

The Reconciliation Approach in Resolving Contradictory Prophetic Tradition

Dr Rohaizan bin Baru

Department of al-Quran & al-Sunnah
Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia.
Email: rohaizan@unisza.edu.my, Phone: 6019 9147438

Rosmalizawati Ab Rashid

Department of al-Quran & al-Sunnah
Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia.
Email: rosma@unisza.edu.my, Phone: 6019 3848100

Abstract

The issue of the prophetic narrations that seem to contradict one another or contrary to Quranic texts or even other facts have been debated and discussed by the hadith scholars long time ago. The scholars, whom are being referred to, always ready to provide interpretations, explanations and conclusions to resolve these so called 'contradictions' which in reality can cause a significant impact on the accountability of hadiths as one of the main sources for the Muslims civilization. Hence, this paper aims to analyse and review the method of al-Jam' (reconciliation) adopted by the scholars of hadith in addressing and resolving the contradictory of hadiths. One of the dominant and chosen methods in solving this problem is by the reconciliation between the meanings and purposes of the hadiths that appeared to contradict one another.

Keywords: Contradictory Hadiths, Reconciliation Method.

Introduction

As we know, the Prophetic narrations have been recognized as a legal source coupled exclusively with the Quran, it became an important element structuring the Islamic identity and building up the Muslim civilization. Therefore, it is important to *muslims* to maintain and ensure the collection of the Prophet *hadiths* are free of the factors that could affect the credibility of this kind of revelation. However, there are a handful of *hadiths* seems to contradict each other and also with some facts or other texts which give a glimpse of this contradiction can be a negative impact on the authority of *hadith* as a source of Muslim civilization. At once, it would raising polemics and become a tool for the enemy of Islam to proof that prophetic narrations are not a revelation. In addition to that, life today are filled with advances and discoveries in various fields, such arguments would easily displayed and it would confusing the public especially for those who are not studying religion properly. Therefore, the scholars as a community reference should always be prepared to provide interpretations, explanations and conclusions that could resolve this conflict.

Some Views on the Contradictory Hadith

Al-Imam Abu Bakr al-Baqillaniy said: "Every two *hadith* which is identified come from the Prophet (peace be upon him), should not likewise apply contradict in what form, although apparent on both contradict each other. (Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy 1986: 473). Al-Imam al-Syafi'iy also said: "We do not found anything that coming from the Prophet (peace be upon him) that we feel contradicts, except we must find the way so that it cannot be contradict ". (Al-Syafi'i 1358H: 216). Ibn Hajar said: "A *maqbul hadith* that if save from any contradictions then it called *al-muhkam*, when if it is contradicting with another *hadith*, we will see whether it can be gathered together, so it called *mukhtalif al-Hadith*, or if it is identified the history then the latter called *nasikh* (abrogating) and the former is *mansukh* (abrogated), or if it cannot be identified then we will make a *tarjih* (outweighing), and lastly we will *tawaqquf* (revert back to the original rule and assume the contradictory texts are non-existent (Ibn Hajar tt: 37)

According to these arguments, there are two circumstances that would apply to Hadith that seems to be contradicts:

Firstly: Both can be solved by way of gather (al-Jam '). If this happens then there is no choice but to raise both hadith by adopting both a correct understanding. This is in line with the method outlined by al-Imam al-Syafi'iy "Utilizing the two propositions (hadith) greater than ignore it." (Al-Syafi'iy 1985: 64) Second: The conflict that cannot be collected or understanding together. If this happens then there are two possibilities that could be assumed, one: Any *nasikh* (abrogation) happens in between these two opposing hadith?

Second: Not known to occur any abrogation between them so then it was taken to the third solution is to make a *tarjih* (outweighing if the chronology is not known). Finally, if the *tarjih* was unable to resolve this conflict then it will be taken to the next solution is *tawaqquf* which left both of them. The majority of scholars hold that there is no contradictions happen between the hadiths of the Prophet. In their point of view, if there are apparent inconsistencies then the cause is not the hadith but the person's lack of understanding in this field. This is because the scholars, who are real experts, will be able to solve this problem easily.

According to al-Imam Ibn Khuzaymah (w 311H): "It is not to my knowledge that any prophetic traditions are contradictory. Should anyone find such instances, bring them to me, and I'll have them reconciled. (Al-Baghdadiy 1986: 473). This view is based on the position of hadith as part of the revelation and it is impossible the revelation will contradict one another. Even the hadith itself becomes a reference to any conflict and dispute, based on God's word which means:

"And if you argue (quarrel) in something that it should return to (the book) God (The Qur'an) and (sunna) His apostle ". [Translation surah al-Nisa '(4): 59] this proved that the false idea of having any two inconsistent traditions. Furthermore, it affirms the Prophet (PBUH) messages, Quran or hadith, as revelations from the Almighty. By no means will Allah send down contradictory revelations to His Prophet (PBUH). There is also the view says it happened contradiction to the conditions specified in the hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH). The proof there is a difference of opinion in the decision or legal *istinbat* (deduction) in circles of friends and *tabi'in*. This conflict is of course derived from the contradiction between the arguments, thus forcing them to perform the process of reconciliation or outweighing between these arguments. (Al-Syatibiy 1402H: j. 4, p. 124). If that so, we would consider the method, "charity with two more major hadith from ignoring one", (al-Syafi'iy 1985: 487) then no choice but to take a step of reconciliation. (Ibn al-Salah 1986: 285)

Reconciliation Approach to Resolve the Contradiction

Muhaddithin have outlined several methods to resolve all forms of conflicts between the prophetic narrations. However, reconciliation method is the most dominant method in an attempt to resolve the contradictory hadith. Other methods such as al-Nasikh (abrogation) and al-Tarjih (outweighing) rather rarely used, except after the reconciliation method cannot be used.

Purpose of Reconciliation

'Al-Jam'' means raise and adopt the second hadeeth which seems contradictory to give the correct understanding of both of them until no longer seems contradictory. It became a duty and responsibility to make sure the two hadeeth that can be collected and to be understand together, so that both hadiths can be used or practiced. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy said that as long as the two hadith can be implemented together, it should be used and cannot be ignored. (Al-Baghdadiy 1400H: j.2, h.222) While al-Imam al-Subkiy says that charity with two main arguments better than to ignore one of them, because the principle in the methodology of derivation (*istidlal*) are using, not ignoring. (Al-Subkiy 1404H: j. 3 p. 210)

Terms of Al-Jam'

The hadith scholars have imposed several conditions to allow the hadiths to be reconciled. This is to avoid wrong interpretation and misunderstanding to the prophetic texts. Among the terms is as follows:

- a. The authenticity of both hadiths including the *sanad* (chain) and its *matn* (text). If it is fabricated hadith, then it do not deserve to make a reconciliation or combination because the two hadith has been lost the qualification to say contradictory. Likewise, if one of the two hadiths authenticated while the other one is not, then the hadith is considered invalid. (Al-Amir al-Sana'aniy tt: j. 2 p. 423)
- b. Some scholars require that the time records are not known which that show one hadith is newer than the others, because if that happened it was included in the method of al-Naskh (abrogating) and this contradiction must be resolved by the methods of al-Naskh. But for majority hadith scholars' point of view, they do not put such requirement because they would prefer reconciliation as better way than abrogating method. If there is room for reconciliation, then the combination will be used although the texts were not recorded the date. That because of the intention of reconciliation is to use both arguments, and then it is better than to ignore one of them. Al-Imam al-Nawawi says that there is no reason to use the method al-Naskh in time to use the method al-jam', because in al-Naskh that a waiver of one of two arguments that should apply. (Al-Nawawiy 1987: j. 1, p. 149) Similarly, al-Laknawiy said that the time records do not prove to abrogating the former as long as no obstacle or prevention to make reconciliation. (Al-Laknawiy (1994: 192).

c. The people doing the work of al-Jam' 'must be an expert, wise in' sciences of al-hadith, jurisprudence and its rule, have a qualifications in Arabic language mastery, understand in methodology of derivation at a certain place, because such work including the matters of *ijtihad* (personal reasoning) in understanding the intentions of the texts, so should people who do the work of reconciliation consists of the *mujtahidin*. Ibn al-Salah once said that people, who deserve to do this work, are those who master the two fields of science, the science of *hadith* and *fiqh* science and those who have a deep insight into the meanings of text. (Ibn al-Salah 1986: 284)

d. Commentaries provided should be correct, accurate and will not turn from the actual meaning of the *hadith*. In coordinating the understanding between the two conflicting *hadith* normally need to be interpreted and explained corroborated by external evidence and arguments that support, such as specialized the general context of *hadith* because of other texts that support it, or understanding the instruction (*al-amr*) which means compulsory, or to the meaning of preference because there are other arguments that support it. (Dr. 'Abd al-Majid al-Susuah 1997: 148)

Examples of Reconciliation between Two Hadith

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "There is no infection". Authentic hadith narrated by al-Bukhari in his book with a different pronunciation in some places. (Al-Bukhariy 1987: no hadith (5707, 5757, 5770, 5773 and 5775). Muslims 1987: j.14, h.213, Abu Dawud 1994: no hadith (3911 and 3912) Hadith of Abu Huraira: The Prophet (peace be upon him) says: There is no Adha (no contagious disease is conveyed from the sick to the healthy without Allah's permission), nor (any evil omen month of) Safar, nor damn owl (hama)." A bedouin stood up and said, "Then what about my camels? They are like deer on the sand, but when a mangy camel comes and mixes with them, they all get infected with mangy." The Prophet said, "Then who conveyed the (mange) disease to the first one?" (al-Bukhariy 1987: no hadith (5770 and 5775)

This hadith is contrary to some other hadith such as:

a. Hadith of Abu Huraira (ra): "The cattle (sheep, cows, camels, etc.) suffering from a disease should not be mixed up with healthy cattle. Hadith is authentic. (Al-Bukhariy 1987: no hadith (5771 and 5774). Muslims 1987: j.14, h.215. Abu Dawud 1994: no hadith (3911). Ibn Majah (tt: no hadith (3541)

b. Hadith 'Amr ibn al-Syarid (ra) from his father al-Syarid bin al-Thaqafiy Suwayd (ra): "there was a leper in the delegation of Thaqif; so, Allah's Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) sent him a message, "We have accepted your allegiance, so you may go. Hadith is authentic. (Muslim 1987: j.14, h.228. Ibn Majah tt: no hadith (3544)

c. He (peace and blessings be upon him) said regarding the plague, which is a fatal epidemic disease, "If you hear about it in a land, do not go there; but if plague breaks out in a country where you are (already) staying, do not run away from it." (Al-Bukhariy 1987: no hadith (5707, 5728, 5729, 5730)

Form of Conflict

A superficial understanding may reveal a contradiction among the abovementioned hadiths. The word "no infection" in the first hadith means that diseases are not contagious by themselves, as the people of *jahiliyyah* (the pre-Islamic period) imagined; rather, they are conveyed by Allah's permission and according to His universal law. The second hadith shows that the Prophet (peace be upon him) when being asked about the healthy camel when mixed up with mangy camel will get infected return a question to them: "Then who conveyed the (mange) disease to the first one. The hadith" The cattle (sheep, cows, camels, etc.) suffering from a disease should not be mixed up with healthy cattle ", also clearly confirms the existence of the elements of infectious diseases. So he was none other than that but as a precaution.

Hadith 'Amr ibn al-Syarid showed concern that the disease impacted by the leprosy patients from a descendant Thaqif, will be spread or be transmitted to others, so the Prophet told him to go home after received his allegiance. Similarly, epidemic diseases *hadith*, the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered *one that heard about contagious disease in a land, must do not go there; but if plague breaks out in a country where you are (already) staying, do not run away from it.* All this is to show the existence of elements of infection and it is contrary to what was first confirmed in the *hadith* that no contagious disease. Addition to that, if there is a text of saying "no infection" and in the same time at the end of the hadith mentions the command of the Prophet to "flee from the leprosy patients as a person running from a lion." (Al-Bukhariy (1987: no hadith (5707, 5757, 5770, 5773 and 5775). We are often expressed with a variety of news about infectious diseases such as Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Measles, Meningococcal Meningitis, Influenza, Polio, Rubella, varicella, and many more are listed by the Ministry of Health as an infectious disease should be monitored and should get medical care. (See: Women Magazine, December 1996, p. 106-108).

Diseases of the enactment as a murderer, TB (Tuberculosis) which considered as an infectious disease at the first ranking before in Malaya between 1945 until 1957 whereby these patients was exiled in a remote place (sonatorium) in hospitals, to avoid infection.

In fact since 1995 new TB cases have been reported increased from year to year. The peak of 15,050 cases recorded in 2000. Assistant Chief Manager of Disease Control Section Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Dr. Abdul Kadir Mohd Naim Tibi said that the disease is still the major public health problem to the state. It is a kind of major infectious diseases dengue even precede the more feared by the public. (Representative of Malaysia, the nurse's office April 2, 2005) Aids disease is also categorized as a contagious disease in which the HIV virus can be transmitted through sexual contact or through a mother to her baby.

Solution

There are several answers expressed by the scholars on how to reconcile and to coordinate the understanding among the *hadiths* that seem to contradict, among them was al-Imam al-Nawawiy and Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalaniy: Denial of infection here means disease is not something occur naturally or contagious by themselves as imagined by people of jahiliyah (pre-Islamic period) rather, they are conveyed by Allah's permission and according to His universal law. Another reason, the Prophet (PBUH) wanted to affirm that the God who made the disease and cure. On the prohibition of approaching the sick of that, he aimed to declare that it is part of God's ways to make or create something diseases. (Al-Nawawiy 1987: j. 14 p. 213. Ibn Hajar 1987: j. 10, p. 160)

b Ibn Hajar, al-Tahawiy and al-Tabariy, saying that it is for sure there is no infectious disease because the Prophet (peace be upon him) stated that "something is not infecting others." (Abu Dawud (1994: no hadith (2150), from Ibn Mas'ud) supported by another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) denied an argument that came from bedouin saying that his camel have been infected when mixed with mangy camels, he said: "The first one which was transmitted from the camel?". The Prophet asserted that the God who made the camels to be exposed to disease, (not the result of infection of each other camels) as it was He who made the healthy camel get infected. About the narration that stated about avoiding leprosy patients, it is actually as taking precautions (saddu al-Zarai '). Hence, the prophet's message is clearly showed that he would like to avoid the people of Islam from all forms of false belief by assuming that the disease came from the infection is not because God's destiny.

c. While al-Baqillaniy and Ibn al-Battal argues that in general it is not infectious, but to certain diseases infection. That is why he prevented people from approaching the leprosy patients. So the Prophet with the intention could be interpreted as denial, that is not infectious unless certain diseases such as leprosy and so on.

d. There is also form of reconciliation proposed by scholars to combine the *hadiths* about leprosy in particular. Among them, as quoted by Ibn Hajar in Fath al-Bari: Jabir Hadith which states that the Prophet never ate with a person with leprosy and firmly Prophet: "By faith in God and resignation." According to this hadith Umar and some scholars argue leprosy sufferers can eat together and they see that the orders away from their (leprosy patients) as *mansukh* (abrogated). al-Qadi 'Iyad said: it become a scholars' view that this *hadith* is not abrogated, instead of that we need to *tawfiq* (coordinate and combine) between these two problems by putting on command intent to distance themselves from people with leprosy as a required or recommended (*istihbab*) and as a safeguard measure, while dining with the patient show the necessity only. (Ibn Hajar 1987: j.10, p. 168)

Others say that it is not infectious. What the Prophet ordered to distance themselves from the leprosy patients is because it's actually respecting their feelings, because if they mixed with people who are healthy, it will decreased their emotion self-confident because they are sick and different with others. "There is no infection" as said by the Prophet (PBUH) also refers to the strong beliefs, people who can prevent themselves from falling prey to the intentions of infection and this person might be able to eat and drink with people with leprosy. While *hadith* told to run away from people with leprosy is addressed to people of weak faith who are cannot maintain their belief and they might feel that they will get infected by mixing with the patient. Therefore, precaution step have to be taken by asking him to distance himself from leprosy patients. (Ibn Hajar 1987: j.10, p. 168). In point of view, one agrees with the view of Ibn al-Battal and al-Baqillaniy and because it is more grounded in the real world. Many types of infectious diseases that do not even mean mixed with healthy people and there are diseases that can be transmitted with mixed causes. This is proven by the results of research and medical research. Some diseases that can infecting others or to spread by certain viruses that brought the patient, spread in the association and so forth.

This is what we find that in medical centres today, certain patients had separated their seats and visitors are given a certain clothing aims to stem the infection. To the visitor, they must obey orders not to approach patients who are classified as people with contagious diseases. They can not deny the fact by using the Prophet tradition which means "there is no infection in Islam".

This is because there is also order from the Prophet to avoid connecting with leprosy patient as you run from a lion. In that issue, by collecting both *hadith* and given the correct understanding of both of them then we will be able to jump into conclusion and both hadiths can be applied together, without any discrepancies or errors. Patient that been supervised by an official doctor, should be kept and taken security measures, for the common good until he recovers from his illness. We take a great example of the SARS disease is said a little while before. The cause of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) or the excessive Acute Respiratory Syndrome is still unknown but it is kind of a dangerous contagious disease, spread through droplets of fluid from the nose and mouth. SARS patients who sneeze or cough will remove liquid droplets in the air and the individuals who will shortly be mixed with the air. The disease is likely to spread through the air or when the liquid droplets from SARS patients contaminate the surrounding objects such as telephones and doorknobs. (Disease Control Section, Ministry of Health Malaysia. www.moh.gov.my).

So far there is no specific treatment and no vaccine to prevent SARS, but with the support of hospital treatment, many patients can be cured. People are encouraged to avoid visiting areas that are involved in this case and avoid connecting with cases are not known. But if you need to connect with such individuals, people are encouraged to practice the things that relate to hygiene and use the masks to the appropriate security destination. While patients who confirmed the disease is not transmitted through association with them, then do not exile them or prevent them because such action would hurt their feelings. The doctors say that HIV cannot be transmitted through normal intercourse. It can only be spread through sexual intercourse with someone who has been infected with HIV, or receiving blood that has been contaminated with blood or income from an infected person such as blood transfusion, the needle or the skin-piercing instruments such as pierced ears, tattoos, knives shaving etc, in an infected mother to her baby, before, during or after childbirth.

So that, with this information then we should be with them, hang out with them, soothe their feelings. Let them feel that they are not alone in facing their difficult days. They are facing the will of Allah. For those people living with Aids-sufferers and their children affected by Aids disease, and for those who infected because of contaminated blood transfusions and so on, such people did not make any mistakes but it is the will of Allah to them . In fact they should be given support and encouragement to continue to live like other beings.

Conclusion

For the hadith scholars in contradiction tips there is one field or discipline discussion called mukhtalif al-Hadeeth. It is part of sciences of hadith which have been given special attention by the scholars long time ago because of its importance in maintaining the sanctity and credibility of al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah. In this science, the hadiths which seems contradictory resolved. The contradiction that is temporary, before the actual understanding of the will and means are found. Therefore, it is a religious duty for the scholars to resolve the conflicts that arise by providing interpretation and explanation regarding the content of the hadith. Al-Imam al-Nawawiy said that mukhtalif al-hadith is among the most important knowledge that need to be learn compared to other field of studies . (Al-Suyutiy 1988: J.2, h.196).

Al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah, if its validity has been confirmed, do not conflict with anything neither the nature nor reality, because al-Sunna is a divine revelation which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Among the most dominant method used by the scholars of hadith in solving the problem of conflict is the hadith is by providing the correct understanding of the purpose statement of the prophet in his hadiths. In this way we would understand that these authentic hadith of the prophet would not contradict one another or with other frames of knowledge, because the hadith is part of the revelation that is not fair at all contradictory, although also seen conflicting.

References

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy (1986), *al-Kifayah fi 'Ilm al-Riwayah*. C.2, Bayrut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi.

_____ (1400H), *Al-Faqih wa al-Mutafaqqih wa Usul al-Fiqh*. C.2, Bayrut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, j.2, h.222.

Abu 'Amr Ibn al-Salah (1986), *Ulum al-Hadith*. Bayrut: Dar al-Fikt al-Mu'asir.

Al-Amir al-Sana'aniy (t.t.), *Taudih al-Afkar li Ma'ani Tanqih al-Anzar*, Bayrut: Dar al-Fikr.

'Abd al-Hayy al-Laknawiy (1994) *Al-Ajwibah al-Fadilah li al-As'ilah al-'Asyrah al-Kamilah*. C. 3, Halab: Maktabah al-Matbu'at al-Islamiyyah.

Al-Imam al-Nawawiy (1987), *Syarh Sahih Muslim*. Bayrut: Dar al-Fikr.

Al-Imam Al-Bukhariy (1987), *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kaherah: Dar al-Rayyan.

Al-Imam Ibn Majah (t.t.), *al-Sunan*. Bayrut: al-Maktabah al-'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Imam Muslim (1987), *Sahih Muslim*., Kaherah: Dar al-Rayyan li al-Turath.

Al-Imam Abu Dawud (1994), *al-Sunan*. Bayrut: Dar al-Fikr.

Al-Imam al-Tirmidhiy (1994), *al-Sunan*. Bayrut: Dar al-Fikr

Al-Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (1313H) *Al-Musnad*., Kaherah: Dar al-ma'arif.

Al-Imam al-Hakim (1990), *al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn*. Bayrut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

Al-Imam al-Syatibiy, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim ibn Musa (1402H), *al-Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Ahkam*. C. 6, Kaherah: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi.

al-Humaidiy, Abu Bakr 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr (t.t), *al-Musnad*. Madinah: al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah.

Dr 'Abd al-Majid al-Susuah (1997), *Manhaj al-Tawfiq wa al-Tarjih Bayn Mukhtalif al-Hadith*. Amman: Dar al-Nafa'is.

Muhammad ibn Idris al-Syafi'iy (1358H), *al-Risalah*. Kaherah: al-Babi al-Halabiy.

_____ (1985), *Ikhtilaf al-Hadith*. Bayrut: Muassasah al-Kutub al-Thaqafiyyah.

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalaniy (t.t.) *Nuzhah al-Nazar fi Syarh Nukhbah al-Fikar*. Madinah: Maktabah Tayyibah.

_____ (1987), *Fath al-Bari bi Syarh al-Bukhariy*. Kaherah: Dar al-Rayyan.

Salih ibn Ahmad Rida (2001), *al-I'jaz al-'Ilmiy fi al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah*. Riyad: Maktabah al-'Abikan,

Taj al-Din, 'Abd al-Wahhab ibn 'Aliy al-Subkiy (1404H), *Al-Ibhaj fi Syarh al-Minhaj*. Bayrut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah.

Majalah Wanita, Desember 1996.

Utusan Malaysia, ruangan kesihatan 02 April, 2005.

www.moh.gov.my/bpk/kempen_kk/kempen_92.htm