

Chapter 35: The Events of the Fourth Year of Migration

Prohibition Of Alcoholic Drinks

Wine and the intoxicating drinks in general have been and are one of the greatest ruinous calamities for human society and it is sufficient to say in reproof of this deadly poison that it wages war against the greatest blessing of man which distinguishes him from other living beings viz. intellect and reason.

The prosperity of man depends upon his wisdom and the difference between him and other living beings is because of his power of intellect, and alcohol is considered to be the greatest enemy of wisdom and intellect. It is on this account that all the divine Prophets have prohibited the use of alcoholic drinks. In fact they have been declared unlawful in all the revealed religions.

In the Arabian Peninsula drinking prevailed like a general calamity and a contagious disease, decisive campaign against which needed quite a long time, and the state of affairs prevailing in the society and the conditions of the Arabs in general did not also permit that the Prophet should declare it unlawful without taking preliminary steps. He was also obliged to prepare the temperament of the society for waging a decisive war against it.

Hence, the four verses which have been revealed to express aversion to wine are not alike. The Prophet commenced with advice till he was successful in declaring its use to be unlawful.

A careful study of these verses tells us about the method adopted by the Prophet regarding the propagation of the laws of Islam and it is appropriate that the proficient writers and orators should adopt this method of instruction and should campaign against social evils in the same manner.

The basic condition for campaigning against an evil practice at the first stage is to awaken the thinking of the society and to invite its attention to its disadvantages and harmful effects. Until there is spiritual preparedness and internal stimulation in a society and the people themselves are responsible it is not possible to undertake a campaign against an evil practice.

Hence, in the first instance the Holy Qur'an told the society, the part of whose life was drinking, that preparation of wine with dates and grapes was inconsistent with good nourishment and this way of speech was in fact a warning to awaken the thoughts of the people. It says:

(We provide you) fruits of the date palm and vine from which you derive strong drink and wholesome food. (Surah al-Nahl, 16:67)

The Holy Book announced for the first time that making wine with these things is not 'good nourishment'. 'Good nourishment' means that they should be eaten in their natural shape.

This verse gave a jolt to the thoughts of the people and made their temperaments ready so that the Prophet might make his tone more strong and declare through other verses that 'some material utility' derived from wine and games of chance is insignificant as compared with their evil effects. This fact has been mentioned in this verse:

They question you about strong drink and game of chance. Say: In both is great sin, and (some material) utility for men; but the sin of them is greater than their usefulness. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:219)

No doubt such comparison between profit and loss, which shows that something is more evil than good, is sufficient to make intelligent people express aversion to it. However, the people at large do not avoid an evil practice unless it is totally forbidden.

Notwithstanding the fact that the verse quoted above had already been revealed Abdur Rahman bin Awf arranged a feast and also served wine on the dining cloth. Those present began offering prayers after drinking wine. One of them read a verse incorrectly whereby its meaning was changed i.e. instead of saying '(O idolaters!) I worship not that which you worship' he uttered a sentence with an opposite meaning by dropping the word '*la*' (*not*) from it.

These incidents made the temperaments of the people ready that so far as the conditions permitted drinking of wine should be prohibited at least in certain special circumstances. In the light of these conditions it was declared openly that no Muslim was entitled to offer prayers while he was intoxicated and this Divine order was proclaimed in these words:

Believers, do not pray when you are drunk, till you know what you say. (Surah al-Nisa, 4:46).[1](#)

The effect of this verse was that a group of persons gave up drinking permanently, and their argument for doing so was that a thing which was harmful for prayers deserved to be entirely eliminated.

However, some others did not forsake this habit, so much so that a person from amongst Ansar arranged a feast and notwithstanding the fact that he was aware of the said verse he served wine as well on the dining cloth. The guests, after having drunk wine, began to dispute and hurt one another.

Thereafter they complained to the Prophet. The Second Caliph, who used to drink wine till that time, being under the impression that the above-mentioned verses did not make drinking of wine totally forbidden, raised his hands in prayer and said: "O Allah! Reveal clear and convincing orders for us".

It is evident that such unpleasant occurrences had made the atmosphere ready for this that if the use of wine was totally banned, all the Muslims would have accepted this ban wholeheartedly. Hence, at the last stage, this verse was revealed: *Wine, gambling, idols and Azlam (a sort of lottery) are filthy acts of Satan and all of you should refrain from them.* As a result of this eloquent and emphatic order those persons who had been drinking wine till that time on the excuse that orders regarding giving it up were not final also refrained from it. On hearing this verse the Second Caliph said, "I renounce it from now onwards".²

Battle (Ghazwah) Of Za'tur Riqa'

In the Arabic language Riqa' means a 'Patch'. This sacred jihad is called Zatur Riqa' for the reason that at this front the Muslims came across a chain of high and low places which appeared like patches. According to another version it is called Za'tur Riqa' for the reason that to alleviate the hardship of walking the soldiers had wrapped their feet with rags.

In any case this battle was not a primary campaign so that the army of Islam should have fallen upon a community on the plea of their being polytheists. In fact their aim was to extinguish a spark which was about to flare up i.e. to suppress the enthusiasm which was being displayed by two families of Ghatfan (Bani Maharib and Bani Sa'labah) against Islam.

It was customary for the Prophet to depute wise and intelligent persons to different areas so that they might inform him about their general conditions. Suddenly a report was received that the above-mentioned two families were gathering arms and men to conquer Madina.

The Prophet proceeded to Najd with special columns and encamped near the territory of the enemy. The brilliant past record of the army of Islam and their self-sacrifice and valour which had astonished the Arabian Peninsula made the enemy retreat and take refuge in mountains and high regions without fighting.

However, as the Prophet offered the obligatory prayers in this battle, along with the soldiers of Islam, as *Salat-i Khawf* (offering prayers during the time of danger) and taught the Muslims the method of offering it by means of 103rd verse of Surah al-Nisa, it may be conjectured that the enemy's forces were well-equipped and that the fighting had assumed a very delicate shape, but eventually Muslims were victorious.

Forbearing Guards

Although in this battle the army of Islam returned from the headquarters of the enemy to Madina without fighting, they acquired a small booty. On their way back they stayed at night in an extensive valley to take rest. Here the Prophet appointed two brave soldiers to undertake guarding the mouth of the valley. These two soldiers named 'Abbad and 'Ammar divided the hours of the night between themselves and it was agreed that 'Abbad should guard the mouth of the valley during the first half of the night.

A man belonging to the tribe of Ghatfan was pursuing the Muslims so that he might do them some harm and then return immediately. This man took advantage of the darkness of the night and shot an arrow at the person guarding the valley while the latter was offering prayers. The sentry was so much absorbed in invocations that he did not much feel the prickly sensation caused by the arrow. He pulled out the arrow from his foot and continued his prayers.

However, the attack was repeated thrice. The last arrow of the enemy struck his foot so severely that he could not continue his invocations as he wished. He, therefore finished his prayers immediately and then awakened 'Ammar.

The tragic condition of 'Abbad moved 'Ammar very much and he said by way of protest "Why did you not awaken me at the very outset?" The wounded sentry replied "I was praying and was reciting a surah of the Holy Qur'an when suddenly the first arrow hit me.

The enjoyment of invocations and the deliciousness of attention towards the Almighty Allah kept me from breaking my prayers. If the Prophet had not made me responsible for guarding this point I would not at all have broken my prayers and the surah which I was reciting and would have surrendered my very life making invocations to Allah before I intended to break my prayers.³

The Second Badr

At the end of the Battle of Uhud, Abu Sufyan declared: "Next year we shall meet you in the desert of Badr at this very time and shall take a greater revenge upon you".

Under orders of the Prophet the Muslims announced their readiness to fight. The fixed time of one year expired and Abu Sufyan, who then ruling over Quraysh, was involved in various difficulties. Na'im bin Mas'ud, who had friendly relations with both the parties arrived in Makkah.

Abu Sufyan requested him to return to Madina immediately and dissuade Muhammad from deciding to come out of Madina. He added: "It is not possible for us to leave Makkah this year and the demonstrations and military manoeuvres of Muhammad in Badr, which is a common market of the Arabs, will bring about our defeat".

Whatever motive he might have, Na'im returned to Madina. His words did not, however, make the least

effect on the morale of the Prophet. He encamped in Badr in the beginning of the month of Zi Qa'dul Haram with 1500 warriors and some horses and a quantity of merchandise, and stayed there for eight days, which coincided with the annual public market of the Arabs.

The Muslims sold their merchandise there and earned enormous profit. Thereafter the people who had come from different areas dispersed, but the army of Islam continued to wait for the arrival of the army of Quraysh.

Reports reached Makkah that Muhammad had arrived in Badr. The chiefs of Quraysh had no alternative left to save themselves from disgrace, except to leave Makkah for Badr. Abu Sufyan, who was well-equipped, came up to Marruz Zahran, but returned from mid-way making an excuse of famine and dearth.

The return of the army of the idolaters was so shocking that Safwan protested to Abu Sufyan and said: "By this retreat we have lost all the honours that we had gained, and if you had not made a promise last year of waging a war we would not have been faced with this psychological defeat".⁴

¹. Refer to Sunan-i Abi Daud, vol. II, page 128.

². Mustadrak, vol. IV, page 143 and Ruhul Ma'ani, vol. VII, page 15.

³. Seerah-i Ibn Hisham, vol. II, pp. 208-209.

⁴. According to Mughazi-i Waqidi, vol. I, page 484, this incident took place in the 45th month of migration.

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