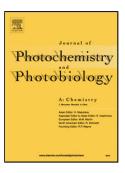
## Accepted Manuscript

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# ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

## Excited State Intramolecular Proton Transfer in 1,8-Dihydroxy-9,10anthraquinone Dye: Revealing Microstructures in [C<sub>n</sub>mIm][NTf<sub>2</sub>] and [C<sub>n</sub>mIm][BF<sub>4</sub>] Series of Ionic Liquid Solvents

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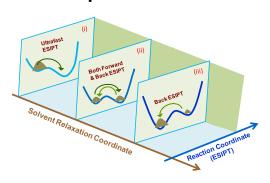
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### **Graphical Abstract**

## **Highlights**

- The ESIPT process of 18DHAQ dye in 1-alkyl-3-methylimidazolium ([C<sub>n</sub>mIm]<sup>+</sup>) based ionic liquid (IL) solvents, [C<sub>n</sub>mIm][NTf<sub>2</sub>] and [C<sub>n</sub>mIm][BF4], with n = 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, display noteworthy modulations in the relative emission intensities for normal (N\*) and tautomeric (T\*) forms.
- Observed results reveal the microstructure formations in the  $[C_nmIm][NTf_2]$  and  $[C_nmIm][BF4]$  series of the IL solvents.
- More extensive microstructures are inferred as the alkyl chain length of the [CnmIm]<sup>+</sup> cations of IL solvents is gradually increased.
- The small differences between the results in [C<sub>n</sub>mIm][NTf<sub>2</sub>] and [C<sub>n</sub>mIm][BF4] series of ILs are understandably due to the dissimilar size, shape and basicity of the [NTf<sub>2</sub>]<sup>-</sup> and [BF4]<sup>-</sup> anions of the two series of IL solvents.
- To the best of our knowledge, this is the only study involving ESIPT process to realize microstructure formations in neat IL solvents based on the [CnmIm]<sup>+</sup> cations.

#### Abstract:

Excited state intramolecular proton transfer (ESIPT) in 18-dihydroxy-9,10-anthraquinone (18DHAQ) dye has been investigated in two series of 1-alkyl-3-methylimidazolium ( $[C_nmIm]^+$ ) based ionic liquid (IL) solvents,  $[C_nmIm][NTf_2]$  and  $[C_nmIm][BF_4]$ , with n = 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10, using steady-state (SS) and time-resolved (TR) fluorescence studies. In both the IL series, fluorescence intensity for tautomer (T\*) form gradually decreases relative to normal (N\*) form with increasing n value for  $[C_nmIm]^+$  cations. Observed results suggest microstructure formation and its consequent

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