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Imam Khomeini's Message with Officials of the Literacy Movement

The Text of Imam Khomeini's discourse at a meeting with the officials of the Literacy Education Movement on 27th December 1980.

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful

I thank all of you gentlemen for assembling in this inclement weather in this small place for a discussion and talk. This year sufficient interest was not shown in the Literacy Education Movement by people and adequate means were not provided for it, but I hope it will be amended in the future. Of course, in beginning, every task meets with unforeseen circumstances, and certain needs arise during the process. I hope the people and Government endeavour to execute this vital task.

On this placard you have brought with you, it is written: "If we could turn our pens into machine-guns," but we hope that man will become mature enough to turn machine-guns into pens. The extent to which pens and speech have served mankind, machine-guns have certainly not. The latter have mostly served superpowers and the cause of human destruction. If Islam has ordered a crusade, it is for the purpose of the defence of justice, and thus it requires military equipment in order to substitute justice and knowledge for machine-guns.

It is the pen, speech and knowledge that can nurture man, not machine-guns and other destructive weapons. Machine-guns and all military weapons were invented through knowledge, but sometimes machine-guns and other so-called "civilised implements" have been made by those who have caused the annihilation of people and things, and sometimes by those who caused human growth and tranquillity. You should try to put aside machine-guns with the use of pens and speech and leave the field to knowledge and science.

As long as man intends to continue his life with the aid of machine-guns, tanks and guns, he cannot be human and attain his human goals. Human beings can attain Islamic and human goals and also

perfection of knowledge and science only when pens dominate machine-guns, and man rises so high in his knowledge that he puts guns aside and the field is left to pens and science.

In the holy Qur'an, when the first Verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet, he was at first asked to read, and then the purpose for which reading was ordered was mentioned. The creation of reading, knowledge and science is not by itself desirable, for, many a kind of knowledge may be contrary to humanity and man's nobility. What is needed is a knowledge whose aim is to serve man and the divine cause, and turn to his godship and His name. Such a reading, knowledge and machine-gun are in the service of mankind.

The goals are the things for which human acts, his invented implements and his science are employed, that is, those objectives for which pens, machine-guns and knowledge have been brought into existence, are used in God's way and thereby gain value.

The value of a pen lies in the purpose for which it is used; so is that of a machine-gun. If this value is not final, human and Godly, neither a pen nor a machine-gun is of any use. Rather, it should be said that the danger of a pen is greater than that of a machine-gun, and the danger of speech more than that of a tank and gun, and the danger of science greatest of them all.

But if they are in the service of people, at their command and devoted to the divine cause, then all of them will find a value. Then, a machine-gun will be like a pen, and a pen like a machine-gun.

Man should remember that those things which are goals and focus on the education and instruction. If universities lack direction, they will be what they are now in a world which produces destructive forces. But if they have a proper direction, they can achieve what machine-guns cannot, and render services which no one else can offer.

The main thing, as I said before, is the direction that is chosen, for God and God's creatures.

If pens were used in the world for God and people, machine-guns would be side-lined, but if they are not employed for God and people, they produce machine-guns. All the destructive weapons are produced by those who hold pens and by university scientists. All human progress is through the written and spoken words of learned men.

Try to give direction to the teachings you offer. In the literacy classes for the young and adults, as you teach them reading and writing, at the same time give them direction to read and write for God and to serve God, Islam and people.

Instruction and education should be combined; a human education which benefits man and is for him, with a direction towards God and in His name. In all the classes which are by God's will, going to be set up throughout the country, you and others who are entrusted with this great task and this devotion, should remember to give direction to the teachers to turn to God and offer their knowledge and devotion

to Him.

A knowledge with a direction is considered by God Almighty as a great devotion. No nation has praised knowledge as Islam has. The Qur'an has in many of its verses lauded knowledge, and man of learning, and the need for attention to learning, but spoken very rarely of iron. It speaks of the benefits and firmness of iron. It is of great value if used in the service of people, but is of no value when as you see it being used by superpowers.

As a pen is valuable, so is iron and everything else, depending on the mode of its service to mankind. The value of even prayer depends on the intention with which one prays. Many a people begin their prayer with a hellish intention, and that is when they use it to show off to people. Many an army, many a soldier or guard act for God, and their worth is greater than prayer. Their machine-guns will then have a greater worth than pens.

In giving instructions, you should also pay attention to education in the name of God. Read and hold a pen to educate man who has benefitted from proper pens more than anything else and has suffered more loss than anything else from improper pens. Pens and speeches have association with people's minds, and if they are for God, they can train Godly minds. But if they are not so, they will produce haughty brains and devilish minds.

I ask the whole Iranian nation to help in this great and vital task. When you go to villages, those illiterate people should welcome you. According to the Prophet, "It is the duty of everyone to seek knowledge, a duty for both men and women". With knowledge man can gain happiness in this and the next world. By means of teaching, the young may be educated in such a way that they can preserve their interest in both worlds. If our country secures knowledge and culture, and the right direction to apply theory and practice, no power can dominate it.

All our difficulties throughout history has been caused by the exploitation of people's ignorance. Exploiters used this ignorance to make them act against their own interests. If the people had knowledge coupled with a proper goal. it would have been impossible for the subverters to mobilise the people in a direction contrary to their natural course.

It is knowledge and literacy with a goal that can save the nation from all its difficulties. Those who intend to cause damage to this Islamic movement and have no wish to see Islam established in this country, can only be hindered by knowledge. With the two weapons of knowledge possessing a goal, and an education which is religious, Godly and human, no-one can show you aggression, or bring back despotism But without these two, they will persuade the people to restore the former tyranny, dependence and such matters.

You teachers of literacy education in the whole country should remember that you are rendering the highest service to mankind. And villagers and other illiterate people should know that they must welcome this service heartily. They should not think themselves to be incapable in this task. Each human being

can learn and become human, from the cradle to the grave, from childhood till death. The world must be managed with knowledge possessing the right goal. An old man and woman, too, can be taught, and they should not lose hope. Young and old, villagers and city-dwellers should all help in this significant task on which your civilisation, your Islam, your humanity and everything else depends upon.

I hope that by next year, if I am still alive, I would witness considerable progress in this matter, and if I am not there, you will witness it yourselves.

I pay God for your success and the success of our nation in imbibing knowledge with a goal, and at the same time learning the use of machine-guns and military training, for the sake of world tranquility.

Greetings to you and God's blessings and mercy upon you.

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