

Introduction

The Holy Qur'an presents a profound and comprehensive principle in Surah Al-Ankabut (Chapter 29), Verse 69, which reads:

“And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good.” (Qur'an 29:69)

The verse appears in Surah Ankabut (The Spider), a Meccan surah that addresses the trials and tribulations faced by early Muslims. The context reveals a community undergoing severe persecution, yet the verse promises that their struggle will not be in vain. It assures them that Allah's guidance and companionship are guaranteed for those who strive sincerely.

This verse stands as the culmination and epitome of the entire Surah. It encapsulates the relationship between human effort and divine assistance, affirming that sincere struggle in the path of Allah is met with divine guidance and companionship. The commentary on this verse describes it as the “epitome of the whole Surah,” linking it to the opening verses that speak of trials, tests, and the distinction between true believers and hypocrites. It offers a powerful promise to those who face difficulties in their faith journey: persistence in striving leads to clarity, support, and ultimate success.

This comprehensive article explores the multifaceted dimensions of this verse, examining its linguistic and theological meanings, its implications for various forms of striving, the nature of divine guidance it promises, and its significance in the context of the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Drawing from the rich traditions preserved in Islamic scholarship, we will demonstrate that this verse serves as a foundation for understanding the relationship between human effort and divine assistance, the importance of sincerity in action, and the comprehensive nature of spiritual struggle in Islam. It further provides a comprehensive exploration of this verse, drawing from classical and contemporary Islamic sources, particularly within the Shia tradition, to elucidate its meanings, implications, and applications in the life of a believer.

Part One: Understanding the Core Concepts

1.1 The Linguistic and Technical Meaning of “Striving” (Jihad)

The Arabic term *jihad* (جهاد) is derived from the root j-h-d, which means “to exert effort,” “to struggle,” or “to strive.” In Islamic terminology, it refers to the utmost struggle and effort undertaken specifically “in the way of Allah” (*fi sabilillah*), as opposed to any other purpose. This distinction is crucial: not every

struggle is jihad; only that which is directed toward divine objectives and performed sincerely for Allah's pleasure qualifies as such.

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) emphasised jihad's centrality by stating, **"Allah has not (written) ordained the monasticism for us (Muslims) Indeed monasticism of my ummah is jihad (holy war) on the course of Allah."** (Jihad holy war is the monasticism of Muslims) (Bihar ul-Anwar Vol. 70, P 115, and Vol. 82, P 114)

The Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) further described it as, **"The one who truly wages jihad is the one who combats his self for the sake of Allah."** (Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 11261)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"The best jihad is one's struggle against their own self that lies between their sides."** (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 20216)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) relates, **'The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) dispatched troops [to a mission]. On seeing the returning armies from the battlefield, he said, 'Blessed are those who have performed the lesser jihad, and have yet to perform the greater one.'** When asked, **'O Messenger of Allah, what is the greater jihad?'** the Prophet replied, **'The jihad of the self'**, and added, **'The best jihad is that of one who combats his own self that is between his two sides.'** (Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 160, no. 1)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) described jihad as, **"Jihad is the pillar of religion and the path of the felicitous."** (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 1346)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated: **"The best jihad is combatting one's self against its desires, and weaning it from the pleasures of this world."** (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 3232)

Amir al-Muminin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated: **"As for what follows, jihad is a door from the doors of Paradise which Allah opened for His special friends - until he said - it is the garment of piety, Allah's fortified armor, and His firm shield. Whoever abandons it, Allah clothes him with the garment of humiliation, encompasses him with tribulation, debases him with lowliness and degradation, strikes his heart with barriers, and truth is taken from him by neglecting jihad, and he is given injustice and denied justice. And the Sheikh narrated it through his chain from Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Said similarly, and added: And truth is taken away by neglecting jihad and Allah becomes angry with him for abandoning His support. Allah the Mighty and Majestic has said in His clear Book: "If you support Allah, He will support you and make your feet firm" [Quran 47:7].**

1.2 The Phrase “For Us” (Fina)

The verse uses the phrase “strive hard for Us” (جَاهِدُوا فِيْنَا). The preposition “for” (فِي) signifies that the striving is done exclusively for Allah’s sake, with sincerity and pure intention. It excludes any struggle motivated by ego, worldly gain, fame, or any purpose other than seeking Allah’s pleasure. The commentary stresses that the struggle must be “in the way of Allah’s pleasure,” “in the struggle against the carnal soul,” “in the path of worship,” and “in the struggle against enemies” – all directed purely towards the Divine.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"He who seeks knowledge for Allah, no sooner does he learn even a chapter of it than it increases him in humility within himself, in humbleness in front of people, it increases his fear of Allah and his striving in religion, and that is the one who benefits from the knowledge that he gains. And he who seeks knowledge for this world and for status amongst people and for a favoured position with the ruler, no sooner does he learn even a chapter of it than it only increases his arrogance within himself, his presumptuousness with people, his self-delusion about Allah and his estrangement from religion. That is the one who does not benefit from his knowledge, and must subsequently refrain from it and stop furnishing proof for the case against himself in order not to feel regret and shame on the Day of Resurrection."** (Rawzat al-Wa'aiuin, p. 16)

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (peace be upon him) said: **"The greatest right of God against you is that you worship Him without associating anything with Him. When you do that with sincerity (ikhlas), He has made it binding upon Himself to give you sufficiency in the affair of this world and the next."** (Risalat al-Huquq by Imam Zayn al-Abidin (peace be upon him) , Book 1, Chapter 2, Hadith #1)

1.3 The Promise of Guidance: “We will most certainly guide them in Our ways”

The verse contains an emphatic promise: “We will most certainly guide them in Our ways.” The Arabic uses the emphatic *lanahdiyannahum* (لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ), indicating certainty. This guidance is not merely intellectual but encompasses all aspects of life, ensuring that the striver’s efforts are directed effectively and that their path is illuminated. It implies that Allah will open doors, ease difficulties, and provide clarity and insight.

This guidance is not merely intellectual but encompasses all dimensions of spiritual and practical life. It includes:

1. **Guidance to the Straight Path:** The path of righteousness and salvation
2. **Guidance in Understanding:** Opening the heart to comprehend religious truths
3. **Guidance in Action:** Enabling righteous deeds and avoiding sin

It is related from Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) from the following narration:

Ahmad ibn Mahran has narrated from ‘Abd al-‘Azim ibn ‘Abdallah al-Hasani from ibn abu‘Umayr who has said the following. “Asbat Bayya’ al-Zattiyy has said that once he was in the presence of abu ‘Abdallah (peace be upon him) when a man asked him about the meaning of the following words of Allah, the Most Holy, the Most High. **“In this there is evidence (of the Truth) for the distinguished ones. (15:75) That town lies on a road which still exists (15:76)** The Imam (peace be upon him) said, **“We are the distinguished people and the (right) path is with us.”** (Al-Kafi (Vol. 1) by Shaykh Muḥammad b. Yaquḥ al-Kulayni, Book 4, Chapter 28, Hadith #1)

Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, **"The straight path is the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (peace be upon him)."** (Ma’ani al-Akhbar, p. 32, no. 2)

1.4 The Companion of the Good-Doers: “Allah is most surely with the doers of good”

The concluding phrase **"Allah is most surely with the doers of good"** provides both reassurance and inspiration. The divine companionship is not merely a metaphorical concept but a reality that manifests in:

1. **Divine Support and Aid:** Allah's assistance in times of difficulty
2. **Divine Protection:** Safeguarding from harm and misguidance
3. **Divine Proximity:** Spiritual closeness and the experience of Allah's presence

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"The generous person is close to Allah, close to people and close to Paradise."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 73, p. 308, no. 37)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"Whoever establishes a good habitual practice that people follow even after him, he will get his own reward for it as well as the like of their reward for performing it, without any decrease in their reward thereof. And whoever establishes an evil habitual practice that is followed by people after him, he will be responsible for the burden of his own sin as well as the burden of their sins, without any decrease in their burdens thereof."** (Kanz al-‘Ummal, no. 43079)

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (peace be upon him) said: **"Verily the one whom Allah is most pleased with from among you is the one who is the most generous towards his dependents."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 78, p.

Part Two: The Comprehensive Scope of Striving

The commentary on this verse explains that “strive hard for Us” envelops any kind of struggle and effort performed sincerely for Allah with the purpose of achieving divine aims. This broad interpretation includes several dimensions:

2.1 The Internal Struggle (Jihad al-Nafs) – The Greater Jihad

The greatest and most challenging form of jihad is the internal struggle against one’s own lower self (*nafs*), its desires, and its negative tendencies. This is often referred to as the “Greater Jihad” (*al-jihad al-akbar*).

A narration regarding The Holy Prophet ((peace be upon him and his family) states:

From Musa ibn Ismail, from Musa ibn Jafar (peace be upon him), from his father, from his forefathers, from Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon them) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) sent a military expedition. When they returned he said: **Welcome to people who have completed the lesser jihad, but the greater jihad remains for them.** It was said: O Messenger of Allah, what is the greater jihad? He said: **The jihad against one's self (nafs). And he (peace be upon him and his family) said: The best jihad is one's struggle against their own self that lies between their sides."**

(Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 20216)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, "**The best jihad is combatting one’s self against its desires, and weaning it from the pleasures of this world.**" (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 3232)

Imam Musa al-Kadhim (peace be upon him) said: "**Perform jihad against your nafs to repel it from its hawa, for this is a duty for you like jihad against your enemy.**" (Tuhaf al-Uqul by Ibn Shu'ba al-Harrani, Volume 0, Page 399)

This internal struggle involves:

Resisting desires that conflict with Allah’s commands.

Purifying the heart from negative traits such as envy, arrogance, and greed.

Overcoming personal weaknesses and developing virtues.

Constantly examining one's intentions and aligning them with divine pleasure.

A narration from Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) states: **"Whoever controls his self (nafs) when he desires, when he fears, when he lusts, when he is angry, and when he is pleased, Allah will forbid his body from the Fire."** (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 20215)

This underscores the importance of selfmastery in all emotional states.

2.2 The Struggle (Jihad)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, **"Jihad has four branches: enjoining the good, forbidding the wrong, fortitude in the battlefield, and detesting the wicked."** (al-Khisal, p. 232, no. 74)

Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said:

"The first fighting with which you will be overpowered is the fighting with hands, thereafter with your tongues and then with your hearts. Consequently, he who does not recognize virtue with his heart or does not disapprove evil will be turned upside down. Thus, his upside will be turned downwards and his lowside will be turned upwards." (Nahjul Balagha, Hadith 375)

The term "Jihad" refers to outward struggles against obstacles that stand in the way of good and justice. This includes:

Defensive Jihad: Fighting in defense of Islam, Muslims, and their homeland against aggression. The basis is defensive: "The basis for fighting in a war or conflict is that the other side has lifted its sword against us, and we are only fighting in response to their aggression."

Upholding Truth and Justice: This includes enjoining good and forbidding evil, fighting oppression, and promoting Islamic principles. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) listed these as branches of jihad.

Intellectual and Verbal Jihad: Using the pen, tongue, and knowledge to propagate truth, combat ignorance, and defend Islamic teachings.

Financial Jihad: Spending wealth in Allah's cause.

2.3 Striving Through Knowledge and Learning

The pursuit of knowledge is itself a form of jihad. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) stated: **"Acquire knowledge since learning is a good deed, teaching equals saying God's glorifications, and discussing about knowledge equals participating in a holy war."** (Al-Khisal, Book 21,

Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"Seeking knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim. Indeed how Allah loves those who strive in their quest for knowledge."** (al-Kafi, v. 1, p. 30, no. 1)

Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"Seek knowledge even in China, for verily to seek knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim."** (Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 28697)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"He who goes out to seek knowledge is indeed on the path of Allah until he returns."** (Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 28702)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim. Let it be known that Allah loves those who seek knowledge."** (Al-Kafi (Vol. 1) by Shaykh Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Kulaynī, Book 2, Chapter 1, Hadith #5)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated: **"The one who strives in the pursuit of knowledge is like the one who strives in the cause of God. Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim, and how many a believer leaves his home in pursuit of knowledge and does not return except forgiven."** (Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 1, p. 179)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, **"The fountainhead of all virtues is knowledge and the peak of all virtues is knowledge."** [Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 5234]

Knowledge is described as a divine light.

Imam Jaffar al Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, **"Knowledge is not acquired through learning. Rather it is a light that illuminates in the heart of one who wants Allah, Blessed and most High, to guide him. So if you want knowledge, first seek out within yourself true servitude [to Allah], and seek knowledge according to its use, and ask Allah to make you understand, and He will make you understand."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 1, p. 225, no. 17)

Thus, the struggle for knowledge is both an external effort and a spiritual seeking, which, when undertaken sincerely, attracts divine illumination.

2.4 Patience in Obedience and Refraining from Sin

Patience in obedience means persevering in performing acts commanded by Allah, even when they are difficult. This includes maintaining consistency in prayers, fasting, and other duties despite inner

laziness or worldly distractions. Patience in refraining from sin involves resisting temptations and avoiding forbidden acts.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, "**Patience comes in the form of either persevering in the face of an affliction, or enduring an act of obedience, or restraining oneself against an act of disobedience. And this third type is of a higher calibre than the first two.**" (Sharh Nahjul Balaghah li Ibn Abi al-Hadid, v. 1, p. 319)

Imam Zayn al-'Aabidin (peace be upon him) said, "**When Allah will bring together the first and the last of people a caller will call out: 'Where are the patient ones that they may all enter Paradise without account?' ... The Imam then continued, 'The angels will ask them, 'Who are you?' and they will answer, 'The patient ones.' Again they will ask, 'And what were you patient with?' They will say, 'We were patient with acts of obedience to Allah, and we were patient in keeping away from acts of disobedience to Allah.**" (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 82, p. 138, no. 22)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: "**Patience is to faith what the head is to the body. If the head goes, the body goes, and likewise, if patience goes, faith goes.**" (al-Kafi by Shaykh al-Kulayni, Volume 2, Page 89)

Imam Mohammad Taqi (peace be upon him) said: **There are three (acts, which make the servants reach the good pleasure and approval of Allah**

1. Plentifulness of repentance.

2. Soft natured and forbearance.

3. Abundance of alms giving.

And there are three acts the doer of which does not repent.

1. Not making hurry.

2. Taking advice.

3. Trusting Allah while making decision (Ehqaq ul-Haqq, Vol. 12, P 438)

2.5 Helping the Weak and Oppressed

Supporting the weak and oppressed is a fundamental duty. The Qur'an asks: "**And what is it with you? You do not fight in the cause of Allah and for oppressed men, women, and children...**" (Quran 4:75).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"Pay attention to the weak, for you are only given sustenance and victory through your weak ones."** (Nahj Al-Fasahah, Volume 1, Page 158)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"Assist me in seeking out the weak people, for verily you are given sustenance and succour only because of the presence of the weak among you."** (Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 6019)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"Assist your brother (in faith), being him an oppressor or oppressed; if the former, keep him away from oppression and if the latter, lend him a hand."** (Nahj al Fasahah; Tradition No. 242; Page No. 40)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim; and so, he should not oppress him, nor should he surrender him (to enemies)"**

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"Whoever takes the side of the oppressed over the oppressor will be with me as my companion in Paradise."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 75, p. 359, no. 75)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) consistently urged his followers:

"Be an enemy to the oppressor and a helper to the oppressed." (Nahj al-Balagha, Letter 47)

Imam Hussain (peace be upon him) said: **"Allah, firstly mentioned, 'command for good and forbid to do evil' as one of His obligatory services, since, He knew that if these two obligatory are performed and established, all the obligatory services out of easy and hard will get performed and established. Because, 'command for good and forbid to do evil' invites to Islam, along with giving out the right of those having right and opposing of the tyrants and oppressors"** (Tuhaf al-Uqul. P 237)

Imam Hussain (peace be upon him) further emphasized: **"O, people! the Prophet of Allah (S) said the person who sees that a tyrant and unjust king has made the things forbidden by Allah legal and allowed, broken and breeched His promise and perjure opposed the sunnah and tradition of prophet of Allah, acted among the servants of lord with sin and tyranny. So when he does not act against him (the king) through practice or speech. It is Allah's right to make him enter into his (kings) place of entry (Hell)"** (Maqtal Khawarzami, Vol. I. P 234)

2.6 Any Other Good Action Done Sincerely for Allah

The scope of striving encompasses every sincere action performed for Allah's pleasure. Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him and his family) said, **"If you perform an action, do it sincerely for the sake of Allah because He only accepts from His servants those actions that have been performed**

sincerely." (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 77, p. 103, no. 1)

Sincerity (*ikhlas*) is the foundation of all acceptable deeds.

Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) defined a pure action as, "**Maintaining sincerity in deeds is harder than the deed itself, and the sincere deed is that which you don't want anyone to praise you for except Allah, the Mighty and Majestic.**" (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 8, Hadith 126)

Thus, the verse covers all forms of effort – spiritual, intellectual, moral, social, and physical – as long as they are done with sincere intention for Allah's sake.

Part Three: Divine Guidance as a Consequence of Striving

3.1 The Nature of the Promised Guidance

The guidance promised in the verse is multifaceted. It is not merely theoretical knowledge but practical assistance and illumination that manifests in various ways:

Tailored Pathways: Allah guides individuals to paths suited to their unique abilities and strengths. The principle is that "the invitation is general but the guidance is particular." Each soul has its own unique path towards spiritual perfection.

Multiple "Ways" Within the Straight Path: While there is one Straight Path (*Sirat al- Mustaqim*), there are many "ways" (*subul*) that lead to it. The commentary in *Al-Mizan* explains that the straight path encompasses different grades and levels, and Allah may guide a person from one way to another of a higher grade, each with its own specific guidance.

Direct Divine Inspiration: Allah inspires the soul to discern right from wrong, serving as an internal compass. This is the light of knowledge that illuminates the heart.

Inner Tranquility and Submission: Sincere striving leads to expansion of the heart for submission, resulting in profound trust in Allah and a sense of peace.

Increased Guidance and Righteousness: For those who accept guidance, Allah increases their guidance and bestows greater piety (*taqwa*). This is a continuous process of elevation.

3.2 The Conditions: Struggle and Sincerity

The commentary explicitly states that success, progress, and victory are placed under two essential conditions: **struggle** and **sincerity of intention**. When both are present, divine guidance and success are assured. Conversely, any failure or backwardness can be traced to neglect of struggle or lack of

sincerity.

The Qur'anic principle is clear: **"Verily Allah leaves to stray whomever He wills and guides unto Himself whomever turns (to Him in repentance)"** (13:27). Guidance is not arbitrary; it responds to human readiness and turning towards Allah.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"If you perform an action, do it sincerely for the sake of Allah because He only accepts from His servants those actions that have been performed sincerely."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 77, p. 103, no. 1)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"He who seeks knowledge for Allah, no sooner does he learn even a chapter of it than it increases him in humility within himself, in humbleness in front of people, it increases his fear of Allah and his striving in religion, and that is the one who benefits from the knowledge that he gains. And he who seeks knowledge for this world and for status amongst people and for a favoured position with the ruler, no sooner does he learn even a chapter of it than it only increases his arrogance within himself, his presumptuousness with people, his self-delusion about Allah and his estrangement from religion. That is the one who does not benefit from his knowledge, and must subsequently refrain from it and stop furnishing proof for the case against himself in order not to feel regret and shame on the Day of Resurrection."** (Muntakhab Mizan Al-Hikma, volume: 1, page: 400)

3.3 Two Types of Divine Leadership

Islamic theology distinguishes between two types of leaders:

Imams of Guidance (A'immat al-Huda)

The Qur'an states: **"And We made them leaders guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakah; and they were worshippers of Us."** (Qur'an 21:73)

1. **Primary (General) Guidance:** This is the universal guidance through prophets and scriptures, showing humanity the right path.
2. **Supplementary (Particular) Guidance:** This higher level is for those who have accepted the primary guidance and actively strive. For them, Allah **"increases them in guidance"** (47:17), granting deeper understanding and support.

A number of our people has narrated from Ahmad ibn Muhammad from al-Husayn ibn Sa'd from Muhammad ibn al-Fudayl who has said that he asked abu 'Abdallah (peace be upon him) about the

meaning of the following verse of the Holy Quran. **"In fact, the Quran consists of illustrious verses that exist in the hearts of those who have knowledge. . ."** (29:49) The Imams (peace be upon him) said, **"They are the Imams (peace be upon him) exclusive of all others."** (Al-Kafi (Vol. 1) by Shaykh Muhammad b. Yaqub al-Kulayni, Book 4, Chapter 23, Hadith #5)

These are the leaders appointed by Allah who guide humanity by His command. They:

Prioritize Allah's commands over their own desires

Are divinely appointed and infallible

Perform good deeds, establish prayer, pay zakat, and worship Allah alone

Possess patience and certainty in Allah's signs

Have a deep and thorough understanding of the Quran

Imams of Misguidance (A'immat ad-Dalal)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: **" Certainly, the worst man before Allah is the oppressive Imam who has gone astray and through whom others go astray. He destroys the the accepted *sunnah* and revives abandoned innovations."** (Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 164)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, **"Among all the people the most detested before Allah are two persons. One is he who is devoted to his self. So he is deviated from the true path and loves speaking about (foul) innovations and inviting towards wrong path. He is therefore a nuisance for those who are enamoured of him, is himself misled from the guidance of those preceding him, misleads those who follow him in his life or after his death, carries the weight of others' sins and is entangled in his own misdeeds."** (Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 17)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said in his description of the hypocrites, **"I warn you of the hypocrites, because they are themselves misguided and misguide others, and they have slipped and make others slip too"** (Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 194)

Part Four: The Station of Ihsan and Divine Companionship

4.1 The Meaning of Ihsan

Ihsan (إحسان) means excellence, virtue, and doing good in the most perfect manner. Allah states:

"Surely (as for) those who believe and do good, We do not waste the reward of him who does a good

work" (Qur'an 18:30). The reward for Ihsan is nothing but Ihsan itself, indicating that those who live a life of excellence and goodness will be rewarded with more of the same in the afterlife. Allah promises a great reward for those who do good and fear Him.

4.2 The Muhsinin (Doers of Good)

The *muhsinin* are those who embody this station.

The Qur'an describes the *muhsinin* as those who:

"Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good" (Qur'an 3:134)

Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (peace be upon him) said: **"Verily the one whom Allah is most pleased with from among you is the one who is the most generous towards his dependents."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 78, p. 136, no. 13)

They are identified as the pious and righteous who perform good deeds.

4.3 "Allah is with" – The Meaning of Divine Companionship

Divine companionship is manifested in various ways, including:

Divine Aid and Support

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) narrated: **"Any servant (of Allah) who comes forward to accept what Allah, the Most Majestic, the Most Holy, loves, Allah comes forward with what he (the servant) loves. Whoever seeks protection with Allah, He protects him. To whoever's rescue Allah comes He will protect him even if the skies were to fall on earth or an incident involving all the inhabitants of earth were to befall them."** (Al-Kafi, Vol. 2, Book 1, Chapter 32, Hadith #4)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, **"When a servant says, 'Whatever Allah wills, there is no power and no strength except in Allah', Allah says, 'O My angels, My servant has submitted so assist him, hasten to him and grant his request.'"** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 93, p. 190, no. 25)

Divine Love and Nearness

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"The generous person is close to Allah, close to people and close to Paradise."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 73, p. 308, no. 37)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "**Generosity is a means of nearness [to Allah].**" (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 72, p. 193, no. 9)

Imam Jafar ibn Muhammad Al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) was asked: What is the definition of generosity?

Imam (peace be upon him) replied: "**It is to give from your wealth the rightful dues that Allah (swt), the Almighty, has obligated upon you, and to place it in its appropriate place.**" (Man Lā Yaḥḍuruh al-Faqīh (Vol. 4) by Shaykh Muḥammad b. 'Alī al-Ṣaduq, Book 1, Chapter 175, Hadith #5898)

4.4 Rewards for the Muhsinin

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: "**The generous person is close to Allah, close to people and close to Paradise.**" (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 73, p. 308, no. 37)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: "**Allah, Blessed and most High, said, 'There is nothing more beloved to Me, through which My servant may endear himself to Me than through the duties I ask him to fulfil.'**" (al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 82, no. 5)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: "**Hasten to give charity, for calamity does not overtake it. Recommendation Of Giving Charity Early Every Morning And Every Day,...**" (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 9, Section 8, Chapter 8, Hadith 12299)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: "**Hasten to give charity in the morning, for whoever hastens to give it in the morning, calamity will not overtake him.**" (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 9, Section 8, Chapter 1, Hadith 12266)

Allah's being with the *muhsinin* entails:

Victory against enemies.

Good sustenance and favourable living conditions.

Good character and Allah's pleasure.

Paradise in the Hereafter.

Multiplied rewards for deeds. Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: "**If a believer does good Allah multiplies each of his deed seven hundred times and it is in accordance with the saying of Allah: 'and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases'.**" (Thawab al-Amal wa iqaḥ al-A mal by Shaykh

Muḥammad b. ‘Alī al-Ṣaduq, Book 2, Chapter 365, Hadith #1)

Imam Jaffar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, **"When the believer excels in his good deed, Allah will enhance each one of his good deeds to equal seven hundred, for Allah, Blessed and most High, says: "Allah enhances severalfold whomever He wishes."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 71, p. 247, no. 7)

Imam Jaffar al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **"When a believing servant does good, Allah multiplies for him his deed - for every deed seven hundred times; and that is the meaning of Allah's words: And Allah multiplies for whom He pleases. [Holy Quran 2/261]"** (Kitab al-Mu'min by Ḥusayn b. Sa'id al-Ahwazi, Book 1, Chapter 2, Hadith #3)

Part Five: The Verse in the Context of Ahl al-Bayt and Their Followers

5.1 The Imams as Embodiments of Guidance

Messenger of Allah peace be upon him and his family said: **"The one who guides to good is like the one who does it."** (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 16, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 21145)

The Holy Prophet (s.a) said, **"The root is Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (peace be upon him) and the branches are the Imams from their (Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) and The Holy Prophet (s.a) descendants and the knowledge of Imams stand for the fruits. Their faithful followers represent the leaves of such tree."** The Imam (peace be upon him) asked, **"Is there anything else in the tree?"** I said, **"No, there is nothing else there. The Imam (peace be upon him) then said, "By Allah, when a faithful is given a child a leave grows in the tree and when a faithful dies a leave falls off the tree."** (Al-Kafi (Vol. 1) by Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni, Book 4, Chapter 108, Hadith #78)

Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said the following: **"We, the Ahl al-Bayt (family of the Holy Prophet), are the tree of the prophet-hood, the station of the Messenger-ship of (Allah), the center wherein the angels interchange, the house of blessings and the mine of knowledge."** (Al-Kafi (Vol. 1) by Shaykh Muḥammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni, Book 4, Chapter 31, Hadith #2)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, **" We are the tree of prophethood, staying place of (Divine) Message, descending place of angels, mines of knowledge and the sources of wisdom. Our supporter and lover awaits mercy while our enemy and he who hates us awaits wrath."** (Nahjul Balagha: Sermon 109)

Imam Muhammad Baqir (peace be upon him) **had said when talking about the verse (You are only a warner and (there is) a guide for every people):** "The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) is the warner and Ali is the guide. By Allah, it (the mission) has never been away from us and it will still among us until the Day of Resurrection. May Allah make us do what pleases Him!" (**Kitab al-Ghayba by Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm al-Nu manī, Book 2, Chapter 4, Hadith #40**)

Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, **"The straight path is the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (peace be upon him)."** (Ma'ani al-Akhbar, p. 32, no. 2)

The Imams are not only recipients of divine guidance but also the primary guides for humanity.

5.2 Extension to the Shias

Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **"Verily our Shi'ah are those who possess four eyes: two in their head, as well as two in their heart. Actually, all people are such, except that Allah has opened their [the Shi'ah's] eyes, and blinded others' [as a result of their rejection of His guidance]."** (al- Kafi, v. 8, p. 215, no. 260)

5.3 Practical Significance for Believers

Prophet Mohammad peace be upon him and his progeny, said: **"Adhere yourselves to our love, the Ahlul Bayt, for surely, whoever meets Allah, having love for us (in his heart) he shall enter Paradise with our intercession. And By Him Who controls my spirit, a servant (of Allah) benefits nothing from his (good) deeds, unless he has recognized our Truth."** (Al-Amali by Shaykh Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Mufid, Book 6, Chapter 2, Hadith #2)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **"There is no good in this world except for two types of men: a man who increases in good deeds every day, and a man who remedies his sins with repentance. But how can he achieve repentance? By Allah, even if he prostrates until his neck breaks, Allah will not accept from him except through our Wilayah (allegiance, guardianship) - the Ahl al- Bayt."** (Wasail ai-Shia Vol. 16, Section 1, Chapter 86, Hadith 21023)

For the followers of Ahl al-Bayt, this verse serves as:

A reminder that their commitment to the Imams' path is recognised and rewarded.

An assurance that their efforts to uphold the true message of Islam attract divine support.

A call to continue striving with sincerity, trusting in Allah's guidance.

6.1 The Diagnosis of Failure

The commentary on this verse provides a powerful diagnostic tool: any failure or dissatisfaction experienced by individuals or communities stems from one of two reasons: **neglect of struggle** or **lack of sincerity**. When both are present, divine victory is assured. Conversely, when they are absent, failure follows.

6.2 Causes of Backwardness

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) warned against superficial religious practice: **"Be aware! Knowledge without thinking has no profit! Be aware! Recitation of the Qur'an without reflection is of little use! Be aware! Worship lacking reflection has no effect!"** (Al-Kafi, Volume One, Page 36 and Tuhaful Uqul, Maani Al-Akhbar, page 226; Bihar Al-Anwar Volume 2, page 48-49, Aalamu Addeen, page 100, Mishkat Al-Anwar 137-138, Muniat Almureed 162.)

Reflecting on the decline of Muslim societies, the text identifies root causes:

Neglect of comprehensive jihad in science, culture, politics, economics, and military fields.

Prevalence of self-love, materialism, and comfort-seeking over sacrifice and devotion.

Treachery and self-interest among leaders, weakening the community.

Isolation and marginalisation of sincere scholars and intellectuals, leading to loss of guidance.

6.3 The Path to Revival

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) taught: **"Seeking knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim. Indeed how Allah loves those who strive in their quest for knowledge."** (al-Kafi, v. 1, p. 30, no. 1)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **"Frequent study of matters of knowledge opens the intellect."** (al-Da'awat, p. 221, no. 603)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said: **"Frequent study of matters of wisdom fertilizes the intellect."** (Tuhaf al-'Uqul, no. 364)

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, **"Much contemplation on [matters of] wisdom causes the intellect to flourish."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 78, p. 247, no. 73)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) advised: **"Only he who lengthens his study attains knowledge."** (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 758)

Amir al-Mu'minin, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: **"Knowledge will only be achieved by whoever lengthens his studying."** (Mizan al-Hikmah by Muhammad al-Rayshahri, Volume 2, Page 862)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, **"He who gives a great deal of thought to what he learns masters his knowledge, and comes to understand that which he could not understand before."**

This emphasises that when sincerity emerges and strivers come forth, victories follow, chains of captivity break, and disgrace turns into honour. This is a historical promise: whenever even a little sincerity appears among Muslims and they shake off apathy, successes are achieved one after another.

The path to revival requires:

Restoring the understanding of jihad as comprehensive effort.

Purifying intentions from worldly motives.

Resisting cultural and ideological dependence on non-Islamic models.

Supporting sincere scholars and intellectuals.

Cultivating unity and brotherhood.

Part Seven: Practical Spiritual Lessons

7.1 Hope for Those Who Have Strayed

Muhammad bin Ishaq Muqri narrated from Ali bin Abbas Maqanai from Bukkar bin Ahmad from Hasan bin Husain Sufyan Jariri from Amr bin Hashim Tai that Ishaq bin Abdullah Ibn Ali Ibn Husain said with regard to the verse: **"And by the Lord of the heavens and the earth! it is most surely the truth, just as you do speak." (51:22-23)** **"This is the verse of the Qaim from Aale Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the following verse is about him: Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers those before them, and that He will most certainly establish for them their religion, which He has chosen for them, and that He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange; they shall serve Me, not associating aught with Me..." (24:55)** (Kitab al-Ghayba by Shaykh Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Tusi, Book 1, Chapter 28, Hadith #4)

This gives hope that Allah's guidance is always available to those who sincerely turn to Him.

7.2 The Importance of Taking the First Step

"And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for." (Quran 53:39)

"And that his striving shall soon be seen." (Quran 53:40)

Further, Verse 41 states: **"Then He will Recompense him the fullest Recompense."** (Quran 53:41)

Meaning and Significance

The verse "And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for" emphasizes several key aspects of Islamic belief and practice:

Individual Effort and Responsibility:

The core meaning is that individuals are directly accountable for their own actions and efforts. Successes and failures are primarily a result of one's own striving rather than external circumstances.

The verse highlights the importance of personal effort in achieving goals, affirming that the outcomes of our lives are a direct result of our actions.

Accountability and Recompense:

Every individual will be held accountable for their deeds. The verse implies that every person bears the weight of their own actions and will be recompensed accordingly.

This recompense is not limited to good deeds; a person will be punished for evil deeds they strived for. The Qur'an also states: **"That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another"** (Quran 53:38), and **"And who so does an atom's weight of good shall see it and who so does an atom's weight of evil shall see it"** (Qur'an 99:7-8).

The efforts made in this world will be seen and rewarded or penalized in full, ultimately leading to a final encounter with the Lord.

The Measure of a Person:

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: **"The wise man relies on his endeavor and action and the fool relies on his wishes."** (Ghurar al-Hikam no 1285 and 1286)

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: **"The reward for any work is proportionate to the toil of performing it."** (Ghurar al-Hikam, no. 4690)

This indicates that a person's worth and value are directly proportional to the effort they invest.

The Key to Success and Rejection of Laziness:

The Holy Qur'an emphasizes that the key to success is constant effort and perseverance. **"His efforts shall soon be seen"** reinforces the idea that striving leads to visible results.

Islam strongly disapproves of laziness and impatience, considering them characteristics that prevent individuals from benefiting in both this world and the Hereafter. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated: **"If work is endeavor, then continuous idleness is corruptive."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 77, p. 419, no. 40)

Imam Baqer (peace be upon him) advised: **"I certainly dislike a man, or dislike for a man, to be lazy regarding his worldly affairs. And whoever is lazy regarding his worldly affairs will be even lazier regarding his affairs of the hereafter."** (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, page 37)

Effort in the Context of Tawakkul (Trust in Allah):

While emphasizing personal effort, this verse should be understood alongside the concept of tawakkul. This means that while one strives diligently, they should also trust in Allah that He will make their efforts fruitful.

Human effort is crucial for acquiring livelihood and sustenance. Although sustenance is apportioned by Allah and cannot be increased or decreased beyond what is destined, humans are still required to go out and make an effort to secure it. Allah provides the means (e.g., a fruit tree), but humans must exert themselves to utilize these means (e.g., pluck and eat the fruit).

Spiritual Striving:

The verse **"O Man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him"** (Qur'an 84:6) speaks to the continuous striving towards the Lord, emphasizing that one's destiny depends on the efforts made towards spiritual sublimation.

A believer's good deeds and exertions will not be ineffective; they will find what good they send forth for their souls with God.

In summary, the statement **"there is nothing for man except his effort"** is a powerful Quranic principle (Surah An-Najm 53:39) that underscores the paramount importance of individual striving,

accountability for actions, and the direct link between effort and recompense in both this life and the Hereafter. It forms the bedrock of Islamic ethics concerning work, perseverance, and reliance on Allah.

Sometimes a single sincere step and struggle can lead to divine guidance and eternal salvation.

7.3 Continuous Effort

The believer is called to continuous striving.

So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship].

And to your Lord direct [your] longing. (Quran 94:7 and 8)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **"The best of deeds is that which is most regular, even if be something small."** (Tanbih al-Khawatir, v. 1, p. 63)

Imam Mohamad Baqir (peace be upon him) said: **"Nothing is more beloved to Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, than a deed that is maintained consistently even if it is small."** (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 21, Hadith 222)

Imam Mohamad Baqir (peace be upon him) said: **"The most beloved deeds to Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, are those that the servant maintains consistently even if they are small."** (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 1, Section 2, Chapter 21, Hadith 224)

It advises that when one finishes a task, one should still strive hard, moving from one effort to another for Allah's sake.

7.4 The Role of Knowledge

Knowledge is a divine light, but it requires sincere seeking. The seeker must combine study with servitude, practice with knowledge, and supplication with effort. Imam al- Sadiq (peace be upon him) advised: **"If you want knowledge, first seek out within yourself true servitude [to Allah], and seek knowledge according to its use, and ask Allah to make you understand, and He will make you understand."** (Bihar al-Anwar, v. 1, p. 225, no. 17)

7.5 Practical Steps for Striving

Based on the teachings, practical steps include:

Daily reflection on one's duties and Allah's favours.

Firm resolve to obey Allah and abandon sins.

Self-examination and regular evaluation of actions.

Self-conditioning with concrete commitments.

Guarding the heart against evil thoughts and motives.

Constant remembrance of Allah and gratitude.

7.6 The Importance of Self-Control

Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) stated: **"Whoever controls his self (nafs) when he desires, when he fears, when he lusts, when he is angry, and when he is pleased, Allah will forbid his body from the Fire."** (Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 1, Hadith 20215)

Conclusion

The profound verse **"And those who strive for Us - We will most certainly guide them in Our ways. And Allah is most surely with the doers of good"** (29:69) encapsulates a complete spiritual framework for believers. It establishes that divine guidance is a direct consequence of sincere effort, that Allah's companionship is guaranteed for those who do good, and that the path to salvation is open to all who strive sincerely.

The teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) illuminate the comprehensive nature of this striving, encompassing:

1. **Internal struggle** against the self and its desires
2. **External struggle** for justice and truth
3. **Intellectual struggle** through seeking knowledge
4. **Moral struggle** through patience, forbearance, and self-control
5. **Social struggle** through helping the oppressed and enjoining good
6. **Spiritual struggle** through sincere worship and devotion

The promise of divine guidance extends to all who strive sincerely, and the guarantee of divine companionship offers hope and reassurance to those who dedicate themselves to the path of righteousness. The Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) serve as the embodiments of this guidance, and their followers are called to emulate their example in faith, ethics, and worship.

In a world where Muslim societies face numerous challenges, this verse offers a diagnosis and a

solution: the path to revival lies in sincere striving in the way of Allah, accompanied by the pursuit of knowledge, the cultivation of good character, and the commitment to justice and compassion. The promise remains eternal and unconditional: **"We will most certainly guide them in Our ways."**

May Allah grant us the sincerity, perseverance, and understanding to strive in His path, to attain His guidance, and to be counted among the doers of good who enjoy His companionship in this world and the Hereafter.

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1. Qur'an 29:69

"And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good."

2. Qur'an 47:7

"If you support Allah, He will support you and make your feet firm"

3. Qur'an 4:75

"And what is it with you? You do not fight in the cause of Allah and for oppressed men, women, and children..."

4. Qur'an 15:75-76

"In this there is evidence (of the Truth) for the distinguished ones. (15:75) That town lies on a road which still exists (15:76)"

5. Qur'an 21:73

"And We made them leaders guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakah; and they were worshippers of Us."

6. Qur'an 29:49

"In fact, the Quran consists of illustrious verses that exist in the hearts of those who have knowledge. . ."

7. Qur'an 18:30

"Surely (as for) those who believe and do good, We do not waste the reward of him who does a good work"

8. Qur'an 3:134

"Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good"

9. Qur'an 2:261

"And Allah multiplies for whom He pleases."

10. Qur'an 13:27

"Verily Allah leaves to stray whomever He wills and guides unto Himself whomever turns (to Him in repentance)"

11. Qur'an 47:17

(Allah) "increases them in guidance"

12. Qur'an 51:22-23

"And by the Lord of the heavens and the earth! it is most surely the truth, just as you do speak."

13. Qur'an 24:55

"Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will most certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers those before them, and that He will most certainly establish for them their religion, which He has chosen for them, and that He will most certainly, after their fear, give them security in exchange; they shall serve Me, not associating aught with Me..."

14. Qur'an 53:39

"And that man shall have nothing but what he strives for."

15. Qur'an 53:40

"And that his striving shall soon be seen."

16. Qur'an 53:41

"Then He will Recompense him the fullest Recompense."

17. Qur'an 53:38

"That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another"

18. Qur'an 99:7-8

"And who so does an atom's weight of good shall see it and who so does an atoms weight of evil shall see it"

19. Qur'an 84:6

"O Man! Thou art labouring unto thy Lord laboriously, and thou shalt encounter Him"

20. Qur'an 94:7-8

"So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship]. And to your Lord direct [your] longing."

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Book 4, Chapter 31, Hadith #2

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