

Fast 1: Name *Islam*

- Among the great religions of the world Islam enjoys the distinction of bearing a significant name, a name that points to its very essence. Muhammad was the name of the Holy Prophet through whom this religion was revealed, but its name as stated in the Quran is *Islam* and the one who follows it is called a *Muslim*. The Quran says:

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

“Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam.” — 3:19

“He named you Muslims before and in this.” — 22:78

Here, by *before* is meant prophecies of earlier prophets foretelling the coming of a nation of Muslims, and *this* refers to the Quran.

- Far from the system being named after its founder, as in the case of Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism etc., the Prophet Muhammad is himself called a Muslim:

“And I am the first of those who submit” (6:163).

The word translated here as ‘those who submit’ is *muslimīn* in the original, being plural of ‘Muslim’. By ‘first’ is meant that he is the foremost, and ahead of all, in submitting to God.

- In fact, earlier prophets of God are spoken of in the Quran as being “submitting ones” (literally, “Muslims”):

“And the same did Abraham enjoin on his sons and so did Jacob: O my sons, surely Allah has chosen for you (this) religion, so die not unless you are submitting ones.” — 2:132.

Again, the word translated here as ‘submitting ones’ is *muslimūn* in the original, being plural of ‘Muslim’.

Those people who submitted themselves to God through the revelation which had come to their prophets are called ‘Muslims’ in the Quran. But they were not Muslims in the sense in which we understand what a Muslim is.

A rough analogy is this: Imagine a medical doctor who was practising medicine one hundred years ago. He was no doubt a doctor, perhaps even having the same letters of qualification after his name as a doctor does today. But that doctor of a hundred years ago was not treating patients like a doctor of today does, because medicine has

advanced greatly since that time. He was a doctor *of his time*. Similarly, prophets before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and their true followers, are called ‘Muslims’ because they followed the revelation given to them *for their times*.

- The various prophets were preachers of ‘Islam’, or how to submit to the One God, among different nations in different times. The Holy Prophet Muhammad is the last and most perfect exponent of Islam, or how to submit to the One God.
- The root-meaning of the word *Islām* is *to enter into peace*, and a *Muslim* is *one who makes his peace with God and with fellow human beings*. Peace with God implies complete submission to His will, and peace with fellow humans is not only to refrain from evil or injury to another but also to do good to him; and both these ideas find expression in the Holy Quran itself as the true essence of the religion of Islam:

“No, whoever submits himself entirely to Allah and he is the doer of good [to others], he has his reward from his Lord, and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve.” — 2:112