



The Ethical Requirements of Sports in the Quranic Thought of Imam Khamenei

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Abstract

Sports are among the physical needs that have allocated a part of human life to themselves and eliminate laziness and lethargy. This human activity, like other behaviors, can be adorned with good ethics or accompanied by inappropriate ethics. The Holy Quran and the hadiths of the infallibles have addressed the ethical requirements of sports in the direction of guidance and upbringing. Imam Khamenei has also emphasized the importance of ethics and adherence to Islamic ethics in life, especially in sports, in various statements, including the Statement of the Second Step of the Islamic Revolution. The inference from the statements of the leader of the Islamic Revolution and the description and analysis of his words show that he insists on sincerity and humility towards others in sports and advises athletes to rely on God Almighty and pray and resort to spirituality and patriotism. He asks athletes to use their social position, popularity, and physical strength to serve people.

Keywords: The Quran, Imam Khamenei, Sports, Ethical Requirements.

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Introduction

Sports and physical strength are among the essential needs of human life, which play a significant role in the physical and mental well-being of individuals. Generally, it can be inferred that sports and physical training are not the ultimate goal, but rather a means to serve the body, mind, and soul of humans, ultimately leading to achieving divine goals and the satisfaction of the Almighty. The result of sports is not merely physical health; it is a significant educational and guiding tool. By observing ethical requirements, these results are achieved. In today's society, considering the importance that sports and athletes have gained, the observance of their ethical conduct has become equally essential. Besides individual personality, an athlete also possesses a social personality, making him a role model and symbol for others. Therefore, if an athlete has certain ethical problems, it will have adverse effects on sports in that society and even on individuals within that society, ultimately overshadowing the essence and goals of sports.

The statement of Imam Ali in the noble supplication of Kumayl, «قَوِّ عَلَى خِدْمَتِكَ جَوَارِحِي» “Strengthen my limbs in Your service,” reflects the fact that all physical and bodily forces should be in the service of God and divine goals, and in this way, sports are considered valuable.

The Supreme Leader has paid particular attention to this issue in his statements and valuable writings, emphasizing the importance of Islamic values and observance of ethical standards in sports (Statements in a meeting with the officials of the National Martyrs' Sports Congress, 21/10/1394, <https://khl.ink/f/32076>). He has regarded the sports environment in our country as a spiritual environment filled with bravery, chivalry, piety, righteousness, and moral and spiritual brilliance, emphasizing that it should reflect its own luminosity to all segments of the country (Statements in a meeting with Olympic and Paralympic medalists, 21/12/1391, <https://khl.ink/f/22168>).



Background

The issue of the relationship between ethics and sports has a long history and has been addressed in religious texts with the advent of Islam. The Quran and the hadiths of the infallibles have extensively addressed the issue of ethics and have also mentioned physical abilities, indicating a relationship between these two concepts.

In contemporary times, this issue has been of interest to scholars and writers, and books such as “*Mabānī, arzish-hā, wa akhlāq dar warzish*” [The Foundations of Values and Ethics in Sports] by Rahim Ramzaninejad and Hamid Reza Gohar Rostami, as well as “*Darāmadī bar warzish dar Islām*” [An Introduction to Sports in Islam] by Tawhīdī Aqdam and “*warzish dar Islām*” [Sports in Islam] by Khālidī and Ṣabūrī, have discussed the importance, necessity, and some ethical requirements of sports from the perspective of religious texts. The Supreme Leader has addressed this issue in various statements, especially in meetings with athletes. However, his perspective on the ethical requirements of sports has not been explicitly discussed in the aforementioned writings and articles, and it can be acknowledged that this specific issue lacks a particular background.

The Conceptual Framework

1. Ethics (Akhlāq)

Ethics, derived from the Arabic word “*khuluq*” refers to the internal and intrinsic form of a person that is perceived with insight (Ibn Manẓūr 1993, 10: 86). Some have described it as “spiritual qualities and good ethics are said to be the source of actions that are considered appropriate and commendable from a religious and rational perspective” (Ismā’īlī Yazdī 2011, 19). Islamic ethics is considered a part of the teachings of the Islamic faith, discussing the virtues and vices of human actions.



Some have defined ethics as any action that is characterized by virtue or vice and deserving of praise or condemnation. European scholars have generally considered any good deed or commendable act as ethical, while reprehensible actions and wicked behavior are regarded as contrary to ethics. (Miṣbāḥ Yazdī, n.d., 1). In Islamic thought, ethics is described as “firm and enduring spiritual qualities that lead to actions corresponding to those qualities being easily and effortlessly manifested by individuals without the need for contemplation” (Ibn Miskawayh, n.d., 41).

2. Sports (*warzish*)

In its literal sense, sports refer to customs, orders, habits, occupations, efforts, and endeavors. In terminology, it means exercise, specific movements, and actions that are performed daily to enhance physical strength (Nafisī, 1976, 5: 388). Some have also stated that sports entail the regular performance of physical exercises to improve physical and mental capabilities. (Muʿīn 2002, 4: 5002).

Quranic Documents and the Ethical Requirements of Sports in the Words of the Leader

Today, sports play a significant role in the lives of people worldwide. Millions of individuals are involved in sports, and there are many times more spectators and fans of various sports programs. In some cases, sports can strengthen national and social unity, and its virtues and vices reflect the virtues and vices prevalent in that society (Various authors 2009, 429). We witness the expansion of sports daily. Both the fields of sports and the enthusiasts of sports have increased, to the extent that the Olympic Games have attracted nearly three and a half billion viewers (Simson & Jennings 2003, 30). However, alongside this expansion, we have always witnessed a lack of adherence to ethics in sports, due to the separation of spirituality and ethics from sports; an issue that has consistently been emphasized by Imam Khomeini and Imam Khamenei. Imam Khomeini has stated in a meeting with athletes: “Athletes should have spiritual exercise just as they have physical exercise. From ancient times, Iranian athletes have



remembered God and Imam Ali, and this has been one of their prominent features” (Mousavi Khomeini 2006, 18: 251).

Islam, as a complete religion, considers all aspects of Islamic life, and since sports play a vital role in human well-being and hold special importance in the contemporary world and in every society and country, ethical virtues have also gained double importance in it.

As the Supreme Leader has emphasized the importance of Islamic values and the observance of ethical standards in sports (Maktabī 1998, 23), based on the Quranic verses, ethics has been the most important goal of the divine prophets. Numerous verses indicate the Quran’s extraordinary attention to ethical issues as a fundamental and foundational matter.

The Islamic Republic’s sports stand out from those of other nations due to their unique requirements and prohibitions. The highly respected Leader of Iran has spoken about the qualities of a Muslim athlete and the ethical and behavioral expectations in numerous statements throughout the years. This article aims to elucidate the Quranic evidence that supports his views.

1. Observance of Spirituality

The first and most important characteristics of an athlete, according to Islam, are faith and God wariness, which are the criteria by which a person is considered superior to others. With this characteristic, a person is revered by God. As the Quran says: ﴿إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ﴾: “Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God wary among you” (Quran 49: 13). Having this characteristic, strength becomes a divine and human advantage. Strength alone does not have inherent desirability, but it becomes desirable when accompanied by faith and piety. In that case, it becomes the source of positive effects such as the defense of religion and Muslims, and greater strength for worship and service to people.

In another statement, the esteemed Leader of Iran says:



The spirit of sports is faith, piety, and chastity. If you want to do this, you must bring the confederates of Allah (*ḥizbullāhīs*) and the believers in the religion and the revolution to the field of sports and involve them in sensitive matters... Create an environment in which the *ḥizbullāhīs* attend. Make the environment of sports, a religious and Islamic environment, an environment of devotion and attention, and an environment of belief in God. If you want sports to progress, it will go this way. When the faithful find their way open to the field of sports, they will move forward, work, and be good. This is an important point that should be pursued in the domain of the spirit of sports. (Statements in a meeting with Olympic and Paralympic medalists 27/12/1391, <https://khl.ink/f/22168>).

Athletes should show their spirituality through their actions. This may include an athlete humbly prostrating in prayer after achieving victory, a female cyclist taking a moment to perform her prayer, or athletes invoking the name of God and the Infallibles or seeking aid from God and the Imams. Publicly exhibiting their religious beliefs is a tangible expression of the devotion of athletes, which should be fostered and upheld.

Imam Khamenei considers the current sports environment to be influenced by the spirituality of sports martyrs and by enumerating the manifestations of religiousness and commitment of our athletes. This includes the presence of female athletes with Islamic *hijab* on the championship podium, abstaining from shaking hands with foreign men, dedicating championship medals to the families of martyrs, prostrating and mentioning the names of the Imams after victory, and the sports teams' determination to visit the *Arba'īn* pilgrimage, which are considered magnificent and unparalleled phenomena in today's materialistic and corrupt world (Statements in a meeting with Olympic and Paralympic medalists, 27/12/1391, <https://khl.ink/f/22168>).

Therefore, the first characteristic of Muslim athletes is their faith and piety, and what evaluates their worth is God wariness. Just as the Almighty



God says in the Quran: ﴿إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ﴾: “Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God wary among you” (Quran 49: 13). Indeed, a person who is pious and faithful will be better when stronger and more powerful, but strength alone is not enough and will not be the criterion of value.

2. Sincerity (*Ikhlaṣ*)

One of the important indicators of faith is the intention behind one’s actions. In Islam, the criterion for the value of an action is the intention and purpose behind it. An action is considered valuable if it is done to seek nearness to God and His satisfaction. According to the Quran and hadith deeds without sincerity hold no value in the eyes of God. If one’s worship is hypocritical, it is considered as nullifying of deeds and not worthy of any reward.

The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution also considers intention important for athletes and believes that an athlete’s intention to serve the Islamic Republic is a divine merit and a spiritually meaningful act deserving of reward (Statements made during the meeting with the medalists of the Iranian sports delegation at the Asian Para Games in Indonesia, 23/08/1397, <https://khl.ink/f/40910>).

Elsewhere, he says: “You [athletes] who are engaged in this field - the field of sports - must feel and truly believe that you are performing a spiritually valuable act, and if you intend to serve the country and the Islamic Republic, surely it is a divine and spiritual merit, meaning it is rewarding, it is like worship and becomes a form of worship” (ibid).

Sports is one of the activities in which satanic temptations are abundant and any possibility for the athlete to fall into moral decline through arrogance and self-centeredness. According to the Quran: ﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَالِمُ غَيْبٍ﴾: “Indeed, Allah is the knower of the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. Indeed, He knows well what is in the

breasts” (Quran 35:38). God has warned people about the misleading temptations of Satan in numerous verses (*Maryam*: 44, *Zukhruf*: 62, *Mu'minun*: 97, *A'rāf*: 27) and considers only the sincere to be safe from the tricks of Satan (*Ṣāffāt*: 128, 74, 40).

Given the recommendations of the esteemed leader in having a correct and divine intention and purpose, in the Quran the subject of sincerity has been emphasised in numerous verses (*Zumar*: 11, 14 and *A'rāf*: 19), and in some verses, pretense is introduced as the cause of the invalidation and destruction of good deeds and is considered as one of the acts of the hypocrites (*Baqarah*: 264 and *Nisā*: 142).

Based on this, an athlete, in the Quranic thoughts of Imam Khamenei, must have a sincere intention and his ultimate goal in sports should be to seek closeness to the Almighty so that his pride does not lead him astray and Satan cannot influence him.

3 . Confidence in God (*Tawakkul*)

Tawakkul refers to putting one's confidence in God in carrying out tasks and entrusting affairs to Him in a way that enhances the individual's mental balance and keeps them away from anxiety. Belief in the power, wisdom, and mercy of God creates a state in humans such that they consider the presence of the Creator in all situations and behaviors, and in this sense of presence, they feel strength and capability, finding peace in their hearts.

Therefore, athletes should recognize that all their strength and power comes from God, not from themselves, and in the event of failure, they should consider it a step towards progress, knowing that God is their main supporter, and entrusting their affairs to Him. The Supreme Leader has considered standing on the podium of victory as the result of divine blessings and emphasized the importance of athletes' attention to ethical values (Meeting of the country's champions and sports officials with the Supreme Leader on 30/10/1381, <https://khl.ink/f/19882>). Just as God



says, «لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ» (Sūrat al-Kahf: 39), because all the abilities of the athlete come from their Creator, «أَنَّ»: «الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا» (Sūrat al-Baqarah: 165).

An athlete with faith, in addition to training and preparing for competition, should rely on God. Imam Baqir says, “Whoever relies on Allah will not be defeated, and whoever seeks refuge in Allah will not be overcome”¹ (Muḥammadī Ray-Shahrī 1995, 10: 681). The Prophet Muhammad says, “Whoever wants to be the strongest of people should rely on God”² (ibid).

In a meeting with a group of elite young scientists and members of the national volleyball team, the Supreme Leader emphasized the importance of having a spiritual connection with God, relying on Him, and seeking help from Him, attributing their victory to the grace of the Almighty (Wednesday, 16 Murdad 1398, <https://khl.ink/f/43172>). These statements are in accordance with the verses of the Quran and the sayings of the infallibles. For example, verse 12 of *Sūrah Ibrāhim* admonishes the servants of God for not relying on Him, and in many other verses such as *Āl-‘Imrān*: 122, *al-Ṭalāq*: 3, *al-Mumtaḥina*: 4, *al-Mā'idah*: 23, putting one's trust in God is mentioned. This confidence in God brings about the athlete's peace of mind in competitions and sports arenas, dispelling fear and despair and paving the way for their victory.

One of the reasons for the emergence of confidence in God in the remarks of the esteemed Leader is engagement with the Quran. The athletes should turn to the Quran in order to strengthen their confidence in God. The Leader, about the benefits of engagement with the Quran, says:

١. قَالَ الْبَاقِرُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: «مَنْ تَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ لَا يَغْلِبْ وَمَنْ اعْتَصَمَ بِاللَّهِ لَا يُهْزَمُ».

٢. رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «مَنْ سَرَّهُ أَنْ يَكُونَ أَقْوَى النَّاسِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ».



“Engagement with the Quran strengthens faith, increases confidence in God, enhances trust in divine promises, reduces fear and apprehension of material problems, strengthens the human spirit, instills self-confidence, and illuminates the paths of approaching God for humans” (Remarks in the gathering on engagement with the Quran, 08/04/1393, <https://khl.ink/f/26828>). This is inspired by the words of God, which state: “Indeed this Quran guides to what is most upright” (Quran 17: 9).

Remembrance of God and engagement with the Quran lead to the constant remembrance of good moral qualities and instill confidence in God, remove the fear of problems, and foster self-confidence, leading to the observance of ethical principles.

4. Supplication and Recourse (*Du‘ā wa Tawassul*)

One of the fundamental teachings of Islam is supplication and imploring the Almighty, which creates a sense of tranquility for the soul and mind. Supplication and recourse to the Infallibles are among the factors of success in all fields, especially in sports, and they give athletes extra strength, keeping them steadfast on their path.

Therefore, supplication, imploring, and seeking intercession should become a permanent practice among athletes and in sports gatherings, allowing athletes to find a greater sense of spirituality. This supplication, imploring, and seeking intercession should have an impact on their ethical attitudes and also provide the means for their success. Just as the Supreme Leader has emphasized and stated: “We have experienced the role of imploring, seeking intercession, and supplication in the victory over the enemy in the battlefield, and in sports arenas, athletes who hold onto the mercy and grace of God undoubtedly have the upper hand over their competitors” (Meeting of war-wounded world champion athletes with the leader of the revolution, 23/06/1374, <https://khl.ink/f/720>). This statement is derived from the verses of the Quran, where God reminds us of His infinite power in critical moments and emphasizes the importance of



beseeking Him: ﴿وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ﴾: “Your Lord has said, ‘Call Me, and I will hear you!’” (Quran 40:60).

Furthermore, God has highlighted the importance of supplication in the last verse of *Sūrat al-Furqān*, verse 186 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, and verse 16 of *Sūrah Qāf*. These verses serve as a reminder of the significance of supplication in seeking help and guidance from the Almighty.

5. Humility (Tawāḍu‘)

Humility towards coaches and mentors, as well as others, is one of the ethical traits in sports. While athletes should be humble towards all people, humility towards predecessors and coaches, who rightfully hold the position of authority, is of greater importance. The sports environment is one where individuals strive for victory over opponents and rivals. Therefore, athletes standing on the podium of championships must be careful not to let pride and arrogance distance them from their ethical responsibilities. The most important ethical trait of an athlete is humility and modesty, especially in front of mentors and elders. Just as Imam Ali said, “Be humble in front of someone from whom you have gained knowledge” (Tamīmī Āmudī 1987, 249).

A morally upright and humble athlete is not arrogant and acknowledges that all strengths and powers come from God: ﴿أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا﴾: “That power, altogether belongs to Allah” (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*: 165). In this way, there is no place for arrogance, and sometimes, one of the factors leading to an athlete’s failure is arrogance. Imam Ali says, “The flaw of strength is considering the enemy weak” (Tamīmī Āmudī 1987, 347). This issue has also occurred in military events, such as the Battle of *Uḥud*, where Muslims became arrogant and disregarded the enemy's strength, leading to a severe defeat.

An athlete must understand that this strength is not permanent and can be taken away from them by an accident or illness, aging, and various other



factors. Hence, they should not become arrogant about physical strength. The Supreme Leader acknowledges that what we have is from the grace of God and considers arrogance as a prelude to stumbling and failure, referring to the verse : « مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ » : “Whatever good befalls you is from Allah; and whatever ill befalls you is from yourself” (Quran 4:79). (Remarks in a meeting with leaders and trusted figures of Kurdish tribes, 24/02/1388, <https://khl.ink/f/6834>).

The Quran also advises against arrogance and boasting in *Surah Luqmān*, verse 18:

﴿وَلَا تَصَعَّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ﴾
(لقمان/ ١٨)

“Do not turn your cheek disdainfully from the people, and do not walk exultantly on the earth. Indeed Allah does not like any swaggering braggart.” (31:18)

Numerous instances in the Quran warn against arrogance and pride after having power, such as the people of ‘Ād who unjustly exalted themselves in the land and said, ﴿مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً﴾: “Who is more powerful than us?” (Quran 41:15).

6. Observance of Appearance

Athletes are prominent in societies as role models and examples for others. Some even imitate athletes in their clothing and movements. Athletes are prominent in international arenas as representatives and cultural ambassadors of a nation, and their unethical actions are written in the culture and customs of that nation and country. In addition, the unethical behavior of athletes can inflame society. In this case, the necessity of observing ethical principles is essential. Thus, it is important to provide an explanation of the ethical principles that athletes should follow and those that they should avoid.



Audiences learn from the behavior, speech, ethics, words, even the type of clothing, color of clothing, shoes, hats, and the way program presenters eat. Each viewer chooses a specific model and sets a special behavior as a role model, whether good or bad. Of course, among various models and role models, such as professors, teachers, pilots, astronauts, religious scholars, champions, and artists, sports and artistic champions have more appeal for some young people. This explains why these groups who become role models for many should be very cautious about their ethics, behaviour, and appearance. Imam Khamenei says about the role of athletes as role models: “Champions who become role models have difficult responsibilities and must behave in a way that is worthy of emulation and guiding young people in all their behavior and speech” (Meeting with a group of champion athletes and sports officials, 30/10/1381, <https://khl.ink/f/19882>)

The Supreme Leader also says: “The presence of a revolutionary Muslim sports team with good ethics can be a means of transmitting the Islamic revolution. A committed, aware, and morally upright athlete can be an ambassador of the Islamic revolution in the field of sports” (ibid).

From an Islamic perspective, the ultimate goal of emulating role models is to achieve truth and righteousness through intellectual and cognitive growth and excellence. Numerous texts from the Quran and Hadith support the claim that some of which are: “Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who guides not unless he is [himself] guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?” (Quran 10:35). Due to the importance of the part of role models in guiding and educating humans from the perspective of Islam, the educational method of modeling and exemplification in the Quran generally introduces divine prophets and messengers such as Prophet Abraham and Prophet Muhammad as exemplary and desirable role model: “There is certainly a good exemplar for you in Abraham and those who were with him” (Quran 60:4) “In the



messenger of Allah there is certainly for you a good exemplar” (Quran 33:21).

Therefore, a faithful and committed athlete can declare his religious identity in such situations to others and indirectly become a preacher and promoter of the Islamic faith through his ethics and good deeds, and be the cause of honor and dignity for his nation. Imam Sadiq says: “Be an adornment for us, not a disgrace. Speak well to people, guard your tongues, and refrain from nonsense and ugly speech.”¹ (Majlisī 1982, 68:310). When an athlete follows the sayings of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, it will be an adornment for them and will convey the culture of the Infallibles to various nations and people of different religions.

By adhering to ethical principles and religious beliefs, athletes can have a significant spiritual impact on individuals. They can serve as powerful tools for promoting culture and ethics in society and changing public opinion across the globe.

Ayatollah Khamenei advised athletes to safeguard their honor and that of their nation and country by their conduct both on and off the field. He added, “In the past, our sports environment was always adorned with the name of God, the infallible Imams, and religious and moral aspects. However, Westerners have sought to introduce their culture alongside new sports. While embracing and advancing in new sports, we must prevail our own culture and not allow sports to become a gateway for the entry of Western culture” (Statements at the meeting with the organizers of the Second National Congress of Sports Martyrs, 20/06/1401, <https://khl.ink/f/51095>).

١. امام صادق عليه السلام: « كُونُوا لَنَا زِينَةً لَا تَكُونُوا عَلَيْنَا شِينًا قُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا وَ احْفَظُوا أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَ كَفُّوْهَا عَنِ الْفُضُولِ وَ قَبِيحِ الْقَوْلِ ».



As mentioned, sports can serve as a means of promoting behavior, culture, and religion, as well as the country and its flag. Iranian athletes are highly valuable and influential.

7. Utilizing Physical Power and Popularity in the Service of People

Athletes should possess ethical qualities that are beneficial to Islamic society. Ethical athletes consider themselves a part of the community and utilize their resources to alleviate the pain and suffering of their fellow citizens. They do this by assisting in times of natural disasters, such as flood-affected areas, earthquake-stricken regions, and deprived areas. They use their wealth, life, and honor to serve their community and make a positive impact on society.

A moral athlete is always a supporter of the oppressed. He uses the blessing of health and physical strength to assist those in need. Just as the prophets and infallible Imams have sought this blessing from the Almighty, Imam Sajjad in his 20th supplication requests from God: «اللَّهُمَّ: "O God, bless Muhammad and his Household, appoint for me a hand against him who wrongs me."» «صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ، وَاجْعَلْ لِي يَدًا عَلَى مَنْ ظَلَمَنِي» Similarly, Prophet Moses expressed in his supplication: «قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ» "He said, My Lord! As You have blessed me, I will never be a supporter of the guilty" (Quran 28:17). This means that O God, in return for this blessing and strength that I have been able to overcome one of the enemies with a single strike and in gratitude for it as long as I am alive, I will not support the criminals, but with this strength, I will always rise to their struggle and fight so that you will be pleased (Ṭabāṭabā'ī 1996, 26: 30).

An athlete, in addition to his physical strength, not only refrains from oppressing others but also acts as a supporter of the oppressed. He considers himself the addressee of the saying of Imam Ali: "Always be the

enemy of the oppressor and the supporter of the oppressed” (Nahj al-Balagha 1989, 422).

8. Patriotism

Today, politics has entered the realm of sports, and the cultural and social effects of athletes, champions, and global legends on individuals are undeniable. Therefore, athletes should adopt political ethics based on Islam and the Quran. In the Islamic system, ethics are not only separate from politics, but Islamic politics are based on ethical philosophy. Athletes display their patriotism through their actions in the field of sports.

Sports and athletic competitions have become an integral part of people’s lives worldwide, affecting their behavior as well as societies and governments. They have biological, health, economic, social, recreational, and entertainment aspects. However, their political consequences cannot be ignored. These events have put government relationships under the spotlight and intertwined with concepts like national power, competition, peace, confrontation, unity, and national unity. As a result, they have influenced the attitudes and behaviors of governments and nations towards one another.

In recent years, we have witnessed many political incidents in football matches. Some countries without diplomatic relations play national and club football matches in a third country. Some Islamic countries withdraw from competitions when faced with a rival from Israel.

Competitions usually begin with the national anthem of the countries, and different countries take pride in the achievements of their athletes. Presidents of countries attend some sports competitions as spectators. These issues have intertwined to the extent that separating sports and politics has become nearly impossible, and politics has essentially become part of the duty of every government in sports.

As the Supreme Leader stated in a meeting with sports medalists:



Today, even though slogans are raised that sports should not become political and that politics should not interfere in sports, and such slogans exist in the world, sometimes they even put politics behind sports. Why? To make their country prosperous and proud through the blessing and grandeur of sports. This is how sports is. Therefore, you [athletes] who are engaged in this field - the field of sports - should feel and truly believe that you are performing a valuable spiritual work. (Statements during a meeting with Iran's sports caravan medalists at the Asian Para Games in Indonesia, 23/08/1397, <https://khl.ink/f/40910>)

Regarding the political ethics of sports, he states: "From my point of view, this is a political issue, especially in the Iran and America game! If you were winning from Germany, I wouldn't be as happy" (Furūghī Jahrumī 2006, 63). The dimensions of the political ethics of sports in patriotism can be inferred from this verse of the Quran in which God says: ﴿وَ أَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ﴾: "Prepare against them whatever you can of [military] power" (Quran 8:60).

According to the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, the desirable and approved type of sports aligns with the Quranic thoughts, which aim to strengthen the comprehensive body of the Islamic community and prepare them to confront their enemies. Athletes should not be indifferent to their religious and political friends and foes.

In the Quran, God says:

﴿إِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ عِشْرُونَ صَابِرُونَ يَغْلِبُوا مِائَتِينَ وَإِنْ يَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ مِائَةٌ يَغْلِبُوا أَلْفًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ﴾ (الأنفال/ ٦٥)

"If there be twenty patient men among you, they shall overcome two hundred; and if there be a hundred of you, they shall overcome a thousand of the faithless, for they are a lot who do not understand." (Quran 8:65)



In summary, it can be said that the Islamic Republic has raised a flag that makes every Muslim in the world feel a sense of identity and pride when they remember it. This distinctiveness belongs to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and when it triumphs in a competition, all Muslims around the world rejoice and celebrate. Therefore, within the Islamic Republic system, sports have a significant international and global impact, as emphasized by the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution.

As a result, political ethics and patriotism lead individuals to proudly sing the national anthem, wave the country's flag, and refuse to compete against an Israeli rival or wear a uniform of another country. With these political ethics, they elevate the dignity of their society and declare their patriotism to the entire world. It is also narrated from the Prophet of Islam: «حب الوطن من الايمان» "The love of one's country is a part of faith" (Namāzī Shāhrūdī 1997, 10: 375).

Conclusion

Considering that sports is not merely about physical health, but also of significant importance as an educational and guiding tool, it is only fully beneficial when ethical principles are observed within it. In today's world, given the importance that sports and athletes have gained in various societies, ethical considerations and behaviors are equally important. This is because a professional athlete has become a social personality and a role model for others, and his behavior and ethics have a significant impact on his own and others' well-being.

The Supreme Leader has addressed these ethical principles in various speeches, as he believes that the observance of ethical principles by athletes can contribute to the promotion of individual and societal excellence. Conversely, the neglect of these principles can pave the way for corruption in both the individual and society.

Based on Imam Khamenei's teachings, which are inspired by the Quran and hadiths of the Infallibles, the sports environment should be an



ethical environment filled with courage, chivalry, piety, modesty, sincerity, humility, and moral and spiritual brilliance, reflecting its divine illumination to all segments of society.

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