



## Citizen Rights Based on Human Dignity in the Intellectual Framework of Ayatollah Khamenei

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** Citizen rights grounded in human dignity constitute one of the central themes in the legal and political philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei. This approach divides human dignity into two types: "Innate and acquired. Innate dignity is a natural and inherent attribute inseparable from being human, while acquired dignity results from ethical conduct, the pursuit of justice, the commitment to rightful claims, and a conscious effort to realize lofty human values." Both forms of dignity serve as the foundation for a coherent and interconnected system of human, civil, judicial, welfare, political, and social rights that originate from four sources: "Divine, legislative rights, innate, creational rights, natural rights, and contractual rights.

**Method:** This study, through the method of content analysis, seeks to provide a renewed reconstruction of dignity based citizenship rights in the political philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei.

**Findings:** A key conclusion drawn from the intellectual system of Ayatollah Khamenei is that the realization of the foundations of dignity, together with their corresponding legal structures, depends on the presence of a righteous and dignified government and on the active participation of dignity seeking and justice oriented citizens. In this view, all four sources function in a complementary and harmonious manner. Citizenship rights are rooted in human nature and innate disposition; revelatory legislation affirms them, and human contracts establish them as the basis of social life. The dignified state, likewise, emerges from human nature and innate disposition, is affirmed by divine law, and through human agreements becomes the central guarantor of dignity and citizens' rights. Within such a framework of sources and foundations, human life proceeds on the basis of reciprocal rights and responsibilities.

**Conclusion:** Commitment to the rule of law, ethical conduct, civic participation in the reform of societal affairs, and mutual observance of rights and norms are mechanisms for realizing this process.

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## **Introduction**

In contemporary political and legal literature, the concept of citizenship is regarded as one of the core subjects in social and governmental theories. In modern political systems, citizenship is defined as a legal and contractual status within society, shaped by reciprocal rights and obligations between the individual and the state. Prior to the Islamic Revolution, this relationship in Iran was largely based on unilateral dynamics between the ruler and the subjects, in which individual rights were overshadowed by the power of the sovereign.

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution, a new discourse emerged in which human dignity was recognized as the foundation of citizenship rights and responsibilities. Ayatollah Khamenei, emphasizing this transformation, argues that the Islamic Revolution brought about the true realization of citizenship in Iran, replacing previous hierarchical relations with reciprocal and human-centered ones.

This study aims, through an analytical and interpretive approach, to re-examine the concept of citizenship within the intellectual framework of Ayatollah Khamenei. In this view, citizenship is not merely a political or social status but is rooted in human dignity originating from the Islamic worldview. Dignity in this philosophy is divided into innate and acquired forms. Innate dignity is a natural and inherent human right belonging to all individuals solely by virtue of being human. This dignity is potentially present in all human beings regardless of their actions or behavior.

In contrast, acquired dignity results from a conscious and responsible human effort to actualize innate capacities with the guidance of reason and religion. From Ayatollah Khamenei's perspective, the realization of this dignity in society depends on the establishment of justice, for justice provides the necessary conditions for everyone to attain legitimate rights and freedoms while preventing individuals from falling into negligence and sin.

In this approach, citizenship rights encompass not only civil, political, economic, and cultural rights but also highlight the integration of divine, innate, natural, and contractual rights. The rights of the people, including the right to choose their government, do not compete with divine authority but rather originate from it; therefore, any violation of the people's rights is considered a violation of divine right and deserving of punishment.

Within this framework, the dignified state serves as the primary infrastructure responsible for guaranteeing the dignity of citizens and providing the necessary conditions for the realization of their rights. In turn, dignity-seeking citizens bear reciprocal responsibilities, including respect for one another's rights, adherence to the rule of law, and active participation in the reform of societal affairs. This reciprocal interaction constitutes the fundamental basis of the code of citizenship in the Islamic system.

Through a precise analysis of these foundations, this article seeks to present a theoretical framework for understanding how the ideal of human dignity is transformed into concrete and explicitly articulated rights within the system of the Islamic Republic. It further aims to demonstrate how this perspective paves the way for the enhancement of civic culture and the realization of social justice and sustainable development. In this regard, by carefully elucidating the concepts, foundations, and categories of citizenship rights from the viewpoint of the Leader

of the Islamic Revolution, this study also examines practical strategies for promoting civic conduct.

This analytical approach enables us to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the reciprocal role of governance and the people in realizing a just and dignified society, one in which every individual, regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation, enjoys their rights and freedoms and actively participates in shaping their collective destiny.

## **1. Conceptual Foundations of the Research**

### **1.1. Citizenship/Citizen**

The term "citizenship" does not have a long history in Persian political and legal literature. Prior to the Constitutional Revolution, terms such as subjects were used to denote the social status of individuals (Dekhoda, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 7, entry "Ra'īyyat"). At that time, people were followers and subjects of the monarch and lacked recognized social rights.

In prevailing legal and political discourse, the concept of citizenship is closely associated with the emergence of nation-states. Individuals residing within the borders of a country became citizens, possessing shared rights and duties (Rezaeipour, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 110). This concept became recognized in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. Ayatollah Khamenei has explicitly stated that "The Islamic Revolution led to the formation of the reality of citizenship in Iran; prior to that, the relationship between rulers and the people was based on that of master and subject." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 27/08/1370)

In the Islamic system, the interconnection between rights and duties for citizens is a recognized principle. This perspective is compatible with the modern definition of citizenship, which is based on nationality rather than belief. In the Islamic system, when securing the rights of an Iranian citizen, no inquiry is made regarding his or her religion; rather, individuals are treated on the basis of "Shared Citizenship" and "Common Nationality." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 27/08/1370)

In the past, political and national affiliations were subordinate to religious affiliation and the distinction between the abode of Islam and the abode of unbelief prevailed. Even in classical Islamic political philosophy, it was held that if a virtuous Muslim resided in another city, he was considered part of the virtuous city (Mohajerania, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 335). Today, however, an individual's belonging is determined by nationality, and all nationals of a country, regardless of religious identity, possess citizenship rights (Mohajerania, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 112).

### **1.2. Citizenship Rights**

Citizenship rights refer to the set of legal and social entitlements and responsibilities that define relations between individuals and society. In effect, these rights encompass all the powers and duties to which each person is entitled by virtue of membership in a given country (Rezaeipour, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 110). This concept includes such fundamental rights as freedom of thought, expression, and belief; the full equality of all individuals in enjoying benefits and fulfilling obligations; and active participation in shaping social life. These rights can take various forms, including equality before the law, the right to personal security, the right to welfare and social development, the right to determine one's political destiny, the right to adequate housing, and other material and moral rights. Anthony Giddens, the eminent

sociologist, grounds citizenship rights in the principle of equal enjoyment of rights and obligations for all and holds that all citizens share in the creation of social order (Giddens, 1988 AD/1367 SH: 795). In the Islamic perspective, Ayatollah Khamenei has emphasized that anyone living in an Islamic society is regarded as a citizen and enjoys all citizenship rights (Khamenei, 15/06/1380). This view underscores the dignity and equal rights of all members of society.

### **1.3. Human/Islamic Dignity**

Dignity signifies human nobility, honor, and magnanimity (Raghib, 1989 AD/1368 SH: 30), and exalted honor accompanied by superiority (Mostafavi, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 10, 46), as opposed to baseness, inferiority, humiliation, and ignobility (Dekhoda, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 538). In Ayatollah Khamenei's thought, it denotes the intrinsic sanctity and inherent worth of all human beings bestowed by God, a natural and divine right of all people, realized solely by virtue of "Being Human." In his exegesis of Surah *al-Isrā'*, verse 70, "Indeed, We have honored the children of Adam," he regards innate human dignity as the right of all human beings without racial, religious, or ethnic distinction (Ayatollah Khamenei, 26/05/1402).

## **2. Theoretical Framework and Research Method**

This study reaches its conclusions within the framework of the "Five Rites" theory presented in the book *Political Philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei* (Mohajeraniya, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 201). There, the author contrasts the rite of citizenship with the rite of rulership and treats dignity as one of the foundations of citizenship rights. The technical apparatus of the research is based on the method of textual inferential elicitation, which is a specialized approach to content analysis. Inferential elicitation from text is among the most important methods for understanding and uncovering a text's and author's intended meaning. It assists the researcher in four stages to move beyond descriptive understanding toward explanation, analysis, and even prescription. "The significance of this method lies in its capacity to apply a philosophical approach to contents and sources produced in past eras or other cultures without regard to time and place, and, using intra-hermeneutic techniques, to extract the text's philosophical and abstract contours in a profoundly layered manner. Employing this method in the present study is necessary for three reasons":

- Access to information on the political philosophy of the Islamic Revolution is largely limited to documentary sources;
- Understanding its essential elements is contingent upon grasping the language employed in the texts and documents;
- In textual inferential elicitation, attention is typically directed to the basic elements of texts, namely symbols, themes, characters, propositions, and titles.

The principal function of the inferential elicitation method is content analysis, identifying the foundations, goals, values, culture, and orientations of the text or its author. In the present study, following the four stages below, an effort has been made to elucidate and examine the subject of citizenship in the political philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei:

- An initial understanding of the text's content through description and identification of its explicit content and outward features;

- Explication of the fundamental, ontic elements that constitute the text's content;
- Analysis of the identity-forming, cultural, and linguistic elements of the text's content;
- Prescription of determinate, elevating components for consolidating and sustaining the content.

The authors maintain that only through a logical response to the above stages can a proper analysis of the described content be presented. Without passing through this process, one cannot gain sufficient insight into the three factors that lie beyond the text, namely the pre-textual, identity-forming, and determinative elements. We believe that after describing, explaining, and analyzing the relevant texts, it becomes possible to formulate a theory of citizenship within the political philosophy of Ayatollah Khamenei.

### **3. Human Dignity as the Foundation of Citizenship Rights**

The most explicit Qur'anic verse regarding dignity states: "Indeed, We have honored the children of Adam." (al-Isrā': 70) This divine message indicates that the human species as a whole has been granted this divine beneficence and honor. However, when this verse is considered alongside other verses that speak of human dignity and mention certain conditions and causes for it, such as piety, good character, justice, self-restraint, gentleness, and nobility of spirit, it becomes clear that human dignity is of two kinds:

#### **A) Innate Dignity**

This refers to that which exists inherently in the essence, nature, and constitution of human beings in a creational and natural sense. As long as it has not yet reached the stage of realization and external manifestation, it exists potentially in all human beings. In Islamic teachings, the human being, considered the crown of creation, has been granted certain ranks and stations in the order of creation, such as: Vicegerent of God (al-Baqarah: 30), possessor of the divine spirit (al-Hijr: 29), bearer of the divine trust (al-Ahzāb: 72), the one before whom the angels prostrated (al-Baqarah: 34), and the being for whom the heavens and the earth have been subjected (al-Nahl: 12), among others.

Regarding the relationship between the Islamic Revolution and the intrinsic dignity of human beings, Ayatollah Khamenei states:

"The other pillar of the Islamic Revolution is attention to human dignity. A society that lives within a given geographical and political framework requires, by virtue of its dignity, to be free and independent, for its talents to flourish, to be in control of its own destiny, not to be subjected to humiliation and insult, and for its intrinsic personality to manifest itself." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 22/07/1382)

#### **B) Acquired Dignity**

Acquired dignity refers to the form of dignity that human beings actualize through specific means and through the guidance of reason and religion, transforming the potential capacities of their innate dignity into actuality. Conversely, through negligence, sin, and indifference, a person may decline and fall to the lowest of states.

Ayatollah Khamenei considers the attainment of this form of dignity in society to depend on the establishment of justice. Justice is one of the most fundamental and essential principles of

the Islamic system. The efforts and struggles undertaken within this system are centered on implementing justice in society; when justice is properly established, human rights and human dignity are also guaranteed, and individuals gain access to their legitimate rights and freedoms (Ayatollah Khamenei, 23/08/1382).

In the case of intrinsic dignity, considered at the level of ontological reality, the sole condition for possessing this status is simply being human, and human conduct or behavior has no role in attaining this rank. In contrast, with regard to the realization and acquisition of dignity, numerous causes and conditions are required.

Some Qur'anic commentators, in explaining the verses on human dignity, have attributed the honoring of the human being above other creatures to several factors: "The capacity for speech, the upright human posture, the structure of human fingers which enables the performance of many tasks, eating with the hands, the ability to write, the beauty of human form, mastery over many creatures and their subjugation, the direct creation of the first human by God, and the fact that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was chosen from among human beings. Some of these qualities derive from reason, such as the capacity for speech, writing, and gaining mastery over other beings." (Tabataba'i, 1983 AD/1362 SH: 13, 165) Therefore, reason itself is considered a factor in human superiority and dignity (Alidadi Soleimani, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 150).

However, since the human being is not self-sufficient and reason alone cannot determine all orientations and ultimate purposes, humanity requires guidance and the mission of the prophets (Ayatollah Khamenei, 13/11/1370). As he states:

"The prophetic mission has been the means of liberating human beings, it frees and emancipates them. Human bondage in the context of the prophetic missions has been both material and spiritual. In the sphere of material life, human beings were in bondage: "Their economies, their governments, their social relations and interactions were under the domination of tyrannical and satanic powers. Pharaohs ruled over them. Their material lives were harsh; they had neither freedom nor independence. They obtained even a meager livelihood with great difficulty. Among human beings there was discrimination; justice did not exist. People were humiliated, and they were subjected to torture."

Society was struggling under various forms of material pressure; this describes the material dimension of life. Yet in the spiritual and moral dimension as well, human beings remained in bondage. People's morals were corrupt. They were not permitted to learn correct thought and sound reasoning; they thought incorrectly and crookedly; virtue did not exist in human societies; no one showed mercy to another; people's talents remained dormant. Human beings were not allowed to develop the treasures inherent in their nature or allow the springs of their inner capacities to flow forth. It was in such conditions that prophets appeared and the prophetic mission emerged (Ayatollah Khamenei, 30/1/1364), to save human beings, guide them toward light, elevate them to human morality, and raise them to the station of humanity and dignity (Ayatollah Khamenei, 12/9/1379). Thus, the mission of all prophets is to bring human beings out of these darkneses and away from everything contrary to the path of humanity, and to guide them toward light and dignity.

Reflecting on Ayatollah Khamenei's political philosophy, it appears that the following five principles can be inferred from his perspective:

- Dignity is inherently part of human rights and the rights of humankind;
- Dignity is the result of a collection of human attributes and qualities;
- The realization of dignity as a right occurs only within social life and through acceptance of membership in a community;
- Attaining dignity requires citizenship within a guardianship-based government;
- Human beings living under oppression, deprived of the right to dignity, must sever their allegiance to such regimes and embrace citizenship in a guardianship-based government.

On this basis, dignity is both the product and outcome of many elements and components that are secured through the acceptance of citizenship. At the same time, providing these elements for the citizen generates rights for them. Conversely, corresponding to these rights, the citizen bears duties that must be fulfilled in order to strengthen the bond between the guardianship-based society and the dignified state.

#### **4. Conditions for the Realization of a Dignified Society**

In Ayatollah Khamenei's intellectual framework, two fundamental conditions must be met in order to attain dignity as a citizenship right:

##### **A) The Existence of a Dignified State**

To guarantee human dignity, the existence of a dignified state is essential. This concept appears in *Iftitāh* pray as "O! God, we long for a dignified state" meaning a plea to God for an honorable and noble government. Such a state must possess specific characteristics: it must be noble and steadfast, remaining impervious to external pressures. It must also hold firm conviction in the path defined for it by the Constitution and by the duties of the Islamic system. A dignified state does not cheapen its own values to accommodate others, and presents to the world a fresh and meaningful message, such as religious democracy, which is a new concept in today's world.

This outlook parallels the advice of Imam *Ṣādiq* (AS) to one of his followers:

"If you hold a precious gem in your hand and the entire world tells you it is worthless clay, does your belief change? Do you feel humiliated?" When the follower answered no, the Imam replied: "Then preserve your gem."

Ayatollah Khamenei uses this example to emphasize steadfastness in values and resilience as defining features of a dignified state (Ayatollah Khamenei, 05/06/1380).

According to him, the most complete example of a dignified state is the ten-year government of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This period forms the foundational blueprint of the Islamic system and serves as an unparalleled model for all societies and eras. Although reaching its full perfection in later periods may be impossible, its indicators and criteria can be used to evaluate systems and individuals. These indicators act as guidance for Muslims and for all humanity. The system established by the Prophet contains numerous markers, among which seven stand out: "Faith and spirituality, justice and equity, knowledge and insight, harmony and brotherhood, moral and behavioral rectitude, power and dignity, and constant work, movement, and progress." (Ayatollah Khamenei, Friday Prayer Sermon, 28/02/1380)

Based on these characteristics of the Prophetic system, Ayatollah Khamenei considers the Islamic Republic in the contemporary era to be an instance of the dignified state (Ayatollah Khamenei, 16/09/1374).

### **B) The Existence of Dignity-Seeking Citizens**

One of Ayatollah Khamenei's notable qualities is his ability to bridge theoretical concepts with practical realities and to link abstract ideas to tangible examples. Unlike purely theoretical approaches, he presents the concept of the "Complete human being" not only as an abstract ideal but through real and observable models.

In Ayatollah Khamenei's anthropological foundations it is stated that the purpose of human creation is not mere earthly existence; rather, human beings are created to traverse the path toward God, reaching their rightful station, which is the station of divine vicegerency, becoming manifestations of God's attributes. Therefore, what is fundamental in the human being is the set of elevated values inherent within them, which they can actualize through their own will (Ayatollah Khamenei, 22/07/1382).

From his perspective, the impeccable Imams are regarded as the most outstanding exemplars of the "Complete human being." He maintains that the divine straight path is the only path these individuals follow in order to attain their ultimate goal. In his thought, this process of exemplification is not limited to positive models; rather, identifying negative examples is equally important, as it helps in recognizing misguided paths.

However, in raising the concept of dignity, the intention is not merely to describe a perfectional attribute of the human being. Thus, 'What has been stated regarding the meaning and significance of dignity serves, in this discussion, as a preliminary foundation?' The essential aim of presenting dignity as a right of citizenship is to clarify that every human being possesses both intrinsic and acquired dignity and that once a person becomes subject to and a citizen of a state, their dignity must be secured and preserved.

In Islamic teachings, accepting citizenship and submitting to social regulations is intended to enable human beings more readily to fulfill their rights and duties, cultivate elevated values within themselves, and attain moral excellence. If, however, accepting citizenship in a given society prevents a person from attaining dignity, perfection, and felicity, the explicit command of religion is that one must sever the bond of citizenship and migrate in order to attain dignity, joining the citizenship of a virtuous state (Farabi, n.d.: 56) and a dignified government.

Ayatollah Khamenei divides migration into three types:

- Spiritual migration toward God, meaning non-attachment to a particular place;
- The migration of nomadic tribes to cities, for the purpose of civilized life;
- Migration for the sake of a new civilization and new citizenship.

Regarding the third meaning, he refers to the migration of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) from Mecca to Medina, stating that it was undertaken in order "To establish a civilization. So long as people do not become subject to a civilizational order and urban social organization, it is not possible to implement divine and Islamic prescriptions upon them or elevate them." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 20/06/1373)

He considers this type of migration to be among the requirements of a guardianship-based government. Thus, he argues that at the very beginning of the Hijrah, the Noble Prophet's first action was political: "Laying the foundation of the Islamic community, establishing the Islamic government, and forming the Islamic system." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 31/05/1385) This was because citizenship under guardianship-based governance required precisely such a foundation.

"The primary meaning of guardianship is connection, linkage, interweaving, and mutual entanglement. This is the meaning of guardianship: "Something that evokes unity, joining hands, being together, moving together, unity of purpose, unity of path, and unity in all political and social affairs. Guardianship means bond and connection. 'And those who believed but did not migrate, you have no bond of guardianship with them until they migrate (al-Anfāl: 72). This means that the bond among members of the Islamic community is achieved through migration, not merely through faith. Faith alone is not sufficient. The bond of guardianship, which is a political and social phenomenon and a determining event for life, is realized through effort, movement, and migration, being alongside one another, and working together." (Ayatollah Khamenei, 27/01/1377)

## **5. The Nature of Citizenship Rights**

One of the fundamental questions in Islamic political thought is: 'To what is a citizen subject?' 'Is the citizen subject to a city, a country, a nation, or the the abode of Islam?' Despite differing viewpoints, what is certain is that terms such as people, citizen, and subject acquire meaning only within the context of a society, whether that society exists within the limits of a city-state or nation-state, within the broader scope of a regional polity encompassing an *Ummah*, or even at the level of a global state.

By virtue of a person's allegiance and obedience to a state and its governing authority, they are referred to as a citizen or subject. And because they stand opposite the state as its counterpart, they are known as the people. When the relationship between citizens and rulers is founded on Islam, it becomes a humane and desirable relationship. Thus, citizenship is a political and social concept referring to social and political structures as well as to the manner in which power is distributed within modern city-states. Beyond defining the type of social and political order, this concept also determines the level and quality of the relationship between governing power and members of society.

### **A) The Importance of Dignity-Centered Citizenship Rights**

The concept of individuality and individual rights within the framework of citizenship was first articulated in the West, particularly through the schools of humanism and liberalism. The historical conditions of Europe were such that this concept conveyed two main intentions: "The negation of being subjects and the negation of servitude to God. In effect, human will and desire were placed in the position of divine guidance, and thus human law, reflecting human will, replaced divine law. European-style theocracy, or divine sovereignty over society and human life, gave way to democracy, while slogans such as freedom, equality, and fraternity became the foundations of social life."

By emphasizing natural rights, they argued that all human rights arise from nature. Since

natural laws operate uniformly everywhere, the rights of all human beings must also be equal, and all individuals should equally participate in determining their own destinies. Accordingly, a citizen was defined as a free and autonomous individual, endowed with rights, who participates in shaping the general will and collective decision-making, and who accepts three fundamental principles:

- Political power does not arise from divine will, but from the consent of citizens;
- All socio-political systems must be based on rationality and oriented toward human welfare;
- The human being possesses innate rights that must be respected by state authority (Ayatollah Khamenei, 15/05/1382).

From the perspective of Islamic thought, the human being is not a forsaken or abandoned creature; rather, he holds a unique position. He is the chosen of God and His vicegerent on earth. His being is composed of both spiritual and material dimensions, and within his nature lies an inclination toward God. The human being is free, independent, a divine trustee, and responsible before himself and the world. His journey begins in weakness and moves toward perfection; yet true tranquility is found only in connection with the Creator. His intellectual and practical capacities have no fixed limits, and he possesses an intrinsic dignity, one whose motivations may at times be purely spiritual.

Although the human being has the right to benefit from divine blessings, he remains accountable to God (Khamenei, 15/05/1382). In Ayatollah Khamenei's political philosophy, the human being differs from all other created beings and possesses special privileges granted to no other creature. For this reason, true humanism exists only within divine religions, for they focus on the growth and elevation of the human being and do not permit him to be sacrificed for the aims of others. All of a human's grandeur and nobility stem from his existential connection to God, and his lofty capacities can flourish only through this bond and within a divine educational system.

Therefore, a human being detached from God cannot qualify for these rights and attributes. One of the fundamental principles shared by all divine religions is the emphasis on human dignity. This dignity prevents the human being from committing sin or encroaching upon the rights of others. The liberation of human beings from the chains imposed by oppressive rulers has been the great ideal of the prophets and divine leaders. Certain human rights can be established on the basis of the very nature of human existence. "Islamic narrations also emphasize that one who feels no dignity within himself cannot be trusted, and one who possesses dignity does not stain himself with sin."

The foundation of rights in Islam is built upon a distinctive anthropological and worldview framework. Without understanding these foundations, neither the philosophy of Islamic rulings can be grasped nor can the limits of Ijtihad and proper implementation of laws be determined. Acceptance of human responsibility before God and the relationship of servitude play an essential role in defining the boundaries of human rights.

However, to establish universal rights for all human beings, a shared essence among them must first be demonstrated. As long as human thought remains dominated by differences, proving this common ground, and formulating equal laws for all, will be difficult. In this regard,

innate disposition offers a comprehensive definition of the common element shared by all humans. This concept stands in contrast to mere "Nature," and in harmony with Islam's view, which attributes both natural and spiritual dimensions to the human being, *Fitrah* emphasizes the primacy of the spiritual dimension.

Thus, *Fitrah* represents the human's immaterial, heavenly spirit, which, through the infusion of the divine breath, attains value and exalted status. *Fitrah* is a universal and uniform reality that guides all human beings toward truth and perfection. According to this theory, the human being is not a neutral entity; rather, he possesses innate cognitions and inclinations. *Fitrah* has key characteristics that help us establish human and citizenship rights:

- Universality: All human beings, regardless of differences, possess it;
- Innateness: This attribute exists from birth in every human being and requires no special conditions to be affirmed.

For example, the right to freedom is a universal requirement for attaining perfection. Since the ultimate purpose of creation is human elevation, this goal can only be achieved through freedom in choosing one's path. Therefore, the foundations of rights in Islam lie either in *Fitrah* or in nature. In cases of conflict, *Fitrah*, because of its higher value, guides the human being toward his ultimate end, which is perfection. Divine laws based on revelation also constitute an important source. Ayatollah Khamenei states: "We believe in freedom. Our belief in freedom and the securing of citizenship rights in social matters is deeply rooted and has a religious foundation." (Khamenei, 15/05/1382)

Regarding sovereignty and its relation to citizenship rights, he asserts: "Human rights are secured under Islam and the Islamic government. It is Islam that says, "Judgment belongs to none but God; He has commanded that you worship none but Him." (Yūsuf: 40) This verse rejects every form of tyrannical authority. No one has the right to rule over the people unless they possess legitimate criteria and are accepted by the populace (Khamenei, 13/11/1370).

#### The Nature of Citizenship Rights

Given the definition of citizenship rights, the question arises: 'How do they differ from human rights, and do the two concepts overlap?' It appears that human rights constitute the foundation of citizenship rights. Within this framework, every person, by virtue of being human and residing within the geographical boundaries of a state, enjoys similar rights.

The key differences between these two concepts can be examined in two dimensions:

- Scope: Human rights are universal and global, whereas citizenship rights are defined within the context of a specific country and political system;
- Nature: Human rights concepts are often abstract and somewhat ambiguous, while citizenship rights, due to their direct relationship with the people and their practical, implementable character, are more concrete. In fact, modern citizenship rights concern reciprocal relations among citizens as well as their relationship with state institutions, making them a particular interpretation of human rights.

The importance of citizenship rights is such that it becomes closely linked with the position of sovereignty. Some analysts believe that in societies where citizenship rights are not firmly established, the relationship between the people and the state becomes unstable. In modern

citizenship theory, the relationship between government and people is based more on interaction and mutual cooperation than on state authority and command. Although the state exercises sovereign power in certain major matters, in most areas both citizens and the government bear clear responsibilities to ensure the realization of citizenship rights.

One of the important questions regarding citizenship rights concerns their relationship with divine rights. 'Are these two concepts incompatible and irreconcilable, an assumption that emerged in post-medieval Europe? Or are they in fact not contradictory and even mutually reinforcing?' In the thought of Ayatollah Khamenei, several key points can be identified on this issue:

- Rooted in human nature and *Fitrah*: From a philosophical and legal standpoint, part of citizenship rights is grounded in human nature and innate disposition, and divine religions have correctly affirmed and recognized these rights (Khamenei, 22/12/1368);
- Rooted in divine obligations: From a theological and religious perspective, another part of citizenship rights originates from the duties and laws that God has prescribed for human beings (Khamenei, 27/12/1380);
- Positive and contractual rights: Based on these two categories of rights (natural and divine), human beings formulate additional rights in their social life to regulate their mutual relations. These are known as positive (enacted) and contractual rights (Khamenei, 15/05/1382);
- No conflict with divine rights: The legitimacy and authority of positive rights ultimately derive from religion, and therefore they must not contradict the divine rights that God has embedded in human *Fitrah* and conveyed through revelation.

Ayatollah Khamenei explicitly states that in Islam, divine rights and the rights of the people are not only non-conflicting but are in fact complementary. All the rights people possess, including the right to participate in selecting the governing authority, originate from divine commands and ordinances. In reality, the validity of people's rights stems from God's sovereignty and the laws He has established. Thus, in the Qur'an, violations of people's rights, such as usury, are described as "War against God." (al-Baqarah: 279) Likewise, regarding corruption on earth, the Qur'an considers it "Waging war against God and His Messenger." (al-Mā'idah: 33) This demonstrates that violating human rights is essentially a war against God, for the rights of the people are a divine duty and a right that God has assigned to them and placed as a responsibility upon those in authority (Khamenei, 27/12/1380).

## **6. Types of Citizenship Rights**

Citizenship rights are not confined to a particular domain of civic life; rather, they encompass all dimensions of human social life insofar as the individual is a member of society. Human rights exist across all these domains. Examining the structure of civic life reveals that some of these rights belong to a person simply by virtue of being a member of society, and they are indispensable. They are established to protect a person's life, property, and freedom.

A review of the system of citizenship rights shows that a significant portion of these rights are privileges granted solely on the basis of an individual's membership in society. These essential and fundamental rights are formulated to safeguard each person's life, possessions, and liberty, and no individual can be exempt from them. These are commonly referred to as

public rights. They exist across political, social, economic, and cultural spheres and take on the characteristics of the domain to which they belong.

Some classifications divide citizenship rights into three main categories:

- Civil Rights: This category includes the rights that the law recognizes for every individual. Examples of these rights include freedom to choose one's place of residence, freedom of expression and belief, the right to property, and the right to a fair trial before the law;
- Political Rights: These rights pertain to individuals' participation in determining the political destiny of society, such as the right to vote and the right to run as a candidate in elections;
- Social Rights: These rights are defined on the basis of each individual's natural right to attain a minimum standard of living. They include matters such as access to health and medical services, social security, and other welfare services.

## **7. Citizenship Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

Ayatollah Khamenei believes that genuine human rights can be secured for citizens under the umbrella of Islam. From the Islamic perspective, sovereignty belongs solely to God, and the verse "The command belongs to none but God; He has commanded that you worship none but Him" (Yūsuf: 40) invalidates any form of tyrannical rule. Therefore, no one has the right to govern the people unless they meet recognized criteria and are also accepted by the populace. Only under such conditions can citizenship rights be fully realized.

He considers attention to citizenship rights a modern idea, stating:

"There is an advanced, highly modern, and defensible mode of thinking within the Islamic system regarding the people's right to vote and political activities. Of course, political activity is not limited only to voting, though that is its greatest and most important part. In summary, among various freedoms, the political freedoms, the right to vote, the right to be elected, the right to political activity... in the Islamic Republic we returned to the Islamic model, which we found to be clearer, more progressive, and stronger than what exists in the world today." (Khamenei, 22/03/1366)

He values these rights so highly that he equates the Islamic Republic itself with the recognition of such rights, stating:

"The Islamic Republic means a political system that recognizes, in the broadest sense; the rights of the people, relying on God have will and divine legislation." (Khamenei, 27/12/1380)

Therefore, anyone who, despite professing belief in Islam, violates people's rights should expect divine punishment, because the rights of the people originate from divine duties, and constitute rights that God has designated for them and placed upon the shoulders of officials (Khamenei, 27/12/1380).

Ayatollah Khamenei regards citizenship rights as fundamental pillars of the Islamic Republic and emphasizes their importance. He holds that the foundational principles of the system, including the drafting of the Constitution and the election of officials, are directly dependent on citizenship rights. According to his view, the people's choice, based on divine criteria, is a necessary condition for governmental legitimacy in the Islamic Republic (speech dated 27/12/1380).

An important feature of this view is the inclusiveness of citizenship rights. Khamenei stresses that these rights are not limited to Muslims, and followers of other religions are also entitled to them (speech dated 25/11/1379).

To demonstrate these rights and freedoms in Iran, he frequently refers to the country's Constitution. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, grounded in an Islamic worldview and a profound understanding of the human being, establishes rights for individuals. Paying attention to these rights can promote awareness and insight among citizens, enabling proper and logical relations with the government and other members of society, ultimately contributing to social stability and well-being.

Throughout all its sections, from citizens' rights to the structure of government, the Constitution pursues specific goals. Each article of the Constitution represents an objective that must be pursued for realization (speech dated 07/03/1381). This perspective presents the Constitution as a roadmap for achieving the defined goals of society and the state.

## **Conclusion**

Citizenship refers to the social status and position recognized for an individual in relation to society or government. This status is attributed to someone who enjoys inherent, natural, and legal rights, which the state is obligated to respect and protect. In return, the citizen is required to consider him or herself bound by the laws of citizenship. This status is defined by the laws of each country, and there are various ways through which it may be acquired.

In the political thought of Muslim scholars, there have been differing views as to whether a citizen is affiliated with a city, a nation-state, or the broader *Ummah* and *Dar al-Islam*. Nevertheless, what is certain is that terms such as "People," "Citizen," and "Subject" acquire meaning only within the context of a community, whether that community is defined as a city-state, a nation-state, a regional religious community, or even a global government. Beyond describing social and political structure, this concept also indicates the nature and level of the relationship between political authority and members of society.

Citizenship rights constitute a collection of individual and public rights that regulate social relations. These rights are, in effect, privileges that every individual enjoys by virtue of nationality, including freedom of thought, belief, expression, and opinion. Equality of all individuals in the enjoyment of rights and responsibilities, as well as their active participation in social life, are also among the essential dimensions of citizenship rights.

From a philosophical and legal perspective, part of these rights is rooted in human nature and *Fitrah*, whose validity has been affirmed by divine religions. From the standpoint of Islamic political philosophy, another part of these rights originates from the divine obligations that God has prescribed for human beings. These two categories of rights, natural and divine, are not in conflict; rather, they complement one another.

Ayatollah Khamenei emphasizes that in Islam, the rights of God and the rights of the people are not in competition or contradiction. He explains that all the rights of the people, including the right to choose in matters of governance, derive from divine command, and that the legitimacy of people's rights stems from God's sovereignty and His laws.

Citizenship rights are not confined to a single aspect of life; rather, they encompass all spheres of an individual's social existence by virtue of his or her membership in society.

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