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Imam Khomeini's Message to Heads of Education Departments

The Text of Imam Khomeini's discourse at a meeting of the heads of Education Departments from all over the country, and members of the employees of the Ministry of Interior and various Governorates—general at the Jamaran Religious Centre on 1st July, 1980.

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful

While thanking you for your trouble in coming here and accommodating yourselves in its inadequate space, I wish to say a few words.

Words are often interesting, but are in fact a cover for something uninteresting. Instruction and training are both attractive words, and in the old regime too we had a ministry for them. Islamic society, too, which exists throughout Iran now, is an interesting word meaning that Islam must be promoted.

But in both cases, that is, in connection with instruction and training and Islamic societies we were entangled with words. In the old devilish regime, they spoke of education consisting of instruction and training, but let us see what these two were.

One expected something proper. Instruction consists of things needed by our nation; sciences that can make our nation self-sufficient after some time, and training is something necessary, especially for ignorant ones. Both are needed so that when individuals graduate from these educational centres, they may be useful for their country and possess fine qualities, proper conduct, right opinions and similar things. But we have all seen what type of persons were produced by our system of education and universities, and what academic training was given and for what purpose. If that education had met Iran's needs and had been for the cause of Iran, we would have had institutions of higher education after 50 years.

We should not be in a position that a patient, with a fairly complicated illness, should be advised by our

physicians to go abroad for treatment. Why should a patient be obliged to go to America or England after 50 years of heavy expenditure on so many universities and schools and after so much trouble? What has the university done in these fifty years?

Let those who claim that they have preserved the university and done this or that, come and tell us what has been done by them during these long years under the old regime. Show us your performance, your teachings and those who were trained scientifically.

You say training is combined with instruction. What are the mental state, the views, and the morals of these products of yours who were busy doing something all over the country? In this one and a half year that we have tried to bring about a reform here and there, how is it that we still hear of women there doing this and that, though this is not limited to that centre, but is noticed in various ministries, too, which are in a truly undesirable state?

I have no intention of mentioning names, but a minister who hears these words should take steps for reform. A ministry is not a place for obscene acts. A university should be a centre of education. God has not expressed man's indebtedness to Himself in any of the worldly matters except in the question of education. He says that "He has sent the Prophet to purify and instruct the people in the Book and Wisdom". You notice that purification is mentioned before instruction.

The above Qur'anic Verse requires a discussion which would be lengthy, but I say briefly that it shows us the way of instruction and education.

It shows that the main reason for sending the Prophet has been for these two things: to read the verses to the people, then purify their mind and spirit and then teach them the Book and Wisdom.

Education comes before instruction, and if it is not before, it comes with it but with priority. If people are not cleaned and purified and vices are not removed, knowledge will produce harmful consequences. All the false creeds have been invented by men of learning where knowledge was not combined with purification and education. Such a learned man who lacks the power of purifying becomes dangerous for society.

In this respect, there is no difference between university professors and clerical men of learning. If religious centres of learning and universities lack moral refinement, the knowledge stored there would be similar to what is said by God Almighty, that is, 'like a load of books on a donkey's back.'

He who has a knowledge of monotheism, morality, religions and all, but has not purified his mind and spirit is a dangerous being for society.

If young people enter a university which lacks proper instruction and education even if it can give proper instruction, it will lead to corruption without the prerequisite purification. God forbid corruption by an impure man of learning. In our tradition it is said that the stench of a wicked man of learning torments

those in hell.

You witnessed that when the university was managed by unworthy people, their teachings only produced Westernised graduates. It was an improper instruction with the limitations of a colonised university. Those who go abroad to study, too, do not receive the training that American or English youths get. There, too, they are given a colonised training for a colonised country, as a result of which people like Sharif Imami and Nassiri are produced.

So many people received an education to become doctors and engineers, but it was like cultivating in brackish soil. Knowledge in an unwholesome land is like rain in a fetid place which increases its fetidness. But the same rain in another place causes the spread of fragrant smell. An impurified man of learning is much more dangerous than an ignorant being.

An ignorant person who is corrupt confines his corruption to himself, but a corrupt man of learning corrupts the world.

Purification comes before instruction. As I quoted before, the Prophet has come to purify and educate the people, and then teach the Book and Wisdom. Without the combination of these two, the product will be similar to what we saw in the Senate and Assembly before the Revolution. Both looked magnificent, so did the university with its fine buildings. But foreigners do not care how they look and how much money is spent out of public funds on their useless appearance and on extensive ministerial buildings. What they were concerned about was their contents. The teachers, with the exception of a few, were colonials and worked for them and trained our youths for them.

You people are in the field of education, but for what type of instruction and what education? Do not deceive yourselves and do not be deceived by the word 'education'. Those of you who belong to an Islamic society, too, should not deceive yourselves by the word 'Islamic Society'. You must see what your task is and what it should be in order to perform it in the interest of the country and Islam.

If education is in the interest of the country and Islam, their results would become known to everyone after a few years. Those who oppose the reforming and Islamization of the university and education are the ones who were brought up by foreigners, and fear that with the Islamization of the university they can no longer engage in theft and revelry. The Islamization of university is probable, but one feels ashamed of saying what has been going on in all these centres, offices and ministries.

Those who have been in these places as well as those sent by me to visit these ministries have narrated many things about these centres. If an Islamic society has been set up in each ministry, how is it that so much depravity is allowed to still exist there?

If our system of education were proper, our country would be culturally self-sufficient, and not waste the results of the labours of this long-suffering nation by so much expenditure during all these years, and let the rest of the people be famished.

These centres are machines into which Muslims are thrown to come out as Communists. The product shows us the nature of the machine. These people who were in the government. Senate and Assembly must be examined carefully since they were the products of these very universities and educational organisations. If they were properly educated they would not offer our country in a silver platter to aliens.

Difficulties are plentiful and must be resolved. You must do it yourselves. and not wait for the outside people to remove them. If someone comes from outside, he does not regard your interests. He will train you to be like those in the old regime. You must build up the contents and try to make it a proper system of education and that is possible and useful only when there exists spiritual and moral training and purification in the universities and other centres of learning – both religious and non-religious.

The teachers must be of the type to be able to give the students the necessary ethical training and enable them to purify themselves as they study. A chaste man of learning in every sense of the word can bring an upheaval in a whole society

In my youthful years when I sometimes visited various towns I noticed that the people of some towns were very religious. I was interested to find the reason; I realised that this was due to a priest who had purified himself first before reforming others.

A priest who goes to a community, a locality or a village must first give others moral training before teaching. A university professor must be assisted by a learned priest to give moral training, and remove those who try to divert our youths.

The university and offices must be purged from those who mislead and corrupt our youths. If a teacher tries to have wrong influence on our children with his words, this should be dealt with. Inform the purging officials of those devils who are seen here and there, at the universities and elsewhere. Those of them who insist on diverting our young are our enemies and also enemies of Islam. A minister who has not been able, after several months of I had assuming his position to do anything to purge those who corrupt the young – has neglected his duty and if such people take no step, I will announce them by name.

After coming out of prison one day, Masoor, the then Prime Minister, sent Sadr who was the Minister of Interior to me in a detention house, claiming that he wanted to act differently from the previous government and such talks.

I replied that we were neither the enemy of the previous government, nor on fraternal ties with this one. We must see what you will do.

As I am now under detention there is no point in liberating me, because I will pursue with the same talk after my release.

I am no kith and kin of yours, and I will criticise any wrong action.

Right now I declare to all of you in position that I have no brotherly bond with you, and even if I would

warn you to reform yourselves in case of default – each minister must purge his ministry of those whose ideas and actions are diverted as well as those who mislead our youths in thought and action.

I hope that with the grace of God these people will be Islamic. These Islamic societies, too, wherever they are, whether in a ministry, an office, or a factory, must remember to be Islamic themselves, for, if one is diverted, he cannot guide others to the right path, One who, God forbid, is addicted to drinking, cannot check others from it, but rather invites them to it. If you do not reform yourselves in accordance with the name of Islamic society which you have adopted, you cannot ask others to be Islamic.

God Almighty, in sending prophets to guide people, chooses those who have not blundered even once throughout their lives and are wholly innocent. Thus, they can educate, purify and teach people. A person who intends to train a society or an organisation in an Islamic way, must first Islamize himself and his mind to be able to influence others, for, without it, he can do nothing. School teachers who lack education can neither educate nor instruct youths.

Everything begins with the man himself.

When the Prophet appeared on the scene, he was personally perfect. He began with his wife, Khadija and she was converted to Islam. Then Ali, peace be upon him, embraced Islam even though he was very young. Then the Prophet gathered his kith and kin, and presented the subject to them. Some of them agreed, and some did not.

One should begin with oneself. If I am corrupt, my advice to you to do such and such deeds is of no avail. You, too, who have set up Islamic societies or whoever has done so with God's grace, must remember to begin with that society itself, to be Islamic in every sense. Its morals, opinions and actions must be Islamic and its founder should have been taught the Book and Wisdom, not necessarily to the highest level, but to the extent that the Qur'an enjoins the good and forbids what is inadmissible.

You gentlemen must first reform yourselves, which we hope you will do, and then all of us must reform society. The university which wishes to produce truly learned men, must bring about a reform within itself, and not turn itself into an arena of disputes. Those who are loyal must try to make it a centre needed by our country for education, refinement of character and home of knowledge, not a place leading to corruption.

Many of the things that are imparted under the name of teachings at the university, cause the corruption of our youths. There must be some planning to the extent needed by us and in the interest of our country, and omit what has been to our loss in the past, in order to create a fine and true centre of knowledge. The university must employ people who can educate these individuals.

Our youths are good to begin with, but they are spoilt by teachers. When a child is born he is good by nature, but a corrupt environment should be such that every entrant finds its personnel to be faithful, loyal and serving the country and Islam. In that case he will also be brought up like them.

A wholesome society will produce sound individuals automatically. A good family will bring up good children, unless they enter a community which is corrupt and are thereby corrupted. A child is easily influenced by good or evil, and so an honest society will make him honest, and an evil one turn him wicked.

You gentlemen and those of you engaged in educational work or about to undertake this task, and all those in such institutions both modern and old, must be able to educate and give moral training to students. We need teachers of morals everywhere. The mosques should be centres of proper education, and fortunately most of them are, and those who frequent them should be offered Islamic teachings.

Do not let the mosques remain empty of you. Those who try to keep you away from them and from educational centres are your enemies. The blessed month (of Ramadhan) is near at hand, and in that month education worth should be offered.

In this month, education should be provided for in mosques in every sense and in all its aspects. Let those who say that the Revolution is over now and other matters must not be heeded. They should rather be told that mosques are the source of revolution.

Preserve both the mosques and universities. These two are not contrary to one another. Let the mosques flourish by your visits. You of the Islamic society and educational jobs have a precious task to perform as well as a great responsibility. I hope all of you and the whole nation will follow the path of prosperity and attain happiness, and save the young from the troubles that perverts have created for them.

May God Almighty preserve all of you.

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