

Supreme Leader's Address to Academics - 24 /Sep/ 2008

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

First of all, I intended this meeting to have a symbolic aspect to it. I would like my heartfelt respect for scholars to be reflected in society. We need to create a sense of respect for our scholars and scientists in society.

Respecting scholars and knowledgeable people is the best way to promote knowledge in society. Academics and prominent figures of our research centers are among the scientific elites of our country.

Therefore, this is the first reason for holding such a meeting. And this goal will be achieved through holding such meetings. You dear friends - brothers and sisters - should know that I feel great respect towards scholars and knowledgeable people. And I would like all our people - including our officials and people at various levels of management - to have the same feeling towards knowledgeable people. This feeling should be - and is - manifested in practice.

Another purpose of holding such meetings is to reflect the views of our elites about scientific and educational issues in a public gathering. This is very important and necessary. If possible, I would also like more of you to express your views in this meeting.

Unfortunately, this is not possible in this meeting. Of course, what was discussed today was very useful for me. Some of the speakers mentioned important points which have to be taken into consideration. These points are very useful for the officials in charge of scientific and research organizations. Later, when these views are broadcast, they will also be useful for the people and those who are interested in scientific issues.

A point just came across my mind which should be discussed later. I believe it is useful to hold public gatherings in the presence of academics and researchers during the year and invite some of the participants in the gathering to deliver lectures and express their views. This will facilitate the decision-making process both in the administration, the Majlis, the Expediency Council, and various executive organizations such as ministries.

There are some points that I would like to mention. However, since time is short I can only mention a few of them.

Our comments are usually based upon some assumptions, a point that has to be taken into consideration. One of the assumptions is that scientific progress in different fields is a vital need for the country. Of course, I will talk about determining the priorities later. This is a very important task.

The second assumption is that although acquisition of knowledge from other countries is an integral part of making progress in science, generation of knowledge is also an important issue which has to be taken into consideration. We should not be dependent upon Western countries in science. Of course such dependence will undoubtedly bring about some progress. However, this will be accompanied by imitation and lack of innovation, which make this dependence inadvisable.

Therefore, we must try to generate the knowledge we need. Every step we take towards that goal, will further prepare us for the next stage. We should start this movement by utilizing our own talents and cultural heritage.

The third assumption is that making progress in science should be accompanied by self-confidence, hope for success, and making great efforts. This is because we believe that science progress inside the country should be based on indigenous efforts, our Islamic culture, our national resources, and the country's needs. This should be

considered in all our scientific efforts. Some people might say that this is not possible. But we should come to believe that we can. We should know that once we start making efforts, there is always hope for success.

The fourth assumption is that indolence, seeking comfort, and leaving our duties to others is not advisable. Our movement should be like a jihad. Jihad is not limited to battlefields only. Jihad is necessary in scientific areas as well, just like all other areas of life. Jihad means making non-stop efforts and accepting risks. Of course this should be done in a logical manner and be accompanied by hope and progress.

These are the assumptions. We have discussed these points several times and we have come to accept that these facts have all been agreed upon by our scholars and academics. As you noticed, some of the points our friends mentioned today were related to the demands which I have made in this regard during the recent years. This proves the fact that scientific progress and encouraging innovations in science have been internalized in our society. This is a fact that has never been doubted.

Considering these facts, what is the role of academics? This is a point that has to be taken into consideration. Academics have an important role to play in this regard. They play a significant role in universities and research centers. Similarly, executive bodies shoulder responsibilities in this regard as well. We cannot address these points to executive bodies only and ignore the role of academics who are the leading force on this front. Conversely, we cannot address the points to academics only and disregard the role of executive bodies that are in charge of this great scientific movement. A great project has been developed in the country which will result in scientific progress inside the country. Executive bodies, the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, and the Ministry of Health are in charge of completing this project.

One suggestion is that both academics and the officials in charge of universities should promote self-confidence among university students. Students should have self-confidence. There should be a sense of self-confidence among all the people as I previously mentioned. I do not mean self-confidence at an individual level only. Rather, we should have confidence in our national resources and cultural heritage. This is what I mean by national self-confidence. This should be manifested in all our youth.

I am going to have a meeting with students in a few days' time. They are going to mention some points as well. There should be no sign of despair and doubt among them about achieving our goals in the future. They should be full of hope about the future. This feeling of optimism about the future is rooted in facts. You are responsible for creating a sense of optimism about the future among students. Of course there are various contributing factors - such as political and social factors - in this regard. However, academics play an important role in classes, laboratories, and learning centers. They should instill self-confidence and optimism about the future into the students.

A second suggestion I would like to make - especially because educational officials are present here as well - is that we should determine the country's needs and scientific priorities and base our educational plans on these two factors. Research and thorough investigation may reveal a number of priorities in the humanities, fundamental sciences, and various areas of experimental sciences. The results of these investigations must be taken into account when doing large-scale planning. Due to the limited amount of resources available and the large number of needs we currently have in the country, we should not spend our time on low-priority projects. Neither should we use our human and financial resources in these cases. This is also an important matter.

Another issue is that of promoting research activities among the students. The issue of educational reform is an important and complicated matter, and of course it should be discussed in such meetings. However, we do not have enough time now to discuss all these issues.

What I intend to say regarding the educational reform in the country is that the educational system should be planned in a way that encourages research and in-depth understanding on the part of the students. Rote learning is not a good

option.

Unfortunately, there are still professors at our universities who assign their students to read hundreds of pages on a single subject. Why is that? This will only involve our students in the memorization of the subject matter. We may even not know how useful they might be for the students. This would draw students' attention to what is not necessary. You should act thoughtfully in this regard. Prominent scientific figures should discuss this matter and plan an educational system which encourages research and in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Our youth are talented. To be fair, they have exceptional talent. The average level of aptitude in the country is very high.

I think time is almost up. One of the subjects I usually discuss is that of experienced and young professors. We should not let this matter turn into a source of discord among us. I believe that we are in need of experienced as well as less-experienced and young professors. I do not support the formation of cliques inside universities. Young professors should also be allowed to enter universities. We should prevent the formation of cliques among university professors. We should also provide opportunities for the young professors.

Of course, I have to mention that experienced professors in different fields are great assets for the country. We should utilize their capacities in the most suitable way. We should plan to have both experienced professors - those who have a lot of experience and have been teaching for many consecutive years in a particular field of study - as well as young and enthusiastic professors who have just finished their education and are ready to start teaching. The capacities of neither group should be ignored.

We need both experienced and young energetic professors in our universities. We need our human resources. If we plan to develop our research and educational centers, we can utilize the capacities of both groups. We can also provide employment opportunities for students who are willing to get employed. We can employ our elites and involve them in scientific activities. This is another thing we could do.

I think it is almost prayer time, and we cannot continue this meeting any longer.

I thank all the dear friends, brothers, and sisters who took part in this meeting. Hopefully, the points mentioned in this meeting will be extracted by the staff serving at my office. I follow up the issues that are in my own sphere of influence. The executive bodies will also do their own portion of the responsibility.

Greetings be upon you and Allah's mercy and blessings