

Fast 6: Prophets and Messengers of Allāh — raised in all nations

- The Quran declares:

“Mankind is a single nation (*ummah*). So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people in that in which they differed.” (2:213)

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ
مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ
بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ۗ

As all human beings are a single nation, God, too, has been revealing Himself to all of humanity. Prophets were raised among all nations that constitute the ‘single nation’ humanity, and to every one of them a revealed Book was given to show them the right way. The Book did not necessarily mean a written book with a name. The guidance revealed to a prophet, which he conveyed to people, is also his ‘book’.

Judging “between people in that in which they differed” means that the prophets, through their revelation, gave judgment as to who, among their people, was right or wrong in their spiritual beliefs and moral values.

- The first words of the above verse are: “Mankind is a single nation (*ummah*)”. The word *ummah* is generally considered by Muslims to mean ‘the Muslim community’ in the world. Some may be aware that it can be applied to followers of other religions; for example, Jews are the *ummah* of Moses.
- The word *ummah* as used in the Quran is applied to any group whose members have something in common. It says that animals and birds are communities, like people are (6:38). A group within Islam, created for a particular purpose such as preaching the truth of Islam, is also called an *ummah*:

“And from among you there should be a community (*ummah*) who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful.” (3:104)

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

- A group of misguided unbelievers are called an *ummah* (43:33). A group of righteous Jews are called an *ummah* (7:159). And all mankind, humanity, is called one single *ummah*, as above in 2:213.
- The words “Mankind is a single nation (*ummah*)” are translated by almost every translator in the past tense as: “Mankind was a single nation”. This is because it

contains the word *kana*, usually meaning “was”. They then interpret this verse to mean that, in very remote times in the distant past, the whole of humanity was one small community. Then as it spread in the world, it no longer remained a single nation. Its various sections started requiring guidance, and thus Allah raised prophets among them.

- However, the Lahore Ahmadiyya translator of the Quran, Maulana Muhammad Ali (d. 1951), writes that when the word *kana* is applied to something it does not necessarily mean that “it was” or “it used to be”, but it can also mean “it has always been”. Therefore, this sentence means that mankind **has always been** a single nation, **is still** a single nation, and **will ever be** a single nation.
- As humanity is ever a single nation, each of its sections have the same requirements to receive guidance, and the same claim upon God to show them the right way. So, before the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, God raised prophets separately among each nation of the world to give them the good news that if they do good deeds they will succeed and to warn them that if they indulge in wrong-doing they will lose God’s favour.
- When differences of creed arose between these various nations themselves, so much so that sometimes one nation apparently believed the complete opposite of another, God raised the Holy Prophet Muhammad to give the final judgment, so that all the nations could be brought together as one humanity.
- The Islamic teaching that prophets arose among all nations is mentioned several times in the Quran:

“Surely We have sent you (O Prophet Muhammad) with the Truth as a bearer of good news and a warner. And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.” (35:24)

إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا ۗ وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ
إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ ﴿٣٥﴾

“For every nation there is a messenger.” (10:47)

وَبِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولٌ ۗ

- Another verse states:

“You (O Prophet Muhammad) are only a warner and for every people a guide.” (13:7)

إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَبِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ ﴿١٣﴾

The last words, “for every people a guide”, may mean that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is a guide for every people. However, the wording is such that many

translators take it to mean that **every people or nation has had its guide**. Typical such translations are “for every people there is a guide” and “every people had a guide”