying the lives of creators, we find that the creative process does not stop at the stage of illumination. If a creator were to stop, the idea would be lost; rather the creator continues his idea, evolving and improving upon his or her creation by gathering new information and verifying it with evidence and proof.¹⁰⁰ Imām Al-Bukhārī spent a period of sixteen years authoring, improving, and verifying *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. He

once said, “I wrote this book in sixteen years.”¹⁰¹ He also said, “I have gathered in my book only the authentic *ḥadīth* and I ignored all others because I did not want to prolong my book.”¹⁰² Out of his cautious approach in verifying the *ḥadīth*, Al-Bukhārī said, “Before I started working on gathering the *ḥadīth* I used to have a bath and offer two *rak‘ah* (a unit of prayer).”¹⁰³ He further used to show what he wrote to scholars of *ḥadīth* such as Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā bin Mu‘īn, ‘Alī bin al-Madīnī as well as others. They both liked and approved of his productions.¹⁰⁴ This shows the intensity of Al-Bukhārī’s care for correctly verifying and gathering the *ḥadīth*.

3.3 Components of creative thinking in *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*

According to J. P. Guilford (1986) there are five components which constitute creative thinking: cognitive fluency, flexibility, originality, sensitivity to problems, and finally elaboration.¹⁰⁵ Imām Al-Bukhārī implemented the above five skills in the production of *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

3.3.1 Cognitive fluency

This refers to the ability to fluidly produce a vast quantity of suitable ideas in a much quicker time than that of a normal person.¹⁰⁶ In studying the works of Al-Bukhārī, we can immediately ascertain that he had this quality, as he was able to individually analyse any single *ḥadīth* and elicit a great deal of jurisprudence from that *ḥadīth*.¹⁰⁷ One of the features of his book is that one *ḥadīth* could be quoted in many different chapters (each chapter is a collection of *ḥadīth* on a certain topic) being appropriate for each of these chapters.¹⁰⁸ An illustrating example would be the following *ḥadīth*: “Narrated ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd: The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said, ‘Whoever swears falsely in order to grab the property of a Muslim (or of his brother), Allah will be angry with him when he meets Him.’”¹⁰⁹ Imām Al-Bukhārī quoted this *ḥadīth* in no less than thirteen different places in *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, producing it as an evidence for differing matters of jurisprudence; examples would be the book of “*Disputes*”, the book of “*Mortgaging*”, the book of “*Witnesses*”, the book of “*Prophetic Commentary on the Qur‘ān*,” and the book of “*Oaths and Vows*.”¹¹⁰ In this example we can see how Al-Bukhārī could classify a single *ḥadīth* as evidence for many different matters. This and countless other *ḥadīth* given the same level of classification indicate his degree of cognitive fluency. In his collection *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* he produced ninety-seven books, while *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* produced only fifty-four, and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* only fifty-one.

3.3.2 Flexibility

The creative individual has the innate ability to differentially categorise a range of ideas, being able to openly maneuver from one category or idea to another, thus making them a divergent thinker. In comparison, a person of lesser creative talent would be inclined mostly to one set of ideas, being a convergent thinker.¹¹¹ Imām Al-Bukhārī laid down certain defining criteria for *ḥadīth* to be accepted in his collections, inevitably making the *ḥadīth* he accepted limited in number. While collecting the *ḥadīth*, circumstance dictated that Al-Bukhārī met many types of *ḥadīth* but was able to accept into his collection only two types of *ḥadīth*, even with the criteria he created. One of them was *marfū‘* (literally, ‘elevated’), sayings that ‘elevated’ the *ḥadīth* through a chain of narration of the companions of the Prophet

(p.b.u.h.) to the Prophet himself; and the second type was *ḥadīth* that were *mu‘allaq* (literally, ‘suspended’), where one or two narrators from the chain of narration were missing. Professor Nur-ud-Din al-Attar, in his comparative study between Imām Al-Bukhārī and Imām Al-Tirmidhī, said, “Although Al-Bukhārī laid down tough criteria, which resulted in limiting the number of *ḥadīth* he collected, his elicitation was both broad and deep.”¹¹² As he began only by accepting the *marfū‘* and after encountering the *mu‘allaq* was open to accommodating it also, he demonstrated a certain standard of flexibility, being able to continuously maneuver between both forms while maintaining his criteria. Another example of his flexibility was, as we mentioned earlier, his custom of repeatedly quoting *ḥadīth* in any relevant area as evidence for certain matters of jurisprudence.¹¹³

3.3.3 Originality

This concerns inventive ideas that are rare, distinguished, unique and either rarely conceived or never conceived before. The ideas should also be practical and relevant to the problem at hand. Therefore it could be argued that originality is equivalent to creativity.¹¹⁴ *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* combined all of the above with regard to originality; it was rare, distinguished and unique, while gaining the prestige of being the first book in which only authentic *ḥadīth* were collected. Hence Al-Bukhārī conquered the challenge of protecting the *sunnah* from both lies and weak *ḥadīth*.

3.3.4 Sensitivity to problems

This pertains to both the awareness of a problem and the realisation of the urgent need to solve it. The creative person is the quickest at appreciating this and acting upon it. In all cases, the recognition of a problem is the first step to its resolution.¹¹⁵ Imām Al-Bukhārī was well aware of the great dangers that threatened the *sunnah* and had the acute sensitivity to address them, producing a remarkably creative solution to preserve the authentic *sunnah* in the collection of his book.

3.3.5 Elaboration

This is with regard to the ability of the person to build upon the initial idea, increasing its pertinence to solving the problem while convincing others of its impeccability.¹¹⁶ An affirmation of this is how some creative individuals concoct inventive ideas, yet they need someone to help elaborate their ideas and make them more persuading to others.¹¹⁷ Therefore elaborations can complete and clarify ideas to a greater extent, like a continuum of steps leading to further steps.¹¹⁸ Imām Al-Bukhārī elaborated and enriched his ideas by collating his book, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, dividing it into books and chapters, and linking all of them in a logical and knowledgeable manner.

3.4 Areas of creativity in Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ

Many people consider *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* to be an outstanding invention of creativity, as Imām Al-Bukhārī laid down certain criteria for the *ḥadīth* to be accepted into his book, the first being that any *ḥadīth* should be *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic). Although this is sometimes quoted as the only reason for distinguishing *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* in creativity, there is an abundance of additional reasons.

3.4.1 *Stipulation of the highest degree of accuracy*

One of the main reasons that the book is often preferred over *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* is because of its veracity. In the words of Imām Al-Nawawī, “There is a consensus amongst scholars that out of all books written about *sunnah*, two are the considered the most accurate—*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. The majority of the scholars agree that the most accurate of the accurate is *Al-Bukhārī*.”¹¹⁹ Al-Bukhārī was strict in his investigation and selection of individuals who narrated *ḥadīth*. His requirements for accepting sayings from an individual were that they themselves were well-versed in *ḥadīth*, were widely considered to be accurate in their narrations, had a long history of learning from scholars, and had heard the *ḥadīth* in question directly from a scholar and not from a third person. Such *ḥadīth* would be considered *muttaṣil* (literally, ‘connected’), meaning that each person included in the chain of narration heard it directly from the preceding person in the chain, until the chain reached the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) himself with no gaps.¹²⁰ Al-Isma‘īlī, in his comparison between *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, said, “May Allah shower his blessing upon Imām Al-Bukhārī, who dedicated his entire life to the collection of his book, which came out in a most ingenious manner. Although Imām Muslim performed to his utmost ability and learnt a lot from Imām Al-Bukhārī, his efforts will never be equal to that of Al-Bukhārī.”¹²¹ Furthermore, after Ibn Ḥajar compared the above two *ṣaḥīḥ*, he commented, “I have come to the conclusion that Al-Bukhārī’s strict criteria enabled his collected *ḥadīth* to be superior in accuracy and precise in connection among the narrators of the sayings of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), investigating thoroughly each narrator in the chain of narration for every *ḥadīth* he studied.”¹²² The above affirmation of *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* by such distinguished scholars is further testimony to the prestige and respect that the book attained and still maintains amongst the scholars of Islam.

Imām Al-Kirmānī once remarked, “*Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* is second in authenticity only to the Qur’ān.”¹²³ Furthermore he added, “It is one of the most genuine, accurate, veritable books ever written and has been acknowledged by all the scholars of the Muslim *ummah*.”¹²⁴ Imām Al-Nisā‘ī said, “I have not seen a book as precise as the book of Muḥammad bin Isma‘īl Al-Bukhārī.”¹²⁵ With regard to this saying of Al-Nisā‘ī, Ibn Ḥajar commented, “Imām Al-Nisā‘ī praised Al-Bukhārī even though he was extremely strict in accepting narrations from men.”¹²⁶

3.4.2 *Deep elucidation of the text during analysis*

This characteristic refers to a rare aptitude for inferring hidden meanings from what is available, while being able to relate and explain such derivations of the text in commentaries.¹²⁷ An illustrating example of this quality would be when Imām Al-Bukhārī quoted the following *ḥadīth*: “Narrated Jābir bin ‘Abdullāh: The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said, ‘Allah made me victorious by awe, (by His frightening of my enemies) for a distance of one month’s journey’” (with regard the battle of Tabūk), connecting this with the *ḥadīth* referring to the time the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) sent an invitation to embrace Islam to Heraclius, the Emperor of Shām (Byzantine). Heraclius sent for Abū Sufyān, who at the time was present in the Empire for trading goods, and asked him of the Prophet whose letter he had received. After posing a large number of questions to Abū Sufyān, Heraclius exclaimed with regard to the Prophet (p.b.u.h.),

“‘If what you have said is true, he will very soon occupy this place underneath my feet and I knew it (from the scriptures) that he was going to appear but I did not know that he would be from you, and if I could reach him definitely, I would go immediately to meet him and if I were with him, I would certainly wash his feet.’” In the same *ḥadīth*, Abū Sufyān added, “‘I told my companions that the question of Ibn-Abī-Kabsha (i.e. the Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h.) has become so prominent that even the King of Banī al-Asfar (Byzantine) is afraid of him. Then I started to become sure that he (the Prophet, p.b.u.h.) would be the conqueror in the near future till I embraced Islam (i.e. Allah guided me to it).’”¹²⁸ Al-Bukhārī commented in his book that a connection was present between these two *ḥadīth*, as he not only realised that the “distance of a month” could refer to both Tabūk and the Byzantine Empire (as the distances of both these places from Madinah were equal to one month’s journey on foot), but also the “victory over my enemies” referred to both the victories the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) gained at these locations. In Tabūk the Roman army fled upon hearing the coming of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) and his army, and in Byzantine, Heraclius exclaimed that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) would conquer him out of fear. Hence we can see clearly how Al-Bukhārī was able to infer relations from seemingly unrelated *ḥadīth*, and that this required a supreme level of understanding. Ibn Jamā‘ah thus remarked, “When Abū Sufyān said that the King of Byzantine was frightened of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.), the King was in Syria and the distance between Syria and Al-Ḥijāz (Madinah) was that of one month’s journey on foot.”¹²⁹ Imām ibn Ḥajar commented, “These types of inference of hidden relations between *ḥadīth* are remarkable; they truly make even the most learned scholars have their brains astonished and thei30expressions gawked.”¹³⁰ Additionally, Imām Naṣīr al-Dīn ibn al-Munīr said, “Imām Al-Bukhārī is unique in his inferences, precise in his ideas, recurrently relating *ḥadīth* while going beyond basic comprehension to achieve a deeper, higher level of understanding. His main objective was to use his significant talent and knowledge to benefit others.”¹³¹

3.4.3 *Proportionality in the order of and coherence between the books, chapters, and individual ḥadīth in Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*

While authoring *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, Imām Al-Bukhārī pioneered a unique way to collect and arrange the subjects of *ḥadīth*. This is exemplified in how *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* begins with the book of *Revelations*, its first *ḥadīth* being, “Narrated ‘Umar bin al-Khaṭṭāb: I heard Allah’s Apostle (p.b.u.h.) saying, ‘The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended...’” Placing this *ḥadīth* first in the entire collection is logically sound, as it is the predecessor for all acts of worship; any Muslim who comes to read this book will thus read this *ḥadīth* first, and will then come to know that all subsequent acts of worship should be done for the sake of Allah in order for them to be accepted. Al-Bukhārī then organized his *ḥadīth* in a coherent manner, according to which each *ḥadīth* is consistent with its adjacent *ḥadīth*, allowing the reader to maintain understanding and build upon ideas in congruence. Additionally, Al-Bukhārī completed each book with a *ḥadīth* that inferentially sealed the subject of the book, allowing a perfect conclusion, which has been termed *barā‘at al-‘ikhtitām* (literally, ‘the ingenious conclusion’ or ‘closing versatility’). With regard to this Imām ibn Ḥajar commented, “I have never ever seen a scholar produce this level of coherence

between books and chapters. Hence we are indebted to Al-Bukhārī.”¹³²

We can conclude here that there is a trinity of creativity in *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*: his stipulation of the highest degree of accuracy; his deep elicitation of the text during analysis; and the proportionality he created in the order of and coherence between the books, chapters and individual *ḥadīth* in *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*.

4. Conclusion

The researchers have come to the conclusion that Imām Al-Bukhārī was irrefutably a highly regarded and unparalleled champion of creative brilliance. Many factors can be attributed to this: the divine bestowal of bounty from God, his immaculate personal qualities, the significant role his teachers played and the encouraging environment in which he lived, all of which contributed to his greatest production, *Al-Jāmi‘ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*. On completion of this article, the researchers are henceforth content that they have successfully discovered and explored the imaginative genius of Imām Al-Bukhārī, resting assured that most will concur with their mutual consensus that he was and is a dynamic genius of geniuses, among the most exceptional of gifted individuals, one whose fascinating and prestigious life will thus remain on a podium of distinct renown for all time to come.

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 128. With regard to the first quoted ḥadīth of Tabuk please refer to the full ḥadīth found in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, The book of "Tayammum" (Rubbing the hands and feet with dust), ḥadīth no. 331. With regard to the second quoted ḥadīth of Abū Sufyān please refer to the full story found in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, The book of Revelation, ḥadīth no. 6.
 129. Ibn Jamāḥ'a, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Ibrāhīm, *Munasabāt tarājīm al-Bukhārī* (Explanations of the commentaries of Al-Bukhārī), edited by Mohammed Ishaq al-Safli, Al-Dār al-Salafiyyah, India, First edition, 1404 A.H. 1984. p. 88
 130. Ibn Ḥajar, *Hadī al-sārī* (Guidance of the walker towards knowledge), p. 13.
 131. Nasir al-Dīn Ahmad bin Mohammed ibn Al-Munayyir Al-Askandari, *Al-mutawārī 'alā abwāb al-Bukhārī* (The parallel doors of Al-Bukhārī), edited by Ḥasan 'Abdul Hamīd, Dār-Ammār, Amman, First edition, 1411 A.H. 1990., p. 87.
 132. Ibn Ḥajar, *Hadī al-sārī* (Guidance of the walker towards knowledge), p. 97. See also, Ali al-'Ajeen, *Al-Tanāsub fī Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Coherence in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī) an article presented in the conference, "The conference of the victory for the two Ṣaḥīḥ", the University of Jordan, Amman, July 2010.