

Epidemics between *Qadr* and *Hadhar*: Insights from al-Nawawī

Epidemik Di antara *Qadar* dan *Hadhar*: Sorotan dari Al- Nawawi

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Abstract

Being a great jurist and influential scholar with seminal works on hadith, theology, biography and jurisprudence, al-Nawawī's (d. 1277) views on epidemics are of great significance in these days of the pandemic. This article explores his views and explanations vis-^{azza}vis epidemic to find his perspectives on balance between *qadr* (predestination) and *hadhar* (precaution) by conducting a content analysis of his various texts. In this article, the authors mainly referred to his texts *Sharah Muslim*, *Riyaḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, *al-Majmū' Sharah Muḥadhdhab*, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn* and *al-Adhkār al-Muntakhab*. This study substantiates that in the view of al-Nawawī, Islam postulates a balanced position between taking precaution and faith in Allah's decrees in dealing with the situations of an epidemic. Thus, it holistically complements the concepts of *qadr* and *hadhar* to guide people towards leading a faithful and safe life in the trying times of epidemic.

Keywords: *Qadr*, *Hadhar*, Precaution, Predestination, Al-Nawawī, Hadith, Epidemic.

Abstrak

Sebagai seorang juri dan seorang sarjana yang terkenal dan berpengaruh dalam ilmu hadis, agama, biografi dan falsafah perundangan, pandangan Imam Nawawi [d1277] pada epidemik pada masa kini mempunyai kesan signifikan dalam waktu pandemik sekarang. Artikel ini meninjau pandangan dan penghuraian perspektif epidemik dan keseimbangan di antara *qadar* [takdir] dan *hadhar* [pencegahan] dengan mengkaji analisa kandungan pelbagai hasil penulisan. Dalam artikel ini penulis merujuk kepada penulisan *Sharah Muslim*, *Riyaḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, *al-Majmū' Sharah Muḥadhdhab*, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn* dan *al-Adhkār al-Muntakhab*. Kajian ini juga membuktikan pendapat Imam Nawawi bahawa Islam mencakna keseimbangan kedudukan di antara mengambil

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langkah berjaga-jaga yakni pencegahan dan keyakinan kepada kekuasaan dan penentuan Allah swt dalam mengurus situasi epidemik dalam konsep *Qada* dan *Hadhar*.

Kata Kunci: *Qadar*, *Hadhar*, Pencegahan, Takdir, Al-Nawawi, *Hadith*, Epidemik.

Introduction

Abū Zakariyyā Yahyā bin Sharaf al-Nawawī (631–676 A.H./1234–1277) is one of the foremost Islamic scholars, a Sunni Shafi'ite jurist and hadith scholar. At an early age, he started a serious study of Islam and memorised the Quran. He dedicated his whole life to studying, teaching, compiling and issuing fatwas. He was extra cautious in choosing the food he eats, and he insisted that it must always be lawful (*ḥalāl*) and pure (*tayyib*). Though he lived comparatively a short period of forty-five years, his massive influence via his scholarly contributions is perennial, and his works are still considered among primary references in various fields.

A brief introduction of mentioned texts of al-Nawawī in this article, is given below:

Al-Majmū' Sharḥ al-Muhadhdhab is an extensive commentary of al-Nawawī on *Al-Muhadhdhab* of Abū Ishāq al-Shīrāzī. Many scholars regard it as a comprehensive manual of Islamic law in Shafi'ī School. Regrettably, he passed away before finishing this text, and al-Subkī continued to work on it, but he also could not complete it. It is noted that al-Nawawī followed in al-Majmū' the style of Ibn Qudāmah in al-Mughnī.

Al-Rawḍah or *Rawḍat al-ṭālibīn wa 'Umdat al-Muḥtājīn* is an abridged version of *Fath al-'Azīz bi Sharḥ al-Wajīz* (also known as *al-Sharḥ al-Kabīr*) by al-Rāfi'ī which is an explanation of al-Wajīz of Abū Ḥāmid al-Gazālī. *Al-Rawḍah* is one of the reliable references in the Shafi'ī School. It covers the explanation of several Islamic legal rules.

Al-Minhāj Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj is one of the finest commentaries of Prophetic traditions compiled by Imām Muslim. Along with meanings of aḥādīth, al-Nawawī included in this book, discussion of fiqh rulings, clarification of ambiguities and linguistic analysis of the hadith. This book attained great attention among scholars, and it is considered as one of the comprehensive commentaries of Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.

Riyāḍ aṣ-Ṣāliḥīn (the Meadows of the Righteous) is a famous book of al-Nawawī which is a compilation of verses from the Quran and Prophetic traditions organised under various sub-titles.

Al-Adhkār al-Muntakhab min Kalām Sayyid al-Abrār is a compendium of some supplications, rituals and devotional phrases for daily life, collected from hadiths. This book consists of several chapters that include prayers and *dhikrs* related to various occasions like prayer, fasting, hajj, sleeping time, entering masjid, etc.

This article attempts to determine the areas where al-Nawawī discussed the epidemic issue and investigate his views on it. We selected these texts because they cover fiqh, commentary of hadith, social issues, ethical aspects and the discussions on the epidemic. However, the main focus of the exploration was on how al-Nawawī's views shed light on the concepts of *qadr* and *hadhar* in dealing with infectious diseases. In Arabic, *wabā'* means sudden death, and it is also used for an unhealthy place where diseases are widespread, which mainly infect outsiders.¹ *Tā'ūn* means plague that is one type of epidemic. Accordingly, *wabā'* and *tā'ūn* are frequent words mentioned in the texts to signify epidemic. Nowadays, the word *wabā'* is generally used for signifying an epidemic. In this article, the mentioned arguments and views are taken from al-Nawawī's texts, of which references are given in footnotes unless otherwise stated.

Qadr (Predestination) and Hadhar (Caution) in Epidemic

A chapter in *Riyāḍ aṣ-Ṣāliḥīn* is entitled “chapter on the abomination of departing from or coming to a place stricken by an epidemic”. This chapter begins with two Quranic verses that could be depicted as a crux of Islam's approach to communicable illnesses. The first verse is “Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even though you were in lofty towers” (al-Nisā': 78), and the second is “do not let your own hands throw you into destruction” (al-Baqarah: 195). The first verse insists that no matter whatever precautions people take or safe places they reside in, “but never does God grant a delay to a human being when his term has come; and God is fully aware of all that you do” (al-Munafiqūn: 11). It underlines the nature of the death that occurs in its own pre-designed time, and everybody is going to taste it no matter where they are or whatever methods they use to escape from it.

The second verse gives another dimension of the previous verse, which could have been taken for granted if not mentioned. It explains that nobody should put themselves in risky places or throw to hazardous situations, the instruction that asserts the inevitability of taking precau-

¹ Yaḥyā bin Sharaf al-Nawawī, *al-Minhāj Sharah Muslim*, (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' Turāth al-'Arabī, 1392 AH), vol.9, p.150.

tions according to one's best capacity. In a nutshell, though death will happen despite every attempt to get rid of it, people should purposely stay away from all impending harm and take all precautions against it, as a religious duty and individual obligation. This aspect is conspicuous in a hadith narrated 'Abdullah bin 'Abbas.

'Umar bin Al-Khaṭṭāb departed for Sham, and when he reached Sargh, the commanders of the (Muslim) army, Abu 'Ubaida bin Al-Jarrah and his companions met him and told him that an epidemic had broken out in Sham. 'Umar said, "Call for me the early emigrants (muhajirun)." So 'Umar called them, consulted them and informed them that an epidemic had broken out in Sham. Those people differed in their opinions. Some of them said, "We have come out for a purpose, and we do not think that it is proper to give it up," while others said (to 'Umar), "You have along with you other people and the companions of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) so do not advise that we take them to this epidemic." 'Umar said to them, "Leave me now." Then he said, "Call the Ansār for me." I called them, and he consulted them, and they followed the way of the emigrants and differed as they did. He then said to them, "leave me now," and added, "Call for me the old people of Quraish who emigrated in the year of the Conquest of Mecca." I called them, and they gave a unanimous opinion saying, "We advise that you should return with the people and do not take them to that (place) of the epidemic." So 'Umar made an announcement, "I will ride back to Madinah in the morning, so you should do the same." Abū 'Ubaidah bin al-Jarrāḥ said (to 'Umar), "Are you running away from what Allah had predestined (*qadr Allah*)?" 'Umar said, "Would that someone else had said such a thing, O Abū 'Ubaidah! Yes, we are running from what Allah had predestined to what Allah has predestined (*min qadr Allah ilā qadr Allah*). Don't you agree that if you had camels that went down a valley having two places, one green and the other dry, you would graze them on the green one only if Allah had predestined that, and you would graze them on the dry one only if Allah had predestined that?" At that time, Abdul al-Rahman bin 'Awf, who had been absent be-

cause of some job, came and said, "I have some knowledge about this. I have heard Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saying, 'If you hear about it (an outbreak of plague) in a land, do not go to it; but if the plague breaks out in a country where you are staying, do not run away from it.' 'Umar thanked Allah and returned to Madinah.²

As shown in the above hadith, 'Umar bin Khattāb did not enter Sham, a plague-hit region, following the prophetic tradition. When he was questioned on returning to Madinah by a prominent Companion, he responded that it is running from one *qadr* of Allah to another, which means taking precaution also comes under the implication of *qadr*. 'Umar explained his decision by a parable of camels which went down a valley having two places, one green and the other dry; one would graze them on the green one only with Allah's *qadr*, and one would graze them on the dry one only with Allah's *qadr*. Among many, this hadith shows the importance of choosing the right and beneficent choice when a person is left with two picks, rather than picking the harm and blaming that it is because of Allah's *qadr*. Therefore, instead of entering Sham and throwing themselves to a risky place, Umar guided his team to stay away from the epidemic and travel to a safe place. This incident portrays the precise form of balance between *qadr* and *hadhar* in dealing with epidemics.

Themes Related to *Qadr* Epidemic as Punishment

Narrated 'Ā'isha (the wife of the Messenger ﷺ) that she asked the Messenger (ﷺ) about the plague, and he responded, "plague was a punishment which Allah used to send on whom He wished, but Allah made it a blessing for the believers. None (among the believers) remains patient in a land in which plague has broken out and considers that nothing will befall him except what Allah has ordained for

² Yahyā bin Sharaf al- Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, (Calicut: Capital International Books, 2014), vol.2, p.983, no. 5784; Yahyā bin Sharaf, *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn* (Egypt: Alfā li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2013) p. 355, no. 1791.

him, but that Allah will grant him a reward similar to that of a martyr."³

Epidemic breaks out as punishment from Allah on those He wills, particularly on the disbelievers and sinners.⁴ From an Islamic perspective, one incident might occur as grace for one party and disgrace for others, which is also evident in this hadith. Therefore, al-Nawawī explained whenever epidemic breaks out in a place, and a believer stays back therein with an ultimate faith that he will not be affected except what Allah wills and without showing signs of impatience, he will be rewarded similarly to that of a martyr.⁵ The aspect of punishment and blessing is also depicted in another hadith:

‘A’isha reported: When we came to Madinah, and it was an unhealthy, uncongenial place where Abu Bakr and Bilal fell sick; and when Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) saw the illness of his Companions, he said: O Allah, make Madinah as congenial to us as you made Mecca congenial or more than that; make it conducive to health, and bless us in its ṣā‘ and its Mudd (measures for grain), and transfer its fever to al-Juḥfah.⁶

In this hadith, the Prophet (ﷺ) prayed for Muslims' health and prosperity while he prayed to transfer the fever to the al-Juḥfah, where Jews were the main inhabitants. In Prophet's life, as far as his prayers are concerned, two various approaches had been noted as sometimes he prayed in favour of the enemies while some of his prayers seemed against them. He prayed against al-Juḥfah because its residents were Jews who repeatedly betrayed Muslims and deceived them in fulfilling a mutually agreed compact. Some other scholars explained that Prophet (ﷺ) was feeling uncomfortable to ask Allah to obliterate this trouble as it might portray the impatience of the believers. Therefore, he asked to move it away from Madinah. Whoever believed in Islam from al-Juḥfah started resettling to Madinah. In Ta’if, despite severe physical abuse and offences posed by the disbelievers therein, the Prophet prayed for them,

³ Muhammad bin Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Beirut: Dār Ṭawq al-Najāt, 1312 AH) vol.7, p.131, no. 5734.

⁴ Ubaid Allah bin Muhammad al-Mubarakfūrī, *Mir‘at al-Maḥāṭīḥ*, (Banaras: Idārat al-Buḥūth, 1984), vol.5, p.238.

⁵ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.14, p.204.

⁶ Muslim bin Al-Hajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol.1, p.562, no. 3342.

but he stopped Jibrīl from punishing them because he foresaw good and faith in them and their coming generations.

One of the Prophet's lasting miracles is seen in this hadith as al-Juhfah is since then remains as a land, whoever outsider drinks its water is infected by the fever.⁷

Likewise, leprosy, one form of severe infectious diseases, is mentioned as punishment even in the hereafter. Al-Nawawī narrated in his *Al-Adhkār* a report transmitted by Sa'd bin 'Ubādah in Sunan of Abū Dāwud and Musnad of al-Dārimī that "No man recites the Qur'ān, then forgets it, except that he will meet Allah on the Day of Judgment as leper".⁸ In another hadith reported by Abu Hurayrah in Sunan of Abū Dāwud and Tirmidhī, the Prophet (ﷺ) said "Every speech in which there is no *tashahhud* (testimony of faith) is like a leprous hand".⁹ In both hadiths, this particular infectious disease is mentioned as a punishment or disgrace.

Conflicting views on Infection

- 1) Amr bin Sharīd reported from his father that he said: "There was a leper among the delegation of Thaḳīf. So, the Prophet (ﷺ) sent a person to him to say: "Go back, for we have accepted your oath of allegiance."¹⁰
- 2) The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Do not place a sick patient with a healthy person".¹¹
- 3) The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Flee from the leper as you would flee from a lion."¹²
- 4) The Prophet (ﷺ) said: "Do not keep looking at those who have leprosy. If you have to speak with one of them, then there should be a gap between them of a spear".¹³
- 5) Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh narrated that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) held the hand of a leper and allowed him to enter his bowl with him, and said: Eat with the name of Allah, attest-

⁷ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.9, p.150.

⁸ Al-Nawawī, *Al Adhkār*, (Beirut, Dār al-Fikr, 1994), p.106.

⁹ Ibid., p.281.

¹⁰ Muslim bin Al-Hajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol.2, p.990, no. 5822.

¹¹ Ibid, vol.2, p.985, no.5791.

¹² Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.14, p.228.

¹³ Muhammad Najīb al-Muṭī'ī, *Takmila al-Majmū' sharāḥ muhadhdhab* (Dār al-Fikr) vol.16, p.269.

ing (the protection) of Allah (against the contagion) and trusting on Him.”¹⁴

- 6) The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “There is no ‘*adwā* (transmission of infectious diseases) and no *ḥīrah* (superstitious belief in bird omens) but I like good omens”. They (*ṣaḥābah*) asked, “What is a good omen (*fa’l*)?” He replied, “A good word”.¹⁵

The above hadiths regarding infection may seem to conflict with each other. On the one hand, the Prophet (ﷺ) prompted to stay away from infectious diseases. On the other, he dealt with it as he denied the possibility of infection. The scholars have explained how to reconcile between them. The first three hadiths guide people to take all possible precautionary measures to avoid infectious diseases while the last two hadith denotes that no infection is caused without Allah’s command and infection has no power on its own. Al-Nawawī mentioned that this reconciliation is a preponderant opinion among scholars. Some scholars argued that Prophet's prohibition on gathering sick and healthy is not because of infection, but rather due to stinky smell and uglier appearance of sick. Al-Nawawī does not give importance to this view.¹⁶

‘*Ā*’ishah had an infectious servant (*mawlā*) who used to eat from the same dish of ‘*Ā*’ishah and drink from her vessels and sleep on her mattress. ‘Umar bin Khaṭṭāb and some others opined that eating with infectious patients permissible and proof against mixing with them is abrogated. However, the preponderant view negates the view of abrogation and suggests that the command for fleeing is only recommended and is not obligatory command. In this regard, the Prophet (ﷺ) ate with the infectious patient in order to inform the permissibility.

Al-Nawawī explained a situation that demonstrates how close interaction with infectious patients can be limited. Suppose people of any village become helpless in mingling with lepers for taking water (an example of basic necessity), and they are doing so without causing any harm. In that case, they are allowed to do so. However, if the use of lepers the same source of water poses harm, then village people should deliver or arrange someone to supply necessary water for them. On the other hand, if they are not making arrangements for their water, the lepers

¹⁴ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.14, p.228.

¹⁵ Muslim bin Al-Hajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol.2, p.987. no.5801.

¹⁶ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.14, p.214.

should not be barred from coming and taking water.¹⁷ Here, it is evident that the aspect of precaution against the infectious diseases is social obligation.

Al-Qāḍī said that the scholars supported the opinion of prohibiting leprosy from entering masjid and socialising with people. However, if the number of infectious patients is high, the scholars have different opinions if they need to stay in an isolated place and allow them to do their businesses therein. The majority is inclined towards the opinion of isolating them. However, if their number is limited, they should not be stopped from doing their works and joining only for *jumu'ah* prayer but no need to coming for *jamā'ah* of other prayers.¹⁸

In *Takmila al-Majmū'*, al-Muṭī'ī explained that an infection that happens when a body meets with an infectious body is as similar as a white is created from two white things and black is from two black, though Allah is able to create a white from two black things and vice versa. Therefore, we do not mean that infectious diseases are spread independently, but with Allah's *qadr*.¹⁹

The abovementioned views also refer to the balance between taking the necessary precaution and firm faith in *qadr* of Almighty; that view is underlined by al-Nawawī in his interpretations.

Themes Related to *Hadhar* Prayer in the Time of Calamity

Since epidemic is believed to be a punishment from Allah, one of the forms of the fight against it, is prayer. For this reason, *qunūt nāzilāt* (specific prayer at the times of calamity) is encouraged to do in the last *rak'ah* of every obligatory prayer whenever any serious issue hits. According to preponderant opinion, *qunūt* is recommended not only in *Ṣubḥ* prayer but also in all obligatory prayers.²⁰

Generally, Sufīs are believed to be content with whatsoever Allah wishes for them, and they never complain about what befalls them. Consequently, if they pray for something to happen that inevitably alludes to that, they are not content with their existing situation, which is against the genuine trust in Allah. Therefore, in their view, prayer resembles weakness in the trust in Allah and lack of contentment in His decrees;

¹⁷ Ibid., vol.14, p.228.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Muhammad Najīb al-Muṭī'ī, *Takmila al-Majmū'*, vol.16, p.269-270.

²⁰ Al-Nawawī, *Al-Majmū' Sharah muhadhdhab*, (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2005), vol.3, p.458.

therefore, in their view, prayer needs to be discouraged.²¹ Ibn Taymiyya explained that a group of people from the philosophers and Sufis – he attributed both as false groups – argued that there is no point in supplication because God’s will and divine cause either might have preceded same as our need or the opposite of it; for the former no need of supplication and for the latter no benefit by the supplication.²²

Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī categorised *tawakkul* (perfect trust and reliance on Allah) into three stages from the perspective of strength and weakness. The first stage is a person's trust in Allah and confidence in His guardianship, resembling that of a trustee or agent. The second stage of *tawakkul* is akin to that of a child in his mother; for him, everything is the mother and rushes to her in the face of any trouble without a second thought. This is because he has an unequivocal belief in the mother's help and support, who resembles the source of ultimate hope. The difference between first and second is that trust and work come together in the former, and *mutawakkil* (one who does *tawakkul*) is not melted in the trust; instead, he pays due attention to the trust and does his part on his own. As for the latter, the *mutawakkil* is melted himself in trust, and he does not think about trust and its reality; alternatively, his complete reliance is on the one whom he does trust. The third stage of *tawakkul*, which occupies the topmost position, is to submit a person’s action and inaction in front of Allah like a dead body before the one who washes him. In this stage, *mutawakkil* will not make any deliberate move/choice/action; rather, he leaves everything at the will of the Creator. It is different from the stage of a child because child rushes to and searches for mother in the face of problems. However, in the third stage, *mutawakkil* thinks God will come to and search for him knowing about his problems, therefore no need to rush to God. Therefore, in the third stage, *tawakkul* ends up in getting rid of supplication due to the impeccable confidence in Allah's kindness, guardianship and the belief that Allah will offer the better option than what he supplicates for because how many great blessings are people enjoying without any prayer and even many of them are not what they deserve for. The second stage does not obliterate supplication, but it revokes asking anybody except Allah, the Almighty.²³

²¹ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.9, p.150.

²² Ahmad bin ‘Abd al-ḥalīm bin Taymiyyah, *Iqthida’ aṣ-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*, (Beirut: Dār ‘ālam al-kutub, 1999), vol.2, p.228.

²³ Abū Hāmid Muḥammad bin Muhammad Al-Gazzali, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūmiddeen*, (Cairo: Dār al-Taḳwa, 2000), vol.4, p.160-161.

In Mu‘tazilī view, prayer brings no benefit if there is a preceded fate. However, they interpret the Quranic verse ‘Call Me, and I will hear you!’, as the prayer is worship and response is its reward.²⁴ The majority of Ahl al-Sunnah scholars believe in the possibility of extraordinary things while mu‘tazilah rejects this thought.²⁵

Sunnī scholars' preponderant view reinforces that prayer is independent worship but answers will be only for preceded things. Prophet (ﷺ) says, "Caution does not prevent fate. Supplication benefits concerning the occurred matters and pending matters. The epidemic breaks out, and prayer meets against it. Both will fight each other until the Day of Judgment." Supplications are beneficial in the absolute decree (*al-qaḍā' al-Mubram*) as well as in conditional/relative decree (*al-qaḍā' al-Mu‘allaq*). At times, supplications may not prevent the occurrence of the epidemic but may cause to shower His mercies as an end result of a calamity.²⁶

According to Allah’s knowledge, every decree is absolute, as everything happens as per his knowledge. Nevertheless, it does not stop a believer from supplication, at the pretext of saying that he is doing *ta-wakkul*. So, for example, a believer does not give up eating, relying on Allah's command that He gives food to everyone; rather, he goes for work and earns his food, believing that Allah is the real source of everything, as in the verse “and it was not you when you threw [sand at them], but it was Allah Who threw it” (al-Anfāl: 17).²⁷

Prohibition of Entry to and Exit from Epidemic Place

Messenger (ﷺ) said, “If you hear about it (an outbreak of plague) in a land, do not go to it; but if plague breaks out in a country where you are staying, do not run away from it”.²⁸

As per the hadith Narrated ‘Ā’isha (mentioned above under the sub-title Epidemic as Punishment), though Madinah was known to be a

²⁴ Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad al-Bājūrī, *Hāshiyat al-Bājūrī ‘ala Jawharat tawhīd*, (Cairo: Dār as-salām, 2002), p.254.

²⁵ Rashīd Riḍā, *Majallath al-Manar*, Egypt, 24 August 1903, vol.6, p.406, Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad, *Hāshiyat al-Bājūrī*, p.253.

²⁶ Ibrāhīm bin Muḥammad, *Hāshiyat al-Bājūrī*, p.254.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Muslim bin Al-Hajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol.2, p.984, no. 5784; Yaḥyā bin Sharaf, *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, p. 356, no. 1791.

fever place, the Prophet (ﷺ) and companions entered there, which contradicts another famous hadith that prohibits the entry to and exit from epidemic areas. Al-Nawawī explained why the Prophet (ﷺ) and companions entered an epidemic place: (1) the prohibition was issued only after they settled down in Madinah, and (2) the prohibition was meant only against entering to the areas of deadly diseases like plague, whereas the situation in Madinah was not identical. Therefore, prohibition addresses specifically the deadly things, not all diseases in general.²⁹

Discussing the ban of entry and exit from the plague inflicted region, ‘Abd al-Ḥaq bin Sayf al-Dīn al-Dahlawī and others explicated some objectives and wisdom. Some of them are: (1) usually the epidemic effects through inhalation. The deadly air does not pose a threat to the external part of the body but indeed the internal. Consequently, fleeing the area is no at all avail of the inhabitants therein. (2) If the exit is allowed, all capable people will flee, leaving behind physically weak or bedridden people as their voices are unheard and their needs unattended, which will worsen the situation. Sick and weak people, let alone the dead, are in dire need of others. Therefore, if otherwise happens, it causes severe casualties and psychological impacts on society.³⁰

Under the commentary of hadith related to ‘Umar bin Al-Khaṭṭāb’s trip to Shām, al-Nawawī discussed in detail about the entry to and exit from plague-hit regions comparing different views of prominent scholars, including ṣaḥābah.

Quoting al-Qaḍī ‘Iyād, al-Nawawī viewed that the preponderant opinion on the matter is the prohibition of entry and exit, and this view is more in conformity to the literal meaning and sound interpretations. Likewise, this view is closer to the implications of the hadith "Do not wish to meet the enemy, but when you meet, face the enemy, be patient".³¹

This hadith promotes taking precautions against impending harm and its reasons and then promotes submitting to Allah's decrees when something terrible happens despite prevention. However, scholars are unanimous on the permissibility of travel for any job or need other than fleeing, as per the proof of hadith, which specifically prohibits feeling

²⁹ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.9, p.150.

³⁰ Abd al-Ḥaq bin Sayf al-Dīn al-Dahlawī, *Lam ‘ātu thanqīḥ fī Sharḥ mishkath al-Masābīḥ*, (Damascus: Dār al-Nawādir, 2014), vol.4, p.28.

³¹ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.14, p.207.

solely believing that it will save him. Furthermore, the Prophet's wife, 'Ā'isha, argued that fleeing from an epidemic is tantamount to fleeing from a battle (marching).³²

The other group of scholars beheld that entry to and exit from the epidemic area are not unlawful and they substantiated their argument as 'Umar bin Al-Khaṭṭāb had regretted his return from Sargh on the way to Sham.

In addition, Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, Masrūq and al-Aswad bin Hilāl had fled from epidemic areas. 'Amr bin 'Āṣ advised his people for seeking refuge from the epidemic in the reefs, valleys, and tops of mountains. This group interpreted that the mentioned hadith prohibits believing that entry and exit will bring something other than predestined things. Consequently, people say that a person was infected because of his arrival, and the other person became safe as he left the place. Ibn Mas'ūd opined that if people start thinking like this, it may befall as tremendous tribulation on them. This group further argued that this prohibition is like Prophet's prohibition about bird-omens and coming closer to leprous. The prohibition was for keeping the belief in Allah with *tawakkul*; whatever he wants will take place even we are thoroughly equipped.

Epidemic descends in Open Plates

Jabir bin Abdullah reported: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "Cover the vessels and close the water skins, for there will be night out of the year in which an epidemic descends. It will not pass over an uncovered vessel or an untied water skin but that some of this contagion will fall into it."³³

In this hadith, Prophet (ﷺ) said about the relationship between epidemic and covering of vessel. In one narration, it is daytime mentioned instead of night. Al-Layth said non-Arabs were expecting the descending of the epidemic in December and extra-cautious in covering vessels and tying water skin during that period.³⁴ Al-Nawawī used al-kānūn, it is the term used Romans to denote wintertime as al-kānūn al-awwal is December and al-kānūn al-ākhir is January.³⁵ The doctors and

³² Ibid., vol.14, p.205.

³³ Muslim bin Al-Hajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol.2, p.903, no. 5255.

³⁴ Al-Nawawī, *al-Minhaj Sharḥ Muslim*, vol.13, p.186.

³⁵ Muhammad bin Manzūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, (Beirut, Dār Ṣādir, 1414 H) vol.13, p.362.

other experts have confirmed the high probability of spreading diseases during the wintertime as coldness is highly conducive for contagions.

The night mentioned in hadith is unspecific, and it could be any night throughout the year; therefore, people need not leave the dishes uncovered all the time. Each acute infectious disease has its season of occurrence, which may vary from place to place and time to time, and disease to disease. Geography, particularly air and climate, influences matters related to descending the epidemic, its spread, mobility, and aftermaths. Medical science proves that some infectious diseases appear in particular seasons of the year; for example, measles and polio abound in September and October, and typhoid overflows in summer; as for cholera, it takes a cycle every seven years and smallpox every three years.

Conclusion

This article has explored the views and rulings of al-Nawawī on the epidemic. The authors referred to his five significant texts and organised the data under various headings with a brief analysis. This article has portrayed certain theological, ethical, social and juristic viewpoints of Islam regarding the occurrence of and dealing with the epidemic. Since al-Nawawī is regarded among the erudite scholars, his views on epidemic have arguably an authoritative and influencing nature in general.

Analysing the selection of two verses in the chapter related to banning entry to and exit from an epidemic place in *Riyāḍ aṣ-Ṣāliḥīn*, this article formulated the concept of balance between *qadr* (predestination) and *hadhar* (caution). Taking from the view of Umar, *hadhar* is also part of *qadr*, and consequently, it affirms the faith in Allah and underlines the vitality of precaution. Thus, Al-Nawawī reconciled between contradicting hadiths on the issue of infection and related precautions. Likewise, the epidemic has been deemed a punishment from Allah against those He wishes, and at the same time, it is a mercy to believers who are patient and steadfast. The believers view the whole life is a test which has to be met with *shukr* (gratitude) and *ṣabr* (patience). Therefore, prayer and trust in Allah during calamities have a significant role with regard to the life of a Mu'min. It also shed light on the rulings related to social distancing and ban of entry to and exit from the epidemic place and the exceptions to the general rulings. In addition, it explained the relationship between covering vessels and descending of epidemic.

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