

The Leader & Youth

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THE LEADER OF THE REVOLUTION'S VISIT WITH A GROUP OF YOUTH ON THE OCCASION OF YOUTH DAY

* How do you feel when you meet the youth?

* What is the first thing do you have to say to them?

When I am accompanied by youth and when I am exposed to a youth environment, I feel the like one who is breathing in the fresh morning air. I feel a freshness and vitality. The first thing that normally flashes into my mind that I have thought about a number of times, is that “do they (youth) know that a star is shining on their foreheads” I see this star, but do they see it too? The star of youth is very bright and full of good fortune. I think if the youth discover this valuable and unique asset in their lives, they will make use of it in the best way, God willing.

* How did you spend the period of your youth?

Indeed, the situation those times was different from that of today and it was very bad. The youth environment was not a desirable one, not only for me as a student of theology but for all the youth as well (I would like remark that I was student of theology simultaneous with my primary- school period). Attention was not paid to them. A lot of potential was destroyed and we witnessed this phenomenon with our own eyes. I even saw it in the of school theology as well as in the universities (because I had had contact with university students and I was very close to them for many years).

There were lots of shining potential, and there were also lots of people who probably did not possess enough ability for the courses in which they were studying but it is possible that they could have been masters in other fields but nobody were aware of them and nobody understood.

As “Mr. Mir Baqheri” pointed out, which he expressed correctly that before the revolution I had spent the entire period of my youth with them. When the revolution achieved victory I was about 39 years old, by then, I had spent most of my life from 17 or 18 to 39 with the youth, whether with students of theology and religion or with outside the field of theology. I felt that Muhammad Rida Pahlavy's regime had done something that youths deviate toward decadence, toward moral decadence as well as decadence in their identity and in their very personality. Of course I can not claim that regime had deliberately planned to encourage our country's youth toward lives of decadence, it may or may not be so, but what I can say with certainty is that they had planned and were running the country in such a way that it necessitated that one be totally distant from matters of politics and of life.

Would you believe me if I say that people like me, in their 20's were not aware of who were the people in the ruling government? And nowadays, do you know anybody in this country who does not know who the education minister is? Or who is the minister of economy and finance? Or is there anybody who does not know the president (Muhammad Khatami)? Even people in the farthest reaches of the country are aware. In that era all layers of society



—especially the youth were unconscious of political affairs. Youth were mostly occupied with daily affairs, and some of them had to work very hard just to get a piece of bread to eat; of course a part of their earning was not only spent on eating they were spending it on other things as well.

If you study the books at that period on Latin America and Africa- “frantz Fanon” and others who were writing books at that time which have remained in vogue up till today because of their own validity -you will find out that our situation was exactly the same. No one dared to write about Iran, but one could easily write, for instance on Africa, or Mexico or Chile. Reading these books, I found out that our situation actually is the same as those countries.

I mean, that young worker who after working very hard just to earn some pennies, would spend half of his pay on sensuality, pleasure seeking and things such as these. These were the same things that we read about in those books and we saw that in reality the same conditions prevailed in our society. It was truly very bad. Youth environment was not a good environment. Of course within their hearts it was different; because fundamentally the young is full of joy, hope, excitement and so forth.

I myself, personally had a very exciting youth, both before the outbreak of the revolution my literary and artistic activities gave some excitement in my life. And also after the outbreak of the struggle in 1341 -at that time I was 23 years old- naturally we found ourselves at heart of the basic excitement of the country, I was imprisoned twice in 1342,- detention, investigation –you know how all this can excite a person. Afterwards, being released, a person would feed even more excited on seeing huge masses of people interested in such things, and being a witness to a leader like Imam Khomeini guiding them and correcting their actions and thoughts, the excitement increased even more. This is how life was for people like me who were living and thinking in this category it was extremely exciting, but it was not so for everybody.

Of course, youth naturally gather together because it gladdens their hearts.- I mean there is a kind of happiness in their nature. They enjoy eating and speaking, looking in the mirror, and they enjoy holidays. You (youths) will not believe that, when a person had passed his youth he will not enjoy, for example, delicious food as much as you do. At that time, sometimes our elders -who were at the same age as I am now- said some things that made us astonished, we asked ourselves, why did they think like that? Now I understands that those poor people were not too wrong. Of course I have not separated myself totally from youth and even now I feel something of the youth within myself which I will not let myself lose.

But those who were subject to old age, as a matter of course did not feel the enjoyment that a youth feels in all aspects of his \ her life. It was like this at that time. I do not claim that an atmosphere of grief dominated, but there was an atmosphere of negligence and of unawareness and of a lack of identity.

That is why we, who were thinking seriously and deeply in affairs of struggle, put our efforts (extricate the) youth as far as possible out of the circle of the cultural influence of the regime. For instance, I myself used to go to the mosque to teach tafsir, preach to the people after prayers and at times I would go to other cities and give lectures. The main point of my attention was to take youths out of cultural noose of the regime. I considered it an “invisible noose”. I said “there is an invisible noose which is taking all of the people in a particular direction” and I would have to tear this lasso away and release the youth as far as possible.

Whoever got rid of that mental noose –which first of all required piety and secondly conversion toward Imam Khomeini’s thoughts- would become sort of immune. It was like this in those days. This very generation got the basic fundamentals of the revolution. Now, when I look at our society I can identify many of those individuals, whether they were related to me or not.

At any rate you are in a better period now, the atmosphere is better. Of course I do not say that our youth are provided with everything and that everything is running as it should, but in comparison to that time, today’s situation is better. In my opinion a youth can afford a good life today and find his or her human identity and personality if he or she wants.

*** What is your definition of a Muslim youth and what are his or her characteristics?**

*** How can a youth reach his goals in the course of life?**

Of course it cannot be easily traversed. The condition that you put makes it very difficult for me to answer you. Actually nor every important and serious work could be done easily. If a man wants to realize valuable goals, he has to undergo lots of trouble and effort - this is inevitable. Basically, amongst the important characteristics of youth, I consider three as the most evident, and if these are identified and directed in a right direction it will be feasible to answer your question. These three characteristics are as follows:

Energy, hope and innovation. These are the three most salient characteristics of the youth. If the media – be it a religious lecturer, a lecturer in cultural and intellectual affairs, T.V and Radio or schools- as cultural assistance can direct these three main characteristics, I think, it will be very easy for a young person to find the Islamic path because that which is required by Islam is for us to put our potentials into effect.

The Qur'an contains a very basic point and it is not bad that I express it for you dear youth in that it focuses upon piety. When individuals want to see themselves in terms of piety, prayer, fasting, servitude, worship, thikr and du'a come to their minds. It may be that they may all be a part of piety but none of them, themselves mean piety means being careful of oneself. Piety means that human being should know what he is actually doing, and that he chooses his every movement in accordance with his own will, thought and decision; it is like a person who is riding a tame horse, horse, holding its bridle and knowing where he will be going; this is piety. A person who does not have piety does not have control over his movements, decisions and future. According to words of the Nahjul Balagha" he is like one who is placed on a refractory horse,- without having any control over it. Having the bridle in his hands, he does not know where he will go and has no choice but to go wherever horse goes and there is no saving him. If we take piety with this meaning in mind, in my opinion it will be easy to travel this path of course, not very easy however. It is feasible for a youth to find the Islamic way of life; if one is religious, one has to be careful about one's deeds, about this venture, this word, this friendly relationship this lesson and work, this Action and thought, are they correct or incorrect? This very thinking about the correctness or incorrectness about one's actions is piety.

If one is not religious, but is however in that very state he will be guided towards religiosity.

The Holy Qur'an says: "it is a guide to those who guard (against evil)" it does not say: "A guide for those who believe: ".

The first expression means that a non- religious person could be guided by Qur'an if he has the piety, (it is possible for a non-religious person to be pious in the meaning we have outlined). But if a believer does not have piety, probably he is not firm in his faith and its existence will depend upon his situation: If he is located in a favorable environment his faith will stay with him.

Therefore if we utilize these three characteristics in the context of piety and guide them, it will be very easy for them to live in the way advised by Islam, this will be especially so in our country which is an Islamic country. It is very important point to note that the government- the national authority-is under the auspices of Islam. The people who have authority in this country, believe deeply in Islam, and faith has deep roots in the souls of the people as well. Therefore the way is paved to be a Muslim and live like a Muslim I will give a short example and conclude my answer to your question.

During the imposed war which, unfortunately, were not able to experience its upliftment -of course the fact that you had not experienced war is no cause for regret; but what someone will regret are those unique features associated with it in this regard- youth exactly like you now, eighteen and twenty years old from the point of view of spiritual purity were on the same level as agnostic who had spent forty years travelling on the path to God. We sensed this in their very being and such individuals were by no means few.

When I come face to face with such youth, I felt a real humility and it is not that I wanted to pretend to such humility. You have seen that when man is in the presence of greatness and witnesses its perfection's he comes to understand his own weakness. I observed that same feeling in Myself when in the presence of a young Bassiji and a young combatant. Such was the atmosphere that could change a normal youth in such a manner.

You know how youth are in the world with “RAP” groups and the like and with all kinds of mental and moral calamities. Youth in the world are really suffering from a thousand misfortunes of this kind. “RAP” groups and groups similar to them existed in our time too. In our time the “Beatles” were famous, I have heard they have become old men now.

Some time ago I read about them in a foreign magazine talking about where they were and what they were doing. Those spiritual troubles and psychological complexes made them end up in these things. Now those people who imitate them in backward and remote countries do not understand what an illness had afflicted these poor unfortunates.

What they consider as progress is in fact decay and decline. But while the world was in such a state, our youth was in another situation entirely, in Iran the youth was bubbling, enriched honored, in the depths of their hearts they were happy, they had a sense of responsibility and they were clear about their objectives, what they were doing and for whom.

Leader of the Revolution Advises Youths on Pattern Selection

*** As female students how can we pattern ourselves on Hazrat-e- Zahra’s life?**

*** Who were your own role models during the period of your youth?**

That’s a good question. First of all I must say that no role model should be presented to us and then we be told that it is our role model. This type of stipulated and imposed Pattern role model is commonplace and uninteresting. We must find the role model ourselves, that is we must scan the horizon of our thoughts then we would see that among all of the figures that come to mind, that which comes to our minds more often, that is our role model. I believe that it is not difficult for a Muslim youth especially one who is acquainted with the lives of Infallible Imams, the family of the Prophet and of the early Muslims of Islam to find a role model, of which there are quite many.

You yourself fortunately mentioned Hazrate-Zahra’s name in this context. I would like to say a few words on sacred existence of Hazrat-e-Zahra. Perhaps, if seen against the background of the infallible Imams and other great personalities it will provide a lead.

You, madam living in an era of technological, industrial and scientific progress, in a big world a materialist civilization with a multitude of new phenomena in life, you settle on a role model, for example, who lived 1400 years ago in what area would that role model be analogous to your present situation that could be useful for you. For instance you want to know how went to university? Or how she thought on world political affairs? These factors would not be found.

Each human being has a number of fundamental characteristics that you should clarify and search for your role model in them. How do you suppose, for instance, a human being should act when faced with events in the environment? Events in the Environment can sometimes be related to the era of the train, the subway, the jet or the computer and sometimes it is related to an era where none of these things exist. Nevertheless it is something which engulfs man.

Man can confront this matter in two different ways: one way is with a sense of responsibility and other in an apathetic manner.

Having a sense of responsibility is of various types and divisions:

With what mentality and with what kind of perception toward future should he have? Man has to search for these basic lines in a person who can be his pattern and follow them.

Once had spoken about this matter in a lecture. Sometimes in our lectures no attention is paid to noteworthy words and we miss them.

Look, Hazrat-e-zahra, for instance, was about six or seven years old that event of the Sheb-e-Abitaleb occurred. The Shu’ab-e- Abitaleb was a very difficult period in the history of Islam The public call of the Holy Prophet had



begun, he had openly proclaimed this call and little by little, the people of Mecca, especially the youth and slgradually gravitated towards the Holy Prophet. Leaders of the Tagut such as Abu-Lahab, Abu – jahl, and others had no other choice but to exile the prophet and those around him and so they did. A large number of people consisting of tens of families among whom were the Holy prophet and his family, Abi-Talib -who himself was one of the leaders of the Quraish's heads –children and others were exiled from Mecca, but where could they go? Abi Talib had some land –some miles away from Mecca– which was located in a mountain fissure and was known as Sheb-e- Abi Talib (“sheb” means fissure of mountain or narrow valley). We from Mashad call it “Bazeh”, an original Persian word.

Abi –Talib had a “Bazeh” or “Sheb” and they were told that it was better to go there” Now think about it, in Mecca it is very hot in the day and very cold at night quite an intolerable situation, and they lived there for three years only God knows what hardships and hunger they suffered.

This was one of the most trying times for the Holy Prophet. In this period he was not only responsible for managing a society, but he had to support himself as well as the people who were suffering from severe hardship.

When a situation is pleasant, the people who have gathered around a leader are satisfied they say “God bless him that provided us with such a nice situation, but in hardship and in the face of uncertainty and they say “he guided us to this and we did not wish for such a situation” of course people with strong faith resist, but in the final analysis all the hardships are placed on the shoulders of the Prophet. In the midst of such a severe situation Abi-Talib who his supporter and hope and “Khadijah-e- Kubra” the greatest source of psychological support for the Prophet both passed away within a week, this unforeseen calamity left the Holy Prophet completely alone.

I do not know if you have ever been in charge for a work collective to know what responsibility really means? A situation like this could make a man feel quite helpless. In such conditions take a look at Fatimah Zahra's role. When man looks at history he finds such instances pushed aside to the corners and unfortunately no chapter is opened for them.

Fatemah Zahra was like a mother consultant and nurse to the Holy Prophet. That is why she is called “the mother of her father” from the time she was only six or seven years old. In Arabia and other hot environments girls grow faster physically and mentally and the equivalent of her age would be like that of a girl of twelve in our environment, accompanied by a heightened sense of responsibility.

Couldn't this be a pattern for youth that can encourage them to quickly feel their responsibility toward matters in their environment, to quickly feel that joy? She expended that excitement, that valuable asset which permeated her existence in removing the dust of grief and displeasure from a father's face who was now about fifty years old and was almost old man. Could she not be a pattern for youth? This is very important.

The next example is that of a married life and haring a husband when someone thinks about wife hood they think about organizing meals in the kitchen, cleaning rooms, making beds like in the old days, arranging the cushions and then waiting for the husband to come home from the office or store. Being a wife, however is not just this.

Just look at the married life of Fatimah Zahra (S.A.).

Fatimah and Imam Ali (a.) had been married for about nine of the ten years that the Holy Prophet spent in Medina. Had wars taken place almost sixty in most of which of Imam Ali had participated.

Now look here, here is a lady who stays at home while her husband is involved in fighting battles on a regular basis and without whose presence on the battlefield the struggle would be paralyzed, so much did success on the battlefield depend upon him.

At the same time they did not have an easy life, exactly as we have heard. It said: The same things that we have heard “Because of love of God they feed the poor, the slaves, the orphans, saying: truly we feed you for the sake of God alone”.

Truly they lived a life of poverty although she was the daughter of a leader, the daughter of the Holy Prophet, and with a sense of responsibility as well.

Do you know what a strong spirit a human being needs in order to equip such a husband, to free his heart from the

distractions of family problems, to reassure him and to properly educate the children? You may say that Imam Hassan and Imam Husayn (a.) were both Imams and had nature of Imamate (leadership), but Zainab (a.) was not an Imam. Fatimah Zahra had trained her during these nine years. After the Holy Prophet's demise she did not live very long. She was that kind of housewife, she was that kind of spouse in this way they managed the home and in this way this axis of family life is permanently written in history.

Can not this be a pattern for a young girl? A woman who is a housewife a lady who is honored as a housewife this is very important.

After holy prophet's demise she (Hazrat-e-Zahra) comes to the mosque and gives that startling lecture. Those of us who vocally give extempore speeches and lectures will understand how extraordinary that lecture was. A girl of eighteen, twenty or at most twenty four years old (of course her real age is not certain because date of birth is in dispute) experiencing those hardships and calamities comes to mosque and in the presence of a huge crowd of people she gives a lecture whose every word would remain in the annals of history.

The Arabs are famous for having good memories. A man might come and compose an elegy of eighty lines, and afterwards, ten people would write it. The elegies which have survived originated in this way. Poems were read in social gatherings and were recorded. Lectures and sayings were recorded in the same way, though memorizing or writing and they have remained with us until today.

Empty talk does not remain in history neither would any kind of speech, lots of words have been expressed, lots of poems have been composed, but none have survived and nobody pays to them any attention. That which history keeps in its heart and after 1400 years would fill anyone with humility when they consider it this demonstrates magnificence and in my opinion this can be a pattern for a young girl.

You are correct, the fault is with those of us who are in charge of these affairs. Of course by this I do not mean those in charge of governmental affairs I mean spiritual and religious affairs, that we have not offered them to the young generation as we would have liked, but you yourselves can do work in these areas. There are similar cases to be seen in the lives of our Imams, as well.

Imam Jawad's life is also a model. Imam Jawad (a.) despite his stature and his magnificence died when he was only twenty five years old; these are not our words but the words of history, a history written by non-shiites. This magnanimous man during his infancy and his youth attained a magnificence before the eyes of "Mamoun" and all the people. This is very important and could also be seen as a model for all of us.

Of course, in our time we have a model as well. Imam Khomeini (May his spirit be sanctified) is a model, these young volunteer forces are a model both those who had been martyred and those who are still alive to- day. Of course man's culture makes it easy to speak about people who have been martyred or have passed away. Just look and see what models we can find. We have seen people in the war who had left their towns or villages as very average people. I had noted previously that the previous regime could not elevate these potentials or even realize them. In the previous regime these people were normal human beings, but in this system they came to the battlefield which was a field of work and all of a sudden their potentials were realized, they became "major generals" and later they were martyred. Such cases are many.

Some years ago I was reading about them in a pamphlet entitled "My commander" recounting the memories of young men about their commanders on the battlefield. I don't know if this work was continued or not. They narrated very short stories or brief memories, memories that manifest the magnificence of such a personality to man. These could be patterns for us. And of course, in our scientific personalities, athletic personalities, literary personalities, as well as among our artistic personalities we may find patterns as well; personalities that are truly notable.

Of course man chooses his model in accordance with his own criteria. You may choose any pattern that you wish, but I ask you to consider piety as a criterion, piety is something that cannot be neglected. It is necessary for a worldly life as well as a spiritual one.

In response to your question as to what personalities had impressed me I must say that there were quite a variety. The person who impressed me very much in my youth was the late "Navab Safavi". I was about fifteen when he

came to Mashad. I was really impressed by him. When he left Mashad he was martyred in a terrible way only after some months had passed. This deepened his impression upon us. Ladder Imam Khomeini profoundly impressed me. Before I left for Qom and before the outbreak of the struggle I had heard Imam Khomeini's name, I had not yet seen him but I was interested in him; because all the young men in Qom's theological school took great interest in his lectures which appealed to them. When I left for Qom I did not hesitate to go to his classes. From the start I attended his sessions and I continued to attend his classes for as long as I stayed in Qom. He impressed me very much. My father and mother, of course, impressed me as well. My mother especially so, she impressed me deeply. She was quite an effective lady.

*** Considering your interest in art and literature, who among contemporary poets have you studied most and in whom are you more interested?**

I divide contemporary poets into:

Poets who composed lyric poems, poets who composed of satirical poems, and poets who composed modern verse. Each of these categories consists of some individuals in whom I was interested. Among the lyric poets there is the late "Amiry Firouzkouhy" who was a friend of mine and he took a great liking to me we were in contact with each other for many years after the Revolution. He passed away during my term as president. Besides "Amiry" there were, of course one or two other composers of lyric poems whose work attracted me; one of them is the late "Rahy Moavery" I did not have close contact with him, the other one is the late "Shahriar" I was very interested in his poems, and I was also acquainted with him, after the Revolution but we had no relation before the Revolution. One of the best among composers of satirical poems was "Malekashoara Bahar" whose satirical poems proved very attracted to me. The late "Amiry Firouzkouhy" used to compose a sort of satirical poem in the style of "Khaghany" a famous and noted composer of satirical poems, I was very interested in him.

There were two or three people in the area of modern verse, whose work I found very interesting; one of them is "Akhavan". We knew "Akhavan" and his poetry was very exceptional. There are two or three other people that are also notable but I do not wish to mention their names. During our youth there were individuals who were masters in the art of modern verse and I believe they composed modern verse even better than "Nima Youshij", although he paved the way but in my opinion these people were better at composing more experienced and more noteworthy. Of course no one had the sincerity that "Nima Youshij" had neither did "Akhavan" nor the two or three people that have not mentioned. "Nima Youshij"- contrary to gossip – was a religious man. The late "Amiry" was his close friend and he told me that "Nima Youshij" was religious. He was interested in traditional poems, but he was also interested in this style modern verse as well. You know, of course that he imitated Europeans in this style.

Basically the style of our (modern verse) is not an original style in a real sense; it is a style of European poetry; with many of the characteristics that these poems possess, even patterns of English sentence structure has entered modern Persian poetry.

Among the poets we have today, we have some very good ones; we have also good lyrical poems and to be fair, among those whom we say are good poets; we have those who write modern verse as well. Among the poets of the Revolution, some are really good and gifted ones. Allow me not to get into commenting upon the contemporary poets at this time.

*** Today literature is directly mixed up with political viewpoints; consequently bewildering writers of the young generation. What is your opinion in this case?**

I do not understand what you are getting at when you say that literature has become mixed with politics. Does it

mean that it has political content? For instance, suppose we say that, there is a poet who is in opposition to our current reasoning from the political point of view but he is a notable poet, if his poems found its way into the universities and attract attention it may be used, therefore it should not be so employed. Of course I do not know how such poetry is encountered with in the universities. If we really had a poet who had a high position from a poetic point of view so that a student in the university could really make use of his poetry I would not criticize him. Even if that poet was going against the revolution for coming into a class and being the subject to attention; but honestly I do not know any such a poet now.

You speak of the separation of modern poem and prose from the poems of the previous era. In that time when this so called notable poet composed this poem, we probably had ten other poets who may have had the same fame or more famous. Now this particular poet's poetry, and I wish not to mention his name and will not do so, found its way into the university but Akhavan's poetry did not and I do not think that his poetry was the best manifestation of the poetry of that period. "Akhavan" was a friend of mine; during my presidential term we had a warm relationship with each other After my presidential term.

Subsequent to return from a one year trip to Europe, he wrote me a letter and composed a poem, and soon after he passed away. Therefore there is nothing wrong with «Akhavan». In fact why shouldn't we not gravitate towards such a man who could be so useful to us? In other words, if we really have great poets right now I see no problem in students of universities making use of their poetry and subjecting them to scholarly research, I see no problem in this, at least it is not prohibited on my part. I am not aware about any such programs but I do not know such poets. You should know that there are some people who have famous names, but really are not that great and their poems, too, are not that important. When exposed to criticism, and putting aside their status as poets in considering both good and bad in detail it then becomes clear that some of them are fakes. Usually I am not uninformed about these contemporary poets. Some of these so-called poets compose poems and claim that they are this and they are that, that they are the roots of poetry in this country, while we know they are nothing of the sort. At the time when it was best for their work they were second rate, some of them were third rate while there were many in the country who were much better than them.

Contemporary poems should be worked on. You will find no one in lyric poetry who is better than Rahy Moayeri during his time. «Rayh» is from the same generation that is connected to this period, and it is the same with the late Amiry Firouzkouhy, and these are quite noted poets, or the late «Gholam Reza Qodsi» or Mr «Qahraman» who is now in Mashad and is a very good composer of lyric poems; or for instance Mr. Sahebkar in Mashad who is not a well-known poet but his lyric poems are excellent. Or for example in Kermanshah there is Mr. Behzad. These are the poets of note in this period. The young poet of today will really not be able to find any pobetter than these. We have exceptional poets that unfortunately the young generation is not aware of. All of them are also good people. People who are on the line of the Revolution, the system and Islam; the very line that the people support in Iran. There is no opposition or separation. They could be quite useful for us, but our youths are somewhat lazy in the fields of research, investigation and follow up. If it is not too presumptuous to the youth this must be said. If they search a little and be serious they can uncover very good sources. Right now in our own university in Tehran we have very excellent and noteworthy poets to whom people pay very little attention.

*** We have observed that in social and political affairs, some people take up extremist positions and also follow up on them. What is your guidance for young people in this regard?**

One should not be very afraid of variety in tastes. Variety in taste is not a bad thing. Now, for example, if there are two political orientations, and one youth believes in one of them and the other youth believes in the other it's no problem, what is harmful is action without thinking and without study jumping to quick decisions, becoming



agitated and carrying out activities without proper study. I warn dear youths to beware of this attitude. Being young does not necessarily mean having speed in making decisions. Of course, youth means intrepidity in taking action, which means that man should not let himself be rendered helpless by the complications and complexities of the work that he wants to accomplish. It does not mean becoming, agitated and acting without methodology and without deliberation. Youth can act without deliberation but they can also work with deliberation which is to work completely, thoughtfully and with reflection. These characteristics that is, the characteristics of deliberation, of thoughtfulness of study and of seeking the truth all of them can exist in the youth. If some youth, for example can be seekers after truth which is, basically, part of their attributes there will be no objection at all to them having variety in taste and it will not be the cause of any error, at least it will not create any serious damage.

As regards to the attitude of denying the other side, such as in social affairs, a person taking up a position and saying that it is one hundred percent so and so and nothing else, is not right. It is not a good attitude to have. Of course, we must be so with regard to some of the principles of our religious beliefs that is, one must follow it thoughtfully and take stand on a fixed and well established point, and decisively say this is it and there is nothing else. In this case it is not bad to say so, rather, it's good but in social matters, in political matters and in various social encounters it is not right to say that (This is right and there is nothing else. In my opinion man should tolerate opinions contrary to his own, and concerning the effect upon his thoughts and his opinions, he must establish deliberation as the criterion and the basis of his work. In my opinion there would be no problem if such was the case.

*** So far, during the course of your activities, to what extent have you given youth responsibility and what is your experience in this regard? In your opinion, what is the responsibility of youth for scientific uplifting of the country?**

At the beginning of the Revolution, I gave youth responsibilities in areas of work that were in my control whether in the armed forces, working in the government or during my term as president. My experience is, that, if we put our trust in youth, that young person who has what it takes should be given that responsibility, he has the competency. This does not mean "every youth, every responsibility". Compared to others young people were better and more responsible in performing their jobs, they also progressed more rapidly, they would be more innovative and would deliver earlier; in other words they maintained a progressive method on the job. On the other hand, it was possible for non-youth to accomplish their actual tasks quite well, but they stopped short of progressing in practice, and usually such is the case.

When we were on the Revolutionary Council, some other friends and ourselves were objected against concerning this matter, there were older individuals, mainly sixty, seventy, seventy-five years old who also sat on the council and did not have much belief in the youth. They used to say why do you turn forwards the youth and put them to perform crucial tasks without proper warrant? They didn't like to give away too much ground to the youth. They certainly preferred that the youth obey and follow them. They used to say they are young and we are old so they should follow us. They were not quite ready to place their trust in young people, but we had been placing our trust in them. With the practical experience they were having, we were giving them the answer, work was well done and progress was being made. As to the other part of your question, referring to the scientific advancement of the country. Bear in mind that the period of youth is the period of capability. How, for what can this capability be employed? In my opinion, it should be used mainly in acquiring knowledge, in purifying the soul, in instilling piety in oneself and in strengthening the body-namely through exercise. These three areas are fundamental, such that if in one short sentence I was asked, "what do you want from youth?" I would tell that person: acquiring an education, spiritual refinement and exercise. I think that the youth should go after these three special characteristics. Acquiring an education includes research as well as intellectual work. Because this ability resides in youth, they should strive very hard in acquiring an education. Nowadays, I have heard that youth are not willing to accept this heavy scientific

responsibility. This is not good at all. How could we advise a young person who is not getting an education, his high school program left in the lurch and not attending university that he should go and study but not so advise a university student who is not studying hard in university at all? Really, what did you go to university to do? You should be going to University to advance knowledge. In my opinion young people should apply their energy which is, in reality, the power of their youth, in the pursuit of acquiring knowledge.

As to your question whether the gap between the advanced countries and ourselves is coverable or not, I believe so, I think it can definitely be covered. Of course it is possible that we cannot cover it by going the same route as they have gone, however, *ilâ mâsha Allah*, short cuts do exist in the world. We do not know very well this natural world that God has created. There are thousands of ways. One way is the very path that contemporary industrial civilization has taken, and after every step they have mapped out the steps to come. Why should we not be hopeful of opening a new door and making a new discovery. There was a time when electricity had not been discovered, I mean, it had been in existence in the world, but people had not been aware of it, suddenly, they came to know of it and to utilize it. Yes, they had known of steam power and long before that they did not even know about fire, however, later on, they came to know about it. So why should we despair of not coming to know of something hither to unknown once again, just as every day something otherwise unknown before becomes known? We must work in this area and reach a road, our road, that will make ready the rapid advancement of science. It's only remedy is for the youth to work hard especially those involved in science, education and research.

Once can accomplish whatever task one wants to do during our youth; especially in those three areas: knowledge, self purification and sport, which are best accomplished while one is young. Everyone certainly knows that exercise when one is older is not as effective to the some extent as compared to when one is younger. Most people, however, do not know about purifying the soul, imagine that when a human being grows old then is the time to practice worship and self. Purification exactly when self-purification is difficult, sometimes even impossible. In old age self-purification is a most difficult thing. In your time, however, the time of youth, self purification is very easy. At any rate, young people should take these three tasks very seriously.

*** With respect to fashion consciousness being regarded as a special characteristic of man, who, in some manner displays himself in such ways that include make up and dress. What is your opinion as to how one should confront such a subject? What has the state machinery done until now? Have they been successful?**

In answer to your question, what I can say now, is that the principle behind the inclination towards the beautiful, beautification and the love of beauty is something found in the essential nature of man (*fitrah*). Of course it may be a bit different from the concept of fashion consciousness. Fashion consciousness is something more general. The question of make-up, clothing and the like which you have mentioned is a particular category, that is, that man, especially the youth, like beauty and beautification and like to be beautiful themselves as well, there is no harm in this, it is something natural and normal and is not forbidden in Islam, what is forbidden is causing a disturbance (*fitnah*) and corruption.

Beauty and beautification should not be the cause for brining corruption and decadence into existence in society. In other words it should not introduce moral decadence into society. How does it do so? His ways are clear. If male-female relationships are to be irresponsible, unconditional and unrestrained, it causes corruption. If fashion centrism assumes an extreme form you will get corruption. If the topic of beautification, cultivating external appearances, clothing and the like become the primary occupation of life this leads to deviation and decadence. It will be like in the period of tyranny (*taghut*), when aristocratic women and those from among the nobility would sit behind the dressing table. And how long do you think they sat there for? Six hours! This is true, I have accurate information on the fact that they would sit there for six hours. A human being spending all this time because she wants, for example

to go to a wedding and she has to do her hair or her face in some special way! If it comes to this, that is deviation and decadence. In itself, however, there is no harm in paying attention to your outward appearance and clothing, as long as it is not for showing off and for displaying one's charms (tabarruj).

Tabarruj is forbidden in Islam. Tabarruj means women showing themselves off in front of men in order to attract and encourage disturbances (fitnah). This is a kind of fitnah that carries a whole lot of problems along with it. A young man falling into sin with a young woman is not the only problem, that is only the beginning, I would dare say it is the smallest problem, it continues right into the family. Fundamentally, this type of unrestrained, unconditional and unrestricted relationship is a deadly poison for the foundations of the family, because a family with love is alive. In principle, love is the basis of the family. If this love -the love of beauty, the love toward the opposite sex- is provided for in a hundred different places then that strong support, necessary for the stability of the family will disappear and families would become unstable. Unfortunately today, the situation has indeed come to this in western countries especially in Europe and America. America is now severely afflicted with this problem, families are disintegrating and this has become a great calamity. The negative consequences of this disaster on its most primary level, affects women themselves. It is, of course very hard for the men as well, but it affects women more so. Next, it affects the generation to be born. See what a criminal and delinquent generation we have in the world today and in America? All of them originate from there. It is the evil introduction and key... after which wickedness follows in succession.

Islam gives importance to the subject of beauty. We have quite often heard the saying: God is beautiful and loves beauty:

There are many narratives in our books of traditions (hadith) that treat especially of looking after our outward appearance. In the book of Marriage (Nikah) it is discussed in detail that man and woman must pay attention to their outward appearance. Some people imagine that men, for example, should shave the hair on their heads; no. In religious law it is recommended (mustahabb) that young men leave their hair, it is narrated that: "Beautiful hair is among the blessings of God, so treat it honourably or, for example, it is narrated that whenever the Honorable Prophet wanted to go among his companions he used to look into a container of water and properly fixed his appearance. In those days when mirrors as we know them today did not exist, Medina was poor too, so the Prophet had a container of water which he would use as a mirror when he wanted to go out among his friends. What is evident here is that looking after your outward appearance, putting on nice clothes and inclining towards beauty was a thing aimed at from the beginning of Islam. But that which is bad and harmful is that which become the tools for fitnah and tabarruj. As I had said before, the damage will hit their families and the generation that comes after them. Recently I saw mentioned a subject in one of the American magazines which was also reflected in our newspapers, that two boys of ten or twelve years old had took up ambush and gunned down a group of teachers and children with a machine gun! First of all they sounded the alarm so that the children would assemble, then they gunned them down. How truly bad and painful it is for a society to be in such a state. It was a cold-blooded and unimaginable criminal act, because of bad upbringing. All of this comes after that very unrestrictedness.

*** How can a youth satisfy his need for excitement and make use of it?**

That's a good question. However it's also a difficult one, not among one of the most easy questions. See here, excitement is in a special area concerning those things in which excitement becomes evident, for example, sports, especially in some sports like soccer, which is an exciting event. Soccer is so by nature and it is different to other sports like volleyball and tennis; from the point of view of the fundamental nature of the game, it is constructed in such a way that there is a great deal of competitiveness, excitement, and the like. On the whole sports is an exciting thing, artistic works, also evoke excitement.

But excitement is not only confined to these areas alone. If a young person was able to find an area (whatever area)



that is attractive to him, he could easily satisfy that excitement in himself. I felt that excitement when I was younger and donned the garb of a religious student (talabeh). The dress and also the environment were restrictive, nevertheless, I was excited and it was also satisfying. How? I liked poetry. It may be hard for you to believe. There used to be poetry sittings with four or five friends who all were aficionados of poetry, where we would sit for two or three hours, just talking about and reading poetry. This is for a person who is interested in that sort of thing. It satisfies his excitable mood to the extent that it does for a soccer player or for fans watching a soccer match. As such it is not a restricted field.

Another example is related to the very example you gave about a university engineering student. You said that he studies but is not excited about it. When the name of study is brought up, someone would think that it is not an exciting thing. It is true that a classroom may not be an exciting place, however if you assume that a workplace is set up alongside the class, whether in the university or outside as is now in vogue with young people during their engineering program are put in relationships with factories. Such a young person would feel that this workshop would contain the possibility for him to initiate and pursue the innovations he desires or the ideas that come to his mind in that environment. Do you think he would be less excited? In fact he would be even more so.

As I was saying to the brothers, do research, research must be done with love and enthusiasm. Research in which you force someone, telling him "go research" will certainly be something dry, unexciting and useless also; but in the case of a field of study for which you have a great deal of love and affection, for which you have written your university entrance examinations, which you are now studying in university, where you have a good professor, and now, you have a well-equipped workplace within your reach where you can make the results of your ideas and your innovations into a reality, that's really great.

I would like to express it in this way, that we should not consider the matter of satisfying the sense of excitement of youth in such a way as to evoke it in the mind as something questionable or as a cause for concern, no. If the field of life is opened up in various areas, youth themselves will go into those areas where they have an interest in order to satisfy their excitement.

As the authorities as well as every person who is interested in this country- inclusive of governmental, and non governmental organizations and sections concerning youth in particular - we must open the field for healthy and proper youth activities. Now, for example, a youth may be interested in the area of literature, or economics. Normally, economics does not have laboratories, however, if all of a sudden it may be announced that such and such an economist, foreign or local, in such and such a place, is having a class or a seminar and is going to give a lecture. This is very meaningful for a young person who has such an interest. To get a ticket, to go there immediately and to put his questions to the professor, all this is excitement. With divine grace if the field of work and activity facing the youth is expanded -a trend that has progressed since the beginning of the Revolution- the youth will be able to satisfy this sense of excitement which is one of their blessings. Of course I concur that it has not gone as far forward as it should have because of the problems that have existed for nineteen years up till now.

In eight of these nineteen years there was a real war going on. In the first two or three years those in authority were lacking in experience, information and know-how, then, little by little we began to move ahead.

You are an artist, and all praises be to God, you are also well known, we have seen you on television. You artists are the ones most capable of serving the people. The people can learn from you. If the artist really possessed that piety that I was talking about, so that when you, are performing this role, when you are playing that part that you keep in mind that a number of youth, a number of children, a number of women and men will be looking at you and will be learning from you; if you plan it so that your work be well done and be of the highest excellence, I would imagine that you would be most capable of service.

Art has an expressiveness of language that no other language possesses, whether it be the language of science, that of ordinary speech, or the sermon. None of them has the expressiveness of the language of art. One of the secrets of the success of the Qur'an is its artistry. The Qur'an is very much at the pinnacle of art, it is quite extraordinary, in fact, it enchanted the people of that time; otherwise, if the Noble Prophet had sat with the people and without an

artistic language spoke with them in a matter - of - fact kind of language, maybe he might have found a small group interested in what he had to say, but that thunderbolt, that thunder and lightning, that storm would never have been. It is art that does this kind of thing. Art has that kind of effect. Even now, when someone reads Hafiz's poetry, he could see a greatness in it. It makes an impression on you. At the same time, the influence of these performing arts is much more rapidly felt compared to that of poetry and literature, however I don't know if they are more lasting or not. It is possible for someone to say that in certain areas it is or is not more lasting, but at any event its influence is quicker more decisive and more overwhelming.

You all (artists) can make an impression quite well. I want to ask those script writers, those who write screenplays, the actors, the directors, the set decorators, and the costume designers - which, by the way, is one of the most important aspects in artistic work, but is most overlooked, because the clothes you wear serve as a model for one group and is very attractive to them - I would like to ask them to be aware of what they are doing, that they should think about its end results. At any rate it is a very good field and, God willing, I hope you will be successful. Why don't we see a strong policy in sports? And why isn't sports used as a powerful tool against the cultural invasion?

The subject you have mentioned concerning what is lacking in the affair of sports is absolutely correct. Not much has been done in sports. Turning our attention to sports we perceive two big deficiencies:

First, investment should be made in devising a massive program and in making crucial fundamental decisions as to the choice of sport. There is the demand, and the potential in Iranian society. Which sport should be placed under consideration? What should be the state of mind and how should it be followed up? In this very context, I had spoken in detail with athletes and national sports authorities one or two years ago. I believe that if we invest in this area and do some proper thinking and planning, without a doubt, the same thing would happen in the world sporting arena that had occurred in the war with our volunteer forces and military organizations who were all but cut off from the modern equipment of the world. You have seen what honour they brought. Even now, in volleyball for the handicapped and disabled war heroes, the same thing has happened; these brothers have consistently been bringing honour and glory; or, for example, in wrestling, you yourself (addressing Rasul Khadim, the Iranian wrestler) your brother and other brothers have really brought great honour to this country. We can be like this in every area of sports. There is no reason why we cannot enter the battlefield among the world's most distinguished athletes in soccer, volleyball, equestrian events or in some of our traditional sports like polo, or in martial arts or swimming. The reason for the situation being so disorganized at present is because there has been no programming applied to training or for advancement or utilization of relevant techniques. This is one problem. The second problem, which is very much related to the first, is the lack of a spiritual and cultural atmosphere in sports. It is not that our athletes are not good people, not at all, there are very good, believing, pious and abstemious people amongst them, however it must be more than just this. Our sports environment must be an environment of modesty. Modesty has a very intriguing and very wide meaning. It is the wholesomeness of the soul of a man where so ever he may be. The sports environment must be a modest environment; licentiousness disrepute, or any form of immodesty should not be seen in it, we must create this atmosphere in our sports environment and if this is so, it will shine in the world and our sports will become a star.

Look, right now, our films are entered into international film festivals, and the point that proves very attractive to the judges and the audience is the modesty that is now characteristic of Persian films. Some directors and filmmakers naturally go after this now, for some others, however modesty is something that is imposed, they have no choice but to portray women, men and family relations in a manner that is in conformity with the atmosphere currently accin the Islamic Republic. This is exactly what makes it stand out in the world.

Contrary to what has been imagined, the world does not like this unrestraint, and lasciviousness, it is tired of it. Islam has also recommended the very state of chastity, decency, wholesomeness and propriety which is so natural to Iranian society. We must make this dominant in the sports environment and in other areas as well, this will become the culturo-spiritual atmosphere of sports. It will be exactly as you are saying. For with regard to going into the

battleground of the cultural invasion, we must hold on to our own culture, this is absolutely correct.

Therefore, if in the world of sports, the authorities pay attention to these two tasks; which are, on the one hand, getting the knowledge and drawing up a precise program in every respect, such as selection technique, work, training and exercise; and on the other hand in attaining a cultural atmosphere in sport, I believe that our sports environment will go forward which will be very good.

However, I would like to ask the youth that they should not wait for that day, and they should not say that when sports get like that then we would go and participate, no youth should exercise without exception. Now, when we say "youth" it does not mean that those who are not young should not participate in sports, they should also, however sports contain a great deal that is attainable for youth, a subject which I wouldn't repeat since I've already spoken about it men and family relations in a manner that is in conformity with the atmosphere currently acceptable in the Islamic Republic. This is exactly what makes it stand out in the world.

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*** Why isn't there a special policy - making center in youth affairs? Why are the different sections concerning youth affairs - for example, marriage, not coordinated with each other?**

Of course, this has been accomplished to some extent, that is, with the establishment of the High Council for Youth, the first step has been taken in this direction, and I hope that this first step will also take us the rest of the way.

Without a doubt some governmental organizations, for example the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education or that of Medicine are also related to youth affairs, however, with respect to the main center that can consider youth affairs in a comprehensive and exhaustive manner, is the very High Council for Youth. So far, in my opinion, the brothers have done a good job to the extent where their responsibilities apply. They should do the work of a headquarters and the task of executing the directives should be the work of the governmental organizations. The Youth Charter that some gentlemen had prepared last year and presented to me was very good, very comprehensive and useful and it could be a practical logical and excellent base for organizations to the Islamic Republic of base their work upon.

The government or even the High Council for Youth could, of course make deliberations on the subject of marriage which you had mentioned. The issue of marriage, however, is a completely individual and personal matter. Families must think about it and governmental and public organizations should give general recommendations. My own recommendation is that you should make marriage easy; do not make the mahr too high, jahiziehs (trousseaux) should not be heavy, wedding parties should not be too lavish and extravagant. These things should be put into practice. If would be very good if this was propagated through culture and art in order to get the people to adopt it.

If this way is adopted, I think that marriage will be a very easy thing.

Also, the age at which individuals should marry should not be so that, on the one extreme, you have some people thinking that it must take place very early in youth. No, I disagree with this. There is no objection if someone wants to marry at a very early age there is absolutely no problem with this, but in this regard it is not necessary that we insist upon the matter.

Neither should it be the opposite extreme, like what westerners do, marrying at thirty or forty years of age. Of course, in my opinion, selfishness could be so dominating that a man or thirty, forty or fifty years would see no problem in marrying a young girl, I mean these upper years are those of grown men, but still he is after a young woman much younger than him with a great age difference between them, which is, of course, found over there (in the west), the very same place where insecure marriages take place, and so, you have a lot of single people in Western countries, people who, for their entire lives, have lived alone, something which, fortunately, is very rare in Iran and in other Islamic countries. At any rate, marriages should be made easy and should not be for chasing down prestige so that it would be easier for the youth to reach the stage of getting married. This must come into existence within families, among the youth, and within the young men and women themselves. There should be no barrier to marriage. If the government could provide the facilities that would be very good. I have always been pushing for this, always advising the authorities regarding housing, loans and other living necessities for the youth; we presume all these things, however I would like to say that the first level of responsibility in this task is family and personal responsibility.

In your opinion what ways are there to protect the values and carry over the spiritual atmosphere of the war years to the youth of today?

You are quite right in every word you said. I also believe in the same point sir. I believe, and I am proud of people like you. It's a discussion, not about individuals, it is a discussion about states of mind, it's a discussion on intentions, on the renewed life and these difficult tests which this revolution has given to our country. In the circumstances surrounding the Fath (Victory) of "Operation Bostan" the Imam gave a message in which it was changed to "Fath al Futuh" (Victory of Victories). Some people imagined that the Fath al Futuh was the Battle of Bostan itself, however, the Imam did not say that, he was saying that the Fath al Futuh - the Victory of Victories- is the victory or the fashioning of these aware and awakened souls.

Indeed the biggest victory of the Islamic Republic was that it was able to take these youth to this level of greatness and spiritual exaltation so that they could believe in themselves, to be able stand up and defend the country, defend themselves and defend Islam against the great assault of a united world, which was manifest in the Imposed War, and which has continued up till now. Even now we are facing a worldwide attack.

I have noticed that some of the press, the newspapers, the man new on the scene who has no idea of what's going on are really uninformed, if not biased. These people seem to think that it is some kind of art to draw this country back to the state of banality that existed before the revolution, and they are, at present, actively trying to do this. How irresponsible. What a pity. Our young people, at the time of their youth were able to save themselves from the stupefaction that had prevailed in the country, they were able to move and deliver Iran. Iran was gone and we were lost. We were totally wrecked. The flood of western cultural sewage which marked the introduction of economic, Political and colonial domination in the real sense, of the word, really destroyed us. In the midst of all this, the powerful hand of the revolution and Islam, by means of these very youth, rescued the country. Now a group of people wants this proud period to be entrusted in the bosom of forgetfulness and the people to go back to that very state of stupefaction that existed before. Who wants that situation? The enemies of this country and this nation want it.

I think I have mentioned this in a speech before. Just recently, before Eid (Noruz) in an American magazine, a well known American writer wrote an editorial, which, in brief, said talked about the confrontation with countries like Iran, which he, by the way, referred to in a very derogatory manner, as an outlaw state - meaning that we cannot operate along economic and military lines. He said that those ways (economic and military) had been tried but had



failed. He said "we must enter by cultural means", once again making it clear. You may ask, how can they enter? In the middle of that very page the picture of a totally naked woman was drawn, and he said that this was the way. He said that "we must promote this for us to be able to overcome them". He's right that's the way.

Unfortunately there are a number of people who have no idea what they are actually doing to the country, but certainly, with Divine might and power we will not let them and they will not be able to. We will not let this treachery take place against this country and against this Revolution and bring them to an end, however, they continue to indulge themselves in these whims and want to take the people back to those unfortunate days.

In my opinion, our youth today are godly, believing and good of heart. Take a look and see the university situation, our workers' situation, see what kind of environment prevails in our country. Look at those days when we hold demonstrations, like the 22nd of Bahman or the Day of Quds. Who are the majority of the people who flow into the streets like a flood? They are those very youth. Those very godly souls, that very zeal, that Divine thunderbolt which is still found in the country and is still quite active. This spirit once again will take this country to the shores of salvation.

Right now, there is no doubt that we have difficulties and problems in the area of economics and such, and they will come to an end one day, but that which will eliminate all these difficulties is nothing more than this spiritual attitude and holding on to Islam and the Revolution; nothing else will. Once again, it will be this young girl and this young boy that will save this country. I have said time and time again that the young generation is the one that will resolve periods of great difficulty and suffering. When they come on the scene- and all Praise be to Allah they are now on the scene- problems both intricate and difficult will be solved. Our youth are believers (mu'min), religious they are fond of their country and Islam and oppose American and foreign domination. This is exactly what will be effective. These people are in the process of also hatching plots and weaving lies. It will have no effect, God willing. God - willing, God Himself will help. Hadhrat Baqyyatullah (our souls be sacrificed for him) would also support this path, this effort and these youth.

Finally there is one point I would like to bring to mind and that is that these efforts that the youth are making are not minor. Study itself, I'm saying, the very same work in research, working in art, sports, all of these are not small efforts. I implore you, those involved in these activities, not to think that your work is insignificant, no, this very work, among the enormous aggregates of the country, changes into a determining element. Assume, say a certain artist decides, by himself to do a great work of art, he can't say "I am now doing one individual work, I, myself, am alone, and this is but an insignificant work" not at all; this well - done work you did, even if one hundred other persons thought like yourself, that tremendous upliftment that same great work would take place all the same. It is the same thing in sports, study, in research and in the special efforts of the youth. This is exactly like that on a day of a demonstration. If we all say "Right now I am one person, what effect could I have?" this great flood of millions on the 22nd of Bahman or at the Friday prayer would not take place, however everyone still feels that he is fulfilling his duty at that moment.

I would like to emphasize and repeat that the individual efforts of these youth -everywhere and in every area that they are working, in the area of the Qur'an, scholarship, in education, in the theological school, in the university or in writing - is an important effort. The very effort that, God willing will elevate the country.