

## **A Psycho-spiritual reflection of Qur'an (Ash –Shu'ara) 26: 61-63 The Psychology of Prophet Musa's staff and the parting of the sea.**

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The Qur'an relates the story of Prophet Musa in around 70 different instances. It is one of the most amazing stories of the Prophets related to us by Allah in the Qur'an. The struggles, the dramas, the highs and the lows, the victory that Moses and the Children of Israel encountered are worthy of study and reflection repeatedly.

In Surah Shu'ara (26), Allah narrates the incident when Prophet Musa and Bani Israil were fleeing Pharaoh and his army who were trying to capture them from escaping. You could imagine how terrified Bani Israil was. They had nothing – no money, no home or protection of an army. They were prisoners and enslaved to work for Pharaoh who admired himself to be a God! They were trying to run for their lives.

They walked and strode, with their family – young, old, the sick men and women, for days until they reached the sea. They could not turn back. In front of them was the fierce and aggressive sea. The only way forward was through the sea which looked like inevitable death. And behind them, steadily and assertively marching, were Pharaoh and his army eager to direct devastation upon them.

This exact moment seemed to symbolise the believers' condition; weak, meek and frightened in the face of a powerful looking, strong and materially confident Pharaoh and his army.

The words the believers uttered at that moment describe the horror they felt witnessing Pharaoh's army violently approaching to slaughter them: "and when the two companies saw one another, the companions of Moses said, "Indeed, we are to be overtaken!". The Arabic conveys the intensity of the

situation. *Inna la Mudrakun*. Surely, without a doubt, we are done for! There is no escaping Pharaoh. No one will be able to save us.

Prophet Musa, with firm belief and conviction, is guided by Allah to affirm and reassure his people: “No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.” In other words. No. For a certainty we will not be destroyed because Allah is with us. The Arabic language yet again conveys the deep conviction and power Prophet Musa projects in this frightening moment. He says My Rabb is with me (us) and He will guide us. Notice he did not say the All-powerful, the All-mighty will save us. Rabb or Rububiyat in the Arabic language means, ‘to develop a thing from stage to stage in accordance with its inherent aptitudes, needs and its different aspects of existence, and also in a manner affording the requisite freedom to it to attain full stature’. Rububiyat is a process of tender care or careful nourishment providing from moment to moment and from stage to stage all that one needs to gain the fullest development.

Prophet Musa is reminding his people that the same way He (Allah) created them, looked after them when they were young and weak, provided their sustenance, took them out of tricky situations during their lives etc, Allah is with them to rescue them from this difficult moment. It is not the first time and it certainly will not be the last time. So trust in Allah and you will be fine.

The other amazing verb used in at this instance is *Yahdeen*. *Sa* -here indicates immediacy. In other words, he is reminding them that they do not need to wait for long, Allah’s victory and their deliverance from Pharaoh is imminent. Notice how he used *yahdeen* (guide me) instead of, for example, calling for some material assistance. I mean what is a stick in comparison to the mighty forces that Pharaoh can unleash upon them!? He (Allah) could have sent down Angels to assist Prophet Musa or through other physical or material means. But guidance is used to remind the believers that no matter what befalls them, the only way out is for them to remain steadfast. If Allah provides the guidance no material power or control will be able to defeat them. How many a small group overcame a bigger group with the permission and guidance by Allah? Victory, power and salvation is only sought and obtained through the guidance of Allah. And in the next verse this is emphasised even more emphatically.

‘ Then We inspired to Moses, "Strike with your staff the sea," And it parted, and each portion was like a great towering mountain.”

Here is the army of one of the biggest and ruthless tyrants, with all their material arsenal at their disposal, imminently about to attack Prophet Musa and the believers, and he is being ordered to strike a

weak looking staff made out of a tree on the ground. It may look weak but the power behind it is supreme. Psychologically Allah is reminding the believers about the power and might of Allah. As human beings we view things materially and forget that when Allah says to a thing Be and it is. Material things like wealth and money cannot protect the weak and oppressed. It is the guidance of Allah that will protect them. And he does not need to send an army of Angels to protect the believers nor any physical or material tools.

What happened at that instance? The sea, which looked like death, parted and each portion was like a great towering mountain. The bed of the sea was made smooth for the believers to comfortably cross through to safety. They did and Pharaoh and his army were all swallowed up by the sea. The lesson here is that difficult times will encounter us. Powerful forces will make our skin and hair shiver. They will psychologically make us meek and docile. But when the guidance of Allah materialises in front of our eyes all the difficulties, the thorny, horrific, and tumultuous times will be made comfortable and calm.

Ashura symbolises the struggle of truth against falsehood. It demonstrates that truth will always prevail sooner or later. The people of truth should remain just and steadfast upon the guidance of Allah.