The Leader’s Remarks in Meeting with Poets on the Occasion of Imam Hassan (PBUH)’s Birth Anniversary - 21 /Jun/ 2016

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

(Arabic prayer)

This meeting was a very desirable and sweet meeting for me, [just] like all meetings [I’ve had] in the middle of the [fasting] month of Ramadan during long years; [it is] a meeting of intimacy, a meeting of politeness, a meeting of sincerity, [and a meeting] to see advances. When I compare the present poetry of [the Iranian] youth with the poetry [as it was] ten years ago and fifteen years ago, one is overcome with a sense of enthusiasm and thankfulness by observing this progress. Thank God, our youth have become very good, [and] have advanced a lot, [because] the number of poets is high, the quality of poems is good, [and] the poetical movement in the country, thank God, is moving ahead.

Well, of course, our aspirations transcend these [limits]; we have shortcomings in poetical issues, [and] there are many things to say [in meeting] with such an erudite and wise and talented and artistic gathering; there are many things that one is willing to say, but there is neither [enough] time, nor energy; now, you have been listening [to these poems] for, I don’t know, two hours or more; [therefore,] it is not very appropriate for me to put more burden on this gathering, but well, there are many things to say [and as put by the Iranian poet:]

There are many untold stories in my heart, [and] I look like an unwritten poem.

I deem it necessary to honor the memory of my dear friend and our honorable poet, the late Mr. Hamid Sabzevari, who during these long years was a regular participant in our [poetical] circle here; we always – almost in all meetings – took advantage of his presence. When we commemorate the late Hamid Sabzevari, it is not merely that one commemorates a friend, [and] a poet, [but] certain things are taught to one, [and] certain ideas are transferred to one’s mind through commemoration of Hamid and the personality of Hamid and roundup of the poetical life of Hamid. This roundup is not done as long as these dear ones are alive – now, everyone [of you] who is willing for this roundup to take place [about him] sooner, this is the way – and as long as they are [among us], nobody has time to [do a] roundup [of their activities] in a correct manner. When they are gone, one starts to think [about them] and looks [at their works].

As for the late Hamid, first of all, he had a very good poetical talent; he was really a poet; I mean, he was poet by nature, [and] did not pretend. Secondly, he had [good] command of all kinds of poems, [and] was in command of a vast vocabulary, that is, he had a vast vocabulary at his disposal, [and this is why] his poems were diverse, [and he] was [always] up-to-date; [the] important [point] is that [he] was up-to-date, I mean since I came to know Mr. Hamid [he was like this]. I made the acquaintance of Mr. Hamid in early revolution – from the early months [after victory] of the revolution – and had literary and poetical interaction with him despite [all] my problems and strange preoccupations at that time; he was a window which provided me with fresh air and I considered it an opportunity. Since that time up to the end of [his] life, this man was always up-to-date; I mean, his poems were up-to-date poems. In my opinion, the unique characteristic of the late Hamid Sabzevari is his poems; both in terms of quantity, and in terms of quality and content. Today, we have this vacuum; today, we still need anthems; anthem is a need [for us at the present time]. Of course, I have written down something about anthem, which [I wanted to say] at the end of my remarks, [but] well, now that I talked about anthem, it is better to say what I have written down right here. In my opinion, anthem is a very effective form of poetry, [and] it has [great] effect. Its effectiveness is more than many [other] types of poetry, [and] perhaps I could say more than all kinds of poetry; that is, its scope of effectiveness and speed of effectiveness is higher [then other forms of poetry].

Assume that we have a suitable anthem befitting the situation of [our] time, and these young people [can] sing it in [their] excursions, [and] for example, a group of young people who go to the mountains [can] sing it along; [and]

sing it in their gatherings, [or] assume that a group of young people sing the same anthem during demonstrations on the 22nd [day] of [the Iranian calendar month of] Bahman [which marks victory of the Islamic Revolution]. These are very important points, [because] these [steps] are [in fact] repetition of teachings and propagation of teachings, which we need to propagate [across the society]. An anthem does this and it will have a rapid effect. It [also] builds culture; one of the characteristics of anthem is that it builds culture in the society and stops at no [specific] level. I mean, from the high levels of knowledge and science and the likes of these [down] to the [ordinary] levels of lay people, it rapidly sweeps through all of them, and we have seen this in the poems written by the late Hamid.
God bless the soul of Martyr Majid Haddad Adel - the brother of our Dr. [Gholamali] Haddad Adel – who told me this in the early [months of the Iranian year 13]60 (early 1981); he said, 'When in the [Iranian calendar] year, [13]59 (1980-1981), [western Iranian city of] Sanandaj was liberated from the clutches of counterrevolutionary [groups] – the city was in the hands of counterrevolutionary [groups], who dominated [the city], [while] our forces were only bound and limited to garrisons – people were happy and had poured into streets'; before Sanandaj was liberated, streets were surrounded [by counterrevolutionary groups], there was threat, bullet sound was heard incessantly there, [and] later, when the counterrevolutionary [groups] were driven out, Sanandaj turned into an ordinary city. Well, Sanandaj is also a beautiful and desirable city; those who have seen [it] know [this]; [it] is a desirable and beautiful city. He said, 'I saw that one of these fruit juice vendors had set up a fruit juice stall on the corner of a street; these young people came and stood [in line] waiting their turn so that he would extract the fruit juice and give it to them. At the same time that he [the vendor] continued to put carrots into the juice extractor and pushed its handle, [he] was singing this [revolutionary anthem:] "This is the call of freedom, which has arisen from the Orient;" Hamid had just written [the poem for] this [anthem]; perhaps, [you] assume, it was one month, or two months or maybe less, which this poem had been written. Now, in Sanandaj, a person is extracting carrot juice, [and] nobody has told him to sing [this anthem], [and] as said by Mr. Feiz, he was not [even] supporter of the [Islamic] establishment, who might have been told to sing this anthem; no, [but] he kept [singing] it naturally by himself. Look, this is [the effect of] anthem; that is, [a good] anthem makes its way [among people] like the fresh air, [and] like the spring air; there is no need for anybody to take action in order to propagate it, write comments [on it], [and] write poem [to promote it]; no, when an anthem is composed in a good way, [it would have its effect]. Today, we are short of this. Today, it seems that we need this and the late Hamid Sabzevari (May God's Mercy Be Upon Him) was the best in this field. Now, I do not remember well, [but] I think [according to] the statistics they have given me, he has written about four hundred or more than four hundred anthems; these [anthems] are very valuable. These [anthems] must not be set aside.
Now that I mentioned that poem, which Mr. Sayyar and Mr. Erfanpour had jointly written – and I said I have heard it – I think it was the same poem on which foreign counterrevolutionary networks became sensitive and pounded it, that is, they immediately understood the importance of this work – I think they had told me and reported that they started pounding [this poem] in the Fox News and the likes of these – and a good music had been mixed with it and the good theme of the poem had made them angry, that is, had made them upset; [but] we ourselves know nothing about it; that is, we do not propagate [such poems]; [and] do not propagate a good anthem. In my opinion, it is very good to write an anthem, [and] it is [also] very good to mix it with good music and now, I have recommendations, of course, about the wording and composition [of the anthem] and the likes of this, which I will explain later. God bless [the soul] of our dear Hamid; God willing, I hope the divine mercy would be upon him and these [points] which were explained, and are [just] part of his services, may be reserved for him in the Afterlife.
My dear ones! A poet is an asset for the country; [and] the poet is among the most valuable and dearest assets of any country. Of course, all artists are assets, but the poet has a [special] characteristic and poem, among all kinds of arts, has a [special] characteristic and these characteristics cause the value of the poet to rise in the society; [he] is an asset and a reserve [for the society]. Well, this asset must be used by the country at times of need; this is a very clear and natural inference after all: wherever the country needs some assistance – both with regard to its cultural issues, and with regard to its political issues, and with regard to its social issues, and with regard to its popular communications and social bonds, and with regard to countering its foreign enemies – well, this reserve [must prove useful] just like that national development fund reserve, where we save the oil money in order to be helpful to the country at a [certain] time and be used there. Therefore, if we have a poem, which takes no position on the current issues of the country, this poem would be of no good to the country's need; [therefore, poems] must take position

[on country's current issues].
Of course, you know I have frequently said in this very meeting that I do not mean that all poems you write should contain a political position or be committed [to politics] or be such and such; no, there is no problem with writing ghazals and love poems; after all, these are part of the poet's nature and he writes [such] poem(s) [as well], [and] there is nothing wrong with it, but even in that – I mean, in the same ghazal or love poem – there must be fundamental elements of guidance [toward spiritualties], not fundamental elements of corruption and deviation. Of course, this is reserved in its own place, [but] what I mean is that it is not expected that when you write a poem, an entire ghazal, from its beginning to the end, must be about political matters; no, it is possible for you to allocate three lines, [or] four lines of a ghazal to emotional concepts and love and such things, [and] then bring two more lines in its middle [about political issues], like a sharp reminder. This has been something that our good poets have always done; [they have] written a ghazal, but in this ghazal, you suddenly see that two lines refer to a sensitive issue, bring that issue to life, [and] put if forth [for the audience to muse over]. After all, a poet's poem must be alive.
One issue is the issue of poems that are written about current affairs of the country, and well, fortunately, in our time, [the number of] those poets, from whom we hear such lively and positioned poem, is not few, [and] thank God, they exist. I mean from this viewpoint, we are currently ahead and [in a] better [position] compared to ten [or] fifteen years ago; however, these [issues] are not being promoted. Assume that, now for example, many poems were written for [our] diver martyrs or for defenders of the [holy] shrine [of Hadhrat Zeinab (PBUH) in Syria], or this poem which tonight this gentlemen, [Hojjatoleslam Seyyed Mohammad Mehdi Shafiei] read about the issue of defenders of the shrine; well, these are very good poems, [and] these are prominent [poems]; why these [poems] are not promoted? This is my question; what is [the best] way to promote these [poems]? Or, for example, a poem was written for [the leader of Nigerian Muslims] Sheikh [Ibrahim] Zakzaky; well, Sheikh Zakzaky was an oppressed and brave and determined person in his own path and way, who was made subject to aggression and they exacted revenge on him. Well, if, for example, assume that we translate this poem and send it somewhere, which [would cause] his name to be heard there, you [just] look how effective it would be; [and] how inspiring [it would be].
We do not do this; fairly speaking, we are not doing enough in these fields; or with regard to [the issue of] Palestine, or with regard to [the situation in] Yemen [and] Bahrain, and the likes of these, or with regard to America's treacheries. Well, with regard to this issue of the JCPOA (Iran's nuclear deal with the P5+1 group), Americans' treacheries were too many, and these [treacheries] must be said [in poems]; and this is not a job for politicians, which [only] politicians [would have to] say [it]; better than politicians is that artists must express these [treacheries]. Among arts, that [one art] which is more available and easier and more popular and more rapid acting is poetry. These [US treacheries] must be said [to people], they must be expressed, [and] they must be transferred to the public opinion. Or in the field of the Sacred Defense likewise. Of course, I sincerely and from the bottom of my heart thank these brethren, and in our tonight meeting, thank God, a number of these brethren, who have written poems in these fields are present. They did a good thing, but well, this work must continue, must develop and must be promoted; it must be [seriously] promoted. I see that at some places as if the opposite of this is being taken into account.
That given faithless [and] libertine artist, who has not shown the smallest bit of inclination toward the concepts of the Islamic Revolution and toward Islam during these 38 years is being praised, [but] another artist who has spent all his life on this path is not praised at all, no respect is shown for him, [and] he is being snubbed. This is a very wrong way. Our officials must pay attention to these issues. Therefore, one of my points is that we must make our poetry a lively and vibrant poetry with position [on country's issues] and reflect it; I mean, promote [it]; people [should] promote it, the IRIB [the state-run radio and television should] promote [it], [and all] state and non-state organs [should] promote [it].
Well, fortunately, now this group, which is working, fairly speaking, is doing great things. [However,] the scope of their work and their facilities are limited, and their facilities must be also developed and they must be able to really work; both in this field, which I said, and in the field of training poets and helping young poets grow, which well, fortunately, they are taking steps in this regard.
One issue is the issue of poems, which have become very common among people, including lament and requiem poems. Lament is very effective, [and] can have great effect [on people]; [of course,] if a [suitable] theme exists in these laments. Assume that in [our] country, now during the day of Ashura or some other mourning days, you see

millions of people, and today mostly the youth, [who] stand up to listen to a speaker, who is singing a lament song and that poem and that song invokes a feeling of excitement in them; [as a result,] they beat their chests, wail, [and] their beliefs, their sentiments, [and] their emotions about religious concepts grow. This is an important opportunity; [and] we must take advantage of this opportunity. When I say 'we', I mean the country must take advantage, Islam must take advantage, [and] the Islamic Republic establishment must take advantage [of this opportunity]. Of course, I have notified this to [various] groups of eulogizers and the likes of these, [and here] I also notify you, who are given to poetry. For example, [during] the days [which people commemorate the victory] of [the Islamic] Revolution – [or] during the same [mourning] days of [the lunar month of] Muharram – I remember they brought me a tape of chest beating ceremony in [the city of] Jahrom – [at that time] I was in [the city of] Mashhad – [and] it [was] so effective. First of all, it was beautiful both in terms of the poem and wording and meaning of the poem; secondly, [it was beautiful] in terms of rhythm; [and] thirdly, [it was also] exciting, inciting, [and] guiding; it was very valuable.
Then, they brought [me] a tape from [the central city of] Yazd, and I remember [those tapes] from these two cities, [and] I did not see [the likes of them] elsewhere. Well, the political concepts of that time, which were important to [anti-regime] struggle, had been transferred [to people] in the form of lament. We had the like of this during the Sacred Defense period; this lament songs, which Mr. Ahangaran sang – and that esteemed poet, who may God bless his soul, that teacher [who lived] in [the city of] Ahvaz, wrote the poems for him – they are like this, [I mean, the poems] they [wrote] were poems and laments, which were didactic. We must follow up on this job diligently; of course, the lament poem has certain characteristics; that is, in terms of wording, in terms of composition, [and] in terms of poetic structure, it must have certain characteristics to become established [among people], [so that] singer of lament would be able to sing it. However, I ask these people who sing lament [songs], [and] who sing requiem [songs], [I ask] these [people] to pay attention; [they must] want and accept [these poems], [and] take advantage [of these poems], and you dear poets [must] also pursue [this goal] in this field as much as possible.
One of the gentlemen read a poem here, whose theme was that 'if you [the Leader] draw [your] sword, [there are many] chests who would stand in front of you and act as a shield against your enemies. [In response,] I said, 'I have [already] drawn [my] sword, am busy [fighting], [and] I am striking on the left and right; it is not like this; however, the type of today's sword and the type of today's arena is different from the arena in early years [after the revolution]; we are [engaged] in a soft war; in a political war, in a cultural war, [and] in a security and infiltration war; thoughts and wills are fighting against each other. Today, we greatly need effective and influential tools; a large part of these tools, in my opinion, is poetry, which must receive [due] attention from you.
As I said [before], I believe that there are many things that have not been done in the field of poetry. One of them is the issue of translation. Now, tonight, he [Alireza Qazveh] told me that some poems have been translated into Urdu. This is a very good step; this step is a necessary step. Persian poem(s) [must be translated] in various fields. Now, for example, a poem on Palestine, a poem on the Sacred Defense, women's poem, [and] poem(s) related to regional issues, [including] poems on Yemen, [and the likes of] these must be compiled, [and] translated, [including] translation into Arabic, translation into Urdu and English, and translation into some other languages, good translations, and [then] be published, [and] reflected [in various media] and be sent [abroad]. Now, for example, assume that [you can focus on] "Palestine in Persian poetry," as an instance; it is a subject [for poetry] after all.
Or what happened during the eight-year [imposed] war between Iran and Iraq, or what was the story [of the Iran-Iraq war]? Well, they don't know after all. That Iraqi lady doctor had told my friend that '[during] the first and second trips that I made to Iran – after the fall of [the former Iraqi dictator] Saddam [Hussein] – when I came across any Iranian, I thought that this [person], had killed my two brothers, who were killed in war, [and] I looked [at Iranians] from this viewpoint. And I felt grudge [against them] – now she continued to say that – until I saw [Iranian military commander, Major General Qasem] "Soleimani." When I saw that Soleimani has come [to our country] and is making such sacrifices, my viewpoint changed.
Now, I did not mean this last part of it, [but I had] that first part [in mind]. I mean, [this is] an Iraqi youth, and Iraqi woman, [and] an Iraqi mother, who well, does not know what happened [during the war], [and] does not know what took place. Well, we were sitting in our own home, [Iraqi] airplanes came and bombarded us, what were we supposed to do? Remain with our hands tied? They crossed our border, occupied several thousand kilometers of our border [regions], what we were supposed to do? Should we have sat idle for them to advance [into our country] or should [we have] gone [to war fronts and] defended [our country]? Well, we did this. This is the truth; [so,] why this

truth should not become clear for an Iraqi youth, an Iraqi mother, an Iraqi orphan, [and] an Iraqi sister? Why it should not be clarified for others? These are those things, which can happen and take place in the language of poetry.

Another point is that our dear poets, well fairly speaking, have greatly progressed and made [considerable] headway. I mean, today, when I look, [I see that] both among young people, and among the middle class, poems have, fairly speaking, progressed; that is, poetry [in the entire] country has progressed and on the whole, one feels that our poetry has taken one step ahead compared to what it is; however, this does not mean that we have reached that destination where we would not need to go ahead anymore. I have repeated this frequently, [and] I repeat it again: I ask you not stop expanding your poetry and exalting the poem, which you will write later.

I mean, today, your poem is a good poem, [and] I also like it when you write it; both enjoy [it myself], and say bravo, but this does not mean that this [poetry] has reached its peak. No, well, it is a good poem, [but] I want your poem to reach the peak; this is what I am after. One of its so-called tools is words; beautiful words, fine words, [and] well-established words. Sometimes one sees that poems are good poems, [but] they include crude or misplaced words; these [poems] are not good. When good words are used in a poem, one [would be satisfied with it].

And poetry must be promoted; it is for poetry experts to recognize [the best way for the] promotion of poetry. I have heard that, now, some people publish [their] poem(s) in this cyberspace, which has become very common. [For example,] a person has written something, [which has no] value, then, for example assume, several thousand people have “liked” this poem; that “like” has no value; what gives value to [a] poet and [his] poem is the viewpoint of the expert; those who are expert in poetry and know what poetry means, [and] basically [know] what a good poem is, [and] what a bad poem is. I mean, those [“likes” in cyberspace] are not a criterion for [recognizing] a good poem. At any rate, effort must be made to promote poetry.

In my opinion, now that Mr. [Ali Jannati] the esteemed minister [of culture and Islamic guidance] is present here, [I must mention this point]. Yes, they have organized certain courses – certain short-term courses – in order to train poets, [but] no poet can be trained in one day and five days and two weeks; these [measures, like training poets,] are a job for these popular technical groups and the likes of these. If state-run bodies [really] want to do something, [they] must help these [popular organizations]; [they] must help these, bolster these, [and] provide them with [necessary] equipment [so that] they would be able to do their work.

Another point that exists [is this]: the late Mr. Behjati (May God’s Mercy Be Upon Him) – my old friend, who like Mr. [Hojjatoleslam Zakaria Akhlaqi] came from Yazd [province], though Mr. Behjati came from [the city of] Ardekan, [and] [Mr. Akhlaqi] comes from [the city of] Meibod, [and you know that] Meibod and Ardekan have often different viewpoints and arguments and the likes of this over various issues; but well, he was a good poet – [he] had converted Abu Hamza prayer into poem; now I don’t remember how much of the prayer [had been converted into poem]. He himself told me about a paragraph [of the prayer] and said ‘this paragraph was difficult for me and I could not finish it’. One of the steps [to be taken] is that one could really convert the themes of these noble [and] prominent religious texts into poetry. This is a discipline, is a branch of work; [and] as put by film people, this is a poetical genre. I mean, it is not like that now we would want to restrict everything to this, but this is a job [to be done], because in addition to superb themes that they have, these prayers have superb wording as well. These prayers that exist, [like] this Arafeh prayer, Abu Hamza prayer, Sha’baniyeh prayer, [and] prayers in Sahifey-e Sajjadiyeh are full of lofty concepts and excellent Islamic teachings, [and] fairly speaking, with the best wording and with the most beautiful wording; you better reflect these [realities].

Last year, I read this poem [written] by [Iranian poet Mehdi] Akhavan [Sales] here, of course he had written it for another purpose: “O the fulcrum and refuge of the most beautiful innocence-filled and glorious moments of my loneliness and solitude; O my sweet and magnanimous river.” Well, see how beautiful this poem is. I said, when I read this poem, my addressee in this poem is prayer. Prayer is like this: “O the fulcrum and refuge of the most beautiful innocence-filled and glorious moments of my loneliness and solitude; O my sweet and magnanimous river.” Of course, he has taken this poem in a different direction. Well, now if you could write the poetry related to prayer with such literature in which both the wording is beautiful, and the themes are beautiful [it would be very good], [because you see] how beautiful the themes are, [and] how excellent the music of the poem is – the music of the poem is per se an [independent] category, [because] that fluency and beauty and smoothness and music of poem takes poetry out of the state of stuttering and the likes of this – [and if you could] write [poems] on this basis and

with these methods, in my opinion, it would be very good.
And the last point is about religious poems. Well, some of our poets, and fortunately some of our religious poet friends are now present here, fairly speaking, write good poems; [they] write good thematic poems about [Infallible Shia] Imams (Peace Be Upon Them) – both in their requiem, and in their eulogy, and [about] their merits – and there are many good remarks in their poems, but some of them no. Let's do something that religious poems would be a collection of [Shia] Imams' teachings; that is, when you give this poem to a eulogizer and, assume, he reads it in this meeting, it would have an effect equal to a number of good sermons, which this is [really] the case.
I mean, if themes are really good – assume [like] this poem, which Mr. [Ali] Ensani was reading in the meeting – [and] if its poem is a good poem, since an artistic method is used, its effect would be equal to a number of good sermons; otherwise, if its poem is [nothing but] these routine and ordinary sayings and, for example, these issues, which are not much worth mentioning except for making people cry [it would not be very good] – and well, making people cry is, of course, a positive point – but this is not the only [goal]. Look at poems written by the likes of [famous Arab poets] Komeit and De'bal and the likes of these [people] about [Shia] Imams (Peace Be Upon Them), [and] see how they wrote [poems], what they said, [and] what themes they included in those praiseworthy odes; if one wants to write a good poem, he must write it like this. If these [poetical works] are [made] available to those people who run these [mourning] sessions, it would, of course, be very valuable.

I hope that, God willing, the Almighty God would protect all of you, extend your life and [help you so that] you would be able to work, work well, [and] work on time and meet the needs of your country, your society, and your [Islamic] establishment.

Peace be unto you and so may the mercy of Allah and His blessings