

Omar Khayyam



Omar Khayyám (1048–1131) was a Persian polymath: philosopher, mathematician, astronomer and poet. He also wrote treatises on mechanics, geography, mineralogy, music, climatology and theology. He was born in Nishapur, (modern-day Iran), then a Seljuq capital in Khorasan, which rivaled Cairo or Baghdad in cultural prominence in that era.

He spent part of his childhood in the town of Balkh (present northern Afghanistan), studying under the well-known scholar Sheikh Muhammad Mansuri. He later studied under Imam Mowaffaq Nishapuri, who was considered one of the greatest teachers of the Khorasan region. Throughout his life Omar Khayyám was dedicated to his efforts and abilities, in the day he would teach Algebra and Geometry in the evening he would attend the Seljuq court as an adviser of Malik-Shah I and at night he would study Astronomy and complete the important aspects of the Jalali calendar.

He is the author of one of the most important treatises on algebra written before modern times, the Treatise on Demonstration of Problems of Algebra, which includes a geometric method for solving cubic equations by intersecting a hyperbola with a circle and contributed to calendar reform. Omar Khayyám's years in Isfahan were very productive ones but after the death of the Seljuq Sultan Malik-Shah I (presumably by the Assassins sect), the Sultan's widow turned against him as an adviser and soon therefore Omar Khayyám set out on his Hajj.

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He was then allowed to work as a court astrologer and was permitted to return to Nishapur where he was famous for works and continued to teach mathematics, astronomy and even medicine. His significance as a philosopher and teacher, and his few remaining philosophical works, have not received the same attention as his scientific and poetic writings. Zamakhshari referred to him as "the philosopher of the world".

Outside Iran and Persian speaking countries, Khayyám has had an impact on literature and societies through the translation of his works and popularization by other scholars. The most influential of all was Edward FitzGerald (1809–83), who made Khayyám the most famous poet of the East in the West through his celebrated translation and adaptations of Khayyám's rather small number of quatrains (rubaiyaas) in Rubáiyát.

(condensed from Wikipedia)