



The Wine of Wisdom: The Life, Poetry and Philosophy of Omar Khayyam

By Mehdi Aminrazavi

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Representative of the exotic and erotic east, enemy of Christianity, prophet of hedonism, champion of free thinkers, Omar Khayyam and his Ruba'iyyat have been the stuff of legend for centuries. Nourished by an admiration of Khayyam that has been with him since childhood, Aminrazavi's comprehensive new biography reintroduces the figure of Khayyam, and his great achievements, to the Western world. Blending a readable and accessible narrative with scholarly ambition and years of research, Aminrazavi's work covers not only Khayyam's well-known poetry, but also his extraordinary life, his neglected philosophical writings and the impact of his work in the West. It features a variety of supporting material, including original translations and the full text of Fitzgerald's Rubaiyyat, and will prove an ideal introduction not only for those who want to know more about the poets inspired by Rumi, but also for students on a variety of humanities and Middle-East related courses.

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Editorial Review

Review

This is the most nuanced and balanced study of the elusive Omar Khayyam that I have yet encountered. Aminrazavi acknowledges the problems we face in reconciling the personas of the respected mathematician and natural scientist, the questing philosopher and metaphysician, and the skeptical, antinomian poet, and shows himself to be fully conversant with the scholarly arguments involved. He rejects those treatises and couplets which are obviously spurious, but concludes nevertheless that Khayyam the scientist and philosopher was indeed the author of the famous quatrains - more Buddhist or Epicurean at heart than Sufi - which resonated so strongly with like minds in medieval Persia, the later world of Islam, and the modern West. Khayyam is clearly a man for all ages, and Mehdi Aminrazavi does a fine job of introducing him anew to our insecure post-modern world. John Perry, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Chicago The English speaking public have now access to Dr. Aminrazavi's extensive account of Omar Khayyam's scientific and philosophical work, and will become acquainted with the thinking of this unique Persian intellectual figure. Hossein Ziai, Professor of Islamic and Iranian Studies, UCLA "It is the most important book published on Omar Khayyam during the past few decades. For the first time, it deals not only with Khayyam's poetry, but also with his philosophical and scientific works that have not received the treatment that they deserve in the West. It also debunks the myths about Omar Khayyam of having been either an Epicurean drunkard or a mystic. It provides one of the best and most comprehensive analyses of his philosophy and introduces Khayyam as a deep thinker with a rationalist philosophy that is as fresh today as when it was first enunciated. The discussion of the influence of the Ruba'iyyat on leading Western poets and writers such as Mark Twain, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and others is also very impressive. Farhang Jahanpour, University of Oxford

About the Author

Mehdi Aminrazavi is Professor of Philosophy and Religion and Co-Director of the Centre for Asian Studies at Mary Washington College in Virginia.

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