

## Reverent Republicanism: An Ethical Framework for Human Development and Global Peace

Saad Malook\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>\*Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Corresponding author: [saad.phil@pu.edu.pk](mailto:saad.phil@pu.edu.pk)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3289-9346>

**Keywords:** Republicanism, Reverence, Development Ethics, Capability Approach, Human Development, Global Peace, Moral and Political Philosophy

**DOI No:**

<https://doi.org/10.56976/jsom.v5i2.437>

*This article presents an account of reverent republicanism that underpins an ethical framework comprising five moral and political values to foster human development and global peace. Republicanism, as a political theory, envisions a society in which citizens are not subject to humiliation, exploitation, oppression, discrimination, or exclusion by the government or by others. The key argument of reverent republicanism as an ethical framework proclaims that all citizens are owed self-respect, dignity, equal status, freedom, and fraternity, and no one is subject to humiliation, exploitation, oppression, discrimination, or exclusion, irrespective of their racial, cultural, religious, national, or linguistic disparities, because every human person has human worth with distinctive potentials for bringing about the common good – human development and global peace. Reverence comprises a myriad of ethical values – self-respect, dignity, equal status, freedom, and fraternity – that recognise the value of human beings regardless of their identity, race, culture, nationality, or religion. Reverent republicanism envisages a reverent government and a reverent society, meaning neither government nor civil society uses arbitrary power to oppress or dominate others, while both enshrine reverence in their conduct. In this account of republicanism, reverence as a moral and political value plays a key role in protecting and nurturing infinite human potential – creativity and rationality – so fostering human capital for peaceful coexistence. Lack of reverence leads to hubris and arrogance, thwarting the development of human potential and peaceful coexistence in society. Thus, reverent republicanism not only fosters human potential but also helps resolve conflicts, which ultimately lead to peaceful coexistence in the world.*

## 1. Introduction

In the fractured world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, threats of nuclear warfare, environmental degradation, technological determinism, terrorism, and capitalist and imperial hegemony have not only created existential predicaments but also caused contempt for humanity through exploitation, humiliation, oppression, and poverty (Barry, 2005; Pettit, 2023; Malook, 2023a). Under these crucial circumstances, people are subject to tyranny, domination, religious, racial, economic, cultural, and linguistic-based discrimination and exclusion, which not only impede human flourishing but also peaceful coexistence. It is an undeniable fact that without a promising moral and political framework, neither human development nor global peace is possible. Following the tradition of republicanism, which envisages a self-governing society with active and virtuous citizens, I posit and defend *reverent republicanism*, which protects the citizens with a profound spirit of reverence for humanity. Reverent republicanism thus envisions a reverent government and a reverent society in which no citizen is subject to humiliation, exploitation, oppression, discrimination, or exclusion, thereby fostering human development and peaceful coexistence.

Reverent republicanism assumes that humanity is only a dependable unity among human persons, and it is therefore sacred, insofar as it warrants reverence rather than contempt (Malook, 2023b). The key argument of reverent republicanism as an ethical framework holds that all citizens are owed self-respect, dignity, equal status, freedom, and fraternity, and no one is subject to humiliation, exploitation, oppression, discrimination, or exclusion, irrespective of their racial, cultural, religious, national, or linguistic disparities, because every human person has human worth with distinctive potentials for bringing about the common good – human development and global peace. In an environment of contempt in which people are humiliated, exploited, and threatened in numerous ways, the development of human potential and peaceful coexistence is not possible (Barry, 2005; Malook, 2023c). Reverent republicanism determines the factors that foster human potential and, ultimately, peace. Accordingly, reverent republicanism nurtures the human potential to produce active and virtuous citizens who generate new knowledge, create art, build better social and political systems, and, in general, make a better social world. Hence, the central argument asserts that civil society and state institutions should foster reverence for humanity, which is vital for human development and peaceful coexistence.

Since the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, three significant human development theorists – Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, and Martha Nussbaum – have advanced the notion of human development. Mahbub ul Haq launched a broad-spectrum human development research program at the United Nations that does not identify or support any single value fundamental to human development (Haq, 1995). However, Sen and Nussbaum developed Haq’s general philosophy of human development together as the capability approach; they focus on two distinct values necessary for human development. According to Sen, freedom plays an integral role in human development (Sen, 1999). Nussbaum considers dignity as a cardinal value in human development (Nussbaum, 2019). Indeed, freedom and dignity are significant values, but reverence is necessary for human development and peaceful coexistence. Reverence is a multidimensional ethical value with moral and political implications for advancing the common good.

## **2. Reverent Republicanism**

The central ideas of classical republicanism, developed by Aristotle, Cicero, Polybius, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, hold that sovereignty resides in the people, who acquire the common good through civic virtue, active citizen participation, and the prevention of tyranny and corruption in society (Skinner, 2002). Philip Pettit, a contemporary political republican philosopher, develops an account of republicanism that focuses on freedom as non-domination, meaning that individuals are truly free, and no one has the right to use arbitrary power to interfere with them (Pettit, 1997; Pettit, 2023). In short, republicanism safeguards people from arbitrary power: the ability to interfere with others. In general, republicanism limits the unchecked power to protect people who are being (or can be) controlled or dominated by government or civil society.

Contrary to classical republican theories, reverent republicanism places reverence for each individual at the centre of political life. Drawing on Aristotle’s notion of human flourishing and Pettit’s notion of freedom as non-domination, I argue that mutual reverence is essential for the development of human potential and for peaceful coexistence. ‘Reverent republicanism’ is a moral and political framework that supports profound reverence for citizens because it does not allow treating anyone as a subject or a slave; it treats people as equal citizens of the nation. The master can use the arbitrary power to control, manipulate, humiliate, exploit, and coerce a slave (Pettit, 1997). Reverent republicanism rejects any political system, such as colonialism and imperialism, that exploits, oppresses, or humiliates

people. Indubitably, Aristotle’s notion of human flourishing is promising but lacks a moral underpinning. In modern philosophy, Immanuel Kant’s idea of human dignity is inspiring, but it is too individual and abstract. Rawls supports equal status and fairness, but it lacks a spirit of human fraternity. Aristotle, Kant, and Rawls are great philosophers in the history of philosophy, but they did not develop an ethical framework that could intertwine different values together for human development and global peace. To address this gap, the ethical framework of reverent republicanism offers a consistent set of five values: self-respect, dignity, freedom, equal status, and fraternity.

Reverent republicanism enhances the prospects of human development, in a broad sense, including people’s cognitive, moral, and political development. The cardinal end of reverent republicanism is to enhance people’s well-being and protect them from injustice, such as exploitation and humiliation. Reverence and respect are not the same (Woodruff, 2014). Reverence, which is beyond respect, is vital for the good life of an individual and a society (Malook, 2024b). The key idea of reverent republicanism is that all human persons are worthy of self-respect, dignity, equality, freedom, and fraternity, irrespective of their differences, because of their distinctive human worth. By ‘distinctive human worth’, I mean two things: first, human persons have more worth than other animals; second, human persons hold distinctive potentials, such as rationality and creativity, which warrant reverence (Malook, 2023a). Reverent republicanism is necessary for the cultivation of human potential and, eventually, for sustainable human development and peaceful coexistence.

Thus, reverent republicanism, as an ethical framework, must comprise at least five values: self-respect, dignity, freedom, equal status, and fraternity, which are vital for fostering human potential and resolving conflicts for peaceful coexistence.

## **2.1 Self-Respect**

Self-respect constitutes the inner foundation of an individual; if self-respect is valued, human potential flourishes; if it is undermined by humiliation, human potential is undermined. Self-respect is contrary to humiliation. When human potential flourishes, it helps create a better world, resulting in positive peace. ‘Self-respect’ means respecting oneself – one’s own and others’. The self is an ontological substance that constitutes human individuality (Iqbal, 2013; Malook, 2024a). David Middleton states that “self-respect is... one of the most important concepts that constitute our selfhood” (Middleton, 2006, p. 60). Middleton’s claim is correct because self-respect establishes the foundation of individuality of a person. Humiliation is

contrary to self-respect (Margalit, 1988). Humiliation harms the self of a person. I argue that all human persons have distinct selves (individualities) that require reverence rather than contempt, irrespective of their racial, religious, political, or linguistic differences. Reverence for self develops human potentials, while humiliation damages them. When the self-respect of human persons is honoured, they develop their cognitive, moral, social, and political capabilities.

To explain what self-respect is and how it is essential for human development and peaceful co-existence, I draw on Stephen L. Darwall's account of self-respect (1977), Avishai Margalit's account of self-respect and humiliation (1998), and John Rawls's account of self-respect (1971, 1999). In his classic paper, *Two Kinds of Respect* (1977), Stephen L. Darwall explains the notion of self-respect (Darwall, 1977). Darwall marshals on Virginia Held's thesis: "For persons to acquiesce in the avoidable denial of their own rights is to lack self-respect" (Held, 1973, p. 22). In Held's thesis, what is the central right whose denial lacks self-respect? This is the right of being a person. Darwall equates his notion of self-respect with a kind of respect which he calls recognition respect.

To understand Darwall's account of self-respect as recognition respect, it is pertinent to understand how he makes the distinction between recognition respect and appraisal respect. By 'recognition respect', Darwall means that the object of respect is a human person, being a human person, one's respect is (should be) recognised (Darwall, 1977). While by 'appraisal respect', Darwall means that the object of respect is the achievement of human persons, which means that by achieving something, one's respect is (should be) appraised (Darwall 1977). For instance, one has respect due to being a great soccer player or a great scientist. Darwall identifies self-respect with recognition respect (Darwall, 1977).

I endorse Darwall's identification of self-respect with recognition respect because both refer to human persons, as objects of respect. This means that, as human beings, we are all entitled to self-respect. Similarly, there are three significant explanations of self-respect: recognition self-respect, appraisal self-respect, and status self-respect. Recognition self-respect focuses on human persons as objects of respect. Appraisal self-respect focuses on the achievement of human persons as objects of appraisal. Finally, status self-respect is the recognition of the status of some kind, social, political, religious, or administrative. So, recognition self-respect, in Darwall's ethics, is promising because it is consistent with what we call self-respect being a human: being a human person means having self-respect.

To have self-respect for a person means to recognize the unique individuality of that person. I argue that self-respect is significant for two reasons. First, self-respect is a positive value that creates cooperation in social life. We can draw a rule of thumb: I will honour your self-respect if you honour my self-respect and the other way around. Self-respect fosters cooperation in society, while humiliation causes conflict. Thus, self-respect, by promoting cooperation, fosters human development and peaceful coexistence, while humiliation, by causing conflict, leads to human decadence and violence. If self-respect is essential for cooperation, it can be promising for human unity, shared life, and peaceful coexistence. Humiliation is a negative value that injures the self-respect of human persons. By injuring self-respect, humiliation creates conflicts and hostility among human persons. One whose self-respect is injured cannot flourish in one's natural human potential because self-respect is one of the most significant values for human development.

Every human person is owed self-respect irrespective of racial, religious, cultural, ethnic, national, or linguistic disparities. Self-respect does not humiliate one's self and other human fellows. The argument is based on two premises: first, self-respect is essential for human development because it provides persons with the prospects of flourishing. Second, self-respect is one of the essential values of the ethics of reverence for humanity, which promotes cooperation among human persons. In his seminal work, *The Decent Society* (1998), Avishai Margalit juxtaposes self-respect with humiliation; he defends self-respect and rejects humiliation. Margalit argues that 'self-respect' is "the honour persons bestow on themselves by virtue of their own humanity" (Margalit, 1988, p. 24). By virtue of humanity, this honour of self-respect is for all human persons.

On the contrary, Margalit argues that 'humiliation' is "a sound reason for a person to consider his or her self-respect injured" (Margalit, 1988, p. 9). As self-respect applies to all human persons, so does humiliation. According to Margalit: "Humiliation is ... injury to self-respect, that is, to the respect a human being deserves for the very fact of being human, and so it is not fitting to consider anything vital for human existence to be humiliating" (Margalit, 1988). If the self is the foundation of human existence, anything that harms this foundation is detrimental. Margalit holds that humiliation harms the foundation of human existence.

Margalit enumerates three central elements of humiliation: first, "Treating human beings as if they were not human — as beasts, machines or sub-humans; Second, performing actions that manifest or lead to loss of basic control; third, rejecting a human being from the

‘family of man’” (Margalit, 1988, p. 136). These elements of humiliation in Margalit’s mind include inequality, autocracy, and exclusion, respectively. On Margalit’s tripartite account, humiliation does not recognise people as equal human persons, autonomous human persons and members of humanity. Margalit argues that people are also humiliated by institutions. Fellow humans humiliate too.

Humiliation can be caused by fellow humans or institutions; both forms are condemnable. Anthony Quinton criticises Margalit’s account of humiliation that injures self-respect. Quinton uses Margalit’s example that the Jews were forced to get on their knees and scrub the streets of Vienna. According to Quinton, the Jews would be heroic enough to die rather than get injured in their self-respect (Quinton, 1997). I disagree with Quinton’s claim that giving life can be preferred to projecting one’s self-respect. The protection of life is more significant than protecting one’s self-respect.

In his most influential work, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), John Rawls argues that self-respect is the primary good (Rawls, 1999a). Rawls’s account of self-respect has two aspects: first, “it includes a person’s sense of his own value, his secure conviction that the conception of his good, his plan of life, is worth carrying out” (Rawls, 1999a, p. 386). Second, “self-respect implies a confidence in one’s ability, so far as it is within one’s power, to fulfil one’s intentions. When we feel that our plans are of little value, we cannot pursue them with pleasure or take delight in their execution” (Rawls 1999a, p. 386). These two reasons, in different ways, strengthen human individuality. This means that people who lack self-respect do not realise their own value, and they are not confident that what they are doing has any worth. Rawls is right that when one loses one’s self-respect, one cannot behave like a normal human person, such a person cannot be creative and productive.

Without self-respect, all aspirations and actions become futile and meaningless for people. If self-respect is injured, “nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire, and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism” (Rawls, 1999a, p. 386). According to Rawls, failing to acquire self-respect means failing to recognise one’s own worth, which results in shame (Rawls, 1999a). This is a very significant point that, without self-respect, all aspirations and actions become futile and meaningless for people.

Rawls’s other significant claim is that self-respect enhances the efficacy of social cooperation (Rawls, 1999a). In the absence of self-respect, a sense of worthlessness leads



people to be lazy and skeptical. Rawls states that it is quite rational that human persons secure their self-respect. Securing self-respect is vital for them for two reasons: first, the conception of the good gives them satisfaction. Second, its fulfilment provides them pleasure (Rawls, 1999a). Another significant aspect Rawls state is that self-respect ‘normally’ depends upon the respect of others. This mutual respect depends upon the conviction that their conceptions of the good are worth advancing (Rawls 1999a). For making people’s lives meaningful and worthwhile, we need to protect their self-respect.

Moreover, mutual respect directs them not only to treat one another with civility but also to provide the justification of their actions, if required. Rawls infers that self-respect creates mutual respect in society because those who respect themselves are expected to respect others. In contrast, self-contempt leads to contempt of others (Rawls, 1999a). So, self-respect promotes social cooperation, which help promote people’s human potential, capacities or skills.

Rawls holds that the people have a strong desire to avoid those social conditions which injure self-respect (Rawls, 1999a). Rawls states, “The social bases of self-respect are those aspects of basic institutions that are normally essential if citizens are to have a lively sense of their own worth as moral persons and to be able to realize their highest-order interests and advance their ends with self-confidence” (Rawls, 1999, p. 366). He defends the claim that social and political context affect people’s self-respect. Like Rawls, Martha C. Nussbaum, an American human development philosopher, supports self-respect in terms of non-humiliation. According to Nussbaum, “Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, and national origin” (Nussbaum, 2019, p. 242). Nussbaum’s idea of non-humiliation is significant for defending people's self-respect. So, Rawls and Nussbaum converge on the idea that social contexts affect self-respect.

In contrast to Rawls’s account of social bases of self-respect, Margalit argues that self-respect is independent of social contexts. Margalit states, “self-respect is tautologically the respect persons accord themselves without needing the opinion of others” (Margalit, 1998, p. 24). In order to acquire self-respect, one does not need any external authorization in the form of appreciation or recognition” (Margalit, 1998, p. 24). Margalit here defends the idea that people should first respect themselves before respecting others. When they are so



confident in themselves, others' validation may not matter. So, Margalit holds that self-respect needs social confidence independent of people's views and attitudes.

However, a lack of social confidence leads to a false sense of independence, which is the basis of slave morality. 'False independence' means that people are unable to recognise real independence. In contrast, people with social confidence create aristocratic morality, who do not take care of others' opinions and secure self-affirmation independent of others' outlooks. Slaves cannot acquire the capability of self-affirmation (Margalit, 1998). Slaves are slaves because they lose their self-respect themselves, while masters are masters because they honor their self-respect themselves. If slaves do not acquire the required self-respect, do they develop their natural human potentials? The answer should be in negation.

Significantly, self-respect is not the same as social honour. People get social honour from society by their merits, while they acquire self-respect by their humanity (Margalit, 1998). That is why Margalit states: "Self-respect is independent of any action or omission by other people toward one, whether one is a slave like Epictetus or an emperor like Marcus Aurelius" (Margalit, 1998, p. 11). So, according to Margalit, self-respect is independent of social contexts. Margalit's account of self-respect and Darwall's account of recognition respect are consistent. Sadly, people are mostly humiliated on the basis of racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, national, or linguistic disparities (Margalit, 1998). People should be respected on the basis of our common humanity. In contrast, if they are humiliated on the basis of their secondary identities, other than their human identity, they are wrongfully humiliated. This act of humiliation is a contempt for humanity that, of course, obstructs human development and peace in society.

To sum up, self-respect is a vital value of reverence for humanity, in general, and reverent republicanism, in particular. Self-respect is a positive value that strengthens human potential for productivity, creativity, and social engagement. In contrast, humiliation is a negative value that harms the development of human potential and affects people's productivity, creativity, and sociality. So, self-respect not only helps develop human individuality but also promotes social cooperation, which in turn leads to peaceful coexistence.

## 2.2 Dignity

Dignity is another significant moral and political value that protects the inherent worth of human beings. Reverent republicanism protects citizens from exploitation and defends their dignity, enabling them to become creative and peaceful members of society. Nussbaum rightly defends dignity as a vital value for human development (Nussbaum, 2019; 2012). The argument is that if people's dignity is protected, they develop their human capabilities. I agree with Nussbaum's argument, but I argue that dignity is a strand of reverence. If the inherent worth of human beings is subject to reverence, humans flourish their potential. The key claim is that all persons, being human, have inalienable basic dignity, irrespective of their racial, religious, political, national, cultural, or linguistic differences. Immanuel Kant also defends the idea that self-respect is something all human persons need, as it is an end in itself (Kant, 2002). Exploitation is contrary to dignity. In the Kantian sense, 'exploitation' means human persons are taken simply as means for the ends. In general, exploitation takes different forms, such as economic, religious, racial, and political; for instance, bonded labor is a form of economic exploitation.

Nussbaum states: "People may be unequal in wealth, class, talent, strength, achievement, or moral character—but all are equal as bearers of an inalienable basic human dignity that cannot be lost or forfeited" (Nussbaum, 2012, p. 61). She rightly states that there can be infinite differences in human beings, but they hold inherent dignity as human beings. Dignity can be violated in several ways based on racial, religious, cultural, or national disparities. Jeremy Waldron, a New Zealander philosopher, argues that the dignity of all human persons in all societies should be respected (Waldron, 2017). Like Nussbaum, Waldron rightly defends human dignity across cultures. Thus, the ethics of reverence for humanity protects the dignity of every person, helps people develop their human potential, and, in the long term, creates peace in society. In a reverent society, people's dignity is respected for the common good.

One classic treatment of human dignity is attributed to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, an Italian scholar. In a speech entitled '*Oration on the Dignity of Man*' (1496), Pico argues that the dignity of human persons means that they do not possess any fixed nature with ordained potentials in themselves which they can use to create whatever they want to create. Pico articulates that after creating human persons, God addressed them:



“O Adam, we have given you neither a place nor a form nor any ability exclusively your own, so that according to your wishes, and your judgement, you may have and possess whatever place, form, or abilities you desire. The nature of all other beings is limited and constrained in accordance with the laws prescribed by us. Constrained by no limits, in accordance with your own free will, in whose hands we have placed you, you shall independently determine the bounds of your own nature. We have placed you at the world’s centre, from where you may more easily observe whatever is in the world. We have made you neither celestial nor terrestrial, neither mortal nor immortal, so that with honor and freedom of choice, as though the maker and moulder of yourself, you may fashion yourself in whatever form you prefer. You shall have the power to degenerate into the inferior forms of life which are brutish; you shall have the power, through your soul’s judgement, to rise to the superior orders which are divine” (Pico, 1987, p. 244-5).

Pico’s thesis on the undetermined nature of human nature reveals that people have boundless possibilities of development in different ways. Pico’s approach to judging human dignity in reference to human nature is distinctive, highlighting the uniqueness of human persons.

Rationality is one of the main values that make human persons worthy of dignity. Human persons have superiority over non-human animals due to their rationality. Human persons do not have any permanent nature. There is an unlimited range of potentials, and rationality is one of them. Non-human animals have certain instincts that indicate a fixed nature. In contrast, human nature is open, flexible, and extendable. This means that human persons are bestowed with distinctive cognitive, moral, and political potentials, which do not exist in non-human creatures, at least at a higher level, such as rationality and creativity.

Two premises explain why rationality matters in human life. The first premise asserts that rationality fosters creativity. Rationality is one of the greatest tools in human persons, which means they have superiority over other animals. Rationality helps discover the secrets of the universe and human nature. Some non-human animals possess a limited level of rationality that they can use for their everyday matters. Yet in human beings, rationality helps make plans, strategies, policies, laws, and create arts, skyscrapers, massive buildings, airplanes, ships, computers, and rockets. Thus, rationality is a unique tool in human persons.



The second premise holds that human creativity makes human persons worthy of dignity. Human persons are the most creative creatures. Non-human animals are not as creative as human persons. Fellow non-human animals are less creative than human persons. For instance, apes, who are supposed to be the forefathers of the human race, have lived in groves for millions of years. They live a set pattern of life without any creative adventures. In contrast, human persons have been creating new ways of living in every domain of life.

To conclude, dignity is an essential value of the ethics of reverence for humanity because all human persons are worthy of it despite their racial, cultural, religious, and national disparities. Autonomous human persons are devoid of any kind of exploitation, that is, economic, religious, cultural, linguistic, or ethnic. Only autonomous human persons can live their lives with dignity. Consequently, the idea of human dignity is promising for human development and peaceful coexistence. Accordingly, reverent republicanism holds that the dignity of all human beings should be respected so that they can be creative and virtuous citizens. On the contrary, it protects citizens from any kind of exploitation by the government and civil society.

### **2.3 Freedom**

Freedom is one of the most significant moral and political values of reverent republicanism. Freedom means one has the choice to do what one wants, and it is not just the absence of force. Freedom helps develop human potential and, thereby, peaceful coexistence. In the republican sense, freedom means autonomy. There are two premises of the argument: first, choice implies autonomy. Second, freedom implies choice. Freedom is essential for human development because it helps develop cognitive, moral, and political potential. Freedom is contrary to coercion, interference, or domination. So, reverent republicanism provides equal freedom to all human persons while it eradicates coercion, interference, or domination, and even coercion of criminals. Philip Pettit, a neo-republican philosopher, is an influential defender of freedom as non-domination (Pettit, 1997; 2023). I agree with Pettit's account of freedom because it protects people from oppression, tyranny, and coercion.

Freedom implies autonomy, which may be from poverty, ignorance, oppression, domination, or authoritarianism. To defend the argument, I explain Amartya Sen's staple argument in *Development as Freedom* (1999). Sen argues that freedom is a key to human development. From a broader perspective, he claims that freedom is both the means and the end of development. Sen argues that freedom expands people's functions and capabilities.



The notion of capability refers to “the capacity of individuals to do the things that make their lives meaningful” (Sen, 1999, p. 3). To expound his argument, he juxtaposes the expansion of freedom with the eradication of “unfreedoms”. He holds that unfreedoms may be natural or human-made. Sen writes, “Development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states” (Sen, 1999, p. 3). Sen is correct that under the coercion of different unfreedoms, human capabilities cannot be enhanced. For instance, religious exploitation of a minority often causes sectarian violence (Sen, 1999). It is true that different kinds of exploitation, including religious, economic, or political, obstruct the development of human capabilities.

Choice implies autonomy. The choice is a significant value that gives alternatives. Mahbub ul Haq defines ‘human development’ as extending choices in a broader sense. According to Mahbub ul Haq, “The basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. People often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in income or growth figures: greater access to knowledge, better nutrition and health services, more secure livelihoods, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, political and cultural freedoms, and a sense of participation in community activities” (Haq, 1995, p. 14). Haq correctly holds that people should have unlimited choices. Each choice is significant. He further states, “The objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives” (Haq, 1995, p. 14). Haq’s account of human development is promising. So, choice promotes creativity, which helps create alternatives.

Sen distinguishes between two aspects of freedom, which he calls a ‘process aspect’ and an ‘opportunity aspect’. By the ‘process aspect of freedom’, Sen means that one has the capacity to perform certain actions within the rules of society. By ‘opportunity aspect of freedom’, he means that one has the capacity to actually achieve freedoms in society (Sen, 1999). The notion of “capabilities” in Sen’s development framework is significant because it provides the capacity of “persons to lead the kind of lives they value—and have reason to value” (Sen, 1999, p. 18). He argues that people’s capabilities mean “the alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve” (Sen, 1999, p. 75). He holds that poverty undermines people’s capabilities. Thus, Sen’s account of freedom supports human development. Developing humans’ well-being is a kind of reverence for them.

To sum up, freedom implies autonomy. Freedom enhances people’s cognitive, moral, and political capabilities. Freedom as autonomy is vital for human development and peaceful coexistence. No citizen is subject to domination, coercion, or oppression. Thus, reverent republicanism envisages that government and civil society protect the freedom of people so that they can be autonomous in making their own decisions to improve their lives.

## 2.4 Equal Status

Reverent republicanism values equal status while rejecting any form of discrimination against human persons. ‘Equal status’ means that no one is above or below the others. ‘Equal status’ means moral equality. The key argument is that human persons have equal moral status, meaning they are worthy of reverence regardless of their racial, religious, political, or linguistic differences. Reverence helps recognise our equal moral status in this human world beyond the differences of race, colour, culture, or religion. According to Woodruff, reverence helps one ‘knowing one’s place’ as a human being in the world (Woodruff, 2014, p. 57). Knowing one’s place in this social world means that one knows one’s equal humanity.

Equal status also supports human development and peaceful coexistence. Equal status is contrary to discrimination. There is a wide range of discrimination on the basis of race, colour, language, culture, religion, or nationality. I argue that human persons cannot develop their human potential when they are discriminated. For instance, slavery does not value the moral equality of human persons. In the contemporary world, many people are not only discriminated against by one another on their national, religious, ethnic, and linguistic disparities but also are prosecuted and killed. Thus, reverent republicanism supports the equal status of all human persons in the world.

Moral equal status leads to human unity. Human unity requires equal respect for one another. Goethe argues that all humans deserve profound respect because everyone has a “relation to his [her] equals, and, therefore, to the whole human race” (Goethe, 1907, p. 72). Goethe’s account of human equal status entails the notion of human unity. Significantly, Goethe’s standpoint of equality, which unites human persons together, in a broader sense, has a cosmopolitan character because it overlooks the cultural, religious, or racial disparities among human persons. Thus, moral equality is essential for human unity.

Waldron argues that, despite many differences in age, intelligence, gender, culture, colour, or education, human persons are fundamentally equal to one another (Waldron, 2017).



To defend his thesis of basic equality, Waldron argues that basic equality depends upon equal worth rather than merit. There are different kinds of merit in social life. Merit can arise from skills, achievements, deserts, wants, professions, and other capabilities that enable different prices for the relevant services.

Merit-based decision-making may sometimes be justified because the criterion of merit is useful across different arenas of social life. However, Waldron states that if merits are erased, what remains is equal human worth. So, human worth is more significant than merit. Waldron draws a distinction between merit and worth; here, merit refers to acquired properties, such as skills and achievements. In contrast, human worth is shared across cultures. Worth is inherent to human persons.

One question raised by the claim that humans have equal moral worth is whether people with cognitive disabilities that undermine their rationality have moral worth equal to those without such disabilities, and, if they do, in what sense are they equal? The answer to this question has serious implications for the notion of reverence developed here. Waldron argues that cognitively disabled members of the human community should receive equal consideration and equal concern because most of the time they pass a required minimum level of rationality and moral agency. This minimum level of rational and moral agency helps them to live in a society. In the case of cognitively disabled people, there are some substantive demands of basic equality, such as the right to vote, which may not be viable because they may not decide what is good or bad even for themselves.

However, “other normative implications of basic equality stand firm” for cognitively disabled persons, such as they are entitled to: “Equal considerations of interests...and other forms of equal concern” (Waldron, 2017, p. 253). Waldron’s extension of moral equality to cognitively disabled persons seems problematic because they have limited autonomy. However, Waldron’s distinction between merit and worth helps establish that cognitively disabled persons are equal to those without cognitive impairment. If we consider cognitively disabled people from the perspective of merit, it is clear that they cannot develop certain skills, achievements, deserts, wants, professions, and capabilities. However, Waldron argues that if we set aside issues of merit, the worth of disabled people as human persons cannot be denied. To be human does not mean the number of skills acquired, but moral worth, which is inherent in every human person. So, despite disability, they are worthy of reverence because they have equal moral worth as humans.

To sum up, the equal status of all human persons is a central value of reverent republicanism. The claim that human persons have equal moral status is fundamental for the development of human potential and peaceful coexistence. In contrast, discrimination creates conflicts and division in human society. Thus, the equal status of human persons is a vital value of reverent republicanism, fostering human development and peaceful coexistence.

## 2.5 Fraternity

Reverent republicanism is consistent with cosmopolitanism, and it supports human fraternity. ‘Fraternity’ means that we rise or fall together, and there is no *we* versus *them*, because we all belong to a common humanity. In his seminal two-volume work, *Democracy in America* (1840), Alexis de Tocqueville advances the idea of the public spirit of a community (Tocqueville, 2010), which is promising, but it needs to be rooted in reverence to be more meaningful. Fraternity includes all human persons and does not exclude any human person from the circle of the human community. Fraternity is vital for human development and global peace. ‘Fraternity’ refers to two interdependent ideas: human unity and human sympathy. Human fraternity includes all human persons and excludes none, and sympathy for all human persons and apathy for none. As human persons, we have an obligation to do good to our fellow human beings. Human fraternity is the opposite of human alienation. The expressions ‘human fraternity’ and ‘human solidarity’ are used interchangeably. The notion of fraternity exists in both Western and Islamic traditions.

In the Western tradition, Richard Rorty, Bruce Mazlish, Amartya Sen, and Immanuel Kant explicate the notion of human fraternity. In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty explains ‘human solidarity’ as the idea that “there is something within each of us – our essential humanity – which resonates to the presence of this same thing in other human beings” (Rorty, 1995, p. 189). In Rorty’s argument, ‘our essential humanity’ means that this is the only thing that all human persons share with one another. This essential humanity leads to recognising human identity. In contrast, there are different kinds of social identities, which are created on the basis of cultures, religions, languages, or nationalities.

Sen develops his standpoint of human identity, which implies a kind of human fraternity. In *The Idea of Justice*, Amartya Sen writes: “Even the identity of being human – perhaps our most basic identity – may have the effect, when fully seized, of broadening our viewpoint....The imperatives that we may associate with our humanity may not be mediated by our membership of smaller collectivities such as specific ‘peoples’ or ‘nations’. Indeed,



the normative demands of being guided by ‘humanity’ or ‘humaneness’ can build on our membership of the wide category of human beings, irrespective of our particular nationalities, or sects, or tribal affiliations (traditional or modern)” (Sen, 2009, p. 142). Sen’s argument claims that human identity is the basic identity that cannot be denied. This account of human identity supports the idea of human fraternity because being a human person means one shares the core of one’s identity with other human persons.

Sympathy is another vital aspect of human fraternity. In *Globalisation and Transformation* (2015), Bruce Mazlish argues, “Human beings begin life from a small family to tribal, nation states and then bond at a larger scale. The bond at a larger scale that holds us together is humanity” (Mazlish, 2015, p. 2). Mazlish’s account of humanity is historical, showing the transformation of family life from tribes and nation-states to a larger bond. This larger bond, which includes all human persons and excludes none, is humanity. Thus, the bondage of humanity underpins human persons across cultures.

Mazlish’s argument shows that every human is bonded with other humans, and so they have moral obligations to one another. Leonardo Lazarte best explains the central thesis of reverence for humanity as a form of sympathy. In “What Does It Mean to Be Human?”, Leonardo Lazarte states: “Today one of the principal foci of what is to be human is not only individual identity but also reverence toward our fellow humans, related or distant. It has to do with autonomous individuals co-penetrating with their local community and with the grand global monad for the well-being of all” (Lazarte, 2000, p. 219). Lazarte’s thesis is true: being human is a necessary condition for giving reverence to fellow human persons, whether near or distant. Only autonomous human persons have a sense of reverence for people in the local and global community.

Like the Western tradition, the notion of human fraternity occupies a central position in the Islamic tradition. To analyse the notion of fraternity, I explain Shaykh Mushrifuddin Sa’di’s idea of fraternity. Sa’di, a thirteenth-century Persian polymath, best explains the idea of human fraternity in his book, *The Gulistan* (The Rose Garden). Sa’di’s account of human fraternity is based on two ideas: human unity and moral sympathy.

In a poem, *Bani Adam* (Children of Adam), Shaykh Sa'di articulates:

Human persons are the parts of (a body for) each other,  
For, all of them have been created from one substance.

When time causes pain to one organ (of a body)  
The other organs (of the body) may not be relieved.

If you are carefree of others' problems,

You do not deserve to be called a human person (Sa'di, 2008, p. 22).

Sa'di's account of human fraternity affirms human unity and sympathy. Significantly, Sa'di argues that human fraternity is essential to live with fellow humans. In contrast, if one is not a supporter of human fraternity, one is not a human being.

To sum up, reverent republicanism supports human fraternity because all human beings share common humanity. It does not exclude others based on their race, religion, colour, or language. Hence, all the elements of reverent republicanism together contribute to the common good, rather than any one of these aspects of reverence achieving this on its own.

### **3. Reverent Republicanism, Human Development, and Global Peace**

Reverent republicanism provides an overarching ethical framework to foster human development and global peace. There are different forms of contempt for humanity, including humiliation, exploitation, coercion, discrimination, and exclusion; each is detrimental to human development and world peace. For instance, humiliation and exploitation not only impede the development of human potential but also create conflicts among people. When one is humiliated, one's self is injured, and one's human potential cannot be developed naturally. Similarly, when people are exploited, intimidated, or discriminated against, they cannot grow. Certainly, humiliation and exploitation are malign for human development and peaceful coexistence. Instead, reverence is a moral and political value that strengthens civil society and state institutions, promoting human development and cooperation and leading to peace (Malook, 2024c).

Reverent republicanism holds that civil society and state institutions should promote self-respect, dignity, freedom, equality, and fraternity in social life. It has two aspects: first, it supports moral and political values, such as self-respect, dignity, freedom, equality, and fraternity, which support the development of human capabilities, such as rationality and

creativity. This aspect of reverent republicanism makes human persons productive in many ways. They develop their human capabilities and contribute to numerous arenas, including generating knowledge, creating literature (such as poetry, novels, drama), performing arts (theatre, dance, singing, music, painting, acting), participating in governance through democracy, doing scientific research, playing sports, and celebrating cultural festivals (Malook, 2023d). Second, it abolishes the causes of conflicts, violence, and injustice. This aspect of reverent republicanism rejects humiliation, exploitation, discrimination, and oppression in society, which cause conflicts and, if not resolved, eventually lead to tyranny, violence, or terrorism. Peace depends upon the mutual reverence among people and nations. Thus, reverent republicanism comprises five seminal consistent moral and ethical values: self-respect, dignity, freedom, equal status, and fraternity, which not only foster human potentials but also resolve conflicts for peaceful coexistence.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This article expounded the notion of reverent republicanism as an ethical framework and determined its implications for human development and global peace. The key argument of reverent republicanism asserts that all human persons are worthy of self-respect, dignity, equality, freedom, and fraternity, despite their numerous disparities, because of their distinctive human worth. According to reverent republicanism, no human person should be subject to humiliation, exploitation, discrimination, domination, or exclusion because of racial, religious, cultural, or national disparities. This has two implications, one moral and one political. The moral implication is that human agents should have reverence for one another. The political implication is that community and state institutions should promote the spirit of reverence in society.

It is, I believe, no overstatement to say that the root of almost all the evils that humans perpetrate on each other is a lack of reverence for humanity, a lack that finds expression in acts of discrimination, exploitation, humiliation, despotism, and other social pathologies. If a lack of reverence for humanity is the cause of these pathologies, then a very widespread adoption and acceptance of an ethics of reverence for humanity would, if it could be secured, provide the cure (Malook, 2023a). Reverent republicanism is a promising ethical framework that addresses the gaps in the theories of republicanism, human development, and peace studies. This ethical framework can help guide scholars, educators, legislators, and policymakers in building progressive and peaceful societies.



**Acknowledgements:** *This paper is based on the author's doctoral research at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. The author would like to thank Dr. Carolyn Mason and Dr. Douglass Campbell for reading the original text and providing substantial comments and suggestions.*

## 5. References

- Barry, B. (2005). *Why Social Justice Matters*. Cambridge, UK, Malden, USA: Polity Press.
- Darwall, S. L. (1977). *Two Kinds of Respect*. *Ethics*, Vol. 88 (1).
- Held, V. (1973). "Reasonable Progress and Self-Respect," *Monist*, Vol 57 (1).
- Kant, I. (2002). *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Edited and translated by Allen W. Wood (New Haven and London: Yale University Press).
- Lazarte, L. (2000). *What Does It Mean to be Human?* ed. Frederick Frank, Janis Rose, and Richard Connolly. New York: Saint Martin's Press.
- Mahbub H. (1995). *Reflections on Human Development*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Malook, S. (2023a). "Muhammad Iqbal's Pacifist Ethics and Global Peace in the Post-9/11 World", *Al-Manhal*, Vol. 3 (2): 71-83.
- Malook, S. (2023b). *The Ethics of Reverence for Humanity: A Rationale for a Cosmopolitan Common Mind for Global Peace*, a PhD thesis submitted to the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.
- Malook, S. (2023c). "The Ethical Implications of Immanuel Kant's Philosophy for Human Development and Global Peace". *Journal of Academic Research for Humanities*. Vol. 3 (3): 270-282.
- Malook, S. (2023d). "The Politics of Nationalism, Human Development and Global Peace". *Research Journal for Societal Issues*. Vol. 5 (2): 428-439.
- Malook, S. (2024a). "Making Sense of Muhammad Iqbal's Metaphysics of Egoism". *Al-Ida'at*. Vol. 4(2): 14-26.
- Malook, S. (2024b). "Reverence as a Cardinal Ethical Value in the Western Philosophy", *Research Journal for Societal Issues*. Vol. 6 (2): 286-302.

- Malook, S. (2024c). “The Prisoner’s versus Pardoner’s Dilemmas: A Juxtaposition of Two Strategic Decision-Game Theoretic Approaches in Social Sciences”. *Journal of Social and Organizational Matters*. Vol. 3(3): 52-74.
- Margalit, A. (1998). *The Decent Society*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Mazlish, B. (2015). *Globalization and Transformation*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Middleton, D. (2006). “Three Types of Self-Respect”, *Res Publica* 12 (1).
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2000). *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2012). *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2019). *The Cosmopolitan Tradition: A Noble but Flawed Ideal*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Pettit, P. (1997). *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government*. Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Pettit, P. (2023). *The State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pico della Mirandola, G. (1987). “Oration on the Dignity of Man”, in *The Italian Renaissance Reader*, eds. Julia Conaway and Mark Musa. New York: Meridian.
- Quinton, A. (1997). “Humiliation”, *Social Research* 64 (1), 77-89.
- Rawls, J. (1999). *Collected Papers*, ed. Samuel Freeman. Cambridge and Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Rawls, J. (1999a). *A Theory of Justice*. Revised ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Rorty, R. (1995). *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Reprint. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sa’di, Shaykh M. (2008). *The Gulistan*. The Rose Garden of Sa’di), trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Bethesda, Maryland: Ibex Publishers.
- Sen, A. (1979). “Equality of What?”, In *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. delivered at Stanford University on May 22.

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York: Anchor Books.

Sen, A. (2009). *The Idea of Justice*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Skinner, Q. (2002). *Visions of Politics: Renaissance Virtues*. Vol. 2 UK & USA: Cambridge University Press.

Tocqueville, A. D. (2010). *Democracy in America*. Edited by Edurardo Nolla and translated by James T. Schleifer. Indiana: Liberty Fund, Inc.

Waldron, J. (2017). *One Another's Equals: The Basis of Human Equality*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Woodruff, P. (2014). *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.