The Leader’s remarks in meeting with poets on the occasion of Imam Hassan (PBUH)’s birth anniversary - 11 /Jun/ 2017

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

Our meeting tonight was a very desirable and sweet and, God willing, profitable meeting. First of all, I heard good poems and my hope raised in the forward march of the Persian poetry in our country. Secondly, there were poets from various parts of the country who had written poems, which were diverse and different, representing different tastes, viewpoints, [and] origins. And almost everything read here was good; these [developments] are all pleasing and promising.

Poetry is a national wealth; all kinds of poems – [including] ghazal, ode, ruba’i (quatrain), piece, masnavi (a poem written in rhyming couplets) or various kinds of the so-called classic poems or even [modern] poems introduced by [famous Iranian poet] Nima [Youshij] – all of these are a wealth [for the nation and] are a national wealth. It is important in what way a wealth is going to be consumed. There was a drive in the country, and it exists now, that this wealth be used in the service of concepts and topics other than what the revolution gave us and presented and established; this drive existed; [and] it has of course, existed since the outset of the [Islamic] Revolution. The reason is that before the revolution, we had good poets, we had great poets, who wrote various kinds of poems, with various qualities and at various [literary] levels. However, something that would benefit the nation out of those poems was not considerable, [and] was rare; [this is true about] both old – and as these gentlemen call it, classic – poems and modern poems.

Well, I was present in the literary environment of that time, [and] saw [what was happening]. There were people [who] wrote poems, wrote modern poems, [and] had a claim to modernism and new thinking, but in fact, they did not help the progress of the country and its real and correct modernization in any way. I mean many of those people who wrote modern poems and were proud of it and bragged that they were serving modern concepts, were flunkies at organs affiliated with the royal court and [were footmen of] those who were affiliated with the royal court and the likes of these. [I mean,] you cannot say that they cooperated with them, but they were flunkies to them in the real sense of the word. Well, I knew some of them up-close, [and] some others from afar; I both saw what they did and knew them. The poetry was not at the service of the concepts of the revolution; the poetry was not at the service of those concepts, which lead to awareness and awakening of the country; not that there was nothing in this way, but [such poems] were a rarity, [and] were scarce. Compared to what should have been, [the number of such poems] was rare. [And even] those [useful] poems, which existed [at that time], were not such that the general public and the [social] class that needed guidance and leadership could take advantage of them.

You just see that out of modern poets of that time – among top-notch and high-well-composed [modern poets] – that person whose poetry, for example, was at the service of such concepts, most of all was Akhavan [Sales]. However, Akhavan’s poems were among thoses, which could not be correctly understood by most people. He talked in such mystified and symbolic way that many people did not understand [his poems]. Yes, some people who were well-versed and were familiar with this language [of poetry] understood [his poems]. Some other [poets] were not into these issues at all and were not skillful in this regard, [but] they served other concepts. This was also true about poets writing classic poems. Of course, there were poets here and there, who wrote religious poems or poems on revolutionary matters, but they were a few. [In general,] poetry was not at the service of those concepts, which could lead to the country’s progress and boost insight in the country.

That trend changed after the revolution; [because] young people emerged [and] people with strong resolve appeared [in this field]. These very young people who later on, praise be to God, raised to higher levels of poetry – like the late Hosseini, like this late Qaysar Aminpour, or Mr. Ali Moallem, who is not present in our meeting, and some others who were among those young [poets that made their debut] early in the revolution, they really served [the revolution in this regard]. I mean, they ushered the revolution in a new era. The likes of these people really served

[the revolution]; they were few in number, but this circle expanded day by day. Of course, I sometimes see poetical works that serve other concepts; now, some are filled with hostility toward the Islamic and revolutionary concepts, [and] in some others, no, there is no hostility – and sometimes they bring such poems for me, [and] I look at them and see [their content]. However, today across the country, that poetry, which is in line with the Revolution, is dominant. Now, there are either religious or revolutionary concepts or those related to the Sacred Defense and such issues; there are all kinds and sorts of poems. Today, this wealth is, fortunately, being used in this direction.

Up to a few years ago, there was [good] poetic theme, [but] the poetic grade was low, [and] was not high. Fortunately, the poetic grade has been also elevated, and progressed. One can see this in poets that they read [in this meeting]. Well, during the past years and in this very meeting in the middle of the month of Ramadan – well, [this meeting has been held] for many years now, [and] perhaps for 30 years, more or less – I heard [and] listened [to these poems], but the poem, which was read, really made me eat my heart out, because I saw that those poems were not at a suitable and desirable literary level. This is not the case now. Every one of these friends, who reads a poem, makes one really feel proud, [and] feel that, praise be to God, the work is moving ahead. I mean, the poetry – this very growing and thriving and advancing theme – keeps thriving and advancing. Poetry is like this. I mean, art [in general] is like this; many facts are like this that in the course of time if [good] work is done on them inside the country, they are like this [and will advance]. It is like a tree, which thrives more and more on a daily basis. If somebody takes care of this tree, [and if] it is observed in its own right, is taken care of [properly], is watered, is pruned and the likes of this, this [tree] grows day by day and its benefits and its fruits increase likewise. This state, fortunately, exists with regard to poetry in the country right now. Therefore, these two characteristics exist [in poetry]; both poetry – that is, this huge human wealth – is at the service of good concepts in comparison to other sectors; and the [literary] level of this [poetry], which serves such concepts, is a high level, is a good level and is growing and moving ahead; these two points are true [about poetry].

However, I want to say that in these fields, any stoppage and the feeling of reaching the final destination is like a deadly poison; any one of you, gentlemen, those of you, whose poems are very good and one enjoys [reading] them, if anyone of you feels that they have reached the final destination and that there is nothing more left, they will certainly stop and fall and go down. In addition, this feeling is also wrong; I mean, assume that we make a screening among the people in this gathering here and one [of the poets] gets the highest rank; the same person who is number one in this gathering, is not [necessarily] number one in the world of poetry; after all, his distance from [such renowned poets as] Sa'di and Hafez and Ferdowsi and Jami and the likes of them is a remarkable distance and he must [go a long way in order] to catch up with them; [of course,] it is possible to get to a higher level than them; it is not like that Hafez is the acme of poetry; no, one can climb higher as well both in terms of taking advantage of euphemisms and suitable vocabulary for poetry, and in terms of finding [proper] theme. Finding [proper] theme is like what one sees, for example, in Saeb's poems, sees in Kalim's poems, sees in Hazin's poems, [and] most of all sees in Bidel's poems. After all, a great deal of work must be done in these fields and there is room to work, and capability and talent and potential of this tree for growth is much more than this.

So, I want to say that those friends, whose poetry is, praise be to God, at a level that elicits one's admiration, do not think that "well, we're here, praise be to God, [and] it is over;" no, they must continue to work, must work, [and] must go further ahead. I still know people in the world of poetry, [and among poets] of the past before the current era, who in terms of poetical themes are clearly at a totally higher level than good poets of today. I mean, there were really people, who stood at a really higher level, for example, in terms of ghazal. Now, I do not talk about the content; their content may not be acceptable to me, but in terms of the form of ghazal [they stood at a higher level]. For example, Amiri Firouzkouhi or Rahi Mo'ayyeri, or quite recently, the late Qahreman or Qodsi or some others [are like this]. They stood at a high level in terms of poetry and cannot be taken lightly. This is also true about modern [Persian] poetry; there were people in the modern poetry, who well, were really prominent and extraordinary; now some of them that we knew and I knew included late Akhavan and the likes of him. At any rate, it follows that we must move ahead and no halt is admissible. This is one point.

Exercise as much care in poetry as possible, both when finding theme, and for trimming its words, and to get it as close as possible to concepts that are currently in demand; [try to] find these concepts. Fairly speaking, when it comes to reporting our facts and developments and personalities, we Iranians are lazy people; it is really like this. Now, of course, it is for sociologists to do research and see whether this laziness is a national trait of us or it has

been imposed on us in the course of time. We [do not work enough] on our personalities. Now, assume that our honorable Imam [Khomeini] is a first-grade personality after all; I mean, nobody – either friend or enemy – for example, has any doubt about the personality of the Imam and nobody has any doubt about the grandeur of this personality. It is possible for somebody not to like him [in political terms], but everybody accepts his grandeur. Now, how many books have we written about this huge personality, who lived in our time an about 30 years have passed since his demise? Really think and see how many books have we written about the Imam. [Then] compare this with the number of books, which have been, for example, written about Abraham Lincoln in America.

I read in a report that [if] the books that have been written about Abraham Lincoln were stacked on top of one another, a 10-meter column would be made; something like this. Now, Abraham Lincoln has a title, though I believe that his title is false. That they say he emancipated slaves and the likes of these is nonsensical, [and] is not a true saying; [but] at any rate, it has been said as such. However, [even] with regard to ordinary presidents of America like Eisenhower, [and] like others, sometimes a thousand books have been written. Is this a joke? You see how many books have been written about Imam Khomeini. This case is like this; we lag being in these fields; of course, we Iranians lag behind, because in Arab countries I have seen that when a development takes place, they immediately write a book about it, immediately analyze it, [and] write political books and things like that, [which] from various dimensions, [and] from various aspects, [people with] different tendencies, [both] proponents [and] opponents, analyze [those developments] and [take other steps] like this. Fairly speaking, we lag behind in these areas. The same is true about poetry.

Now assume that with respect to these developments in the Levant, [and] these developments related to the Defenders of the Shrine, there is room to write, for example, hundreds of poems about these [developments]. Or assume that with regard to developments in Iraq; developments in Iraq are very important ones. Of course, perhaps people are not much to blame, [because] most of our people are not aware of the truth about Iraq's developments and what has happened in that country – [that is, they don't know about] what Americans wanted to do in Iraq and how they failed and what factors led to this state. However, the case of the country of Iraq is a really strange. [It is very strange that] the Iraq of Saddam Hussein would turn into the Iraq of Martyr Hakim! Just see how [long] this distance is. This distance is not imaginable at all; [but] this change has taken place. Well, hundreds or even thousands of poems must be written about this, [and] long poems epopees be written.

Today, one of the gentlemen had written an epopee, [and] they brought it to me to look at [and] I saw it. I don't remember what that epopee was about, [but I think] it was a quartet; [anyway] it was an epopee. One of those steps, which we have not taken, is writing epopees. You just take a subject into consideration, [and] make an epopee on it, just in the same way that our past poets had done. One of the interesting things done by late [poet] Amiri Firouzkouhi was to write epopees. He wrote three types of poems [using] three methods, [and] three styles. He wrote ghazals; this is one style, [and it is] a beautiful [and] eloquent Indian style full of themes. He also wrote odes in Khaqani style. If somebody looks at Amiri Firouzkouhi's epopee, they sometimes may mistake it with Khaqani [style of poetry], [because his odes] were really written in Khaqani style. And [he] also wrote epopees, which conformed to neither of these two styles; [he used] new styles. Assume that he had written an epopee about a tree in Simindasht [region of Iran] – which was the site of a property he had in north [of Iran], [and] for example, a tree was there – [and] he had written an epopee [about that tree]. I mean such things were done in the past. Or [take] this late Mr. Elahi Qomshe'ei [as another example]; this [poetical piece known as] Naghmeyeh Hosseini (Hossein's Melody) [which has been written by him] is an epopee. He has written Naghmeyeh Hosseini for his son, Mr. Hossein [Elahi Qomshe'ei], who is now famous.

The late Mr. Elahi told me about this case in person that this kid was sick and he had lost hope that this child, who was still on mother's milk, would stay alive. He makes a solemn vow that if this child stays alive, he would write an epopee about Imam Hossein (PBUH). He said, "I started thinking, [and] I saw the child was dying; the child was in his last hours and was passing away; [was] dying. In order for his mother not to see the child in death pangs, I told her to go [and sit] on the roof. I told her 'Go to the roof, bare your head, pray, [and] do such and such'. I used this as an excuse to take her away from the child, so that, she would not see the child as he was dying. This vow, however, occurred to me that if this child is saved, I would write an epopee about Imam Hossein (PBUH). Then I started to think that well, where I should start, how I should write [the epopee] and things like that. I was [reviewing] it bit by bit in my mind until I get to the part about [Imam Hossein (PBUH)'s son] Ali Asghar and Ali Asghar's thirst. It

suddenly occurred to me that this child, on orders from the doctor, had drunk neither water nor milk for a couple of days. The doctor had said that water and milk were detrimental to this [child], and he would die if he drank them. I told myself this child is thirsty [and] is dying as well. Let's give him some water [before] he dies; [I thought] he is dying anyway, at least, don't let him die thirsty." He added that "then I brought some water and poured the water using a teaspoon between the lips of this child in small amounts. I did this two or three times [and] saw that his eyes were opened. I gave him more water, [and] he started to cry. I went toward the staircase, called out to his mother and said, 'Come over here, your child needs milk'." He added, "His mother thought that the child is dead, and I am implying this by telling her 'come [and] give milk to your child'. She came down [from the roof] and saw no, the child is crying and wants milk. She started giving milk [to him]; [then] she said [to me] that the child was good!" Of course, he has mentioned this story in the introduction to [his epopee], Naghmeyeh Hosseini. What he told me, and I recounted here now, is somewhat different from what has been written in the introduction to Naghmeyeh Hosseini [where he says]:

In a page on the book of names and surnames
The name, Hossein, came down for him from Heaven.

This Hossein Elahi [Qomshe'ei] who presents shows [on television] is this [child]; this child is related to this [story]. In short, he has written Naghmeyeh Hosseini and one of the best poems written by Mr. Elahi Qomshe'ei is this Naghmeyeh Hosseini; I mean, one of the best poems of Mr. Elahi Qomshe'ei is this Naghmeyeh Hosseini epopee. Well, we do not have [many good] epopees [like this].

A friends of mine notified me that one of those things that we don't have [in poetry] – as put by him – is lampoon genre. Now, these foreign words have become so rife that without using them one thinks as if he cannot understand [specific issues]; [I should say] the discipline of lampoon [in poetry]. The Prophet told Hassan ibn Sabit to "lampoon these people," and he started to lampoon them. [You can also] use lampoon. Well, [the US president] does sword dance [with Saudi Arabian officials]! This [shows that] modern ignorance goes hand in hand with tribal ignorance. [Can anything be] better than this [for lampooning], [can] a scene be more beautiful [than this for this purpose]? Lampoon this in poetry. For example, assume a thousand poems can be written about this. Now, lampoon is one issue, satire is another issue, which well, of course, we have satire and tonight, this gentleman read [some satirical poems], and there was also Mr. Nasser Feiz, who did not read [satirical poems], and others [were also there]. Praise be to God, we are doing well in terms of satire; [and] we have gradually made headway. However, the void for lampoon is felt. These [American officials] who do some things once in a while, must be lampooned. That they appoint Saudi Arabia, for example, [to that given post] at the UN rights commission, nothing can be more interesting than this. It really offers room for lampoon, and it would be a loss if this is not lampooned; it would be really a loss if such a thing is not lampooned; [because this opportunity] would be lost. This is it. God willing, the Almighty God would help all of you succeed; now it is midnight, [so,] goodbye.