The Leader’s remarks in meeting with a group of poets and literary figures - 30 /May/ 2018

In the Name of God, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful
و الحمدللّه ربّ العالمين و الصّلاة و السّلام على سيّدنا محمّد و آله الطّاهرين و لعنةاللّه على اعدائهم اجمعين.

[This] was a sweet meeting. The only weakness in this meeting was that a few of participants – [both] among brethren and sisters – were willing to read out their poems, so that we [all] could be benefitted by them, but it did not happen [due to shortage of time]. Of course, it is already late; I mean, it is a few minutes past twelve and the time allocated to this meeting has exceeded its usual limit; well, this happens from time to time.
(As the Arab poet says,) no man achieves all he aspires, as winds not always blow in favor of ships.
Sometimes you cannot achieve what you want.
First of all, poems [read out] tonight were very good indeed. Now, this gentleman says “youths” (are among our good poems). [Well,] a number of participants who read poems tonight were young people and, fairly speaking, their poems were good and eloquent. Not only from the viewpoint of linguistic innovations, which praise be to God are observed in the present-day poetry, but also from the viewpoint of attending to important and remarkable and probably new subjects and also in terms of the arrangement of words and linguistic order and suitable use of terms, one sees that well, praise be to God, poems are very good. Sometimes in the present-day poems, I mean in the post-revolution poems, which abound in good themes and new concepts, one can see linguistic weaknesses. I see that such linguistic weaknesses are being gradually phase out; that is, tonight, fortunately, this issue was evident.
Let me bring up a few points about poetry. One point, which occurs to me and attention must be paid to this point at the present time, is that Persian poetry has been mostly a decent [form of] poetry [and] a modest poetry since the time it has gained prominence almost up to the present time. I say this out of my studies. [I do] not [mean] that there has been no obscenity and immodesty in [Persian] poetry; yes, it has existed in the past, though it has not been frequent; [and] it has existed in recent times as well – for example assume some of the poems written by Iraj [Mirza] or Khakshir and the likes of these, which have been explicit and immodest and impolite – but such poems are rare.
In Persian poetry, since its outset, even for example assume in the era of Khorasani [school of] poetry, which the introductory part of odes and the lead of odes included a certain amount of love poems and, as they themselves said, were tashbib (love) poems – for example assume poems about love and so forth – that state of modesty and decency was observed in these poems.
In order for my purpose be delineated correctly, I compare [these poems] with Arabic poetry at that time. Of course, Arabic poetry is not like that anymore; fortunately, the present-day Arabic poetry is very committed and good poetry. Four Arab poets from Lebanon are present here now, who read their poems – a few lines of them – for me before the prayers and they were really good, [and] were really prominent. However, it was not like this in the past. For example assume a poet was bold enough to express love for a women, who was known in the society, by [mentioning] her name in his poem, and express his love for her. Doing this was quite common [back then]. You do not see this in Persian poetry, [and] such a thing does not exist [in this kind of poetry]. In Persian poetry there is expression of fondness and respect and love and the likes of this with regard to a loved one, but it is an unknown loved one and a loved one who is often imaginary or a general character; [at any rate,] it is not a specific person. [This was] not [true about] early Arabic odes [in which the loved one intended by a poet] was a specific person. For example assume, [one Arab poem says:]
If Leili al-Akhiliya said hello to me, I would answer her even if I were in the grave.
[In this poem,] Leili al-Akhiliyah has been the name of a specific person, [and] she has been a prestigious lady in the society. This famous poet expresses love for this woman and it has been of no objection [to do this]. Or assume that another famous poet – who was contemporaneous with Farazdaq and Jarir and the likes of them – is known as Kuthayyer. This poet is in love with a female poet whose name is Azzah. This Kuthayyer expresses so much love for

that female poet in his poetry that he has come to be known as Kuthayyer Azzah; I mean if you want to find the biography of Kuthayyer now, you must look for “Kuthayyer Azzah;” this has been common, [and] this has been ordinary [in Arabic poetry]. [However,] in Persian poetry, you do not see this at all. Yes, in odes written at that time or in later ghazals, there is either expression of love – tashbib and nasib as they themselves called it – or there is basically explicit expression of love and lovemaking, but there is absolutely no specific person to be called by name toward whom the expression of love is made. Of course, in later poems, [the famous Iranian poet Ahmad] Shamlou calls [a woman as] Aida by name, but she is his wife, she is his spouse, [and] she is not a stranger; he expresses love [toward her] in his poems. Therefore, Persian poetry is a decent poetry. Well, I said before that there are cases of indecency in which [certain poems] have said something nasty – which causes one to be ashamed of repeating them in words or even, in some cases, remembering them – but this is a rarity. We see that Persian poetry has been decent throughout history. You must keep this [and] this poetical decency must be kept in our poetical environment. This is an important point.

This is the second point. My dear ones! Poetry is a lasting art. There is a characteristic in poetry, which does not exist in many other arts. Well, some arts are very effective in anther sector and in another way – like movies, like stage plays and the likes of these – but poetry is effective in a [totally] different way. Poetry must give birth to [social] currents. I mean, the entirety of the country’s poets must regulate and produce and create and reproduce poems under the country’s artistic atmosphere and the country’s poetical atmosphere in a way that it would be able to give rise to [a new] discourse and current with regard to important issues that affect the country; for example, with regard to the issue of justice, the issue of resistance [and] the issue of ethics. We are in dire need of moralities for socialization with one another, and I stressed this in a meeting here with young people the other day. Our personal ethics must be purged and grow and be elevated; both those moralities that affect our socialization, and our conduct toward [other] people like selflessness, like sacrifice, like honesty, like fraternity, brotherhood and things like these. Fortunately, in the history of our poetry, there is a lot to say in this regard, many sublime poems have been written and this [process of] creating discourse must continue. The same [is true] about various fields that I mentioned, like the resistance, [and] like these issues, which were mentioned here tonight in a few poems and were important issues.

There is another point with regard to poetry. In the course of time, Persian poetry has played a role in generation of thought and deepening of thought. If you look [closely], [you will see that] there is a lot of wisdom in Persian poetry. We call Ferdowsi as “Hakim (Wise) Ferdowsi,” call Nezami “Hakim Nezami,” [and] call Sanaei “Hakim Sanaei,” and so forth. Sa'di is a really wise man, [while] Hafez is a wise man and a real mystic. I mean, these [poets] used their poetry as a vessel for [transferring] wisdom [to others], which consisted of Islamic wisdom, Quranic wisdom, [and some sort of] spiritual and prophetic wisdom. Persian poetry is teeming with wisdom, [and] this spirit and this state of wisdom and morality must be highlighted in our modern poetry. Among these poems, which were read out here tonight, I saw a few lines, in which you could see real wisdom and were among those lines, which can be held in memory, in books, [and] in writings and [can] be transferred [to others] and published. The opposite point of this wisdom and morality and deepening of thought and generation of thought and creation of hope in poetry is that we, in our poetry, push our audience toward carelessness, superficiality in thought and thinking, passivity in politics, [and] indifference in the face-off with the enemy. I mean, if our poetry was like this and [if it] created such characteristics, this would be certainly against the poetic wisdom, which has existed in Persian poetry in the course of time. Attention must be paid to this [point]; [and] this is an important issue.

Poetry must be active with regard to [promoting among people such characteristics as] seriousness and perseverance and discipline in action and profoundness in thought and strength in identity and struggle against the enemies. And you, our dear brethren and sisters – you who are elites of the society; I mean, the art of poetry habitually arises from an elite mind and an elite spirit – must pay attention, and of course you pay attention, that an effort is being made to deviate [various forms of] art in the country. I mean [enemies] are making investment, are spending money, [and their] think tanks deliberate [and] make plans in order to make our poetry go astray; just in the same way that similar steps are being taken with regard to our movie industry, with regard to our stage plays, with regard to our painting, [and] with regard to various techniques and branches of art. I mean, steps aimed at deviation [of our art] are being taken. The same is true about poetry; they (enemies) are really making an effort [to deviate our poetry]. They magnify a bunch of obscene people; I see this in our society at the present time. There are hands at work to magnify and highlight and make famous that given poet who writes nonsensical and obscene poems, while from a

technical viewpoint, their poems are among low-grade poems. [I mean their poems] are nothing from the standpoint of content, [but even] from a technical viewpoint, they are not [real] poems, which one could say “this is a good poem, though its content is a bad content;” No, their poems are [unworthy] from a technical viewpoint as well, but these [enemies] magnify them.
Another point, which is very important, is the issue of songs and ballads. I have brought up this issue another time here that songs and ballads constitute a necessary section and a necessary branch in the field of the art of poetry and can have great effect as well; songs and ballads are really effective. We have seen in many cases that, for example, a poem has become common among the youth, adolescents and various people – including [university] students, schoolchildren and so forth –this poem, per se, is a cause for movement, is a cause for vibrancy, [and] is a cause for setting direction [of the social moves]. At the present time, fairly speaking, we have not worked enough in this field and have not made enough effort. When it comes to songs and ballads, the number of good ballads is low.
The Iranian society is intermingled with poetry and this is a big forte. The same is true about the Arab society; Arabs are also like this; they are very much familiar and intermingled with poetry. You see that in the course of the [Islamic] Revolution, [and] in various years of the revolution, those slogans, which were often rhythmic and were like poems, have been spontaneously chanted by the crowd. I mean, nobody basically knows who has written this poem, but a person among the crowd has composed it, it has been liked by others, and since it is a poem and since it is rhythmic and, for example, has rhyme in some cases, people have continued [chanting] it. Poetry is very common in our living environments and this is a great opportunity. I have written something down and would like to mention this. In these obituaries, which are [published] in some newspapers, I saw a poem. Some people write a poem [and] this naturally draws one’s attention toward that poem. I saw that the nature of our people is really a poetic nature. The tone in this [poetic] line is similar to the tone used by [Iranian poet] Bidel [Dehlavi], [but] I do not know who has written this poem:

I evaded a hundred traps, escaped many a cage,
I did not see freedom except after doom.

How beautiful this is! “I did not see freedom except after doom.” Well, this is the spirit of our people; [even] in their obituary, you see that they find [and quote] such a beautiful poem. Of course, now, you work with computer and the likes of it, [and] can find its poet; I could not know who its poet was, but its way of expression is similar to that of Bidel. This opportunity, [and] this existing request and demand in the society for poetry must be taken advantage of and those concepts, which people need to know, or those scientific methods, which people need to get familiar with, must be transferred to them through the language of poetry.

God willing, all of you would be successful and I hope you would manage to move on this path for many years to come.

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