

Fast 27: Prophets — Finality of prophethood

- In the Holy Quran, the Prophet Muhammad is spoken of as the last of the prophets:

“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the *khātām al-nabiyyīn*, and Allah is ever Knower of all things.” — 33:40

The word *khātām* means ‘a seal’ or ‘the last portion’ of anything. When a people are mentioned, then their *khātām* is the last of those people. Thus *khātām al-nabiyyīn* means the Last of the Prophets. Therefore the belief that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was last and final Prophet rests on the clear words of the Holy Quran.

- Hadith is even clearer on this point. The meaning of *khātām al-nabiyyīn* was thus explained by the Holy Prophet himself:

“My example and the example of the prophets before me is the example of a man who built a house and he made it very good and very beautiful with the exception of a stone in the corner, so people began to go round it and to wonder at it and to say, Why has not this stone been placed? He (the Prophet) said: I am this stone and I am *khātām al-nabiyyīn*.”

This hadith, in which the Holy Prophet speaks of himself as the corner-stone of prophethood and the last of the prophets, is related in the three most authentic books of Hadith: Bukhari, Muslim and Tirmidhi. Similar reports in which the Holy Prophet made it clear that no prophet would appear after him abound in all books of Hadith.

- **A Prophet for all peoples and all ages:** The idea that prophethood came to a close in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad is not a stray idea. On the other hand, it is the natural conclusion of the universalization of the theory of revelation which is the basic principle of the religion of Islam. Revelation, according to the Holy Quran, is not the solitary experience of this or that nation but the spiritual experience of the whole of the human race. Allah is spoken of in the very opening verse as the *Rabb* of all the nations of the world, the *Nourisher unto perfection*, physically as well as spiritually, of the whole human race. Starting from that broad basis, the Holy Quran develops the theory that prophets were sent to every nation:

“There is not a people but a warner has gone among them.” — 35:24

“And for every nation there is a messenger.” — 10:47

At the same time it is stated that every prophet was sent to a single nation and, therefore, though prophethood was in one sense a universal fact, it was more or less a

national institution, the scope of the preaching of every prophet being limited to his own nation. The advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad universalized the institution of prophethood in a real sense. The day of the national prophet was over, and one prophet was raised for the whole world, for all nations and for all ages:

“Blessed is He Who sent down the *Furqān* (i.e. the Quran) upon His servant that he might be a warner to the nations.” — 25:1

“Say: O mankind, surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of Him Whose is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth.” — 7:158

“And We have not sent you but as a bearer of good news and as a warner to all mankind, but most people do not know.” — 34:28

- The world-prophet therefore took the place of the national prophets, and the grand idea of unifying the whole human race, and gathering it together under one banner, was thus brought to perfection. The basis of the unity of the human race was laid upon the grand principle that the whole human race was one, and that all people, wherever they may be found, were a single nation (see the Quran, 2:213). Such unity could not be accomplished unless the finality of prophethood was established, for if prophets continued to appear after the world-prophet, they would undoubtedly demand the allegiance of this or that section, and shatter the very foundations of the unity at which Islam aimed by giving a single prophet to the whole world.
- By bringing prophethood to a close, Islam has not deprived the world of a blessing which was available to previous generations. The object of sending a prophet to a people was to make known the Divine will, and point out the ways by walking in which human beings could hold communion with God. That object was also brought to perfection through the great World-Prophet, whose message was so perfect that it met the requirements not only of all contemporary nations but of all future generations as well. This is plainly claimed by the Holy Quran, a claim not put forward by any other heavenly book or any other religion:

“This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as a religion.” — 5:3

The perfection of religion and the completion of the blessing of prophethood thus go hand in hand. Religion being made perfect, and prophethood being made complete, there remained no need for another religion after Islam or for another prophet after Prophet Muhammad.