A Primer for Iranians at Home and Abroad



CIVIC ETHICS *and* CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

From the Parochial Citizen to the Global Citizen

From the Informed Citizen to the Responsible Citizen

EBRAHIM ROSHANDEL

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Translated from the Persian

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Transliteration of Persian terms follows a simplified system intended for the general reader. Terms of particular cultural significance, such as *ta'arof*, *p**rti-b**zi* and *adab*, are retained in Persian and explained where they first appear.



A constitution, the charter by which governments act,
can be written in a month;

but the making of a sound citizen
takes a generation.

Laws are written on paper;
citizens are judged by their civility and civic conduct.

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Preface

This book is the fruit of many years spent living in two worlds: the world of diplomacy and politics inside Iran, and the world of migration and life beyond its borders. In both worlds I have tested one truth again and again: nations are not built on slogans; they are built on conduct. I have watched informed and cultivated people, in the bakery queue, behind the wheel, at family gatherings and in Iranian associations abroad, repeat the very habits they condemn in the state at the national level. And I have watched other societies, through education and practice, move beyond these same afflictions.

In my work organizing movements and designing political transitions, I have come to the conclusion that any political blueprint for the Iran of tomorrow is incomplete unless it is accompanied by a blueprint for the formation of citizens. This volume is that other half: a set of principles commended to families, teachers, associations, the media, and every Iranian who wishes not merely to dream of a future Iran, but to begin building it today through his or her own conduct.

Dear reader, this book is a mirror, not a whip. If on some page you recognize yourself, as I have so often recognized myself, take it as a sign of hope; for the first step toward reform is seeing.

Introduction

A society whose citizens are merely "informed" but not "responsible" is a society of much talk and little action: everyone speaks of its faults, and no one regards himself as part of the solution. We Iranians, whether within our borders or scattered across the globe, are ahead of many nations in political awareness and social sensitivity; yet between what we know and what we do lies a deep chasm. This volume is an attempt to bridge that chasm: the gap between knowing and living, between slogan and conduct, between "having rights" and "granting rights."

What follows in these pages is not an indictment of the Iranian nation. No nation is inherently immoral or inherently virtuous. Social habits are the product of history, institutions, modes of governance, collective experience and patterns of upbringing, and just as they were learned, they can be unlearned. Nations renowned today for civic order and mutual respect were, not so many generations ago, afflicted by these very same ills, and they overcame them through education, institution-building and the rule of law. Accordingly, wherever this volume speaks of "the bad habits of us Iranians," what is meant is behavior that has become widespread among some of us, not a judgment on the essence of a nation.

This volume rests on three questions. First, why do behaviors we consider objectionable in private life become normal in public space? Second, why do some of us, after emigrating, either carry our old bad habits with us or imitate the surface of the host culture without grasping its spirit, rather than learning the best models the host society has to offer? And third, for the Iran of tomorrow, which must be built on the equality of citizens, pluralism and the rule of law, what model of citizenship should we begin teaching today?

The structure of the volume is as follows. Part One addresses the theoretical foundations and distinguishes among concepts such as the subject model, the parochial citizen and the global citizen, private and public ethics, and the informed and the responsible citizen. Part Two offers a diagnosis of improper social conduct inside Iran and shows the state's role in producing and imposing some of these habits. Part Three turns to the conduct of Iranians abroad. Part Four sets out the standards and the charter of the global citizen, and Part Five presents the educational dimension, with methods, workshops, case scenarios, discussion questions and a self-assessment checklist. Finally, Part Six offers a "Code of Courteous and Healthy Communication" as a practical reference for the daily life of Iranians abroad: from greetings and the etiquette of conversation to relations with compatriots, hospitality, participation in the host society, online communication, and the practice of apology and reconciliation.

Citizenship does not begin with a passport; it begins with the question of what my conduct does to others.

Part One

The Theoretical Foundations of Citizenship and Civic Ethics

Chapter 1

From Subjecthood to Global Citizenship

1.1 Who Is a Citizen?

The word *shahrvand* (citizen) is young in the Persian language, but the concept is rooted in the city-states of ancient Greece. In Aristotle's thought, the citizen is one who shares in judging and in ruling; that is, one who is both subject to the law and a participant in making it. In the modern era, citizenship means equal membership in a political community, defined by three sets of rights: civil rights (freedom of expression, property, a fair trial), political rights (to vote and to stand for election) and social rights (education, health care, social security). This tripartite classification was formulated by the British sociologist T. H. Marshall in the middle of the twentieth century.

Yet citizenship is not merely a bundle of rights; it is also a set of duties and virtues. A citizen is one who knows that his right ends at the point where another's right begins; one who obeys the law not out of fear of punishment, but because he regards it as his common contract with others. Citizenship, in this sense, is a "disposition of character," not merely a "legal status."

1.2 The Subject Model: The Historical Legacy of Despotism That Is Still With Us

For much of Iran's history, the relationship of the people to power has been that of "subject" and "ruler." In this relationship, the human being is not regarded as a bearer of rights but as a recipient of favors; he does not make the law, he accepts the command; and to survive, he is compelled to rely not on rules but on "acquaintances," "intermediaries" and "cunning." The Constitutional Revolution was the first serious attempt to transform this into a relationship between citizen and state, but the transition was never completed. Despotism, whether in the form of absolute monarchy or of religious rule, once again

returned the people from the station of citizenship to the station of subjecthood (read: *ra'iyyat*, the condition of the ruled flock).

Many of our objectionable social habits are remnants of this very "subject mentality," that is, a way of thinking that despotism imposed on society over centuries: distrust of the law, concealment, a split between outward appearance and inner reality, reliance on connections rather than rules, and the belief that "public property belongs to no one." A person whom the state has never treated as an owner of the country can hardly regard himself as an owner of public space, or feel any loss when it is damaged.

1.3 The Parochial Citizen

> **A note on terminology:** In this book the expression "parochial citizen" (*shahrvand-e mahalli-negar*) replaces "native" or "traditional" citizen, so that no reader takes it as a reference to his birthplace, ethnicity, village or city, level of education, or attachment to family traditions. The author means only a "moral horizon": how far the circle of our respect and responsibility extends. Any one of us, in any city and with any education, may act parochially in one situation and globally in another. The expression is inspired by the concept of "parochial political culture" in the conceptual framework of Almond and Verba.

In contrast to the subject, the parochial citizen is one who belongs to his local community and upholds its norms, but the boundaries of his morality are the boundaries of his city or birthplace, his neighborhood, his ethnic group, his sect or his in-group. The parochial citizen may be exceedingly forgiving and hospitable toward neighbors and kin, yet indifferent or even hostile toward the "stranger." His is an "ethics of insiders."

The characteristics of the parochial citizen may be enumerated as follows: first, loyalty to the group before loyalty to the rule; second, the priority of custom over law; third, acceptance of the imposition of the majority group's norms on all; fourth, a moral distinction between "us" and "them"; and fifth, the notion that public space is an extension of one's own home and neighborhood and may be shaped at the will of one's group.

The parochial outlook also has precious virtues: solidarity, hospitality, respect for elders, family bonds and cultural memory. The point is not to discard these values; the point is to bring them out from behind the walls of the "in-group" and extend them to all human beings.

1.4 The Global Citizen

The idea of the global citizen (cosmopolitanism) also has ancient roots. When the Greek philosopher Diogenes was asked where he came from, he replied, "I am a citizen of the world." The Stoics developed this idea, and Kant, in his essay *Perpetual Peace*, spoke of "cosmopolitan right": "the right of every human being not to be treated with hostility in the land of another." In our own literature, Sa'di sang before all of these that "the children of Adam are members of one another."

The global citizen is not one who has cast aside his national identity. He is Iranian, speaks Persian, celebrates Nowruz and takes pride in his history; but his ethics knows no borders. He shows the same respect to his Mexican neighbor, his Indian colleague and the anonymous passerby that he shows to his compatriot. Global citizenship rests on several principles: the equal dignity of all human beings, respect for the law as a common contract, a clear separation of private life from public space, the acceptance of pluralism and difference, respect for differences, and responsibility for the consequences of one's conduct for others and for all the peoples who inhabit the earth.

1.5 A Comparison of Three Models of Citizenship

Axis of Comparison	The Subject Model	The Parochial Citizen	The Global Citizen
Relation to law	Fear and evasion	Custom takes precedence over law	Law is a common contract
Circle of morality	Personal survival	Insiders: family, ethnicity, sect	All human beings
Public space	Belongs to no one	An extension of one's home and neighborhood	A shared trust

Axis of Comparison	The Subject Model	The Parochial Citizen	The Global Citizen
Privacy	Unknown	Weak; collective surveillance is common	Respected and clearly bounded
Means of advancement	Intermediaries and cunning	Connections and acquaintances	Merit and rules
Response to difference	Concealment	Imposition or exclusion	Acceptance and dialogue
Resolving disputes	Submission or revolt	Elders or the power of the group	Dialogue, mediation, the courts

The "subject mentality" asks, "Whom do you know?";
the civic mentality asks, "What is the rule?"

1.6 The Roots of Citizenship in the Iranian Intellectual Tradition

The idea of global citizenship is not alien to Iranian culture. In the advice literature (*andarz-nameh*) of ancient Iran, the good king is one who dispenses justice to all people regardless of lineage or creed; and in the Zoroastrian tradition, the triad of "good thoughts, good words, good deeds" ties ethics not to outward appearance and ritual, but to thought and conduct. In the Islamic era, thinkers such as al-Farabi, in *The Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City*, wrote of a city whose citizens are partners in cooperation for a common happiness; and Sa'di, nearly eight centuries ago, composed a poem that today adorns the entrance of a hall at the United Nations: "The children of Adam are members of one another."

In the modern era, the Constitutional Revolution introduced for the first time the concept of the "nation" (*mellat*) in place of the old notion of *ra'iyyat*, the people as subjects of the sultan. Intellectuals such as Mirza Malkam Khan, Akhundzadeh, Mostashar al-Dowleh and Talebov emphasized in their writings the law, equality before the law, freedom of expression and the rights of citizens. Mostashar al-Dowleh's treatise *One Word* (*Yek Kalameh*) distilled this

ideal into a single word: law. This legacy shows that the aspiration to citizenship in Iran is not an imported aspiration; it is one that sprouted within this very culture more than a century ago, but was repeatedly crushed by despotism.

Our task today is to join this legacy to global experience: to preserve the best values of our own culture, namely hospitality, solidarity, and reverence for knowledge, poetry and wisdom, and to add what we have lacked: respect for the rule of law, privacy, equality for minorities and responsibility in public space.

Sa'di was a citizen of the world before Kant; now it is our turn to turn this poem into conduct.

Chapter 2

Private Ethics and Public Ethics

2.1 Two Realms, Two Logics

One of the most fundamental afflictions of our civic culture is the conflation of two realms: "private ethics" and "public ethics." Private ethics concerns a person's relationship with himself, with God, with his family and with his close friends: faith, worship, marital fidelity, how one dresses at home, one's taste in food, personal beliefs.

Public ethics concerns a person's relationship with strangers, with society and with shared space: waiting one's turn, avoiding noise pollution, keeping thoroughfares clean, respecting the privacy of others, honesty in transactions, paying taxes and obeying traffic laws.

In a healthy civil society, private ethics is the domain of individual freedom, and neither the state nor society has the right to intervene in it unless harm is done to another. Public ethics, by contrast, is the domain of shared obligation, and no individual has the right to violate it in the name of personal freedom. In short: freedom in one's own home, trusteeship in the street.

2.2 The Inversion of the Two Realms in Our Society

What has happened in Iran over the past four decades is a complete inversion of this logic. The state has intervened most heavily in the domain of private ethics: dress, belief, lifestyle, private gatherings in the home, music and even what people drink in private. Yet in the domain of public ethics, precisely where the intervention of law is indispensable, it has shown the least effectiveness: noise pollution, traffic violations, administrative corruption, encroachment on thoroughfares, unauthorized construction and rent-seeking.

The consequence of this inversion is that many people equate morality with "religious appearance" and assume that anyone who prays or dresses in a particular way is necessarily an ethical citizen, even though the same person may cut in line at the bank, park in front of a neighbor's garage, or short-change customers in a transaction. Conversely, some who have grown weary of imposed religious morality arrive at the mistaken conclusion that "morality" as a whole is coercive and without value, and therefore also ridicule the rules of public ethics.

2.3 The Golden Standard: The Harm Principle

The English philosopher John Stuart Mill, in his essay *On Liberty*, proposed a clear criterion that has become known as the "harm principle": "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." The principle cuts both ways. On the one hand, if my conduct concerns only myself, no one has the right to interfere. On the other hand, if my conduct disturbs the peace, health, safety or rights of another, it is no longer a "personal matter," even if it is clothed in the garb of religion, tradition or nationality.

By this criterion, many of our social disputes become clear. Prayer is a private and respected matter; broadcasting it over loudspeakers at five in the morning to thousands of families, some of whose members are ill, elderly, infants, night-shift workers or adherents of another faith, is a public matter and must be subject to public rules. Mourning is the undisputed right of the faithful; closing streets, broadcasting drums and loudspeakers until midnight and compelling all residents to endure it is an appropriation of shared space. Because of their alignment with the wishes of a religious state, these practices have become imposed customs whose performance disrupts the public peace.

2.4 Public Space: A Shared Trust

Public space, that is, the street, the park, the sidewalk, the government building, public transport, shared online space and even the air we breathe and the sounds we hear, is the property of no particular group; it is a trust in which all

citizens hold an equal share. The German philosopher Jürgen Habermas speaks of the "public sphere" as a space in which equal citizens, free from the power of the state and from private interests, converse with one another. Such a space can take shape only when no group monopolizes it.

In my home my freedom is boundless; in the street it extends only as far as my neighbor's peace.

Chapter 3

From the Informed Citizen to the Responsible Citizen

3.1 The Informed Citizen

The informed citizen is one who knows his rights, understands the mechanisms of power, follows the news, is not deceived by propaganda and can recognize injustice. Awareness is the first step of citizenship, and without it citizenship is impossible. In this respect Iranians, and especially the younger generation, possess great capital: access to the internet, familiarity with foreign languages, a keen sensitivity to political events and the lived experience of repression have made them informed citizens.

But awareness alone is not enough. Awareness without responsibility leads to three afflictions: first, "endless criticism," in which everything and everyone is blamed except the critic himself; second, "one-sided rights-claiming," in which the individual speaks only of his rights and neglects his duties; and third, "paralyzing pessimism," in which awareness of the depth of the problems becomes not a motive for action but a justification for inaction.

3.2 The Responsible Citizen

The responsible citizen is one who turns awareness into conduct. He not only knows that corruption is wrong; he himself does not pay bribes. He not only complains about the city's pollution; he sorts his own waste. He not only criticizes dictatorship; at home, at work and in his own organization he practices a democratic, dialogue-based approach. The responsible citizen knows that changing the political system is a necessary condition for a better society, but not a sufficient one; for if the habits left over from the era of subjecthood re-

main lodged in the soul of society, every new system will in the end revert to the same old pattern.

Civic responsibility has three layers. The first layer is "responsibility toward oneself": honesty with oneself, avoidance of duplicity, acceptance of one's mistakes. The second layer is "responsibility toward others": respect for the privacy, dignity and rights of every human being. The third layer is "responsibility toward the collective": participation in public affairs, stewardship of shared space, and holding power to account.

3.3 Four Questions for Gauging Responsibility

Before any collective act, the responsible citizen instinctively asks himself four questions:

- If everyone did this, what would society look like? (The test of universalizability, inspired by Kant)
- If I were in the place of the person affected by this conduct, would I accept it? (The Golden Rule of ethics)
- Would I do this in front of a camera and in the presence of my child? (The test of transparency)
- Does this act increase or diminish trust among people? (The test of social capital)

3.4 Social Capital: What We Have Lost

The American sociologist Robert Putnam has shown that what distinguishes successful societies from unsuccessful ones, more than natural resources or even formal institutions, is "social capital": a network of trust, norms of reciprocity and voluntary participation that lowers the cost of cooperation. Francis Fukuyama, in his book *Trust*, likewise argues that high-trust societies build more efficient economies and more durable institutions.

Iranian society is rich in "in-group trust" (toward family and close friends) but poor in "generalized trust" (toward strangers, institutions and unknown compatriots). This is the very gap that separates the parochial citizen from the glob-

al citizen. Many of the objectionable habits examined in the following chapters are both a consequence of this distrust and a means of reproducing it: a vicious circle that can be broken only by individuals' conscious decision to take "the first step."

Awareness tells us what the world lacks; responsibility tells us what we must add.

Part Two

A Diagnosis of Civic Conduct Inside Iran

Chapter 4

Imposed Custom and the Appropriation of Public Space

4.1 When a Private Rite Becomes a Public Obligation

In Iran, many religious and sectarian rites that were originally personal or voluntary-collective in nature have gradually turned into "imposed custom." The criterion for identifying imposed custom is simple: can someone who does not take part in the rite stay away from it without paying a price? If the answer is no, that is, if the non-participant is compelled to hear it, to change his route, to lose his sleep and peace, or to remain silent for fear of being labeled or punished, then the rite is no longer a "rite"; it is an "imposition."

This in no way implies denying the rights of believers. Belief, worship and mourning are among the most fundamental human rights, and civil society must protect them. In many cities of Europe and America, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus and adherents of other faiths freely hold their rites, sometimes even in the street; but they do so with a permit, at set times, within noise limits, and without depriving others of their right of passage. The question is not whether a rite should be held; the question is under which rule.

4.2 Examples of Imposed Custom in Iran's Public Space

- Mourning processions and street religious associations (*hey'at*): blocking thoroughfares, broadcasting drums, cymbals and loudspeakers late into the night, with no regard for the sick, the elderly, students during examination periods, or workers who must leave for work early in the morning.
- Broadcasting the call to prayer (*azan*), supplications and devotional chanting from the loudspeakers of mosques and *tekyehs*: at a time when mobile phones, smartwatches and computer applications can inform every believer

precisely of the prayer times, loud broadcasting at dawn and at night serves no function other than imposing a symbolic presence on all residents. Notably, some Muslim countries have also addressed this issue; for example, Saudi Arabia restricted the volume of mosques' external loudspeakers in 2021, and Indonesia issued guidelines in 2022 to regulate their volume.

- Street votive food offerings (*nazri*) and roadside refreshment stations (*istgah-e salavati*) that involve stopping cars in the middle of the street, causing heavy traffic and at times the risk of accidents.
- Memorial and funeral ceremonies broadcast by loudspeaker in residential lanes, and the hanging of black banners and flags on the façades of shared buildings without the consent of all residents.
- Turning educational and administrative spaces into venues for compulsory ceremonies, including requiring students and employees to attend congregational prayers or commemorative events.
- The compulsory broadcasting of religious and commemorative programs on public transport, at airports and in shopping centers.
- Restricting businesses, restaurants, music and the public conduct of all citizens during particular months and days, regardless of the fact that part of society does not follow that faith.

4.3 Why Does No One Object?

In a society where ritual relations have become intertwined with the ideals of the state, objecting to the noise of a *hey'at* or a loudspeaker is quickly construed as "objecting to religion" or "hostility toward the system." The neighbor who complains about noise at two in the morning fears being labeled; the employee who does not attend a compulsory ceremony worries about his performance review. Thus "silence born of fear" takes the place of "consent born of choice," and the state interprets this silence as a sign of public approval of its mode of governance and of its management of society according to its own wishes.

The deeper harm is that this situation makes religion and ritual themselves vulnerable. A rite imposed on all by force and by loudness breeds aversion rather than winning hearts. Many young Iranians today have distanced themselves

from religious symbols not as a result of study, but in reaction to this very imposition. Reforming this custom is therefore also in the interest of believers themselves: a faith that is lived freely is more authentic and more enduring.

4.4 The Criterion for Reform: Three Rules for Public Rites

- **The rule of consent:** No rite should compel non-participants to endure it. The interior of the mosque, the *tekyeh* and the *hosseiniyeh* is the domain of the faithful; the lane and the street belong to everyone.
- **The rule of proportionality:** Any holding of a rite in public space must take place with a permit, at specified hours, within a defined noise limit, and without fully blocking thoroughfares; the same rule applied to a concert, a march or a national celebration.
- **The rule of equality:** Any rule applied to one religion or sect must apply equally to all religions and sects, and also to citizens who profess no religion. Ritual freedom that exists only for the majority is a privilege, not a right.

A faith that needs a loudspeaker to be heard has not yet found its way to the heart.

4.5 Chaharshanbe Suri and National Rites Are No Exception

Fairness requires that we apply the same criterion to national and non-religious rites. Chaharshanbe Suri, an ancient and beautiful festival, has in recent years become an arena for dangerous firecrackers, homemade explosives and the harassment of neighbors, leaving a large number of injured every year. Sizdah Bedar with its litter abandoned in nature, endless car-horn celebrations after sporting victories, and wedding parties with music blaring until dawn in apartment buildings all follow the same logic: the notion that “my joy” or “my belief” licenses the appropriation of others’ peace. The global citizen draws no distinction between a religious rite and a national one: both must be held within the bounds of respect for others.

Chapter 5

Conduct in Urban Space

5.1 The Street: The Mirror of Public Ethics

If you wish to gauge the civic ethics of a society in an hour, it is enough to drive in its streets. The street is where strangers, without knowing one another, must cooperate. Wherever traffic law is observed, trust among strangers prevails; and wherever everyone thinks only of "getting there himself," the street becomes a battlefield. With its very high road-fatality figures, Iran is among the countries in which this mirror reflects a troubling image of public ethics.

5.2 A List of Improper Habits in Urban Space

- Driving without regard for lane markings, overtaking on the right, entering the opposing lane and running red lights when no camera is present.
- Needless and incessant use of the horn, especially in residential areas and near hospitals.
- Double parking, parking in front of other people's garage doors, and occupying the sidewalk with cars or motorcycles.
- Motorcycles riding on sidewalks and against the flow of traffic.
- Disregard for pedestrians, even on pedestrian crossings.
- Failing to wait one's turn at the bakery, the bank, the bus stop and government offices, and the prevalence of "cunning" in order to jump the queue.
- Throwing litter from car windows, abandoning rubbish in parks and in nature, and failing to sort waste.
- Smoking in enclosed public places and dropping cigarette butts in the street.
- Graffiti and the vandalizing of public amenities such as public telephones, park benches and restrooms.

- The appropriation of sidewalks by shopkeepers displaying their goods, and construction that disregards the rights of neighbors (light, view, safety).
- Scattering water and bread around in ways that cause pollution, and washing cars and courtyards with drinking water amid a water crisis.
- Talking loudly and playing music without headphones on public transport.

5.3 Roots

These behaviors share several roots. First, the "belongs-to-no-one mentality": when the citizen does not regard himself as an owner of the city, he feels no shame in polluting it. Second, "selective enforcement of the law": when the citizen sees that the law is not enforced against those who hold power and enjoy rents, he has no incentive to obey it. Third, the "culture of cunning": in a society where lawbreaking is construed as "cleverness" and law-abidingness as "naïveté," peer pressure works in favor of the violation. Fourth, "weak civic education": Iran's educational system has devoted long hours to ideological instruction but has not taken seriously such simple skills as waiting one's turn, managing waste and the etiquette of conduct in public space.

5.4 The Right Model

The global citizen behaves in the street as follows: he obeys the law even when no camera is present, because he regards it as his contract with others; he unconditionally recognizes the pedestrian's right of way; he regards the queue as sacrosanct; he carries his litter with him until he reaches a bin; he lowers his voice in shared space; and when he sees someone commit a violation, rather than imitating or confronting them aggressively, he calmly points it out or pursues it through legal channels.

Our city is only as clean as our hands, and only as safe as our steering wheels.

5.5 The Environment, Animals and Equal Access

Public ethics is not confined to our relationship with the people of today; our relationship with nature, with animals and with future generations is also part of it. Iran today faces one of the most serious water crises in the world, land subsidence, the drying of lakes and wetlands, and air pollution in its major cities. The share of state mismanagement in these crises is very large; but the profligate use of water, abandoning litter in nature, illegal hunting, setting forests and pastures on fire during excursions, and indifference to waste sorting are the share of us citizens.

The treatment of animals is also a test of civic ethics. The abuse of street dogs and cats, the abandonment of pets and cruelty toward animals are signs of a society that has not yet extended empathy to "the voiceless other."

And finally, equal access for citizens with disabilities: sidewalks without ramps, parking in spaces reserved for the disabled, buildings without elevators, and pitying or demeaning looks have deprived millions of Iranians of an equal presence in public space. The global citizen knows that a city designed for its most vulnerable citizens is better for everyone.

Chapter 6

Administrative and Economic Conduct

6.1 *Ps rti-bs zi*: The Petty Corruption That Makes Grand Corruption Possible

*P**rti-b**zi* (string-pulling through recommendations, personal requests, intermediaries, "having connections") has become so normal in our culture that many do not even regard it as corruption. Someone who resorts to an acquaintance to enroll his child in a school, to secure a hospital appointment, to be hired by a government office or to get through a bureaucracy believes he has done "a good deed" for his family. Yet every act of *p**rti-b**zi* in fact tramples the right of someone who had no connections: the patient whose appointment was pushed back, the qualified applicant who was not hired, the child whose place at school was taken.

*P**rti-b**zi* has three devastating consequences: it destroys meritocracy, it erodes public trust in institutions, and it spreads a culture in which "connections" matter more than "ability." A society in which young people come to believe that advancement depends on having connections rather than on effort loses its elites, either to emigration or to apathy.

6.2 A List of Improper Habits in the Administrative and Economic Sphere

- Paying bribes and "sweeteners" (*shirini*) to get administrative matters done, and justifying it with the phrase "everyone pays."
- Circumventing the law through legal tricks, forging documents, obtaining false medical certificates and abusing exemptions.
- Tax evasion and the concealment of income, combined with complaints about the quality of public services.

- Short-weighting, overcharging, hoarding in times of crisis and cheating on the quality of goods.
- Breaking promises and unpunctuality in business appointments and deliveries, turning "tomorrow" into a meaningless word.
- Shirking in the administrative workplace and regarding government employment as "a salary without responsibility."
- Endless *ta'arof* (ritual politeness) that strips transactions and conversations of transparency; saying "it's nothing, be my guest" (*q**beli nad**re*) while expecting to be paid more.
- Disregard for workers' rights, late payment of wages and the exploitation of Afghan and other migrant labor.
- Construction that ignores safety standards and relies on bribing inspectors; a consequence that claims people's lives in earthquakes and fires.
- Misusing office property for personal affairs, from telephones and cars to paper and working hours.

6.3 The State's Responsibility for the Culture of Rent-Seeking

The individual cannot be absolved of responsibility for his conduct; but it must be acknowledged that in a system itself built on rent-seeking, ideological screening, special quotas and the division between "insiders and outsiders" (*khodi va gheyr-e khodi*), *p**rti-b**zi* is not a deviation but an "unwritten rule." When state positions are distributed on the basis of loyalty rather than merit, when para-state institutions are exempt from taxation, and when the laws are not enforced against the "***q**z**deh*" (the privileged offspring of the elite), the ordinary citizen too learns that to survive he must "find his own way." Reforming this culture is impossible without transparent governance, an independent judiciary, a free press and the equal rule of law.

6.4 The Right Model

In the economic and administrative sphere, the responsible citizen begins first with himself: even if the system is corrupt, he does not pay bribes or seek connections, unless a life or a fundamental right is at stake; he honors his word; he

pays his taxes while demanding transparency in how they are spent; he is honest in his dealings; and in the position of manager or employer, he hires on the basis of merit. He knows that his "petty corruption" is a brick in the wall of "grand corruption."

Every time an acquaintance opens a door for us, a door is closed on someone else.

6.5 Academic Fraud, Credentialism and Piracy

One of the afflictions least often seen as a matter of civic ethics is corruption in the realm of knowledge: cheating on examinations, the buying and selling of theses and articles, the forging of degrees, and the spread of "credentialism," in which the title "Doctor" is valued more highly than genuine knowledge. In a society where degrees can be bought, trust in doctors, engineers and professors collapses as well. The consequences of this corruption are buildings that collapse, illnesses that go untreated and universities that lose their international standing.

Alongside this, the unauthorized copying of books, software, films and music has become so normal that many regard it as their inalienable right. The responsible citizen knows that difficult access and sanctions are no justification for disregarding the moral rights of authors, artists and programmers who are his compatriots and who live from the sale of their work. Respect for intellectual property is respect for the labor of others.

CHAPTER 7

Conversation, Judgment and the Privacy of Others

7.1 The Culture of "What Will People Say?"

One of the most powerful mechanisms of social control in our culture is the constant anxiety over the judgment of others and falling into the trap of "keeping up with the Joneses" (*cheshm-o-ham-cheshmi*). "What will people say?" is a question that shapes many of the decisions of our lives: the choice of a field of study, marriage, divorce, outward appearance, occupation and even mourning. This anxiety has two faces: on the one hand, it pushes us toward a performative and double life; on the other, it turns us ourselves into harsh and curious judges of other people's lives. A society in which everyone fears judgment is a society in which everyone judges.

7.2 A List of Improper Habits in Conversation and Relationships

- Asking new acquaintances personal questions: about their income, the price of their home, why they have not married or had children, their religion and their political leanings.
- Backbiting, rumor-mongering and passing on the private affairs of others as "news" or out of "concern."
- Prejudging people on the basis of their appearance, accent, ethnicity, religion, place of residence or occupation.
- Ethnic and demeaning jokes about Turks, Kurds, Lors, Rashtis, Arabs, Baluch and Afghans, which under the cover of "humor" amount to the systematic belittling of groups of our compatriots.

- Belittling and labeling religious and sectarian minorities, including Baha'is, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Sunnis and Dervishes, and even those who believe in no religion.
- Interrupting others, raising one's voice to prevail in an argument, and turning conversation into competition.
- Inability to separate "criticism of an idea" from "attack on a person," turning every disagreement into personal enmity.
- Failure to distinguish criticism offered out of "concern" from criticism aimed at "destruction."
- Unsolicited interference in the lives of adult children, relatives and neighbors under the banner of "good intentions."
- Hasty generalizations ("all women…", "all mullahs…", "all expatriates…") that destroy the possibility of fair-minded dialogue.
- Vulgar and demeaning language online and the hurling of insults at intellectual opponents.

7.3 Privacy: A Concept That Must Be Learned Anew

In the Persian language the word *harim* (sanctum, privacy) has a long history, but it has been used mostly in the sense of "the sanctity of the home" and the *andaruni* (the inner quarters of the household), not in the sense of an individual's right over his information, body, beliefs and decisions. In our family and neighborhood culture, the line between "concern" and "prying" is very faint. The global citizen knows that privacy is every person's right to decide for himself what part of his life to share, with whom and when. Violating this right, even with good intentions, is disrespect for human dignity.

7.4 The Right Model in Conversation

- Listening in order to understand, not in order to reply.
- Asking only about what the other person is willing to share, and respecting his silence.

- Criticizing ideas with courtesy and argument, and refraining from attacking the person, his family, his ethnicity or his beliefs.
- Accepting that I may be wrong; the sentence "perhaps you are right" is a sign of maturity, not of weakness.
- Complete abstention from jokes built on belittling ethnicity, gender, belief, disability or economic circumstance.
- Trustworthiness with the information of others: what has been told to me is not mine to repeat.

Listening is an art one must learn before speaking; and judgment is something one must defer even after listening.

7.5 Family, Gender and Generation: The Hidden Tests of Civic Ethics

Civic ethics is not tested only in the street and the office; its first test is at home. A family in which decisions are made unilaterally, daughters are denied rights equal to those of sons, children have no right to speak and the elderly are pushed to the margins unwittingly reproduces the very pattern of subject and ruler. A child who has learned at home that the louder voice wins will do the same in the street and in parliament.

In Iran's public space, women bear a double burden of civic immorality: street harassment, catcalling, intrusive stares, judgments about their dress and conduct, and the blaming of the victim. These behaviors, which are often normalized with the excuse of "joking" or as a test of "*gheyrat*" (male honor), are a flagrant violation of human dignity and of women's equal right to a safe presence in public space. The global citizen knows that no one has the right to make another woman's body, dress or choices the object of comment, judgment or control; and he also knows that silence in the face of harassment is complicity in it.

The generational gap is another test. The young generation of Iranians, raised in the digital world and with global values, is often in conflict with the preceding generation. Here civic ethics cuts both ways: the older generation must accept that the young have the right to choose their own way of life, and that experience is no license for imposition; and the younger generation must accept that respecting the elderly and listening to their experience is not a sign of being outdated, but a sign of maturity. Dialogue between generations is a small rehearsal for national dialogue.

7.6 Hidden Racism and the Belittling of Compatriots and Neighbors

Many of us Iranians, who suffer from discrimination and stereotyping abroad, have inflicted the same conduct on others inside Iran. The treatment of Afghan migrants, who for decades have lived alongside us doing the hardest work, is one of the most bitter examples: exclusion from education and services, belittlement in everyday language, and waves of online hate speech. The same pattern, though less intense, can be seen in the condescending view of compatriots whose mother tongue is different or who come from deprived provinces. Iran is a multilingual and multiethnic country; and the preservation of its diverse languages and cultures is not a threat to national unity, but the condition for its survival. We cannot ask the world for dignity while withholding it from our own neighbor.

7.7 Conspiracy Thinking and Media Literacy

Decades of life amid secrecy, official lies and the real interventions of foreign powers in Iran's modern history have produced a mentality in which every event has a "hidden hand." Conspiracy thinking appears to be a sign of vigilance, but in practice it lifts responsibility from our shoulders: "If everything is the work of Britain, America and the regime, then my own conduct does not matter." This mentality also makes dialogue impossible, because it sees every opponent as an "agent." The global citizen is armed with media literacy: he evaluates sources, distinguishes among news, analysis and rumor, pauses before

sharing, and accepts that most social events are the outcome of the choices of millions of human beings, not the plan of some hidden room.

7.8 Domestic Violence, Children and Mental Health

What happens behind closed doors is not merely a "private matter" whenever a human being is harmed there. The principle of privacy is a refuge for freedom, not a refuge for violence. The corporal punishment of children, violence against a spouse and the neglect of the elderly cannot be justified with the phrase "it is a family matter"; and the neighbor, relative or teacher who sees signs of violence has a responsibility to seek help through legal and support channels. Likewise, the stigma attached to mental illness and the shame of consulting a psychologist have doubled the suffering of many Iranian families, especially amid the stressful experience of migration. A healthy civil society is one in which asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

Chapter 8

The State's Responsibility for Producing Improper Habits

8.1 The State as Teacher of Public Ethics

States, wittingly or unwittingly, are the greatest teachers of public ethics. Citizens learn their conduct not from textbooks but from the actual conduct of power. If rulers lie, lying becomes normal; if they exempt themselves from the law, evading the law becomes a virtue; if they label their opponents, labeling becomes the common language of society; and if they confiscate public space for a particular belief, other groups too learn that public space is booty to be seized.

8.2 Five Mechanisms That Produce Improper Habits

- The split between outward appearance and inner reality: the requirement to keep up appearances in public space while tolerating freedom in private has raised a generation accustomed to living a double life. Hypocrisy has turned from an individual trait into a survival skill.
- **Institutionalized discrimination:** dividing citizens into insiders and outsiders, Muslims and non-Muslims, Shi'a and Sunni, and depriving minorities of equal rights has erased the principle of civic equality from the mind of society.
- **The confiscation of public space:** turning the street, the state broadcaster, the school and the university into instruments of ideological propaganda has sent citizens the message that public space belongs to those who hold power.
- **The impunity of the powerful:** when those connected to power are exempt from accountability, the ordinary citizen too tries to make himself

"immune" in some way, through connections, money or keeping up appearances.

- **The destruction of civil society:** the suppression of trade unions, associations, voluntary organizations and independent media has deprived society of its most important schools for practicing citizenship. Citizenship is learned in associations; a society without associations does not raise citizens.

8.3 Institutional Reforms for the Iran of the Future

Identifying these mechanisms also illuminates the path to reform. In the Iran of tomorrow, several institutional reforms are necessary conditions for rebuilding public ethics:

- The separation of religious institutions from the institutions of the state, and the neutrality of the state toward all beliefs, so that religion is free in society and the state is in the service of all citizens.
- A comprehensive law protecting public tranquility and controlling noise pollution, applied equally to all rites, celebrations and businesses.
- A law on civic equality prohibiting discrimination on the basis of religion, sect, ethnicity, gender and belief.
- A law protecting privacy and personal data.
- Transparency in public-sector hiring, public declaration of officials' assets, and an independent anti-corruption system.
- Full freedom for civic, professional and voluntary organizations as schools of citizenship.
- A fundamental revision of the school curriculum, replacing religious and ideological instruction with civic education and public ethics.

A state that searches for morality in the privacy of homes and abandons it in the streets ruins both the home and the street.

8.4 The Day After the Transition: Justice, Not Revenge

The greatest test of our civic ethics as Iranians may come on the day after the transition. A society that has endured decades of the wounds of repression, executions, imprisonment and discrimination is naturally exposed to the temptation of revenge. But the history of revolutions, including our own history in 1979, shows that hasty tribunals, street score-settling and collective punishment sow the seeds of the next despotism. The responsible citizen of tomorrow draws a clear line between "justice" and "revenge": those who ordered and those who carried out crimes must be held accountable in independent courts, with due respect for the right of defense and on the basis of evidence; but families, neighbors, ordinary employees and former supporters of the regime must not be punished or ostracized merely for their affiliation or belief. The experience of truth and reconciliation commissions in countries such as South Africa, and of peaceful transitions in Spain and Chile, offers models for the Iran of tomorrow.

We fought a regime that punished its opponents without trial; if we do the same, we will merely have swapped the places of victim and executioner.

Part Three

A Diagnosis of the Conduct of Iranians Abroad

Chapter 9

Migration, a Test of Citizenship

9.1 The Suitcase We Carry With Us

Migration is not merely a geographical relocation; it is a great test of citizenship. The migrant is placed in a new environment whose rules he does not know, whose language he does not fully command, and in which, at least at first, he often faces economic hardship, loneliness and psychological strain. In such conditions, behavior is laid bare: what was hidden in the country of origin becomes visible in the host country.

For more than four decades, millions of Iranians have lived across the world. A large proportion of them are among the most successful migrants in the world: physicians, engineers, university professors, entrepreneurs and artists who have earned respect and standing in their host societies. Numerous statistics show that Iranians residing in the United States and Europe are among the most highly educated migrant groups. Yet this same successful community faces afflictions in the domain of "in-group civic conduct," and at times in its dealings with the host society, that tarnish the collective reputation of Iranians and prevent the formation of a strong Iranian civil society in exile.

9.2 Two Opposite Errors: Blind Attachment and Complete Rupture

The Iranian migrant is usually exposed to two opposite errors. The first is the "blind carrying-over of habits": reproducing, in a new form, the very behaviors he used to complain about in Iran. The second is "rupture and imitation": abruptly discarding one's own cultural identity and superficially imitating the outward conduct of the host society without having understood its logic and fundamental values. Between these two errors the global citizen chooses a third

path: "conscious integration," that is, preserving the best elements of one's own culture and learning the best elements of the host culture.

Chapter 10

Ten Improper Habits and the Alternative Model

In this chapter, ten improper habits common among some Iranians abroad are examined in turn. For each habit, the chapter presents a description of the behavior, its roots, its consequences and the right model of the global citizen.

10.1 Serving as Everyone's "Information Directory": The Violation of Privacy

Description: In many Iranian communities abroad, people's personal information passes from hand to hand with astonishing speed: residence status, divorce, illness, debt, children's problems, income and even the details of married life. More astonishing still, this is often done with the intention of "helping": "So-and-so is not doing well; I thought you should know, perhaps you can do something." The person concerned, who may have confided in only one close friend, suddenly discovers that his entire social circle knows the story.

Roots: The collectivist structure of the family and neighborhood in Iran, in which "knowing" is regarded as a form of participation and solidarity; the migrant's loneliness and need for "something to talk about"; the need to feel important by possessing information; and the failure to recognize privacy as a right.

Consequences: The collapse of trust within the Iranian community; many Iranians avoiding contact with their compatriots ("I don't socialize with Iranians"); individuals left alone in times of crisis for fear of losing face; and in some cases, a security risk for people's families in Iran, since information may reach the security organs of the Islamic Republic.

The Right Model: The personal information of others is a trust. If someone confides a secret in you, share it only with his explicit consent and only with the person he designates. If you wish to help, first ask the person himself: "Will you allow me to speak to so-and-so, who may be able to help?" And remember: about someone who is absent, say only what you would say if he were present.

The secrets of others are a trust in our hands, not capital for buying friendship and intimacy with others.

10.2 Irresponsibility Toward Compatriots and Disrespect for the Laws of the Host Country

Description: Some Iranian migrants carry the same "culture of cunning" with them to the host country: unregistered work and cash payments to evade taxes, abusing social benefits by declaring false income, sham marriages, illegal subletting, driving without insurance, circumventing building regulations, and even encouraging newly arrived compatriots to do the same with the advice that "everyone here does it." At times, newly arrived compatriots who know neither the language nor the law fall victim to fraud by these very people.

Roots: The subject mentality, which sees the law not as a protector but as an enemy; the notion that "this is not our country" and that we therefore bear no responsibility toward it; and ignorance of the fact that in democratic societies, the law is an instrument for the protection of citizens themselves.

Consequences: Legal jeopardy and the loss of residence or citizenship; damage to the reputation of the Iranian community and the reinforcement of negative stereotypes; and harm to honest migrants who bear the burden of others' disrepute.

The Right Model: The host country is our new home, and its laws are our contract with the society that has received us. Paying taxes is our share of the school where our children study and the hospital where we are treated. The responsible citizen helps Iranian newcomers to learn the law, not to circumvent it.

10.3 Premature Judgment

Description: At Iranian gatherings and social circles, it is common to pass judgment on others before getting to know them: "He must be connected to the regime," "She must have easy money," "You can tell from his accent that he's from the provinces," "These newcomers have no culture," "With that hijab she must be a regime supporter," or conversely, "With that appearance she must be loose." Such judgments sometimes turn quickly from a suspicion into a "verdict" within the group.

Roots: Deep distrust born of the experience of life under a security state; real experiences of infiltration by regime agents in Iranian communities abroad, which have fueled general suspicion; and the habit of simplistic classifications.

Consequences: The ostracism of innocent people; division within the Iranian community; and a real victory for the very regime that benefits from the fragmentation of Iranians abroad.

The Right Model: Let us observe the presumption of innocence not only in court but also at social gatherings. Every human being is worthy of trust and respect until the contrary is proven. Security vigilance is necessary, but vigilance is not the same as labeling.

10.4 Aggressive Behavior as a Means of Asserting One's Rights

Description: Some Iranians believe that when dealing with a bank clerk, a salesperson, the police, a neighbor or an official, raising one's voice, making threats and behaving aggressively is the "most effective" way to assert one's rights. This approach, which sometimes works in Iran, often backfires in host countries: the clerk ends the conversation, a manager is summoned, the police are called, and the person is denied his right.

Roots: In a society where institutions are unaccountable, only "the loud voice" is heard; in a host country that has institutions for handling complaints, this habit loses its function. The feeling of being humiliated as a migrant also sometimes leads to defensive, aggressive reactions.

Consequences: The creation of the stereotype of "the aggressive Iranian"; legal repercussions; and the loss of the actual right.

The Right Model: In democratic societies, the instruments for asserting one's rights are "documentation, procedure and patience": keeping records (emails, receipts, dates), making written requests, asking to speak with a supervisor, filing formal complaints, turning to consumer-protection bodies, arbitration and, ultimately, the courts. Calm is strength, and courtesy is no sign of weakness.

10.5 Vulgar Language in Public on the Assumption That No One Understands Persian

Description: On trains, in restaurants, in shops or in the street, some Iranians swear loudly, comment on the appearance of passersby or make offensive jokes, on the assumption that "these people don't understand Persian."

Roots: A false sense of "linguistic security"; and the belief that ethics only matters when someone can see or hear.

Consequences: In the great cities of the world, the number of Persian speakers, Afghans, Tajiks and people who have learned Persian is not small; and even someone who does not understand the language perceives the tone, the gestures and the mocking laughter. Children of Iranian descent who are present also learn this pattern.

The Right Model: Ethics is conduct that is observed even in the absence of an observer. Persian is the language of Hafez, Sa'di, Rumi and other luminaries of their stature; let us not turn it into an instrument of concealment and contempt. The rule is simple: what you would not want translated into the language of your hosts, do not say in Persian either.

Ours is the language of Sa'di; it must not become a refuge for our rudeness.

10.6 Exploiting and Belittling Compatriots Under the Guise of Humor

Description: In some Iranian circles, newcomers, those with a weaker command of the host country's language, people with lower incomes, or those from other cities and ethnic groups become the targets of demeaning jokes. Alongside this, economic exploitation is also common: putting newcomers to work for low wages and without contracts, on the pretext of "helping" them.

Roots: Social and class hierarchies transplanted from Iran into migrant communities; the need to feel superior in an environment where the migrant himself feels inferior; and the absence of support institutions within the Iranian community.

Consequences: Psychological wounds; the alienation of newcomers from the Iranian community; and the reproduction of the very inequalities from which many have fled.

The Right Model: Healthy humor is humor that everyone, including the person who is its subject, can enjoy. Employ a newly arrived compatriot with a fair wage, a clear contract and respect, and inform him of his legal rights. Real help is empowerment, not the creation of dependency.

10.7 The Inability to Take Part Properly in Collective Events

Description: At the national celebrations of host countries, at concerts, Nowruz festivities, sporting events and even official ceremonies, some Iranians display behavior that brings collective embarrassment: excessive drunkenness and aggressive conduct, disregard for queues and turn-taking, entering without a ticket, talking loudly during performances, leaving litter at the venue, verbal and physical clashes over political issues, and sometimes even attacks on performers or speakers who hold different views.

Roots: The experience of long deprivation of public celebration and joy in Iran, which leads to an uncontrolled "emotional release"; the lack of practiced experience in attending free collective events; and intense politicization.

Consequences: The cancellation of Iranian cultural events by venues and municipalities; disrepute; and the loss of an opportunity to introduce Iranian culture to the host society.

The Right Model: At collective events, we are Iran's "cultural ambassadors." Complete joy is not at odds with complete courtesy. The rules of the venue, scheduling, quiet during performances, the cleanliness of the venue and respect for differing views are all part of the culture of celebration.

10.8 Cultural Self-Alienation and Inappropriate Imitation

Description: To demonstrate how "assimilated" they are in the host society, some Iranians hastily cast aside their identity: they change their names, avoid speaking Persian with their children, are ashamed of being Iranian, and superficially imitate the behaviors, tone, dress and even the objectionable habits of the host society. At times these same individuals try to present themselves as superior by belittling other Iranians ("These people are still so Iranian!").

Roots: An identity wound caused by the negative image of Iran in the global media; the experience of discrimination; and the failure to understand that advanced societies value cultural pluralism and do not take superficial imitation seriously.

Consequences: Second- and third-generation Iranians lose their language and cultural heritage; the individual is neither fully accepted in the host society nor able to keep his bond with his roots; and an identity crisis is passed on to the children.

The Right Model: Integration is not imitation. The global citizen learns the fundamental values of the host society, namely respect for the rule of law, respect for the individual, responsibility and civic participation, not merely its outward forms; and at the same time he proudly preserves the Persian language, Nowruz, literature and his cultural heritage and introduces them to the host society. A multilayered identity is a wealth, not a contradiction.

One can be fully American, Canadian or German and still read Hafez on the night of Yalda.

10.9 The Inability to Read the Shared Space of Conversation and the Line Between Jest and Earnest

Description: In multicultural workplaces and social settings, some Iranians cannot correctly read the atmosphere of a conversation: they bring up political debates in business meetings; in non-Iranian company they speak Persian among themselves and exclude others; they joke in serious situations and launch into heated, serious debates in friendly ones; or they comment recklessly on subjects that are sensitive in the host culture (race, gender, religion, the body, age, income).

Roots: Unfamiliarity with the communicative norms of the host society; differing levels of formality across cultures; and the absence of training in "cultural intelligence."

Consequences: The loss of professional and social opportunities; at times serious legal consequences in the workplace (particularly with regard to harassment and discrimination); and social isolation.

The Right Model: Before speaking in any gathering, ask: Why has this group come together? What is its common language? What subjects are sensitive in this culture? In a multilingual group, speak the common language. Use humor only when you are sure that everyone will understand it and that no one will be offended.

10.10 Promoting the Culture of *Ps rti-bs zi*

Description: Some Iranian migrants, especially those who have attained positions in the institutions, companies or universities of the host country, reproduce the same pattern of "connections": hiring unqualified relatives, bypassing formal procedures, writing false letters of recommendation, and distributing opportunities on the basis of relationships rather than merit. Conversely, oth-

ers expect compatriots working in institutions to circumvent the rules for them, and if they refuse, call them "disloyal" (*bi-ma'refat*).

Roots: The transplantation of the relationship-based pattern from Iran; the confusion of "solidarity" with "corruption."

Consequences: Violation of anti-discrimination laws and legal repercussions; damage to the reputation of all Iranian professionals; and the neglect of qualified Iranians who have no connections.

The Right Model: There is a fundamental difference between "networking" and "*p**rti-b**zi*." Networking means introducing qualified people to opportunities and guiding them through legal procedures; *p**rti-b**zi* means substituting relationships for merit. The global citizen supports his compatriot so that he becomes more qualified, not so that he can circumvent the law.

Chapter 11

Other Improper Habits in Iranian Communities Abroad

In addition to the ten cases examined, other behaviors can also be observed in Iranian communities abroad, and recognizing them is essential to building a civil community:

- **Fragmentation and mutual distrust:** the inability to build durable collective institutions; every Iranian association splits after a while into several rival associations. A community of several million people that has only a handful of durable and robust civic institutions.
- **Politicization and labeling:** turning every cultural, academic or charitable event into a political battlefield; branding anyone with a different view a "monarchist," a "Mojahed," a "reformist" or a "regime agent."
- **Verbal violence online:** mob attacks on opponents, the exposure of personal information, threats and insults; behavior that reproduces precisely the methods of repression from which we fled.
- Keeping up with the Joneses and the display of wealth: competition in parties, cars, houses and lavish celebrations that imposes financial pressure on families and reduces a person's worth to his possessions.
- **Improper treatment of service workers:** disrespect toward waiters, drivers, cleaners and shop staff, and failing to tip in cultures where tips are part of the wage.
- **Unpunctuality:** arriving late to meetings, parties and business appointments with the excuse of "Iranian time," whereas in many host cultures punctuality is a sign of respect.
- Indifference to civic participation in the host country: not voting, not taking part in local associations, schools, municipal affairs and volunteer activit-

ies, and as a result the voicelessness of the Iranian community in policymaking that affects its life.

- Loud voices in restaurants, on airplanes and in public spaces, and playing videos or making video calls without headphones.
- Disregard for the rules of apartment living: noisy parties late into the night, cooking odors in hallways without ventilation and the improper use of shared spaces.
- Interfering in the lives and upbringing of other families' children and constantly comparing children with one another.
- Judging and pressuring members of the community who lead different lifestyles, including independent women, divorced people and LGBTQ individuals.
- Using residence in the host country to provide financial or propaganda support to the Iranian regime while enjoying the freedoms of that country; a duplicity that simultaneously undermines the trust of both the host society and the Iranian community.

11.1 Why the Iranian Community Abroad Needs Civic Institutions

Successful diaspora communities in the world, including the Jewish, Armenian, Indian and Greek communities, have been able both to preserve their identity and to have an effective voice in their host countries by building durable civic institutions: weekend schools, professional associations, charitable funds, cultural centers and advocacy groups. The Iranian community abroad, despite its exceptional human and financial capital, has not yet made sufficient use of this potential because of that same distrust and fragmentation. Building these institutions is a rehearsal of citizenship for the Iran of tomorrow: whoever practices dialogue, voting, accountability and tolerance of dissent today in a small association in Los Angeles, Toronto or Berlin will tomorrow be a better citizen and a better administrator for a free Iran.

A community that cannot run an association together in exile will not be able to run a country together in the homeland.

11.2 The Divide Between "Inside" and "Outside"

One of the most painful divides in Iranian society is the divide between Iranians inside and outside the country. Some Iranians abroad prescribe from a position of superiority for the people inside, accuse them of compromise or inaction, and demand of them sacrifices that they themselves do not make. Conversely, some Iranians inside call the emigrants "deserters," "out of touch" or "comfortable bystanders," and dismiss their experience and knowledge as worthless. The regime, too, benefits from this divide and inflames it. The Iranian global citizen knows that both groups are two halves of one nation: one pays the price of staying, the other the price of leaving. Bridging the two is possible through mutual humility, listening and a fair division of roles; it stands to reason that the Iranian abroad should amplify the voice of those inside, not speak in their place.

11.3 Reverse Intolerance

Some Iranians who have suffered from the imposition of religion fall, after emigrating, into a reverse intolerance: mocking religious compatriots, belittling women who wear the hijab, insulting what others hold sacred, and branding anyone who prays or fasts a "regime supporter." This behavior reproduces the same logic of imposition in reverse. Freedom of belief is not only freedom from religion; it is also freedom for religion. If the Iran of tomorrow is to be a home for all, it must be safe and respectful for the believer and the non-believer alike, for the Muslim as well as for the Baha'i, the Christian, the Jew, the Zoroastrian and the adherents of other beliefs.

Part Four

The Standards of the Global Citizen

CHAPTER 12

The Ten-Point Charter of the Iranian Global Citizen

What follows in this chapter is a charter for every Iranian, inside or outside the country, who wishes not only to know his rights but also to be a worthy model of conduct as a global citizen. These ten principles, while grounded in universal values, are rooted in the finest traditions of Iranian culture: from "good thoughts, good words, good deeds" to "the children of Adam are members of one another."

Principle One: The Equal Dignity of All Human Beings

Every human being, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, religion, sect, gender, orientation, class, language or political belief, possesses equal dignity. The global citizen makes no distinction in respect between "insider" and "stranger." He shows the same courtesy to the restaurant waiter as he does to his own superior.

Principle Two: The Law Is a Common Contract

The global citizen obeys the law not out of fear of punishment, but out of respect for the contract he has concluded with his fellow citizens. If he considers a law unjust, he works to change it through civic means, namely dialogue, the media, the ballot, legal redress and peaceful protest, not by secretly circumventing it.

Principle Three: Privacy Is Sacrosanct

The information, body, beliefs, relationships and personal decisions of every human being are his exclusive domain. The global citizen neither indulges in

idle curiosity, nor discloses the secrets of others, nor interferes in anyone's private life without permission.

Principle Four: Public Space Is a Shared Trust

The street, the park, the air, silence, nature and every shared space belong to all citizens. No belief, rite, celebration or business has the right to monopolize it or to disturb the peace of others.

Principle Five: Freedom of Belief and the Equality of Religions

The global citizen recognizes every person's right to hold, not to hold or to change a belief. He does not impose his faith on anyone, nor does he belittle the unbelief of another. For him, a member of a religious minority is not a second-class citizen.

Principle Six: Dialogue Instead of Aggression

Disagreement is a natural part of social life. The global citizen resolves disagreements through dialogue, argument, mediation and, where necessary, through legal institutions. He knows that aggression weakens argument, and that courtesy increases one's capacity to influence others positively.

Principle Seven: Fair and Deferred Judgment

The global citizen does not judge before listening; he avoids group generalizations; he respects the presumption of innocence; and he is prepared to revise his judgment.

Principle Eight: Merit Instead of Connections

The global citizen seeks and distributes opportunities on the basis of merit. He supports his compatriots and acquaintances, but not at the cost of trampling the rights of another.

Principle Nine: Responsibility Toward the Community and the Earth

The global citizen regards himself as part of the solution: he pays taxes, votes, takes part in associations, volunteers, protects nature and considers the consequences of his conduct for future generations.

Principle Ten: Rooted Identity, Global Outlook

The Iranian global citizen takes pride in his language, history and culture and passes them on to his children; but he places universal values above ethnic and national chauvinism. He is both Iranian and a citizen of the world, and sees no conflict between the two.

Good thoughts mean thinking of the other as one's equal; good words mean speaking to him as we would wish to be spoken to; and good deeds mean being trustworthy in the space we share with him.

Chapter 13

Practical Guidelines for Everyday Situations

General principles acquire meaning only when they are translated into everyday conduct. The table below sets out common improper behavior and the alternative model in a variety of situations.

13.1 Table of Improper Conduct and the Alternative Model

Situation	Common Improper Conduct	The Global Citizen's Model
Queues at the bank, shop or office	Jumping ahead with an excuse or through connections	Waiting one's turn without exception; a polite request in emergencies
Driving	Honking, unsafe overtaking, violations when no camera is present	Obeying the law in all circumstances; the pedestrian's right of way
Religious or national rites	Loudspeakers, blocked streets, noise at night	Holding them in permitted spaces, with a permit and within noise limits
Parties and gatherings	Personal questions, backbiting, judgment	Conversation about ideas and experiences, not other people's lives
A friend's secret	Passing it on to others "in order to help"	Trustworthiness; obtaining permission before taking any step
Disputes with a seller or an office	Raised voices and threats	Documentation, written complaints, legal follow-up
Online space	Insults, exposure, mob attacks	Reasoned criticism, respect for privacy, reporting abuse
Multicultural workplace	Speaking Persian in mixed company, inappropriate jokes	The group's common language; inclusive and respectful humor

Situation	Common Improper Conduct	The Global Citizen's Model
Hiring and opportunities	Preferring relatives and acquaintances	Selection on the basis of merit; recommending the qualified
Concerts and public celebrations	Drunkenness, rowdiness, litter, fights	Joy combined with courtesy; leaving the venue clean
Dealing with a newly arrived compatriot	Exploitation or belittlement	Guidance, explaining the laws, a fair wage
Religious and ethnic minorities	Jokes and labeling	Full equality in respect and rights
Nature and travel	Leaving litter, starting fires	"Leave nothing but footprints"
Residence and the host country's laws	Cash work, tax evasion	Paying one's share and demanding transparency

13.2 The Etiquette of Online Presence

Online space is today the largest "public space" of Iranians, the place where those inside and outside the country meet. Many improper behaviors are more extreme in this space than in the real world, owing to the sense of anonymity and distance. The following guidelines constitute the minimum etiquette of the global citizen online:

- Before sharing any news, check its source; spreading rumors, even for a cause you believe to be just, destroys your credibility and that of your cause.
- Do not publish anyone's personal information, photographs or private conversations without his consent.
- Disagree with ideas, not with human beings; an insult is not an argument.
- Do not take part in mob attacks against an individual, even if you disagree with him.
- Be mindful of the safety of others; publishing the names, faces or whereabouts of activists, protesters or their families can endanger their lives in Iran.

- Before writing, ask yourself: Would I say this sentence to this person face to face?

13.3 The Etiquette of Political Dialogue Among Iranians

Political dialogue among Iranians, especially abroad, often ends in destruction rather than shared reflection. If the Iran of the future is to be built on pluralism and democracy, we must begin practicing pluralistic dialogue today:

- Judge every political current by its strongest arguments, not by its weakest supporters.
- Distinguish between an "opponent" and an "enemy"; an opponent is someone who shares a goal with you but has chosen a different path.
- Refrain from attributing hidden motives to others, unless you have evidence.
- Accept that the Iran of the future is the home of all Iranians with all their views; whoever denies his opponent the right to speak today will do the same tomorrow.

Before it is a system of government, democracy is a habit of dialogue.

Part Five

The Educational Dimension

Chapter 14

Methods and Institutions of Civic Education

14.1 Why Education?

Civic ethics is not innate; it is learned. The Japanese are not born clean; from primary school onward, Japanese children are responsible for cleaning their classrooms and their schools. The Finns are not born trusting; their educational system is built on cooperation rather than competition. Canadians are not born accepting of pluralism; multiculturalism is institutionalized in their country's constitution and curriculum. Every society that has attained a high level of civic ethics has done so through purposeful, sustained and multi-institutional education.

14.2 Four Institutions of Civic Education

- **The family:** the first school of citizenship. Children learn more from what they see than from what they hear. A father who runs a red light in front of his child, or a mother who gossips at a party, teaches a lesson more lasting than any book. The family must practice dialogue, respect for the child's privacy, acceptance of "no," and responsibility in household tasks.
- **The school:** civic education must begin in the first years of primary school, not through sermons but through practice: genuine student councils, community-service projects, classroom discussion of ethical questions, and students' responsibility for the upkeep of the school.
- **Civic institutions:** associations, trade unions, cultural centers, volunteer groups and sports teams are practical workshops of citizenship, places where one learns to vote, to accept the majority's decision, to defend the rights of the minority and to take on responsibility.
- **The media:** the media, especially Persian-language media, can play a major role in shaping culture through educational programming, role-modeling,

accounts of successful experiences and critiques of social ills, provided that they themselves are models of respectful and pluralistic dialogue.

14.3 Effective Educational Methods

International experience shows that civic education is effective when it employs the following methods:

- **Learning by doing:** voluntary service, neighborhood projects and participation in real decision-making.
- **Situation-based discussion:** the analysis of real scenarios in which values come into conflict.
- **Role-modeling:** presenting exemplary citizens drawn from ordinary people, not only heroes and celebrities.
- **Reflection and self-assessment:** encouraging individuals to review their own conduct with tools such as checklists.
- **Peer education:** the education of young people by young people, and of newcomers by experienced migrants.
- **Art and narrative:** short films, theater, stories and wholesome satire as powerful tools for changing attitudes.

14.4 A Proposed Program for Iranian Communities Abroad

- Establishing "weekend schools of citizenship" alongside Persian-language classes for children and adolescents of Iranian descent.
- Holding "orientation workshops" for Iranian newcomers on the laws, rights, communication culture and support institutions of the host country.
- Drafting a "code of conduct" for Iranian associations and events that emphasizes respect, privacy, financial transparency and peaceful dialogue.
- Forming "mediation groups" to resolve disputes within the Iranian community without resorting to violence or public exposure.

- Launching "Iranian volunteer programs" in local host communities (food banks, park clean-ups, help for the elderly), which are both a practice of citizenship and a showcase of the positive face of Iranians.
- Producing short educational content on Persian-language social media about civic ethics, in an engaging, non-preachy language based on real examples.

Chapter 15

Educational Workshops and Case Scenarios

This chapter is designed for use in classes, workshops, associations and family gatherings. Each scenario describes a real-life situation and poses questions for group discussion. The aim is not to find a predetermined "right answer"; the aim is to practice ethical reasoning and to listen to a range of perspectives.

Guidelines for Running the Workshop

- **Group size:** 8 to 15 people; in larger groups, divide participants into small groups.
- **Time:** 20 to 30 minutes per scenario; 5 minutes for reading, 15 minutes for small-group discussion and 10 minutes for a concluding synthesis.
- **Rules of discussion:** one person speaks at a time; no view is ridiculed; criticizing ideas is permitted and criticizing persons is not; what is said in the workshop stays in the workshop.
- **The facilitator's role:** the facilitator does not pass judgment, but deepens the discussion through questions and, at the end, recalls the relevant principles of the Ten-Point Charter.

Scenario One: A Secret Revealed "in Order to Help"

Maryam has been living in Toronto for three years. In a private conversation she tells her friend Nasrin that she is having serious difficulties with her husband and is considering separation. Nasrin, worried about Maryam, shares the story with two other friends so that "perhaps they can help." A week later, at an Iranian party, Maryam realizes that several people know what happened and are treating her with pitying looks.

Discussion questions:

- Nasrin's intentions were good; do good intentions justify her conduct?
- What other ways did Nasrin have of helping Maryam?
- How does Maryam feel now, and what effect will this experience have on her trust in the Iranian community?
- Which principle of the Ten-Point Charter has been violated in this case?

Scenario Two: The Neighborhood Hey'at

In a neighborhood of an Iranian city, a religious association (*hey'at*) holds ceremonies over loudspeakers every night until one in the morning during the mourning period. Mr. Rezaei, the association's neighbor, has a sick mother, and his daughter is preparing for the national university entrance examination (*konkur*). He wants to object, but fears being accused of "irreligion" or "opposition to the system."

Discussion questions:

- How can the rights of the mourners and the rights of Mr. Rezaei be reconciled?
- If these ceremonies belonged to another minority, would society's reaction be the same?
- What law or rule could resolve this conflict fairly?
- How can the mourners themselves act as "responsible citizens"?

Scenario Three: "Everyone Here Does It"

Ali, who arrived in Los Angeles six months ago, finds work in a restaurant owned by an Iranian. The owner suggests that he receive his wages in cash and off the books, and in return apply for government assistance. He says, "Everyone here does it; you've just arrived and you need the money."

Discussion questions:

- What risks does Ali take on by accepting this offer?

- What responsibility does the restaurant owner, as a "compatriot," bear toward Ali?
- What effect does this conduct have on the image of the Iranian community?
- How can Iranian institutions abroad support newcomers like Ali?

Scenario Four: The Bank and the Raised Voice

Mr. Karimi goes to his bank branch to follow up on an erroneous transfer from his account. The bank clerk tells him he must fill out a complaint form and that a response will be given within ten business days. Mr. Karimi becomes angry, raises his voice and says, "If this were Iran, I'd know what to do!" The branch manager asks him to leave the bank.

Discussion questions:

- Why did Mr. Karimi's approach backfire?
- What steps should he have taken to assert his rights?
- What in his experience of life in Iran shaped this reaction?

Scenario Five: The Nowruz Celebration

An Iranian association in a European city has, for the first time, obtained a permit to hold a Nowruz celebration in the city's central park. The municipality has stipulated that the program must end by ten in the evening, that the venue must be left clean, and that no partisan political symbols may be displayed. On the day of the celebration, a group arrives with the flags of a particular political current, clashes with another group, and after the program ends the venue is strewn with litter. The municipality announces that it will not grant a permit the following year.

Discussion questions:

- Who is responsible for this failure?
- How can a balance be struck between freedom of political expression and preserving the cultural and inclusive character of an event?
- What mechanisms should the organizers put in place for future years?

Scenario Six: A Joke at Work

Sara is the only Iranian on a multicultural team in Berlin. An Iranian colleague from another team jokes with her in Persian in front of non-Iranian colleagues, comments on the appearance of one of them and laughs. The colleagues realize that they are the subject of the remark, and an uncomfortable atmosphere ensues.

Discussion questions:

- What can Sara do in this moment?
- Why is using the group's common language a sign of respect?
- What professional and legal consequences could this behavior have?

Scenario Seven: Hiring a Cousin

Dr. Ahmadi is the head of a department at a large company in California. His cousin asks him to hire him for a vacant position in his department without going through the full interview process. The family also puts pressure on Dr. Ahmadi, saying, "If you don't help your own family, whom will you help?"

Discussion questions:

- Where is the line between "helping family" and *p**rti-b**zi*?
- How can Dr. Ahmadi both help his cousin and uphold the law and fairness?
- If he agrees, who will be harmed?

Scenario Eight: A Classmate of a Different Faith

At a weekend Persian-language school abroad, several Iranian children mock their Jewish classmate, or a classmate of any other faith, with phrases they have heard from adults. The teacher realizes that some parents share the same attitude.

Discussion questions:

- Where did the children learn this attitude?
- What responsibility do the teacher and the principal bear?

- How can this issue be discussed with the parents without leading to confrontation?
- Where, and from what age, should the civic equality of religious minorities in the Iran of the future be learned?

Scenario Nine: Yesterday's Neighbor

Imagine that several months have passed since the political transition in Iran. In an apartment building, the residents discover that one of their neighbors was for years a member of a state institution. Some demand that he be expelled from the building and that his photograph and address be published online. Others say that he did nothing wrong and was merely an employee. No one has clear evidence.

Discussion questions:

- Where is the line between demanding justice and seeking revenge?
- Which institution should judge this person's responsibility?
- What consequences would publishing his personal information have for his family and for society?
- If you were in his place, what would you expect of society?

CHAPTER 16

The Global Citizen's Self-Assessment Checklist

This checklist is designed for an honest assessment of one's own conduct, not for judging others. Rate each statement from 1 (never) to 5 (always) on the basis of your actual conduct over the past month. The aim is not to achieve a perfect score; the aim is to identify the areas that need practice.

A. Privacy and Trustworthiness

Statement	Score (1 to 5)
I do not share a secret entrusted to me with anyone without permission.	
I refrain from asking strangers personal questions about income, marriage, children and beliefs.	
About someone who is absent, I say only what I would also say in his presence.	
I do not publish anyone's information, photographs or private messages without his consent.	

B. The Law and Public Space

Statement	Score (1 to 5)
I obey traffic laws even when no camera is present.	
I wait my turn in queues without exception.	
In public spaces I keep my voice and my devices quiet.	
I dispose of my waste in the proper place and sorted.	

Statement	Score (1 to 5)
I pay my taxes and meet my legal obligations fully and honestly.	

C. Dialogue and Judgment

Statement	Score (1 to 5)
Before judging someone, I listen to what he has to say.	
In an argument, I do not raise my voice or interrupt others.	
I disagree with ideas, not with people's characters.	
I refrain from ethnic, gender-based and religious jokes.	
I am able to say "I was wrong" or "perhaps you are right."	

D. Equality and Pluralism

Statement	Score (1 to 5)
I treat religious, ethnic and sexual minorities with equal respect.	
I do not impose my beliefs on others.	
I address service workers with the same respect I show to managers.	
I distribute or seek opportunities on the basis of merit, not acquaintance.	

E. Participation and Responsibility

Statement	Score (1 to 5)
I take part in elections and collective decision-making in which I have the right to participate.	
I take part in at least one voluntary or civic activity.	
I help newly arrived compatriots learn about the laws and their rights.	

Statement	Score (1 to 5)
I pass on the Persian language and Iranian culture to the next generation, with respect for the host culture.	

Interpreting the Results

If your average score in a section is 4 or higher, you can serve as a model for others in that area. An average of 3 to 4 indicates that you are aware, but your conduct is not yet consistent. An average below 3 is the starting point for practice. It is recommended that each month you choose the statement with the lowest score as your "exercise of the month" and work on it consciously. Changing a habit is not the work of a single day; but it is possible every day.

Chapter 17

A Program of Action: From Today to the Iran of Tomorrow

17.1 The Individual Level: Thirty Days of Practice

Experience shows that changing a habit is better achieved through small, steady steps than through grand but unsustainable resolutions. The following program proposes four weeks of simple exercises:

- Week one, the week of privacy: each day, consciously refrain from one personal question or one instance of gossip.
- Week two, the week of the law: when driving, queuing and in public space, obey the law without exception and keep a note of your experience.
- Week three, the week of dialogue: in every discussion, before replying, restate the other person's point in your own words to make sure you have understood it.
- Week four, the week of participation: do one voluntary task or help a newly arrived compatriot.

17.2 The Level of the Iranian Community Abroad

- Drafting and signing a "Covenant of Civic Conduct" by Iranian associations, media outlets and public figures.
- Establishing a network of weekend schools of citizenship and orientation workshops for newcomers.
- Launching an annual "Exemplary Citizen" award to recognize Iranians who have distinguished themselves in community service, volunteering and civic conduct.

- Establishing mediation and dispute-resolution institutions within the Iranian community.
- Cooperating with the civic institutions of host countries and participating actively in their civic life.

17.3 The Level of the Iran of the Future

In post-transition Iran, civic education must become one of the national priorities. The main proposals at this level are as follows:

- Introducing a course on "Civic Ethics and Civic Responsibility" at all levels of education, with a practical, exercise-based approach.
- Enacting the laws on public tranquility, privacy, non-discrimination and freedom of belief enumerated earlier.
- Rebuilding the state broadcaster as a pluralistic and educational medium, not an instrument of propaganda.
- Supporting the free formation of associations, trade unions and voluntary organizations throughout the country.
- Running national public-awareness campaigns on driving, waste, queuing, noise pollution and respect for minorities, with the participation of artists, athletes and figures trusted by the public.
- Drawing on the experience and knowledge of the millions of Iranians abroad who have lived in civil societies, as "ambassadors of citizenship" in rebuilding Iran's civic culture.

PART SIX

A Code of Courteous and Healthy Communication: A Reference for Iranians Abroad

In Iranian culture, *adab* (courtesy, refinement of conduct) has never been merely a set of formalities. Sa'di devoted a chapter of the *Golestan* to "the etiquette of companionship"; Onsor al-Ma'ali, in the *Qabus-nameh*, taught his son the art of social conduct; and Rumi regarded courtesy as the condition for partaking of the grace of being: "Let us ask God for the grace of courtesy; / the discourteous man is deprived of the Lord's bounty." This legacy teaches us that courtesy is the outward form of an inner respect: the respect a person accords to the dignity of another.

The five preceding parts of this volume set out the theoretical foundations of citizenship, diagnosed improper habits, presented the charter of the global citizen and pointed to the paths of education. This part takes a further step: it is an affirmative and practical code of conduct that describes what fitting behavior looks like in each everyday situation. Its aim is not reproach but companionship: a reference to which every Iranian living abroad can turn at home, at work, in associations, at gatherings and online.

How to use this code: These rules are not laws, and they have no means of enforcement other than one's own conscience. Each chapter addresses one domain of social life, and the final chapter gathers twenty short rules to be memorized and carried along. Families and associations are encouraged to read one chapter at a time together and to discuss it. Courtesy, like language, is learned through practice, not through memorization.

Courtesy is a language that every nation understands, even those who do not know Persian.

Chapter 18

The Foundations of Courtesy: Five Pillars of Healthy Communication

18.1 What Courtesy Is and What It Is Not

Courtesy must not be confused with three things. Courtesy is not empty *ta'arof*; words the speaker does not believe in, however elegant, are not courtesy but a veil over insincerity. Courtesy is not flattery; praising the powerful while disregarding the powerless is the very opposite of courtesy. And courtesy is not silence in the face of truth; a courteous person can disagree, criticize and say "no," but the way he says it preserves the dignity of the other.

Courtesy, in a single sentence, means treating others as we would wish to be treated, in a language that they understand and appreciate. This definition has two components: the first is ethical and universal; the second is cultural and learnable. Every Iranian would do well to learn both: the essence of courtesy, which is the same in all cultures, and its forms, which differ from one society to another.

18.2 Five Pillars of Healthy Communication

First, dignity: every human being, regardless of position, wealth, nationality, religion, gender or political belief, deserves equal respect. The touchstone of our courtesy is how we treat those from whom we gain nothing: the waiter, the cleaner, the child, the elderly and the newcomer.

Second, privacy: every person has a domain that must not be entered without his permission: his body, his home, his information, his beliefs, his relationships and his decisions. Curiosity about this domain, even out of concern, is a form of trespass.

Third, truthfulness: healthy communication rests on trust, and trust rests on truthfulness. Let us not make promises we cannot keep, and let us do what we have said we will do.

Fourth, fairness: let us listen before judging, avoid generalization, and apply to others the same standard we would want applied to ourselves.

Fifth, humility: let us accept that we may be mistaken, that the host culture has things to teach us, and that no one, ourselves included, possesses the whole truth.

18.3 Courtesy in a Foreign Land: Why It Matters Twice as Much

In one's homeland, each person's conduct is recorded only under his own name. But in a foreign land, every Iranian is, willingly or not, an ambassador of his nation. A neighbor who knows only one Iranian family judges all Iranians by that family's conduct. A colleague who has worked with one Iranian forms his image of "the Iranian" from that person.

Moreover, Iranian communities abroad are small and tightly interwoven. A single discourtesy, a single rumor or a single grievance quickly spreads through a network of friends and acquaintances, wearing away the meager social capital that has been built with great effort. And finally, our children are watching: they do not learn courtesy from our words; they learn it from our conduct.

In a foreign land, every Iranian is a book from which others read Iran.

Chapter 19

Everyday Etiquette and the Courtesy of First Encounters

19.1 Greetings, Inquiries After Well-Being, and Names

A greeting is the briefest and most meaningful message of respect. In Iranian tradition, being the first to greet is a sign of magnanimity, not of inferiority. The following rules of etiquette adapt this tradition to a new environment:

- When entering a group, greet everyone, not only acquaintances or those of higher standing.
- Learn people's names correctly and pronounce them correctly. If you are unsure, ask with humility: "Could you tell me how to pronounce your name?" This question is not rude; it is a sign of respect.
- Until the other person invites you to do otherwise, address him by title and surname. Familiarity must be offered by the other person, not imposed by us.
- Call everyone by the name and title he has chosen for himself. Shortening other people's names or inventing nicknames for them without their consent is not acceptable.
- Do not let inquiries after someone's well-being drift into personal questions. "How are you?" is a question that opens a conversation, not an invitation to interrogate someone about his private life.
- Forms of greeting differ across cultures: a handshake, a kiss on the cheek, a bow or merely a smile. If you are unsure, let the other person choose the form, and avoid unwanted physical contact.

19.2 Three Golden Words: "Please," "Thank You," "I Apologize"

These three words are the key to every healthy relationship and have equivalents in every language. Use them generously, in whatever language you live.

"Please" separates a request from a command. Even with someone whose job it is to serve you, a polite request preserves both his dignity and your own.

Do not withhold "thank you" for small things: from the bus driver, from the colleague who held the door for you, from the child who handed you something. Gratitude is a virtue that does not grow stale with repetition.

"I apologize" is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of maturity. Whoever can apologize promptly and unconditionally wins the trust of others more easily. The method of offering a complete apology is set out in Chapter Twenty-Five.

19.3 Punctuality and Keeping One's Word

Other people's time is part of their lives. Whoever arrives late has in effect drawn on the time of others. The common joke about "Iranian time" must not become an excuse for lateness; in the eyes of others, this joke creates an unflattering image of all of us.

- For business, administrative and medical appointments, arrive a few minutes early.
- If for any reason you will be late, let people know in advance and give an honest estimate of your arrival time.
- Respond clearly and promptly to invitations. "I'll try to come" is not an answer; the host needs to know how many people to prepare for.
- If you are canceling a plan, let people know as soon as possible and with an apology.
- Do not make a promise you cannot keep. An honest "no" is more respectful than an unfounded "yes."

19.4 Ta'arof: A Beautiful Heritage, in Due Measure

Ta'arof in Iranian culture is rooted in hospitality, humility and the honoring of the other, and it should not be condemned outright. But in a society whose language is directness, excessive *ta'arof* can lead to misunderstanding, resentment or even distrust.

- With non-Iranians, state your offer once and clearly. If someone answers "no," do not insist; in most cultures "no" means "no."
- If you accept an offer yourself, accept it explicitly; and if you do not, decline it explicitly and with thanks.
- In financial matters, contracts and commitments, set *ta'arof* aside. Saying "it's nothing, be my guest" (*q**bel nad**re*) in a sale creates confusion for someone who does not know this custom.
- Explain the beauty of *ta'arof* to your non-Iranian friends with a smile, as part of our culture, rather than expecting them to know its unwritten rules.

19.5 Voice, Tone and Body Language

A large part of our message is conveyed not by words but by our tone and gestures. What is a sign of warmth and intimacy in one culture may be perceived as aggression or intrusion in another.

- In public spaces such as trains, restaurants, doctors' offices and shops, keep your voice low. Do not conduct telephone calls on speakerphone.
- Respect other people's personal space. Standing too close, or placing a hand on the shoulder or arm of someone with whom you are not close, is unwelcome in many societies.
- When conversing in the presence of someone who does not know Persian, avoid referring to him in a language he does not understand, collective laughter or meaningful glances.
- Keep anger out of your voice. A raised voice does not strengthen an argument; it merely prevents the listener from hearing.

A calm voice is not a sign of weakness; it is the mark of someone confident in the soundness of what he says.

Chapter 20

The Etiquette of Conversation, Listening and Disagreement

20.1 The Art of Listening

We Iranians have a brilliant heritage in the art of speaking, from poetry to oratory; but we have practiced listening far less. Conversation has two wings: speaking and listening. And whoever tries to fly on one wing alone will never leave the ground.

- Do not interrupt others. If a point occurs to you, wait until the other person has finished his sentence.
- While listening, do not prepare your reply; try first to understand.
- Before replying, restate in your own words what you have understood: "If I have understood correctly, what you mean is..." This dispels misunderstandings before they turn into quarrels.
- Show your curiosity through questions, not through judgment.
- In a group, give those who speak less an opportunity and invite them into the conversation.

20.2 Questions Not to Ask, and Courteous Alternatives

Many questions regarded in our culture as signs of intimacy or concern are in practice an intrusion into the privacy of others and put the other person in a difficult position. The table below shows the most common of them alongside a respectful alternative:

Inappropriate Question or Behavior	Courteous Alternative
"How much do you earn?" or "How much did you pay for the house?"	"Do you enjoy your work?" or "Are you happy with your new neighborhood?"

Inappropriate Question or Behavior	Courteous Alternative
"Has your residence come through? Are you a refugee, or did you come on a work visa?"	If he says something himself, listen; if not, do not ask. If you wish: "If I can ever be of help, I would be glad to."
"Why don't you get married?" or "So when are you having children?"	These are personal decisions and call for no alternative. It is better to ask about his interests, work or plans.
"You've put on so much weight!" or "Why have you become so thin?"	Let us not comment on other people's bodies. If we wish to show affection: "It's so good to see you."
"What is your religion? Do you pray?"	Each person's belief is his private domain. If he speaks of his belief himself, let us listen with respect.
"Which political group do you support?"	"What do you think about Iran's future?", but only if the atmosphere is right for conversation and he is willing.
"Why did you leave Iran?"	"How long have you been here? What is life like in this city?"
"What does your family in Iran do?" (especially regarding activists and protesters)	Let us avoid any question that could endanger his safety or that of his family.

20.3 The Etiquette of Praise and Criticism

Praise and criticism are both instruments of human growth, provided they are used appropriately and sincerely.

Praise: Praise sincerely and specifically. "Your speech was excellent" has less effect than "The example you gave from your own experience clarified the subject for me." Do not withhold praise from those who are out of the spotlight: the person who set out the chairs, prepared the food or stayed behind after the event to tidy up.

Criticism: Criticize in private and praise in public. Criticize the behavior, not the character; instead of "You are an irresponsible person," say "The report that was due yesterday has still not arrived, and the group's work has been held

up." Accompany criticism with a suggestion, and before criticizing, ask yourself: Will these words help improve things, or will they merely relieve my anger?

Receiving criticism: When you hear criticism, express thanks before defending yourself. Even if you do not consider the criticism fair, the speaker has taken the trouble to voice it. Defer your reply until you have calmed down.

20.4 The Etiquette of Disagreement

Disagreement is a sign of a society's health, not of its sickness. What makes a society sick is the inability to resolve disagreements respectfully. The following guidelines complement the etiquette of political dialogue in Chapter Thirteen and apply to every kind of disagreement, from the family to the association:

- Restate the other person's view so accurately that he himself says, "Yes, that is exactly what I mean." Only then express your disagreement.
- **Speak from "I," not "you":** "I am worried that this decision..." instead of "You always rush in headlong."
- Avoid absolute words such as "always," "never" and "everyone"; such words are seldom accurate and often wounding.
- Find and name points of agreement, however few.
- Accept that a conversation may end without agreement. "We do not agree, but I have learned from talking with you" is a worthy ending.
- If the conversation becomes heated, propose a pause: "Let us continue this discussion another time."

20.5 Humor, Satire and Their Limits

Humor is one of the most beautiful expressions of Iranian culture, from Obeyd Zakani to the present day. But a joke is a joke only when everyone, including the person who is its subject, can laugh at it.

- Laugh with others, not at others.
- Avoid ethnic, religious, gender-based and sexual jokes, and jokes about appearance, disability or accent, even if "everyone knows it's a joke."

- Do not repeat stereotype-based jokes about Iran's peoples, the Kurds, Turks, Lors, Baluch, Arabs, Turkmen, Gilaks and others. Such jokes reproduce the very contempt from which we ourselves suffer abroad.
- If someone is hurt by your joke, do not explain that "that's not what I meant"; simply apologize.
- In the workplace and in multicultural groups, a joke whose translation requires explanation probably has no place.

20.6 Trustworthiness in Speech: Avoiding Backbiting and Rumor

In small migrant communities, words travel fast, and at every stop something is added to them. Before repeating anything about another person, put it through three tests:

- Is it true? Am I certain of its accuracy, or have I merely heard it?
- Is it kind? If that person were present, would I say it the same way?
- Is it necessary? Will saying it help solve a problem, or will it merely satisfy curiosity?

Words that do not pass these three tests are better left unsaid. And a secret entrusted to you is a trust; it must not be disclosed without the person's permission, even "in order to help him."

20.7 A Common Language in a Multilingual Group

When you are in a group in which not everyone present knows Persian, speak the group's common language. Speaking Persian in the presence of someone who does not understand it places him outside the circle, even if the subject of conversation has nothing to do with him. If you must say a sentence in Persian, translate it for the others afterwards.

The same courtesy applies to the mother tongues of our compatriots. Iran is a multilingual land. A compatriot who speaks Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, Baluchi, Turkmen or Gilaki with those who share his language has not been disloyal to Iran; and by respecting his language, we too have become more Iranian.

The first gift one can give another is attention; and attention begins with listening.

Chapter 21

The Etiquette of Relations With Compatriots

21.1 With Newcomers: Let Us Be the Host We Once Needed

Each of us was once a newcomer: with an unfamiliar language, complicated bureaucracies and a loneliness that few people saw. Our courtesy toward newcomers is a test of our memory of those days.

- Give accurate and up-to-date information, and wherever you are unsure, refer people to official sources. Incorrect advice about residence, taxes or work can upend someone's life.
- Do not ask for payment for simple guidance that you yourself once received free of charge.
- If you employ a newcomer, pay a fair and lawful wage and put the terms of employment in writing.
- Do not take advantage of his need, ignorance or loneliness, and do not make him beholden to you.
- Do not talk down to him. Your greater experience in this country does not mean you are superior.
- Invite him to gatherings and associations; loneliness is the greatest hardship of the first year of migration.

21.2 With Elders and With the Younger Generation

Respect for elders is one of the most beautiful legacies of Iranian culture and must be preserved. Elderly migrants are often the loneliest members of our community; they know less of the host country's language and have been cut off from their networks of friendship. Visiting them, listening to their memor-

ies and helping them with their daily affairs is repaying a debt to the generation that raised us.

In turn, respect for the young is also part of courtesy. Second-generation Iranians have grown up between two cultures and have a complex identity. Do not mock their imperfect Persian, for it discourages them from their mother tongue. Do not judge their choices in education, work, spouse and lifestyle by the standards of your own generation. Listen to them; they are our bridge to the host society and our link to the future.

21.3 Equal Respect for Women and Men

True courtesy knows no gender. The following guidelines are self-evident in life in civil societies and must be internalized in our everyday conduct:

- Do not make unsolicited comments about the appearance, dress, body or marital status of others, especially women.
- In meetings and conversations, listen to everyone equally and without discrimination (regardless of gender, belief or age); do not interrupt anyone or repeat their words as your own.
- Physical contact, even a handshake or a kiss on the cheek, is acceptable only with the clear consent of the other person.
- When addressing a group, address everyone: "ladies and gentlemen" or "dear friends," not only "gentlemen."
- Do not predetermine the division of labor at home or in the association on the basis of gender; serving guests is not women's duty, and giving speeches is not men's prerogative.

21.4 Respect for Religious, Ethnic and Lifestyle Differences

The Iranian community abroad is a mirror of Iran's pluralism: Shi'a and Sunni Muslims, Baha'is, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Yarsan, Sabean-Mandaeans, and also those who believe in no religion; and Iranians of all ethnicities and life-

styles. Life abroad is an opportunity to learn here what we did not practice in Iran: living side by side with equal respect.

- Do not ask anyone to explain or justify his belief, ancestry or lifestyle to you.
- When inviting guests, ask about and respect their religious or personal dietary restrictions, without inquiring into the reasons.
- Share in the religious occasions of your compatriots, from Eid al-Fitr and Nowruz to Ridvan, Hanukkah, Christmas and Sadeh, with a simple word of congratulation.
- Avoid using demeaning expressions about any group, even in jest or in private.
- If someone insults a compatriot in your presence because of his religion, ethnicity or lifestyle, say calmly and firmly: "I do not think that remark is right." Silence in the face of contempt is a form of complicity with it.

21.5 Respect for Political Differences

The etiquette of political dialogue was set out in detail in Chapter Thirteen. Here only three points regarding everyday social relations are emphasized. First, greet and exchange pleasantries with those who disagree with you politically, and share in their joys and sorrows; political disagreement must not sever human bonds. Second, refrain from labeling people "infiltrators," "traitors" or "mercenaries" without evidence; such labels, even if later shown to be false, do not restore a person's good name. Third, a party, a wedding or a funeral is no place for political debate, unless all those present wish it.

21.6 Money, Loans and Dealings With Acquaintances

Many friendships in migrant communities have broken apart over money. The following rules of etiquette protect both property and friendship:

- Put every loan, however small, in writing, and make the repayment date clear. This is not a sign of distrust; it is a sign of respect for the relationship.
- Repay what you have borrowed on time and without needing to be reminded. If you cannot, let the lender know before the due date.

- In dealings with compatriots, observe transparency more, not less, than with others. "We don't need to bother with all that between us" is the beginning of many grievances.
- Do not use acquaintance to obtain discounts, privileges or appointments outside the rules, and do not put acquaintances in the awkward position of having to say "no."

21.7 Asking for Help and the Art of Saying "No" Politely

Asking for help is every person's right, and helping is a virtue. But asking also has its etiquette: state your request clearly, take account of the other person's time and capacity, and accept a negative answer without resentment.

In our culture, saying "no" is difficult, and many prefer to give a vague promise instead of a "no" and then fail to act on it. This behavior is more hurtful than an honest "no." "No" can be said courteously: "Thank you for trusting me. Unfortunately I cannot take this on at the moment, but perhaps such-and-such a person or organization could help."

An honest "no" preserves a friendship; an unfounded "yes" wears it away.

Chapter 22

The Etiquette of Hospitality, Gatherings and Special Occasions

22.1 The Etiquette of Inviting and Responding

Iranian hospitality is renowned throughout the world. The following rules of etiquette combine this heritage with the order and consideration of contemporary life:

- **Make the invitation clear:** the starting time and, if possible, the ending time, the address, the occasion, and whether spouses, children or companions are also invited.
- Ask your guests about dietary restrictions, allergies and religious or personal abstentions.
- Respond to an invitation within the time requested and clearly. If you cannot come, let the host know with thanks; giving a reason is not required.
- Do not bring someone who has not been invited without first arranging it with the host.

22.2 The Etiquette of Being a Guest

- **Arrive at the appointed time:** neither so early that the host is not ready, nor very late.
- Bring a small and appropriate gift; the value of a gift lies in the thought, not in the price.
- Say nothing but good things about the host's home, furnishings, food or life.
- Do not photograph the host, his children or other guests without permission, and do not publish such photographs.

- Put your mobile phone aside during meals and conversation.
- Know when to leave. Staying late into the night when the host has work the next day is not a sign of intimacy.
- After the gathering, send a short message of thanks.

22.3 The Etiquette of Hosting

- A good host draws everyone into the conversation and does not let anyone, especially a newcomer or a non-Iranian guest, be left alone.
- Do not insist when serving. Accept a guest's "No, thank you."
- Respect your guests' choices regarding drinks: neither encourage anyone to drink alcohol nor judge anyone for drinking or not drinking. Provide good non-alcoholic beverages as well.
- **Safeguard your neighbors' peace:** inform them before a large party, lower the music after the appointed hours, and keep an eye on where your guests park.
- Do not discriminate among your guests; everyone, from the well-known to the unknown, is your guest.

22.4 The Etiquette of Joy and Mourning

In mourning: presence matters more than words. Offer condolences briefly and sincerely: "I share in your sorrow" is enough. Refrain from asking about the details of an illness or the cause of death. Instead of "Let me know if there's anything I can do," offer specific help: bringing food, looking after the children or taking care of an administrative task. And remember that mourning does not end with the ceremony; check on the bereaved a few weeks later as well.

In joy: at celebrations and weddings, temper your joy with consideration for others. Comparing celebrations, gifts and expenses, and asking "How much did this wedding cost?", turns joy into competition. At a birthday or the birth of a child, offer congratulations and refrain from comparing children.

22.5 Collective Events: Nowruz, Yalda, Chaharshanbe Suri and Sizdah Bedar

National festivals are among our most beautiful bonds with the homeland and an opportunity to introduce Iranian culture to the world. These festivals should be held in such a way that the host society, on witnessing them, comes to respect Iranians all the more:

- For public events, obtain the necessary permits and strictly observe the safety rules, especially for the bonfires of Chaharshanbe Suri.
- Return the venue cleaner than you found it. Sizdah Bedar in the parks of host cities is the showcase of our culture.
- Invite your non-Iranian neighbors, colleagues and friends, and explain to them the meaning of the *haft-sin* table, the night of Yalda or the fire of Chaharshanbe Suri.
- At cultural events, set aside political and religious divisions; Nowruz belongs to all Iranians.

Iranian hospitality is complete only when consideration for the neighbor also has a place at its table.

Chapter 23

The Etiquette of Participation in the Host Society

23.1 Neighborliness

The neighbor is the first and closest representative of the host society in our lives. In Iranian culture, the rights of the neighbor are counted among the great rights, and these rights do not disappear with a change of geography.

- After moving in, introduce yourself to your neighbors; and if local custom allows, do so with sweets or a small gift from Iranian culture.
- Learn and observe the rules of the building and the neighborhood regarding quiet hours, waste sorting, parking and shared spaces.
- If you have a problem with a neighbor, first speak with him directly and calmly before complaining to the building manager or the authorities.
- Do not withhold small acts of help in your neighbors' difficult days, in illness, bereavement or loneliness.

23.2 The Workplace and Places of Study

- Be precise, punctual and responsive. In many societies, professional credibility rests above all on honoring small commitments.
- Openly acknowledge the contribution of others to collective successes, and do not present another person's work as your own.
- In the workplace, do not form a "closed circle" with other Iranians, and do not exclude non-Iranian colleagues from conversation.
- Respect your colleagues' calendars, rites and religious and cultural holidays, just as you expect your Nowruz to be respected.

- Pursue workplace disputes through formal and professional channels, not by complaining about colleagues behind their backs.
- At university, take academic integrity seriously and cite your sources accurately.

23.3 Government Offices, the Police and Service Workers

- At government offices, arrive with complete documents and a calm demeanor. The official is not your enemy; he is carrying out a rule that he himself did not make.
- If you disagree with a decision, respectfully ask for an explanation and use the formal appeals mechanism. A raised voice gets nothing done in any office.
- In dealings with the police, be calm, respectful and cooperative, and know your legal rights.
- Treat the restaurant waiter, the cashier, the driver, the cleaner and anyone who serves you with the same respect you show your own manager. Learn and observe the tipping customs of each country.

23.4 Transport and Public Space

- In queues, wait your turn without exception.
- On trains and buses, give up priority seats to the elderly, pregnant women and people with disabilities, and in quiet carriages, respect the silence.
- On sidewalks and escalators, follow the local rule about which side to stand on and which side to walk on.
- Dispose of litter only in its proper place, and in nature, leave nothing but footprints.

23.5 Speaking About Iran With Non-Iranians

Many Iranians abroad are the only source through which their friends and colleagues come to know Iran. This is both an opportunity and a responsibility.

- Distinguish between the people of Iran and its government, and help others to see this distinction as well.
- Speak of Iran with pride, but without exaggeration. Iranian culture does not need to belittle other cultures in order to be admired.
- Avoid demeaning comparisons between Iranians and other migrant groups. We ourselves have learned what wounds a stereotype can inflict.
- If you are asked a question about Iran to which you do not know the exact answer, say that you do not know. An honest ambassador is more credible than an all-knowing one.

The respect we expect from the host society is the same respect that we must first offer it as a gift.

Chapter 24

The Etiquette of Written, Telephone and Online Communication

The general etiquette of online presence was set out in Chapter Thirteen. This chapter addresses everyday written and telephone communication, which shapes a large part of migrants' social lives and in which geographical distance has made courtesy all the more important.

24.1 Telephone Calls and Personal Messages

- Take account of time differences between countries, and do not call during hours of rest except in emergencies.
- Before a video call or a long telephone call, ask with a short message whether it is a convenient time.
- Keep voice messages short. A voice message several minutes long takes the listener's time without permission.
- If you have received a message, reply within a reasonable time, even if the reply is only: "I got your message and will reply soon."
- Do not expect others to reply immediately, and do not interpret a delayed reply as disrespect.

24.2 Messaging Groups

Messaging groups are the shared living room of Iranians scattered across the world, and like every shared space, they have their own etiquette:

- Do not add anyone to a group without permission.
- Stay true to the group's subject and purpose. A family group is no place for political debate unless everyone wants it; and a work group is no place for greetings and daily images.

- Before forwarding any news, rumor or warning, make sure it is accurate.
- Do not air personal disputes in the group; resolve them in private conversation.
- If you wish to leave a group, do so quietly and, if necessary, with a short and polite message.
- Do not send non-essential messages late at night; many members may keep their phones at their bedside.

24.3 Email and Formal Letters

- Write a clear and informative subject line.
- Begin with a courteous salutation and end with thanks and a full signature, including your name and contact details.
- Write concisely and precisely; state your request in the first paragraph.
- Read the letter once more before sending it. A letter written in anger is better left in drafts until the next day.
- Reply to formal letters within a reasonable time, usually within one or two business days.

24.4 Photographs, Videos and Publication

- Do not publish photographs or videos of anyone, especially children, without permission.
- At gatherings and political events, refrain from publishing the faces of those who may be endangered because of their presence in Iran or because of their families.
- Do not publish images of other people's mourning ceremonies, illnesses or private moments without their permission.
- If someone asks you to delete a photograph, do so immediately and without argument.

Distance does not make courtesy less important; it only puts it more fully to the test.

Chapter 25

The Etiquette of Disagreement, Apology and Reconciliation

No society is free of grievances. What makes a society healthy is not the absence of grievances, but the ability to repair them. Iranian communities abroad suffer above all from long estrangements (*qahr*), unspoken resentments and friendships broken over a small misunderstanding.

25.1 When We Have Been Hurt

- Before reacting, wait until you have calmed down. A reply given in anger often creates a new grievance.
- Raise your grievance directly and in private with the person concerned, not with others behind his back.
- Describe the behavior and state its effect on you: "When you said that in front of everyone, I felt humiliated." Refrain from attributing intentions to the other person.
- Consider the possibility of a misunderstanding. Many grievances arise from misunderstanding, not from ill intent.
- Do not choose estrangement over conversation. Estrangement does not resolve a grievance; it only hides it and makes it last.

25.2 A Complete Apology: Four Components

Apologizing is an art that must be learned. An incomplete apology, such as "Sorry if you were upset" or "I'm sorry, but you also...", is often more hurtful than silence. A complete apology has four components:

- **Acknowledgment:** acknowledge exactly what you did: "I said something in front of everyone that hurt you."

- **Responsibility:** accept responsibility for it without excuses: "That was my mistake, and I have no justification for it."
- **Redress:** propose a way of making amends: "If you wish, I will also apologize in front of the same group."
- **Commitment:** commit to not repeating the behavior, and remain true to that commitment.

25.3 Accepting an Apology and Forgiving

When someone sincerely apologizes, accept the apology with magnanimity. Forgiving does not mean forgetting or condoning the behavior; it means freeing oneself from the burden of resentment and reopening a path to the relationship. Once you have accepted an apology, do not remind the other person of that mistake in every subsequent disagreement, and do not recount it to others.

25.4 Mediation in Disputes

In disputes between friends, families or members of associations, the presence of a neutral person trusted by both sides sometimes smooths the path to reconciliation. A good mediator does not judge; he creates a safe space for listening. He gives both sides an equal opportunity, keeps their confidences and leaves the solution to them. As set out in Appendix Two, Iranian associations should have a clear mechanism for mediation, so that disputes are resolved before they lead to schism and estrangement.

A person's greatness lies not in never erring, but in the ability to apologize and to forgive.

CHAPTER 26

A Short Charter of Courtesy: Twenty Rules to Carry With You

What has been set out in the chapters of this part is gathered here into twenty short rules. These rules should be made available in associations, Persian schools, homes and at Iranian events, and each family is encouraged to choose one of them each week to practice.

- Greet everyone; first of all, the person who is least noticed.
- Learn other people's names correctly and say them correctly.
- Use "please," "thank you" and "I apologize" generously.
- Respect other people's time; arrive on time, and if you will be late, let them know in advance.
- Do not make a promise you cannot keep.
- Keep *ta'arof* in due measure; with someone who does not know the custom, speak plainly.
- Keep your voice low in public space.
- Listen more and interrupt less.
- Do not ask about other people's income, residence status, religion, bodies or private decisions.
- Do not repeat anything that is not true, kind and necessary.
- The secrets of others are a trust; do not disclose them without permission, even in order to help.
- In a multilingual group, speak the common language.
- Laugh with others, not at others.
- Criticize in private and praise in public.

- Greet even those who disagree with you, and share in their sorrows and joys.
- Show equal respect to women and men, and to all religions, ethnicities and ways of life.
- Help the newcomer, just as you would once have wished to be helped.
- Do not photograph anyone or publish their image without permission.
- Respect the law, the neighbors and the shared spaces of the host society.
- If you have caused hurt, apologize completely; and if you have received an apology, forgive with magnanimity.

Courtesy is the simplest form of patriotism: every time we treat another with kindness, we bring the Iran of tomorrow a little closer.

Concluding Remarks

The Iran of tomorrow will be built not only by a new constitution, but by a new human being. The history of transitions to democracy around the world has shown that democratic institutions do not endure without a democratic culture. Countries that, upon the collapse of despotism, changed only the structure of power and did not undertake the rebuilding of civic culture sooner or later returned to the same old patterns. By contrast, societies that accompanied their political transition with a cultural transition built enduring democracies.

We Iranians, inside and outside the country, stand today at a historic juncture. Millions of us have experienced life in free societies, and millions of others have fought for freedom at a heavy price. If these two experiences, the experience of living in freedom and the experience of struggling for it, are joined together, they can lay the foundations of a new civic culture that carries Iran from the cultivation of subjects to the cultivation of citizens.

This volume is an invitation to that union. It is an invitation for each of us, before expecting change from others and from governments, to begin with ourselves: in the bank queue, at the Thursday-night gathering, in the family group online, behind the wheel, in the local association. Being a global citizen does not begin with travel to distant lands; it begins with the decision to see the other, whoever he may be and wherever he may come from, as one's equal.

A free Iran will be built by those who love freedom; but a flourishing Iran will be built by responsible citizens.

Memorable Sayings From This Volume

For use in speeches, workshops and the media:

- Citizenship does not begin with a passport; it begins with the question of what my conduct does to others.
- The subject mentality asks, "Whom do you know?"; the civic mentality asks, "What is the rule?"
- In my home my freedom is boundless; in the street it extends only as far as my neighbor's peace.
- Awareness tells us what the world lacks; responsibility tells us what we must add.
- A faith that needs a loudspeaker to be heard has not yet found its way to the heart.
- Our city is only as clean as our hands, and only as safe as our steering wheels.
- Every time an acquaintance opens a door for us, a door is closed on someone else.
- A state that searches for morality in the privacy of homes and abandons it in the streets ruins both the home and the street.
- The secrets of others are a trust in our hands, not capital for conversation.
- Ours is the language of Sa'di; it must not become a refuge for our rudeness.
- One can be fully American, Canadian or German and still read Hafez on the night of Yalda.
- A community that cannot run an association together in exile will not be able to run a country together in the homeland.
- Before it is a system of government, democracy is a habit of dialogue.

- A free Iran will be built by those who love freedom; but a flourishing Iran will be built by responsible citizens.
- Courtesy is a language that every nation understands, even those who do not know Persian.
- In a foreign land, every Iranian is a book from which others read Iran.
- An honest "no" preserves a friendship; an unfounded "yes" wears it away.
- A person's greatness lies not in never erring, but in the ability to apologize and to forgive.
- Courtesy is the simplest form of patriotism.

Appendix One: A Glossary of Key Concepts

For use in classes and workshops, this glossary defines the principal concepts of the volume in plain language.

Concept	Definition
Citizen	An equal member of a political community who both enjoys rights and bears duties toward others and toward society.
The subject model (the subject)	A relationship imposed on the people by a despotic system, in which the human being is regarded not as a bearer of rights but as a recipient of the ruler's favor or oppression, and has no share in making the law. The term describes a structure of power, not a judgment on the people.
The parochial citizen (formerly "native citizen")	One who upholds the norms of his immediate community or native city, but whose moral circle is still confined to his in-group. The term refers to a moral horizon, not to place of residence, ethnicity or level of education.
The global citizen	One who, while preserving his national and cultural identity, makes the equal dignity of all human beings and universal values the basis of his conduct.
The informed citizen	One who knows his rights, the mechanisms of power and the problems of society.
The responsible citizen	One who turns awareness into conduct and regards himself as part of the solution.
Private ethics	Rules of conduct concerning a person's relationship with himself, his beliefs and those close to him; the domain of individual freedom.

Concept	Definition
Public ethics	Rules of conduct concerning a person's relationship with strangers and with shared space; the domain of collective obligation.
Privacy	Every person's right to decide about his own information, body, beliefs and personal life, and to remain free from the interference of others.
Public space	Any shared physical or virtual space in which all citizens hold an equal share.
The public sphere	The space of free dialogue among equal citizens about common affairs, free from the domination of the state and from private interests.
Imposed custom	A practice in which non-participation or objection carries a cost for the individual, and which has therefore become detached from free choice.
The harm principle	The principle that restricting an individual's freedom is justified only to prevent harm to others.
Social capital	A network of trust, norms of reciprocity and participation that facilitates cooperation among people.
Generalized trust	Trust in strangers, institutions and unknown compatriots, as opposed to trust confined to family and friends.
P**rti-b**zi	The substitution of connections for rules in gaining access to opportunities and services.
Meritocracy	The distribution of opportunities and responsibilities on the basis of ability and qualification.
Pluralism	Acceptance of the existence of diverse beliefs, lifestyles and identities as a reality and a wealth of society.
Civic equality	The enjoyment by all citizens of equal rights and opportunities without religious, ethnic, gender-based or ideological discrimination.
State neutrality	The state's refraining from favoring one religion, sect or belief over others, and its equal service to all citizens.
Integration	The migrant's conscious joining of the host society while preserving the best elements of his own culture.

Concept	Definition
Cultural self-alienation	Casting aside one's own cultural identity and superficially imitating the outward forms of another culture.
Cultural intelligence	The ability to understand and adjust one's conduct in multicultural situations.
Mediation	The resolution of disputes with the help of a neutral third party, through dialogue rather than force.
Civil society	The body of voluntary, professional and cultural institutions independent of the state that serve as schools for practicing citizenship.
The Golden Rule	Treat others as you would wish to be treated.

Appendix Two: A Model Code of Civic Conduct for Iranian Associations and Events

The following text is a model that associations, cultural centers, weekend schools and organizers of Iranian events inside and outside the country can adapt to their own circumstances and sign as a shared commitment of their members.

Preamble

We, the members of this association, believing in the equal dignity of all human beings and with the aim of building a civil, pluralistic and law-abiding community, undertake to observe the following principles in all the activities of the association.

Article 1: Respect and Equality

- All members and guests, regardless of religion, sect, ethnicity, gender, orientation, age, class and political views, enjoy equal respect and rights.
- Any form of belittlement, labeling, ethnic, gender-based or religious jokes, and verbal or physical harassment is prohibited.

Article 2: Privacy and Confidentiality

- Members' personal information, including addresses, telephone numbers, photographs and family details, shall not be published or passed on to others without their explicit consent.

- Photography and filming at events shall take place with the knowledge of those present, and the faces of those who do not wish it shall not be published.
- What is raised in confidential meetings or private conversations is held in trust.

Article 3: Dialogue and Dispute Resolution

- In meetings, the order of speaking shall be respected; criticism of ideas is free, but attacks on persons are prohibited.
- Disputes shall be resolved first through direct dialogue, then through the association's mediation committee and finally through legal channels, not through public exposure online.

Article 4: Transparency and Accountability

- The association's income and expenditures shall be reported transparently to members every year.
- Responsibilities and positions shall be assigned on the basis of free election and merit, and terms of office shall be limited.
- No member shall use his position in the association for personal or family gain.

Article 5: Public Events

- Local laws, permits, hours and noise limits shall be observed.
- The venue shall be returned clean.
- Inclusive cultural events shall be kept free of partisan symbols and slogans, so that all Iranians can feel a sense of belonging.

Article 6: Respect for the Host Society

- Members of the association respect the laws and culture of the host society, and the association helps newcomers learn their legal rights and obligations.

- The association participates in the civic and voluntary activities of the local community.

Article 7: Enforcement

- Violations of this code shall be addressed first with a friendly reminder, then with a written notice from the ethics committee and, in the event of repetition, with the suspension of membership.
- Every member has the right to appeal a decision of the ethics committee, and the appeal shall be considered by the general assembly.

A rule that everyone signs is stronger than a command that one person issues.

Suggested Further Reading

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- John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*.



To the Children of Iran

Citizenship is learned not in books, but in the streets. Every time you wait your turn in line, even when no one is watching; every time you keep faith with a secret entrusted to you; every time you lower your voice so that a neighbor's sleep is not disturbed; and every time you speak courteously with someone who does not think as you do, you lay a brick in the edifice of a homeland that has not yet been built. Iran will not be built by laws and leaders alone; it will be built by millions of small and silent acts. The greatness of a nation is measured not by the loudness of its cry, but by the depth of the respect its people show one another in silence. So before you seek to change the world, let your conduct today be such that, were every Iranian to repeat it, a free, flourishing and dignified Iran would come into being. To be a citizen of the world is to leave every place where you stand a little better than you found it.

EBRAHIM ROSHANDEL

Civic Ethics and Civic Responsibility