

The Concept of Empowerment (Tamkeen) in the Noble Quran

(Translated)

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Allah (swt) said, **﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾** **“Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good that He will certainly make them successors in the land, as He did with those before them; and will surely empower for them their Deen, which He has approved for them; and will indeed replace their fear with security, provided that they worship Me, associating nothing with Me. However, whoever disbelieves after this promise, it is they who will be the rebellious.”** [TMQ Surah An-Nur: 55].

When we talk about empowerment (tamkeen), we are talking about the cause for which the Messengers and Prophets, peace be upon them all, were sent. The cause we are discussing in this article is not the empowerment of a person or persons, but instead the empowerment of Deen, and the empowerment of the Islamic Ummah that establishes this Deen. The purpose of establishing Deen is to establish on this earth the way of life that Allah (swt) has chosen for humanity. Among the last verses revealed in His Noble Book is, **﴿الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتَمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا﴾** **“Today I have perfected your Deen for you, completed My favour upon you, and chosen Islam as your way.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Maida: 3]. That is, Allah (swt) has chosen for Muslims Islam as loyalty (walaa’), Deen, Shariah Law, and way of life. The word ‘Deen’ encompasses all of these meanings. The Prophet (saw) did not join the Supreme Companion, Allah (swt), until he (saw) had completed the mission, by conveying the Risaalah (message). His action (saw) was not limited to conveying the Risaalah (message) alone. Instead, he (saw) also established a political authority for Islam, empowered by Allah (swt) on earth. The Prophet (saw) did not depart from this worldly life, except after leaving behind an Islamic state, an Abode of Islam (Dar ul-Islam) encompassing the entire Arabian Peninsula, for the Khulafaa Rashidoon (Rightly-Guided Caliphs) and those who came after them to continue the advance, by expanding the Islamic Khilafah (Caliphate) state. This advance continued for centuries, until a time came when the Ummah abandoned this mission, its authority was removed from the earth, and its empowerment (tamkeen) was completely lost.

Now it is in the process of working to regain empowerment, wanting to return to its former glory; an Islamic Ummah empowered by its Deen, appointed as a successor on earth in order to carry out the mission for which it was sent. Allah (swt) said, **﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ﴾** **“You are the best community ever raised for humanity, you encourage good, forbid evil, and believe in Allah.”** [TMQ Surah Aali Imran: 110]. So, when we talk about empowerment (tamkeen), we are talking about the empowerment of Deen on earth. Linguistically, empowerment (تمكين) comes from the word “makkana” which means to enable and assist in something. As for “مَكَّنَ لَهُ فِي الشَّيْءِ” “To empower someone in something,” it means “جعل له عليه سلطاناً وقدره” “to give them authority and power over it.” Whoever is empowered from within a people, has power over them. Empowerment comes from power (قدرة). When we say, “So-and-so has been empowered on earth,” it means he has acquired power. Of course, power on earth is authority (سلطان). The one with authority, influence, and power is the one who has power on earth. This is the linguistic meaning of empowerment.

When Allah (swt) empowers us on earth, it means that He, glory be to Him, has empowered us. That is, He (swt) has given us the ability to be the decision-makers and the ones with power on this earth, so that the Word (Kalima) of Allah (swt) is supreme, and the

word of the disbelievers is the lowest on earth. This is in the context of the natural struggle that Muslims must engage in, which is the ongoing struggle between truth and falsehood, between Iman and kufr. Quranic verses in the Book of Allah (swt) contain this meaning of empowerment. Among them is the Saying of Allah (swt), ﴿الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاللَّهُ عَقِيبَ الْأُمُورِ﴾ **“They are those who, if empowered in the land by Us, would perform Salah (Shariah ritual prayer), pay Zakat (Shariah alms), command what is good, and forbid what is evil. And with Allah rests the outcome of all affairs.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Hajj: 41]. Establishing Salah in the Quranic verse does not mean merely the performing of Salah by individuals, instead it extends to establishing Salah amongst people in general, within an Islamic society. Commanding the good is also achieved through empowerment, by establishing this good through the obligating authority of the Islamic authority on earth, and not merely through verbal commands and prohibitions. This is because verbal commands and prohibitions are within the power of almost all people, even if they are not empowered on earth.

Similarly, we consider Allah’s Saying, ﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾ **“Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good that He will certainly make them successors in the land, as He did with those before them; and will surely empower for them their Deen, which He has approved for them; and will indeed replace their fear with security, provided that they worship Me, associating nothing with Me. However, whoever disbelieves after this promise, it is they who will be the rebellious.”** [TMQ Surah An-Nur: 55]. Succession and empowerment are a promise from Allah (swt) to those who believe and do righteous deeds. Therefore, empowerment is dependent on Iman in Allah (swt) and adherence to His Shariah Law.

Allah (swt) first said, ﴿وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ﴾ **“Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good that He will certainly make them successors in the land.”** This means that He makes them successors as He made those before them successors.

As for the Saying of Allah (swt), ﴿وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ﴾ **“And that He will establish for them their Deen which He has approved for them,”** clearly states that the goal of this succession is not to establish succession over individuals alone, but instead the succession is for the sake of the empowerment of the Deen, because the goal is to give rise to a jamaa’ah (community) of believers who live the life that Allah (swt) has approved for His servants. As for His Saying, ﴿وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا﴾ **“And He will surely replace their fear with security,”** this is a promise from Him, the Most High, that one of the fruits of empowerment is that He will substitute for them, after their fear, security. Then Allah (swt) says, ﴿يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا﴾ **“They worship Me, not associating anything with Me,”** which is further evidence that the goal of this empowerment is a life in which the worship of Allah (swt) is manifested. Worship in the Islamic concept is not limited to individual ritual acts of worship. Instead, the concept of worship in the Book of Allah (swt) is complete submission to Him, the Almighty. What is meant is a life in which servitude to Allah (swt) is manifested in all aspects of life, including the relationships that shape society, generating a way of life that distinguishes the Islamic Ummah from others, which is a life in which the Islamic way of living is manifested.

Then, Allah (swt) said, ﴿وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾ **“However, whoever disbelieves after this promise, it is they who will be the rebellious.”** This statement also indicates that the goal of empowerment on earth is to manifest the Deen so that its emergence, that is, its dominance, is a confirming evidence for the people. After that, those who disbelieve in it, those who disbelieve and commit sins despite the clear evidence, will be disobedient transgressors. Therefore, this goal of empowerment (tamkeen) is to create a community (jamaa’ah) of believers and Muslims living an Islamic life, which is also called, in contemporary terms, an Islamic society. When we speak of an Islamic society, we are not only speaking of a society whose components are Muslims. Today, Muslims are spread across the globe, numbering nearly two billion. However, they do not constitute an Islamic

society. A society is a community (jamaa'ah) of people who have established permanent relationships upon a basis, and these permanent relationships give this society its identity and way of life. If the relationships are shaped by Islam, then it is an Islamic society. If its relationships are shaped by capitalism, then it is a capitalist society, and so on. These relationships can only be Islamic if the culture of a society is based on Islamic thoughts, and the prevailing systems are Islamic systems, which means it is based on Shariah Law. If Muslims embrace pure Islamic concepts, free of any foreign concepts, and apply their Islamic system to their lives, they will have manifested themselves as an Islamic society. If Islam spreads among Muslims with its concepts, if they desire to live an Islamic life, and if they reject all non-Islamic concepts, but limit themselves to being educated in Islam and committed to it as individuals, then unless a political system is established in their land that applies Islamic systems and oversees their affairs, then this society will not be Islamic. This is because the system implemented in a society, in terms of constitution, laws, and legislation, determines its essential identity. A society cannot be Islamic as long as the systems implemented there are not Islamic, even if Muslims embrace a pure Islam devoid of any blemish individually. Therefore, working for empowerment is working for an empowered Ummah on earth, with authority, where sovereignty belongs to the Shariah Law of Allah (swt).

The above discussion leads us to a very important question: Is empowerment the ultimate goal of Islam and Muslims in this worldly life? Or is it a method to achieving the actual goal?

This question is a subject of debate, and even conflict, among many Muslims today. Most of those who answer it give the wrong answer. Many Muslims believe that establishing an Islamic state is the pinnacle of reviving Muslims, and that it is the result of implementing Islam, and establishing an Islamic way of life and an Islamic society. Many sincere Muslims who love their Deen say: We must establish an Islamic society so that an Islamic state can then be established. This is a major misunderstanding, as they fail to grasp the meaning of the state or its function. The state in Islam is neither the pinnacle of reviving nor the ultimate goal. Instead, the state in Islam is the practical method for establishing Islam, generating an Islamic way of life, and perfecting Islamic society. It is well known to all political thinkers, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, that the state is the executive entity for the set of concepts, convictions, and standards held by any people. The state is its means of achieving the way of life it seeks. Without an Islamic state, there will be no Islamic society, and no Islamic life. The misconception that the existence of an Islamic state or the Khilafah (Caliphate) is the ultimate goal of reviving and advancement for the Ummah, after it has fully implemented Islam, is a complete failure to understand the true meaning of implementing Islam and the Islamic state. Islam cannot be implemented without a state, and Islamic systems cannot be truly viable on the ground unless they have a state. Therefore, Allah (swt) made empowerment on earth a means to establish Islamic life, implement Shariah Law, and achieve security. Therefore, those who limit their efforts to preaching Islam to mere preaching, guidance, and what resembles Christian evangelism, without considering the serious work required to establish an Islamic state, whether they realize it or not, are not working to establish Islam. They are merely calling people to adhere to Islam individually. No individual can fully implement Islam, and more so, all individuals together cannot implement it without a state. This is because Islam did not come only for individuals; instead, it came as a way of life, and a state must be established to implement it. The state is the executive entity of any civilization and any political culture. It is the executive entity of the way of life that people want to live.

So, the issue of empowerment on earth means that the Islamic Ummah must have a state that embodies this empowerment, a state for the Ummah, not just any state. For example, if we imagine that Muslims established a small, territorial state that lacks the strength to make it impregnable against enemies, such a state would not empower Islam and Muslims on earth. The state that empowers Islam and Muslims is the one Islam calls "Dar ul-Islam (Abode of Islam)." Dar ul-Islam is the one that, by its Shariah definition and legal

reality, embodies the empowerment of Islam and Muslims. The definition of the Abode of Islam is “الدار التي يطبق فيها الإسلام، ويكون أمانها بأمان المسلمين” the Abode in which Islam is implemented and whose security is guaranteed by the Muslims.” If one of these two conditions is missing — the complete establishment of Islam and the security of the state being guaranteed by the Muslims alone, both domestically and externally — then it is not an Abode of Islam and does not embody the empowerment of Islam and Muslims. There is no empowerment where there is dominance and hegemony of the kuffar, as Allah (swt) says, **﴿وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا﴾** **“Allah (swt) does not grant the kafiroon a way of dominance over the Muslims.”** [TMQ Surah An-Nisaa: 141].

After the establishment of an Abode of Islam, Muslims cannot be content with merely implementing Islam in their own lands. Instead, the state must have a foreign policy based on carrying the Risaalah (message) to the world. Carrying Islam to the world is the practical implementation of the Saying of Allah (swt), **﴿وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا﴾** **“Thus We have made you a just Ummah that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger (saw) will be a witness over you.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah: 143].

Another issue that remains a source of controversy and confusion for some Muslims today is: Is succession on earth a consequence of Muslims striving for empowerment, as it falls under the takleef (Shariah liability) conferred by Allah (swt) upon His servants? Or is it merely a Favor (mannah) from Allah (swt)? Now, some say that empowerment is not one of the takaaleef (Shariah liabilities) upon the believers, but instead it is a mere Favor from Allah (swt) and so we are required have Iman and do good deeds in general, without striving to assume authority and ruling. They add that when good deeds are evident in us, Allah (swt) will then bestow upon us His Favor of succession and empowerment on earth. This statement is undoubtedly devoid of any Shariah legal evidence. Indeed, it contradicts the Shariah legal evidencing. Its implication is that Muslims are not required to strive for nasr (victory), whereas Allah (swt) says, **﴿وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ﴾** **“And prepare against them whatever you are able of material power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others besides them whom you do not know but whom Allah knows.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Anfal: 60].

Allah (swt) commanded us to prepare for battle, and He will not grant victory to the believers if they do not prepare for battle. Instead, Allah (swt) warns them of destruction if they neglect to prepare. Allah (swt) says, **﴿وَأَنْفِقُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تُلْقُوا بِأَيْدِيكُمْ إِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ﴾** **“And spend in the Path of Allah and do not throw yourselves with your own hands into destruction.”** [TMQ Surah Al-Baqarah 195]. This means that if they do not prepare for battle, then Allah (swt) will not grant them nasr. Instead, more than that, they will throw themselves into destruction. Allah (swt) attributes nasr to Himself, but this does not mean that nasr comes without the efforts of His believing servants. If we refer to the Seerah of the Prophet (saw), from the time he was sent until he established his state, he did not wait for the state to come to him as a Favor from Allah (swt). Instead, he would approach the people and tribes and ask them: How much quwwa (material strength) and man'ah (protective capability) do you have? He would ask them to believe in him and grant him material support, because he was searching for a ruler to be established on earth, and he was searching for someone to grant him material support in order to convey the Risaalah (message) of his Lord (swt), and in order to establish a state for Islam. Therefore, when the people of Madinah gave him their leadership, Allah (swt) honored them by calling them the Ansar, because they supported him and supported Islam. Thus, by the Grace of Allah (swt), the state of Madinah was established based on the Prophet (saw) and his Companions (ra) taking the necessary causative measures (asbaab) to achieve this empowerment.

Yes, those who work to achieve empowerment may seek to take the necessary causative measures (asbaab) but fail to achieve it, because they do not yet possess the necessary elements, and because some of these elements are not even within their control. This is what happened with previous Prophets (as). However, if they do not take the

necessary asbaab (causative measures), then empowerment will inevitably not occur, and succession will not take place. There is no succession or empowerment on earth without working for it, and taking the necessary causative measures.

After taking the necessary causative measures, their goal may or may not be achieved, for this is a matter of the Unseen (Ghayb). However, this nation is promised succession by the text of the Book of Allah (swt), in the Words of the Almighty, **بِوَعْدِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا** **“Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good that He will certainly make them successors in the land, as He did with those before them; and will surely empower for them their Deen, which He has approved for them; and will indeed replace their fear with security, provided that they worship Me, associating nothing with Me. However, whoever disbelieves after this promise, it is they who will be the rebellious.”** [TMQ Surah An-Nur: 55]. It is also through His Saying, **﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾** **“It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the Deen of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah (swt) dislike it.”** [TMQ Surah As-Saf: 9]. This is a promise from Allah (swt) that this Deen will prevail over all religions, and this prevalence over all religions has not yet happened. Islam has appeared over a wide area of the earth, but it has not yet been established over the entire earth. This promise is still awaited. In Sahih Muslim, on the authority of Thawban, he said: The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, **﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ زَوَىٰ لِي الْأَرْضَ، فَرَأَيْتَ مَشَارِقَهَا وَمَغَارِبَهَا، وَإِنَّ أُمَّتِي سَيَبْلُغُ مَلْكُهَا مَا زَوَىٰ لِي مِنْهَا﴾** **“Allah (swt) folded the earth up before me, so I saw its easts and its wests. My Ummah’s dominion will reach what was folded for me of it.”** However, the Ummah cannot reach this empowerment unless the causative measures (asbaab) for this empowerment are achieved within it, and these reasons cannot be achieved without its own efforts. Allah (swt) said, **﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِن تَنْصُرُوا اللَّهَ يَنْصُرْكُمْ وَيُثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَكُمْ﴾** **“O you who have believed, if you support Allah, He will support you and plant firmly your feet.”** [TMQ Surah Muhammad: 7].