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Addenda

“Omar’s Dream-Wine of Love,” by Paramahansa Yogananda

The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam (consecutive quatrains 1 – 75)

About the Author

Paramahansa Yogananda: A Yogi in Life and Death
Aims and Ideals of Self-Realization Fellowship
Wine of the Mystic: The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

Introduction

By Paramahansa Yogananda

Long ago in India I met a hoary Persian poet who told me that the poetry of Persia often has two meanings, one inner and one outer. I remember the great satisfaction I derived from his explanations of the twofold significance of several Persian poems.

One day as I was deeply concentrated on the pages of Omar Khayyam’s *Rubaiyat*, I suddenly beheld the walls of its outer meanings crumble away, and the vast inner fortress of golden spiritual treasures stood open to my gaze.

Ever since, I have admired the beauty of the previously invisible castle of inner wisdom in the *Rubaiyat*. I have felt that this dream-castle of truth, which can be seen by any penetrating eye, would be a haven for many shelter-seeking souls invaded by enemy armies of ignorance.

Profound spiritual treatises by some mysterious divine law do not disappear from the earth even after centuries of misunderstanding, as in the case of the *Rubaiyat*. Not even in Persia is all of Omar Khayyam’s deep philosophy understood in its entirety, as I have tried to present it.

Because of the hidden spiritual foundation of the *Rubaiyat* it has withstood the ravages of time and the misinterpretations of many translators, remaining a perpetual mansion of wisdom for truth-loving and solace-seeking souls.

In Persia Omar Khayyam has always been considered a highly advanced mystical teacher, and his *Rubaiyat* revered as an inspired Sufi scripture.¹ “The first great Sufi writer was Omar Khayyam,” writes Professor Charles F. Horne in the Introduction to the *Rubaiy-
at, which appears in Vol. VIII of “The Sacred Books and Early Literature of the East” series (Parke, Austin & Lipscomb, London, 1917). “Unfortunately, Omar, by a very large number of Western readers, has come to be regarded as a rather erotic pagan poet, a drunkard interested only in wine and earthly pleasure. This is typical of the confusion that exists on the entire subject of Sufism. The West has insisted on judging Omar from its own viewpoint. But if we are to understand the East at all, we must try to see how its own people look upon its writings. It comes as a surprise to many Westerners when they are told that in Persia itself there is no dispute whatever about Omar’s verses and their meaning. He is accepted quite simply as a great religious poet.

“What then becomes of all his passionate praise of wine and love? These are merely the thoroughly established metaphors of Sufism; the wine is the joy of the spirit, and the love is the rapturous devotion to God....

“Omar rather veiled than displayed his knowledge. That such a man would be regarded by the Western world as an idle reveler is absurd. Such wisdom united to such shallowness is self-contradictory.”

Omar and other Sufi poets used popular similes and pictured the ordinary joys of life so that the worldly man could compare those ordinary joys of mundane life with the superior joys of the spiritual life. To the man who habitually drinks wine to temporarily forget the sorrows and unbearable trials of his life, Omar offers a more delightful nectar of enlightenment and divine ecstasy which has the power, when used by man, to obliterate his woes for all time. Surely Omar did not go through the labor of writing so many exquisite verses merely to tell people to escape sorrow by drugging their senses with wine!
J. B. Nicolas, whose French translation of 464 rubaiyat (quatrails) appeared in 1867, a few years after Edward FitzGerald’s first edition, opposed FitzGerald’s views that Omar was a materialist. FitzGerald refers to this fact in the introduction to his own second edition, as follows:

“M. Nicolas, whose edition has reminded me of several things, and instructed me in others, does not consider Omar to be the material epicurean that I have literally taken him for, but a mystic, shadowing the Deity under the figure of wine, wine-bearer, etc., as Hafiz is supposed to do; in short, a Sufi poet like Hafiz and the rest....As there is some traditional presumption, and certainly the opinion of some learned men, in favor of Omar’s being a Sufi — even something of a saint — those who please may so interpret his wine and cup-bearer.”

Omar distinctly states that wine symbolizes the intoxication of divine love and joy. Many of his stanzas are so purely spiritual that hardly any material meanings can be drawn from them, as for instance in quatrains XLIV, LX, and LXVI.

With the help of a Persian scholar, I translated the original Rubaiyat into English. But I found that, though literally translated, they lacked the fiery spirit of Khayyam’s original. After I compared that translation with FitzGerald’s, I realized that FitzGerald had been divinely inspired to catch exactly in gloriously musical English words the soul of Omar’s writings.

Therefore I decided to interpret the inner hidden meaning of Omar’s verses from FitzGerald’s translation rather than from my own or any other that I had read.²

In order to grasp readily the logic and depth of the “Spiritual Interpretations,” I hope every reader will read those offerings along with the Glossary. In the “Practical Application” sections, readers
who feel so inclined will find many sincere and useful suggestions as to how these truths may be beneficially applied to daily life.

Since Omar’s real dream-wine was the joyously intoxicating wine of divine love, I have written, in the Addenda, a few paragraphs on Divine Love, which I received in the sacred temple of my inner perceptions. This Divine Love is what Omar advises as a panacea for all human woes and questionings.

As I worked on the spiritual interpretation of the Rubaiyat, it took me into an endless labyrinth of truth, until I was rapturously lost in wonderment. The veiling of Khayyam’s metaphysical and practical philosophy in these verses reminds me of “The Revelation of St. John the Divine.” The Rubaiyat may rightly be called “The Revelation of Omar Khayyam.”
Wine of the Mystic
Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan’s Turret in a Noose of Light.


Spiritual Interpretation

The inner Silence sings:
“Awake! Forsake the sleep of ignorance, for the dawn of wis-
dom has come. Hurl the hard stone of spiritual discipline that breaks the bowl of dark unknowing, putting to flight the pale stars of mock-lustered material desires.

“Behold, the Eastern Wisdom, the Hunter and Destroyer of delusion, has caught the proud minaret of the kingly soul in a noose of Light, dispelling its imprisoning mortal darkness.”

I have been inspired further to interpret this introductory quatrain as Omar’s personal clarion call to the spiritually sleeping:

“O inhabitants of the City of Delusion, sleep no more! The sunlight of my awakening message of mystic wisdom has arrived. Learn how to use the hard stone of spiritual discipline to break the bowl of your dark ignorance, dashing from its hold the desire for momentarily attractive material pleasures.

“Behold with envy how the Hunter of Wisdom has been searching out and gathering the lofty, kingly, spiritually advanced devotees of Truth, encompassing their souls with a halo of the everlasting Light of Freedom.”

**Practical Application**

Most people, though apparently awake, are really asleep in delusion. Pursued by the compelling commands of their hounding habits, they have not yet been awakened by wisdom to walk its pleasant pathways. Where life is in danger for lack of watchfulness, it is not safe to sleep. So it is unwise to slumber in the dark doorways of evil habits, which invite the danger of possible death to wisdom and true happiness.

The ordinary man earns a living, eats three times a day, amuses
himself with trivial entertainments, remaining engrossed in the mechanical performance of material duties without ever awakening to the importance of understanding the purpose of life: attaining true happiness and sharing it with others. The wise man gives up false pride in self-perfection, the thought that “I am all right as I am.” Using the net of introspection, he catches delusion and destroys it. Forsake the slumber of ignorant habits and awaken wisdom by performing those good habits which alone can free life from danger and crown it with lasting happiness.

To be drunk with the daily round of haunting useless habits, to be negatively the same every day for years, is a wasted experience. Destroy false pride. Awaken the soul and remain ever wakeful, striving each day to be different and better in all ways. Your soul was not meant to be a prisoner of passion, sleeping behind bars of ignorance. Jerk yourself from the stupor of sloth; race forward with progressive activities, and catch success in the net of soul creativity.

Forsake spiritual lethargy and melancholia. Bask in the light of meditative peace and Self-realization, which destroys false pride of material existence and banishes inner soul gloom.
Dreaming when Dawn’s Left Hand was in the Sky
I heard a Voice within the Tavern cry,

“Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life’s Liquor in its Cup be dry.”


Spiritual Interpretation

I had not yet fully wakened from my material sleep of ignorance, and was but dreaming of the dawn of early wisdom, when I heard the intuitive voice of my soul cry out from the tavern of inner silence: ‘O little thoughts of awakening wisdom, rouse
yourselves! fill the cup of consciousness with the wine of Divine Joy, ere life’s vitality vanish from the bodily cup.’’

Practical Application

When man is dreaming with early inspiration, the inner voice of the soul urges him to wake up his undeveloped thoughts about the purpose of life and be practical, by filling his consciousness with true happiness — with Divine Joy — before life flies away.

The inner promptings of common sense often shake man in his mental stupor, urging him to rouse his energies and harness them for the realization of life’s principal aim. Yet it is human nature that most people go on year after year dreaming wishfully that they might realize true happiness — their life’s goal and foremost desire — only to find life ebbing away.

Before that comes to pass, one should take care, through determined effort, to fill the cup of his consciousness with the divinely intoxicating wine of spiritual fulfillment, and drink of that elixir to quench the thirst of life’s most important desire. With the chalice of his heart he should drink smiles tapped from the hidden casks of Divine Joy he discovers daily.
And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted — "Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."


**Spiritual Interpretation**

As the cock-call of wisdom sounded, delusion-drowsy devotees were aroused, and stood before the tavern of bodily life and cried, “Ah, Soul, awaken! Open the innermost door of silence, wherein lies God-consciousness. How little time we have to stay on earth! If during this short season we can reap the rich harvest of
God-wisdom, we need never again be reincarnated, dragged here by earth-binding desires.”

**Practical Application**

Earthly desires are the cause of reincarnation. Souls must return life after life in new bodily forms to work out their unfulfilled cravings. But when all longings are satisfied or spiritually sublimated, there is no further need to come back to this earth of suffering and limitation.

When the first call of wisdom awakens you from the sleep of delusion, utilize the short season of earth life for cultivating reincarnation-destroying, misery-annihilating soul freedom in God-consciousness.

Everyone should make the best of his present life, for it comes but once to each soul. Even if you have to reincarnate, you will not be allowed to come a second time as the same individual. Thomas Edison can never reincarnate in the same body with the same mannerisms he had during that particular lifetime. This is true of each soul. Once we depart from the tavern of this bodily incarnation we cannot come and bide in the same fleshly tavern again. So it is the highest wisdom to make the most of this present opportunity. Follow the dictates of wisdom; listen to the voice of common sense, which urges you toward life’s worthwhile goals. Open up and enliven your dormant soul faculties. Do your best to be useful to yourself and others before this ephemeral life ebbs away.

In the light of introspection, keep awake to life’s highest duties and avoid the sleepwalkings of delusion and mechanical, useless
actions. Honeycomb life with worthwhile activities during the summer season of opportunities. Thus you and your loved ones can enjoy sweet contentment to the end. And if by deep meditation you attain soul freedom in God-consciousness, His bliss will be yours through all eternity.