Omar Khayyam: An Introduction

The in hand study, as the title suggests, is a Target- Oriented Approach to Two Different English Translations of Omar Khayyam’s Quatrains. The First Chapter introduces Omar Khayyam, his poetry and the two translations of the Quatrains.

Ghias-ud-din Abulfath Omar-ebn-Ebraheem, popularly known as Omar Khayyam, is a prominent Iranian (Persian) philosopher, astronomer, mathematician and poet. He was born in Neishabur, Khorasan, a northeastern province of Iran, about 1048 AD and died there in 1123. The exact dates of his birth and death are not known.

It is believed that he had a command of all the sciences and knowledge of his time, thus he was given the title of Hakeem (sage, learned). He has, also, been referred to with honorary titles such as Hujjat al-Haqq (the evidence of truth) and Ghiyath al Din (the patron of faith) all of which show that the community had lots of respect for him and he was recognized as a religious authority too.

The majority of his scientific work was written in Arabic which was the scientific language during his time, but his inspiring poetry, known as
Ruba’iyyat, and some of his philosophical essays were written in Persian (Farsi), his native language. Although Khayyam was a talented scientist, many, especially in the western world, know him only for his Ruba’iyyat. About 600 poems have been attributed to him, though most critics agree that not all of those were written by Omar Khayyam.

Khayyam’s Ruba’iyyat have been translated into more than 30 languages. There are very few non-western figures that rivaled the fame of Omar Khayyam in the west. He was regarded to be the representative of the “East” in all its exoticness. Omar Khayyam’s significance in the west is of two fold, first; his Ruba’iyyat (Quatrains), second his scientific works especially those in the field of mathematics, which has always been overshadowed by his poetry.

**Sufism and Sufi Poetry**

According to Oliver Leaman in his book *key concepts in Eastern philosophy* Sufism is a specifically Islamic form of mysticism designed to help its followers understand the nature of divine unity. It is based upon the following of a mystical path, under the guidance of a teacher, and the end of the path is a direct experience of divine reality. The term itself comes from
the Arabic for wool (Suf) which refers to the simple clothes of its original practitioners, and by contrast with many believers the Sufis led solitary and simple lives in order to bring them nearer to God and immerse the individual human soul within the unity of God. There are many schools of Sufism and there is also a wide variety of explanations of the central doctrines.

The Sufi movement started in the early years of Islam, perhaps in the seventh or eighth century, and gained many believers. In its glory days in Iran Sufism inspired some of the finest poems in the Persian language. But after some time, the movement fell into disregard and some of its practices received sharp criticism not only from Orthodox Muslims, who regarded Sufism as close to heresy, but also from intellectuals.

Khayyam is mostly referred to as a spiritual skeptic, and wise poet whose Ruba’iyyat are to be understood as the mysterious utterances of a spiritual master. It is so common to read some of the Ruba’iyyat as examples of Sufi poetry. He employs much of the same Sufi symbolism and poetic imagery of the Sufi poets before and after him, such as Hafiz and Rumi.

The view that Khayyam was a Sufi master and an agnostic is supported by a number of Persian and Western scholars. Ghazzali was among the major
contemporaries of Khayyam, who saw him as a Sufi; he mentions some of
Khayyam’s *Rubā’iyat* and comments on them. It shows that, there must
have been a tradition of understanding *Rubā’iyat* within a Sufi context in
Khayyam’s time.

Figures such as Sayyed Hossein Nasr, Abbas Kayvan Qazwini, Robert
Graves, Anthony Burgess, Henri Masse, Zhukovski, and Christensen have
also offered esoteric readings of Khayyam.

Despite the above authoritative views, the best evidence for Khayyam's
views on Sufism comes from Khayyam himself. In his *On the Knowledge of
the Universal Principles of Existence*, he classifies the seekers of truth in four
categories first of whom are theologians, the second are Philosophers and
sages, the third are Instructionalists and the Fourth are Sufis. He clearly
argues that the Sufis path is “the best of them all.”

In what follows, a Sufi interpretation of Khayyam’s *Rubā’iyat* will be
presented. The intention here is to argue that while Khayyam’s Sufi
tendencies and possible Sufi affiliation cannot be rejected at all, it can be
said that he was not a Sufi in the traditional sense of the word. This
endeavor would be of help in analyzing the pair of translations.
The following seven elements constitute the framework of Sufism:

1. The Transcendental Nature of God
2. Intellect
3. Love and Beloved
4. Asceticism and the Sufi Order
5. Initiation and the Master
6. The Spiritual Journey
7. Unity

The Transcendental Nature of God

Sufism begins with bewilderment and wonder rather than with doubt and skepticism, a line that Khayyam hardly crossed in his Ruba‘iyyat. Despite his skeptical views with regard to every aspect of religion, Khayyam never questions the existence of God in any of the quatrains. Here is an example:

HE IS, and nought but Him exists, I know,
This truth is what creation’s book will show;
When heart acquired perception with His Light,
Atheistic darkness changed to faithly glow

In another quatrain, Khayyam elaborates on the unspeakable reality and mystery of God:

The Chief of Being’s secrets that Thou art,
Thy traits depict to view the Being’s chart;
Veiled in Thy Greatness from the creatures here
Presidest Being Thou in open Mart

16
Khayyam confesses that, despite his mastery over the exoteric and mysterious sciences, he is still bewildered by the mystery of the world.

I know existence and non-existence, outwardly though
I know all that is high and what is below
Despite my mastery, shamefully, I am ignorant
For I know not a degree higher than darkness to go

**Intellec**

Sufis place God in a transcendental domain beyond the reach of reason, and in so doing, reason and rationality is belittled. Traditionally, rationalization and reasoning have been criticized by Sufis as an inferior ability that is incapable of understanding divine reality. Khayyam seems to be in Sufis side in his poetry:

No understanding reached Thy height sublime,
For thought can only move in space or time;
No soul can grasp Thy perfections, O Lord!
And Thou alone could gauge Thy height, O prime!

My soaring mind cannot approach Thy throne.
I kiss this ground and thus for sins atone.
O wondrous Charmer! Who can know Thy Being?
Perchance, Thy knower may be Thou lone

In the tradition of great Sufi masters, he criticizes reason and intellect as well as the formalism of the religious law. ‘Wine’, this powerful symbol of divine intoxication and of dissolving and annihilating oneself in divine love, is used by Khayyam exactly as traditional Sufis do.

You know my friends, with what a brave Carouse
I will enrich myself with two goblets of wine in my house
Divorced old barren of reason and faith thrice
And took the daughter of the vine to spouse 7

**Love and Beloved**
Sufism is the path of love, which is both a mode of being and a mode of
knowledge; the Sufi knows through love what love is, and ultimately his very
being is consumed by love. On this point Khayyam remarks:

Without Love and Guide the world's a restless round,
When heart will tune to flute then He is found;
I scanned the world mound, at last I find
That bliss is truth — the rest is hollow sound 8

For him, Love is an ideal which constitutes the heart and soul of life. The world
is an expression of love which stems from Love.

The compendium of the book of truth is love
The leading line of Ode of Youth is love
O witless Man, the world of love so blind!
Bear this in mind: The core of life is love 9

Khayyam’s Sufism is precisely apparent in his treatment of the concept of love,
which constitutes the heart and soul of Sufism.

May lovers in the ruin consult and meet,
May ascetics burn in their own pious heat;
And may the motley-coats and azure-robos
To crave a lover’s blessings, kiss his feet 10

There are two key concepts in the *Ruba’iyyat*, which, depending on how they
are interpreted, may leave us with a different Khayyam; they are the notions of
‘wine’ and ‘Beloved’. These two key concepts that are repeated in the majority of the *Ruba‘iyyat* play a crucial role in understanding Khayyam. It can be argued that by ‘Beloved’ Khayyam means the only ‘Being’ worthy to be loved. This long-standing tradition and interpretation of Khayyam highlights the Sufi usage of the concept of ‘Beloved’. If taken literally, one ends up with Khayyam as an agnostic hedonist who prescribes worldly pleasures as a remedy for the meaninglessness of life. However, if ‘wine’ and the ‘Beloved’ are understood in their traditional Sufi connotations, then we have a different Khayyam: a Sufi master who belittles all that is transient and thus unreal.

**Asceticism and the Sufi Order**

With love comes pain, the pain of remembering our original residence and the taste of oneness with God; this is where asceticism shows up. This quality is reflected in Omar Khayyam’s *Ruba‘iyyat*; however, it is exposed in very few quatrains.

I am embattled with my ego which I cannot tame
I am ashamed of my deeds but they fan the flame
The mercy will forgive, but then, alas
Thou saw me sin, can I forget the shame

Khayyam may have been an independent Sufi who disliked institutionalized Sufism, as is apparent in his numerous comments about the hypocrisy of the
Sufis. While there is no evidence that Khayyam practiced asceticism or belonged to any established Sufi order, he may have considered himself as a kind of Sufi without formally having been initiated into an order.

**Initiation and the Master**
Initiation into an order through a Sufi master is the gate by which one enters the Sufi tradition. There is not clear evidence whether Khayyam had a master or had been some-one’s spiritual master. He just considers himself to be a follower of Avicenna, the master of Greek philosophy.

Khayyam could have established a direct relationship with the ‘Beloved’.

Consumed by divine love, he says:

\begin{quote}
In tavern rather I in Thee confide
Than pray without Thee at the Pulpit-side
O’Thou, who art creation’s First and Last
Now burn or bless me as Thou may’st decide
\end{quote}

Some critics argue that Khayyam’s master was not a person but rather all the manifestations of the ‘Beloved’. If the role of the master is to show the way and to lead one from the corporeal to the incorporeal, for Khayyam, a flower, a nightingale, a river, as well as the beauty of the face of a woman could do precisely that. Khayyam did not seek an external master, but saw the Master within himself; he expresses this concept in the following quatrain:
O You who seek your Lord at night and day
with purblind eyes you seek Him far away
The Lord reveals Himself and ever says
See me from head to foot with thee – and stay.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{The Spiritual Journey}

The spiritual journey from the outward to the inward, from the exoteric to the esoteric, by means of ascetic practices and cleansing of the soul is another feature of Sufi tradition.

In the \textit{Rubaiyyat} Khayyam offers specific instructions of how the spiritual journey should be followed. Khayyam belittles all that veils the seeker of truth from reality. The following quatrain is an example of Khayyam's perspective on the human condition and our journey:

We came as purest gold, but changed to dross
We came sedate, but griefs have made us cross
We loved with cheerful eyes and flaming hearts
But cast our lives to winds, in dust we toss\textsuperscript{14}

We are no other than a moving row
Of magic shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the sun-illumined lantern held
In midnight by the Master of the show \textsuperscript{15}

Khayyam's spiritual journey peels layers of illusory aspects of life by reminding us continuously how temporary life is. The mind then naturally falls with the Unchangeable, Immutable, and Eternal Truth.
**Unity**

The final goal of a Sufi is union with God. It should occur before death. The saying, "Die before your death," refers to a spiritual death and rebirth, a rebirth whose ultimate aim is to achieve unity with God. In *Ruba‘iyyat* we read:

In danger who allureth? I or thou  
And who with tigers playeth? I or thou  
I cannot speak myself if I be thine  
If I am thou, who speaketh? I or thou

Based on the abovementioned, Khayyam has come to be identified as a Sufi poet because he has adopted certain features of Sufi thought such as acknowledgment of the impermanence of the world, the attainment of a particular type of joy, and the wisdom that is the result of drinking the wine of wisdom.

**Ruba‘iyyat (The Quatrains)**

The word Ruba‘i (*Ruba‘iyyat* – plural), meaning "Quatrain," refers to four hemistiches of up to thirteen syllables each, and a rhyme scheme of *A A B A* or *A A A A*. Traditionally, the first three hemistiches are regarded as the
prelude to the fourth, which should be inspiring, delicate, and short. This four-lined stanza became popular in Persian poetry for the simplicity of its style and its short length which allows an aphorism to be delivered well. In the early period of Persian literary tradition the four parts often rhymed, but by the time of Khayyam, only the first, second and fourth lines rhymed, providing the poet with a greater degree of freedom.

The central and salient features of Khayyam's *Rubā‘iyat* can be divided into seven categories that are treated and illuminated in a variety of ways:

1. Impermanence and the meaning of life
2. Theodicy and justice
3. The here and now
4. Doubt and bewilderment
5. Death and afterlife
6. Determinism and predestination
7. In wine there is truth

The abovementioned all form a unified system of belief. What lies at the heart of the Khayyamian message is the notion of impermanence. Life is changing ‘like the sands of the desert and clouds in the sky’ and only a fool can take this game seriously. Life is not only impermanent, but also fundamentally unjust. It is a mystery why a good God would allow so much suffering to be
inflicted upon us in the continuous cycle of suffering from birth to death.
Then the wise have no choice but to focus on the here and now which constitutes the third principle of Khayyam's thought. The fourth theme is a peculiarly Khayyamian doubt: a mode of being which realizes that major riddles of life are ultimately insoluble.

The other main point of Khayyam's thought is death, more as a symbol of impermanence. Death might not be finality, but it is a mystery, and Khayyam believes that diving into mysteries is futile, "for neither you nor I know the divine mysteries." We are neither asked to come into this life, nor are we asked when we would like to leave. The seventh theme in Khayyam's Ruba'iyyat is Determinism. Khayyam realizes that there is an existential determinism embedded in our very presence; we are here and suffer not by choice. We find ourselves in the midst of this peculiar predicament. The wise are those who can play this game well without taking it seriously.

The last one is the wine of wisdom that enables the "wise fool" to play the game of existence without taking it seriously. 'Wine' is one of the central themes of Khayyam's poetry and runs throughout his entire Ruba'iyyat. It is
the symbol of the type of wisdom whose effect brings about the detachment one needs in order to live a life.

Now we can go through Ruba‘iyyat and trace the mentioned themes in more details.

**Impermanence and the Meaning of Life**
Throughout his *Ruba‘iyyat*, Khayyam repeatedly uses the imagery of a *jug* to indicate the principle of generation and corruption. According to Holy Qur’an God created men from clay, and then blew unto him from his own breath. The temporary nature of the clay is a reminder of the worthlessness of worldly endeavors.

I saw the potter in the market yesterday  
Pounding and pounding upon a fresh piece of clay  
"Behold," said the clay to the potter  
Treat me gently for once like you, now I am clay\(^\text{17}\)

I once bought a jug from a potter’s hand  
The jug revealed secrets from every strand  
"I was a king with a golden chalice" said the jug  
Now look, I am a jug in every drunken hand\(^\text{18}\)

The potter is sometimes the universe, and often God. The jug represents humans, and the bazaar is life, where the potter makes the jugs that are bought and sold as they get old, crack and vanish.
The past, present and future come to an end in death where all concerns, fears and hopes vanish into the deep hole of nothingness. Qaraguzlu, in his work *Omar Khayyam*, argues that Khayyam's emphasis on the impermanence of the world is an evidence of the reality of the only permanent Being, God. According to Khayyam's *Rubaiyyat* what is important in life, in addition to God, are love and joy. *Carpe diem* echoes in this quatrain:

Few in number, days of our lives have passed away
Like water in a creek and wind in the valley; they sway
the sorrow of two days have never haunted me
The day that hasn’t come and the one that has gone away

**Theodicy and Justice**

Regarding Theodicy and Justice, Khayyam asks some questions in his *Rubaiyyat*. Why is there suffering? Why would a creator allow so much suffering? Can we overcome suffering? Suffering is an essential part of the formation of the world and, therefore, an inescapable condition. In a quatrain we read:

In what life yields in this Two-door monastery
Your share in the pain of heart and death will tarry
The one who does not bear a child is happy
And he not born of a mother, merry

"Two-door monastery" refers to the world where one comes through the door of birth and leaves from the gate of death. Here the world is compared to a monastery where monks live an austere and ascetic life and tolerate
suffering. The mystery, however, is not the presence of suffering in our lives but the role of God with regard to it. In some quatrains we read:

Life is dark and maze-like, it is
Suffering cast upon us and comfort in abyss
Praise the Lord for all the means of evil
Ask none other than He for malice. 21

You wish to be wise, yes even you!
Perplexed you are and know not what to do;
So Time, your teacher, flogs you and strikes
Until out of pain, you pray to Him too. 22

Khayyam’s, then, argues that while the problem cannot be resolved, one can come to terms with it. He tries to solve the problem independent of God, faith, and reason. His alternative view is to leave the world, not in an extreme ascetic sense, but in a rational and Epicurean sense. He states that much suffering is self-caused and origins from greed, possessiveness, and a desire to have more. The fundamental cause of evil is attachment, the solution is detachment.

These Noble lords who lead the worldly van,
Are sick of life, their hides alone they tan
But strange! I shun the yoke of greed they bear –
The beasts! They call me "beast" and not a man. 23

O friend, do not indulge in this world’s sorrow
From the world of vain grief and sadness, don’t borrow the past is gone and the future is not yet here,
Be happy and fear not the sorrow of tomorrow. 24
The Here and Now

The Here and Now, according to Khayyam, means that we would better be away from the unnecessary desires in life and be aware of what has an immediate impact upon us.

To seek and fetch what just you eat and wear,
Though not essential, may be thought as fair;
The rest is trash and needless, hence beware
You sell no life’s assets to buy despair.\(^{25}\)

He believes that life is an incurable disease with many ups and downs, trials and difficulties; so one shall throw away the everyday worries and allow the feeling of appreciation and liveliness to come out. Khayyam proposes us in a number of quatrains to drink the wine of wisdom which results in a profound appreciation for the here and now before life comes to an end.

Today is thine to spend, but not tomorrow,
Counting on morrow breedeth naught but sorrow;
Oh! Squander not this breath that heaven hath lent thee,
Nor make too sure another breath to borrow\(^{26}\)

Doubt and Bewilderment

Bewilderment is often the result of being perplexed and puzzled in a situation of predicament; AminRazavi argues that Khayyam’s predicament is not the result of his engagement with specific mystical and theological issues; rather it is life which he sees as a great ambiguity. He is bewildered by the contradiction between the seemingly perfect world of nature and all its shortcomings.
Since mortal shapes are cast by Hand Divine
Widen the flaws that throw them out of line?
If forms are aright, why must He shatter them?
If not, to whom should we the fault assign?²⁷

He questions the purpose of creation, the riddles, puzzles, and the
senselessness of it. God must have created the world and us for a purpose,
but Khayyam is bewildered by the lack of evidence for such a purpose.

The sphere upon which mortals come and go,
Has no end nor beginning that we know;
And none there is to tell us in plain truth:
Whence do we come and whither do we go?²⁸

Omar Khayyam looks deep into the mystery of creation, realizing the
complexities of the cosmos. He must have experienced the anxiety and fear
of this momentous circumstance along with the realization that this
harmonic symphony of the cosmos cannot be the result of chance and
randomness. Khayyam acknowledges two conclusions in light of such an
observation. First, we do not understand fully what life is about. When the
intellect fails to grasp, to understand and make sense of it all, the result is
perplexity and bewilderment. The second observation is that we all are in a
helpless condition.

We halt on earth a while in our course
And lo! We gather naught but plague and sores
Alas! Not one in hundred doubts resolved
We go with heavy hearts and deep remorse.²⁹
Death and Afterlife

Death, for Khayyam, is not only a symbol of impermanence but a desire for adopting the religious awareness. For him, the reality of death casts doubt on the reality of life, turning it into Maya, an illusion not to be taken seriously. But he also accepts that humans cannot live and not take life events seriously either; the death of a loved one cannot be forgotten easily. Furthermore, because we are inclined to take life seriously, we try to give meaning to a series of senseless events we call life attaching some man-made believes to it.

Khayyam warns us against these justifications:

Behind the curtain none has found his way
None came to know the secret as we could say
And each repeats the dirge his fancy taught
Which has no sense – but never ends the lay^{20}

In his Ruba’iyat, Khayyam uses the imagery of a jug over and over symbolizing death, perhaps because the clay from which a jug is made signifies recycled bodies of our ancestors. Yet the primary function of a jug is to contain water, which itself is the symbol of life:

A lover like me was this jug, in snare
Of Beauty’s tousled tresses long and fair;
The handle ’round its neck you see was once
The hand that fondly twined her lovely hair^{31}
According to Khayyam there is no clear evidence to indicate the existence of life after death. He neither rejects that the self survives physical death, nor confirms it. He takes an agnostic position. He argues:

1. Everything perishes; therefore, there is insufficient evidence for believing that we survive death.
2. No one has ever come back from the other world to tell us about it.
3. When in doubt, focus on what is certain, and that is the here and now.

In that regard he provides this quatrain:

O you, the child of Seven and the Four,
In fray with Four and Seven evermore;
Drink wine! I warned a thousand times before,
Once gone, you shall return Here nevermore

Of those who trod the long, long road before,
Who's come to help us Mystery explore?
Lo, in this double way of wish and dream,
Leave naught undone; you shall return no more

They say that heaven has golden ruby parks
And nectar streams with ever singing larks
No thanks — just fill a jug of wine for me
A groat is more than thousand Paper Marks

He argues there is enough here that can bring about a spiritually fulfilling experience. So we better depart from our concern with hell and heaven and focus on what is at hand:

I asked my heart "what heavens should I seek?"
The heart replied "The wise thus never speak"
I said "But all affirm that there's a heaven!"
Replied "Of course they all will eat the leek"\textsuperscript{35}

In the third part here and now becomes a replacement for hereafter. It also shows that he did believe in life after death in some sense. He accepts our given reality with all its limitations. The significance of hell and heaven is also challenged. If heaven provides us with the companionship of angels and rivers of milk and wine, they are all accessible in our world as well. So, a bird in hand is better than two in the bush.

Of Paradise they talk and hooris sweet
The juice of grape I hold as better treat;
Ah, take the cash and let the credit go
Sweet sounds the drum when distant is the beat\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Determinism and Predestination}

It is popular that Khayyam believed in determinism and predestination. If determinism and predestination imply that one could not have done otherwise, Khayyam clearly did not believe in it. Repeatedly, he tells us in an imperative manner to be happy, live in the here and now and drop the worries of the worldly life; and this stands in opposition to determinism as it is traditionally defined.

Khayyam's notion of predestination is a much more profound idea. Khayyam believed in free will amidst a form of cosmic determinism. He argues that
there are specific conditions imposed upon us like “We are born and we die by necessity”, “To exist is to suffer” and “All creation is subject to the laws of nature”. we have no choice but to submit:

You never make your weal, but it is sent
Perchance they kill you, not by your intent
Resign in him, and ever be content
For good or bad in world you can’t invent\(^{37}\)

Determinism, as Khayyam puts it, means that our presence in the world is determined. Some critics have accused him of pessimism, arguing that his sense of determinism leads to a sense of nihilism. Dashti argues that Khayyam did believe in determinism, had become perplexed and developed a negative attitude towards life; but there is no indication that he had lost his faith in God.

The world will long be, without you and me
No sign, no trace for anyone to see;
The world lacked not a thing before we came,
Nor will it miss us when we cease to be\(^{38}\)

At first they brought me perplexed in this way
Amazement still enhances day by day
We all alike are tasked to go but Oh!
Why are we brought and sent? This none can say\(^{39}\)

Time brought me here: what profit did it gain?
*It* takes me hence, but conquers no domain
My Master knows, but none can ever guess
Why Time thus brings and carries me again\(^{40}\)
Khayyam proposes that we should accept our fate, and it means to come to a rational understanding of the destiny of humankind, its constraints, limits, and fundamental constitutions. The following Ruba'i is an example of the Khayyam's view on free will and determinism:

The Fate will not correct what once she writes  
And more than what is doled no grain alights;  
Beware of bleeding heart with sordid cares  
For cares will cast thy heart in wretched plights

**In Wine There is Truth**

Intoxication and wine bring together various aspects of Khayyamian thought and shows how one can encounter temporality and death and still live a spiritual life. In this part, let's begin with three possible interpretations of the use of imagery of wine by Khayyam:

1. The intoxicating wine (popular)  
2. The wine of love (mystical)  
3. The wine of wisdom (philosophical)

There are those who have taken Khayyam's use of the concept of wine in its literal sense. Nasir Khusraw who in his *Safar namah* argues that drinking wine is necessary to forget the pain of the world. The other extreme is exemplified by the orthodox such as S. Nakhjavani, who, in his puritanical study of Khayyam entitled *Khayyam pendedri* rejects the notion that Khayyam could have ever prescribed drinking wine, for he was a devoted Muslim and
drinking wine is prohibited in Islam. There is, also, the view of those such as Khurasani, who believes that Khayyam had Sufi tendencies, but, being a skeptic and a pessimist, he prescribed drinking wine as a solution to his own unhappiness.\textsuperscript{43}

In Ruba’iyyat he repeatedly prescribes drinking wine as a response to major riddles of life, such as questions of being and nothingness and impermanence.

\begin{quote}
Drink wine, worries of unity and multiplicity fade  
From excess or decrease and feud of creed  
And do not shun this mead, a drop thereof  
Will cure ten thousand banes. ’Tis what you need\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Wine strengthens my body and life sustains  
Unveils the hidden secrets therein where it remains  
I cease searching for this world and the next  
A sip of wine is better than all the hidden domains\textsuperscript{45}

The other interpretation of the place of wine in Khayyamian thought is that of an esoteric and Sufi nature, in which the image of wine is considered as sacred. From Ibn Al-Farid’s Wine Ode to Hafiz, the Persian wine-poet, the notion of wine has been used by most Sufi poets in the Islamic esoteric tradition which symbolically represents wine as divine ecstasy. The tradition of interpreting Khayyam’s poetry within a Sufi context is long-standing; researchers such as Qazwini, Nasr, and Omar Ali Shah, and some of the Western scholars of Khayyam such as Robert Graves, Anthony
Burgess, and Henry Masse can be mentioned.

Drinking wine and the love of a rosy face
Better than the hypocrisy of the ascetic, that is base
When the lover and a drunk are doomed to hell
Who is left to see the heaven to embrace?  

The third interpretation of Khayyam’s use of the concept of wine is as the "wine of wisdom," a philosophical image which enables one to encounter the pitiless forces of nature through wisdom:

The mystery is great and the answers are rare
Wise men have searched but you should not care
Make thy own heaven here with this moment and wine
For their heaven is a fairy tale, nothing but Air

This type of wisdom is not achieved through drinking wine; it is a type of wisdom that is acquired from years of thought upon the more significant questions of life.

"Those imprisoned by the intellect's need to decipher
Humbled; knowing being from non-being, they proffer
Seek ignorance and drink the juice of the grape
Those fools acting as wise, scoffer

He prescribes drinking wine to solve other philosophical problems such as eternity and the createdness of the world.

Since our stay is impermanent in this Inn,
To be without wine and beloved is a sin;
O Hakim, why worry if the world is created or eternal,
Once dead, what if created or eternal the inn
O one departed from the warmth of the spiritual domain
By four, five, six,\textsuperscript{101} and seven,\textsuperscript{102} bewildered and constrain
Drink wine for you know not where you came from
Be joyous for you know not where you go again\textsuperscript{50}

For Khayyam, liberation is the answer to the problem of suffering. His
liberation involves gaining the wisdom which allows him to see the sublime
and the beautiful in what the world has to offer. Wine, lover, beloved, spring,
river, flowers and nightingale are all beautiful symbols of the world; and exis-
tence can be seen as a gift if one can drink the wine of wisdom and stay
happily in the world.

As Spring and Fall make their appointed turn,
The leaves of life one aft another turn;
Drink wine and brood not — as the Sage has said:
Life’s cares are poison, wine the cure in turn\textsuperscript{51}

Khayyam, if drunk with wine you be, rejoice,
If next to lovely face you sit, rejoice
And since the world in nothing ends, suppose
Your life be flown — while it is not, rejoice\textsuperscript{52}
Notes.

3. Ibid.
4. Heron – Allen, *Omar Khayyam*, 1899, p.89
6. Ibid.
11. Ibid. p.27
14. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid. p.102
20. Ibid. p.107
21. Ibid.
24. Ibid. p.108
28. Ibid. p.132
30. Ibid, p.229
32. Ibid. p.153
33. Ibid. p.181
35. Ibid, p.249
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid. p.83
43. Ibid, p. 126-127
46. Ibid. p. 128
47. Ibid. p. 129
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid. p. 130
50. Ibid. p. 129
52. Ibid. p.65