

Is changing my name a must?

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Is changing my name a must?

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Question:

From those understandings that we have amongst us is: if a person accepts Islam, it is said to him “Pick an attribute for yourself” and that which they mean is that one changes their name (to a Muslim name) and they say for example, you are a person who is generous (kareem) or you have generosity, so you are Abdul- Kareem (servant of the Most Generous) or you are a person who is aware and experienced about things so you are ‘Abdul-Khabeer (servant of the All-Aware), so is this the correct understanding regarding picking a name?

Answer:

There is no objection in changing one’s name if the name holds some type of evil meaning or even if a person wanted to change his name and it didn’t hold an evil meaning. There is no objection to this; this is the first thing. Secondly, if the name is suitable and it doesn’t oppose Islam in any way, and these individuals always change the names, we say to them: No, stop! Because the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) didn’t change the name of everyone who accepted Islam. He only changed some names due to a wisdom that necessitated that like. For example, if the name held a meaning that exceeded the bounds of the legislation. So it is not from the Sunnah to do the likes of this affair.

Also the affair of looking if a person is kareem (generous), then he is called Abdul- Kareem, then it is not a must that a person picks a name that starts with ‘Abd (i.e. slave of), for the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وسلم) said the best of names are ‘Abdullah and ‘Abdur-Rahman, and the most truthful of names are Haarith and Hammaam.

So he mentioned some names, even if they aren’t preceded by ‘Abd. They still are truthful names like Haarith and Hammaam. So it isn’t a must that a name contains ‘Abd.

The fourth matter is that I fear that it is understood from this matter that there is a Sunnah or that there is guidance from the Salaf regarding this affair and from that which I know, this hasn’t been reported from the Salaf in the likes of this fashion, so I fear that it enters into the affairs of newly innovated matters and innovations so this should be left and the names shouldn’t be changed except for some wisdom and a legislated excuse.