رابعیات
أمادگی‌سی
PREFACE

This translation of Khalilullah Khalili’s Rubaiyyat was not the work of one person but of several members of The Afghan Cultural Assistance Foundation. For this reason, it is the Foundation itself which takes credit and responsibility for this work.

The Afghan Cultural Assistance Foundation would like to express its deep gratitude to Professor Mark Linenthal of San Francisco State University for his help in editing our English translations.

We would also like to thank Abdulahad Tarshi, Massoud Khalili, Ibrahim Waiz and the many others who offered assistance in preparing this translation.
INTRODUCTION

Ustad Khalilullah Khalili was Afghanistan’s master poet and man of letters from the mid-twentieth century until his death in 1987. His verses have found their way into the meditation of mystics, into the hearts of poetry lovers and not least into the songs and lamentations of the Mujahedin, Afghanistan’s brave warriors.

His poetry is written in Persian, the language of the Classical poets of Central Asia and the one language common to all Afghan people. This language is especially suited in sound and grammar to the composition of very powerful poetry. Translations leave readers distanced from Persian’s capacity for depth, multiple meaning and melodious song.

Translations, especially of poetry, are never easy. One is constantly struggling with meaning, expression and meter. The temptation to introduce one’s own ideas is considerable. Just a quick example of this, and a famous one, is the fate of Omar Khayyam’s lovely quatrains in the hands of Edward Fitzgerald. These were the rage in Victorian England and in America and they are still much read and quoted. Yet they are often very far from the originals and in some cases actually suggest meanings which are philosophically contrary to the poet’s. To those rebelling against Church dogma and authority, Fitzgerald’s Omar seemed delightful. Unfortunately, they became so successful that they can be found in almost every library in the world and we now seem stuck with the misrepresentation of Khayyam.
Khalili’s poems have been compared to those of Omar Khayyam. He speaks of wine, lovers and fate in a style similar to Khayyam’s almost a thousand years later. A surprise to literate Westerners who become acquainted with the Persian Classics is how little language, style and content have changed in a thousand years. We would hardly expect an average youth in the West to go around quoting from Chaucer. In Iran, Afghanistan and elsewhere people quote freely from Saadi, Hafiz and Rumi since many of the ideas expressed by those poets still form the basis of culture in the East and their language is, for the most part, still current.

An Eastern poet is not expected to do something strange or new. Poets there attempt to express truths, which means in most cases the same truths expressed by predecessors, yet in appropriate new verse. A master is he or she who in the same simple framework is inspired enough to bring new life and beauty to that mode of expression. In general, poetry in the East does not lend itself to self-preoccupation or personal display. Indeed, in the context of a largely non-literate society in which poetry is widely memorized and sung, it performs a major educational function. The best of Eastern poets have been men of great achievement ethically and in the field of mysticism. Their poetry is often the only revelation they can openly make of their experience of the ineffable.
Ustad (Master) Khalili spent most of his life in the service of the government of Afghanistan as an administrator, ambassador and educator. Since the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union he had published volumes of poetry lamenting the fate of his people and cheering them on in their struggle to expel the Soviets. He died, a refugee in Pakistan, in May of 1987 after a brief illness. This book of quatrains, written long before the invasion, is not only lovely poetry in its original Persian: It is a set of contemplation themes intended to help man to understand himself. The thirty-seven quatrains constitute only a small portion of Khalili’s writings. They are representative of his expressions in the area of spirituality. Each quatrain stands on its own and is worth mulling over. Read together, they create a mood useful for self-observation.

In Persian, the quatrains often have different levels of meaning and it is impossible to transpose these adequately into English. We have chosen to translate the most straightforward meanings and have provided the Persian for those wishing to pursue the matter in greater depth. Readers not used to this type of poetry need to know that there are certain conventions and symbolisms commonly used in this genre. A partial understanding of these conventions can be had by studying written presentations about Sufism, a body of spiritual teaching which often expresses its knowledge in poetic terms.

In the limited space of this introduction, we offer a simplified explanation of certain basic symbols. First, “wine” and “drunkenness” are metaphors for spiri-
tual intoxication, i.e. the activation of one of many possible spiritual states, often ecstatic, which are claimed to exist beyond customary emotional and intellectual conditions. "Love" and "lovers" refer to various states of proximity of the aspirant to objective reality, or God, and spiritual moods that result from this. Then there is the "heart" which is the name given to the spiritual organ of perception or intuition. "Death" can mean the annihilation of the self or certain aspects of it as well as physical death. The "rose" and other flowers and their perfume are symbolic of spiritual activation and permeation. The "Saqī" is the cupbearer who is therefore the source or provoker of a spiritual state. "Friends" are those on the spiritual path.

Although the Sufi is not an ascetic, he is constantly trying to point to the unreality of many of the short-sighted pursuits of ordinary man such as seeking wealth, power or self-esteem and the damage and pain that these pursuits can cause. In the area of spirituality there are also shallow pursuits as some of his quatrains indicate. Transports of ecstasy are considered by the poet as a means to an end and not the goal itself. He tries to point the reader toward the underlying reality, a hidden ever-present reality, that reveals its nature to the fortunate.
Before presenting the quatrains, we offer this account from Sikandar Talib, a traveller, who met Khalili during the last weeks of the poet's life.

"I sought his residence with inexact directions and found myself wandering in a quarter of Islamabad that I did not know. I was thinking that when I should find his home, I would leave a letter asking for permission to visit him.

"Looking for any Afghan to try and get directions, I saw an old man, a beggar I thought, searching my face. Hesitating for a moment because of his ragged appearance, I drew near to him and asked if he knew where the Master Khalili lived. He replied that it was sufficient to call himself Khalili. He was Khalili! Recovering from surprise and embarrassment I asked what he was doing there. He pointed to his heart and replied that he sensed my approach. I was speechless, a little in shock. He then took me by the hand and brought me into his house. He behaved toward me like an old friend or someone greeting a returning son.

"We talked at length about his work, our lives, the war nearby and the quest for inner knowledge. I asked for permission to ask him about Sufism and he consented, setting another day aside for that purpose. When we met again a few days later, I opened by saying that the West seemed to be lacking in spiritual values. He replied that the same thing was true in the East with most people carrying out rituals hypocritically, without grasping their meaning. He emphasized that without the activation of the 'heart', the
inner spiritual sense in a person, religion was lifeless and only of social value. I put many questions to him about various systems of mysticism, teachers and practices and each time he patiently brought me back to the view that this search was not a system but a personal search to develop intimacy between the seeker and God. To support this view, he quoted two well-known writings. One is from the Quran where God reveals to Muhammad that ‘Truly, I am nearer to men than their jugular vein’. Here Khalili commented that God was even closer than that. The other story is from an interchange between the woman Sufi, Rabia, and a seeker. The seeker asks why he must continually knock at the door (to union). Rabia replies that the door has always been wide open.

“Khalili claimed that mankind is partly and visibly of this material dimension and nature and partly of another spiritual nature that is less obvious. By applying traditional values of honesty, humility, patience, restraint and generosity, one could weaken the hold that this material dimension has on the self and that the self could then attune itself to the True. He did not, however, believe in asceticism as this world ‘has its place’.

“Developing the inner sense that he claimed mankind possessed was the way. This sense he would refer to as the ‘heart’ and said that this could be developed by the preparation previously mentioned and by really listening to this heart. Teachers in this science there were but they were far fewer than those claiming to be such. He said that in any case students could do a great deal on their own preparing themselves for a real teacher.
“Khalili had a very developed sense of humor and he would use it constantly in our conversations to help get ideas across and to keep the atmosphere very relaxed. I felt very comfortable with him. He was a small man with loving eyes under thick brows accenting an otherwise soft face. His immediate understanding of my situation and my nature was remarkable. His last words of advice to me were ‘You must try. You are young and have the energy. Don’t wait until you are too old to improve yourself. Work while you can.’”
RUBAIYYAT
OF
KHALILULLAH
KHALILILI
God, You are wealth itself and I am a dervish
You all power and I wretched and helpless
What chance have I to please you?
How easy to please me with nearness

یارب تو غنی مطلق ومن درونش
توتاق در ذواک بال من نزین
شوار زود سانست شاوازند
به لاس مرشادنگیتار خوی
That scrap of bread a starving pauper finds
That warm coat discovered by a beggar's child
Are like the pleasure of a conqueror
Marching his army over a defeated nation
Pour wine! The moon has pitched its haloed tent

Our moonlit cup turns—bright with Love

How far the moon of Love from that of science

One views eternal light, the other is darkness
Pleasure's origin is the company of Lovers
And death's hardship is separation
As Lovers reunite under rich soil
Life and death are one to us
This life is a moment and sad
A painful heart and tears
Victim daily of a tyrant's cruelty
Or cause of pain to some innocent
Sighs, sparks of life, fall from my lips
Heart's broken lute still has a string
If the gates of hope shut tight
As death comes, there is a crack in the wall
Kneaded by fate on the table of grief

What chance to drink pleasure from life's cup?

Struggling like a candle in a drafty room

I flicker to a waxy puddle and vanish

азорو و المسرت تقدم

ارستاغنزلي جخش كر م جهف

بون شمك لا معرض بالابوز

مي لرزم ومي سوزم ومي ميرم
To a shattered heart, what is sorrow or joy?
To the tongue of a corpse, what sweet or salty?
If the steed of our effort sinks in a mire
What matter whether the goal is far or near?
Last night, blossoming boughs were laughing
Swaying above iris and jasmine and laughing
In the distance I saw the lucky morning star
At its own luck and my life it was laughing

دی شانشگل‌زدن دریم می‌خندید
سنبلزن وسمن می‌خند
ازورد ستاره سکادریم
برخت خود لجمر می‌خندید
In every state the Heart is my refuge
In the realm of existence, my Sultan
When I tire of the mind’s mischief
God knows I am grateful to my Heart

دل در سبید حال کلیه‌گاسمت مرا
درگاه و جریان‌گاه سماست مرا
از فقدان حسن بی‌بان می‌آم،
من‌نما هم خدا گواسمت مرا.
When a drop of blood falls to earth
A gem falls from the ring of heaven
Be careful! An orphan's cries
Bring down the walls of the subtle realm

کی قطع فرخون کلبزین می چتر
ازنام آسان گلیس می افتت
بشد ارگ آزآه سکت مطلوم
بر لکره خرنش باش میاند
Light no candle at my grave
It could harm a desperate moth
Nor grieve a loving gardener
Don’t take his flowers for my grave

برنگته من سلم وریزان کنار
پریانشزار را بران کنار
بخاتر با غبن من دفاع کنیم
برنگته من سلم وریزان کنار

24
Fame seekers often work together
A pack of wolves roaming the world
They trample a thousand heads underfoot
In order to raise their own bloody necks
As we learned the truth about life
Our eyes opened wide, our lips were sewn shut
Then we kindled the torch of life
Like a candle lighting a feast for others
O great mountain reaching into the sky
How long will you rest in self-love?
Though only a butterfly, I am free
Dancing on a blossom while you stand bound

ای کوه سرافراز فلک سای بلند
جاپند بی‌خود ولنی خرد
من طایر لوی چشم وله‌ای آزادم
سن بی‌گل قسمت وتوپای بند
The knower sees a world in the heart of an atom
There with its moon and its sun and stars
Now see blindness: An astronomer's eye
Seeking lifeless fragments above...

عَادَرَ بِثِّ الْحَظْنِ وَحَشِّذَ الْجَانِ مَنْ ذَهَبَ
أَحْيَاء مِّمْرٍ وَكَبْشٍ مِّنْ يَبِيدَ
لَوْ كِنْدَرَ حُشَمٍ وَانْشَوَاء بَعْصَر
بَوْرُكَ شَتِّكَانُ وَرَأَنَّ مِّي بَيِّنَ
How long persist with sword and spear?

How long with fraud and deceit?

These are ways of wolf and fox

Fully human you'll recoil from these
The Faithful who are of one great tree
And of the grace of Spring’s perfect meadow
Gave to us the one message of Truth
And struggle in the world like caged birds
Pour Wine! Its pure draught which excites
Is an old friend who leaves us thirsting
We've grown old, youth lost to the wind
And the lovely daughter of the vine never ages

می ریزگردد زبده دل گیرد
یادی است که یک چندل از او نشتر
ماهی شمش و شجاعی بر بایران
ویه دختر عشوه باز زیبایی نشد
Killing they justify with political jargon

The world's plunder they call wise governing

Clothed in good wishes, what haven't they ruined?

Now that really is a skill...
Life a chase after power and position
Grasping for a name brings a bad name
Grateful now for release from this race
Resting quietly in this corner we grow peaceful

 عمری پی جاها در سوکام شیم
عمری پی نام دنبال می‌شیم
صدکرمان نه‌ره دوی آویز
خفتم درون گوشو آرام شیم
You who think the world obeys you

That moon, stars and sky are servants

I fear that you will soon serve

The maggots waiting to taste your corpse
Players and spectators in the arena
Baffled by our moves and by the world's
We are playthings in the hands of time
Dancing to music that is not our own

بازیکن و بازیکن می‌سیزم
درخور و دوست‌می‌خشم
خیالی در رست‌م‌ان
می‌کنم و دوست‌م‌ان
بر می‌زنم و دوست‌م‌ان
کن در پی آن‌م
Order delivers its thousand advantages
Confers on man relative calm and joy
Now go and learn in the way of Love
That disorder with a special pleasure
Life without a lover's face is futile
Youth is empty without purple wine
In the school of life, except for love's tale
Futile every word you read or skip over

پی رودی نگارزنگا در عبست
پی باده گل‌فرت، حوالی عبست
درخت بندیکی بی‌قصیش
حرف کنوازی وخوازی عبست
Those who bind themselves in marriage
Consign their children to fire and pain
Time the harvester smiles at man
Planting death seeds in satisfaction
You fist of clay! Why this strange conceit?

Look at yourself this once and see

A box of bones, two measures of blood

What of you is hidden? What appearance?

ای شست گلابی خوری جا گیاه
پیکار بودن کر در منا ی تو همیشه
که جهاب استوان و سیا شتوان
به‌هان تو هستی آشکار تا همیشه
Saqi, where is your pure red wine?
In this night of grief where is your sun?
Tales of this world won't carry me to sleep
O Friend, where is your sleep medicine?
Seekers of fame more base than able
Have lent this world the face of hell
A hundred times blood wets the earth
As some son of a nobody grows famous

شهرت بی بی بی وری دو ناخن
کرونده قدمان را بچه‌بازند
صد بار دین کلن مردم تشاد
سناام فلان ابن سنا این کشت
Wrapped in love I was a child asleep
And from afar came familiar melodies
Until numbed ear heard neither voice nor lute
Spirit of youth, where have you gone?

طفلی بودم غنوه دار بی‌سترنز
پرخاست، زد چون‌دهم‌ما مسا
سگلوش نهادم نزدیک‌بودو زید
ای شور چونی تو که بارفته‌ی‌ام
As you grow old, drink twice your share of wine
Though the cup in your hand trembles, drink!
Time has long played its games with you
Now laugh at the Trickster. Laugh and drink!

چمن پیرشیدی باده دوچندان می‌توان
بناندی بیست لرزان می‌توان
بازگردی پیش باتوباز کرد
فیل باری اپسی فخرندان می‌توان

43
Old age, you have left me bitter and weak
Exposed to the treachery of month and year
That I can take, but look, you've left me
Stripped of the pleasure of my sins
We are bitter fruit that falls to earth
In the grasp of time there is no escape
Except for Your grace, of what use is freedom?
What chance has bitter fruit to grow sweet?

آن میوه تازه که رودبین
در پی بی‌ام پی سه‌مین
خنف بس ایام پی سه‌مین
بزن پیای بپارآدی پیت
کان میوه تخلق راناپید شیرین
I am not afraid of death, it is my support
My companion and relief on my last day
It carried those before us to their destination
This graceful, this even-paced steed
Lovely spring with what life bubbling up
Whose message do you bring and from where?
Like tears that others never see
Slowly, softly, without sound you emerge

ای خچیبخت جهان‌زدایی بی
بی‌خانم که داری گربه‌ای بی
مانند شکایت من بهان‌زددم
آسمان‌بارم وی صدای آمی
You knew I saw you as a delicate flower
A shining essence in the depth of that sea
Though you were half-hiding your face from me
I saw the blossoming branch end to end
I throw aside the rose with thorns
Enough, I say, of the wine that stupefies
Weary of a hundred years of this life
Followed by a moment of silent shame
BIOGRAPHY OF THE POET

Khalilullah Khalili was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1907. His parents were both of powerful families residing North of Kabul and his father, Mirza Mohammed Hussein, was in the service of the King, Habibullah, during the end of an era of British intervention in Afghanistan. The family’s position changed after the murder of the King, an assassination whose circumstances have never been clarified though many suspect the involvement of the King’s son, Amanullah. Fearing Khalili’s father’s influence, Amanullah had him imprisoned and later executed. The family’s fortunes were confiscated and Khalili, along with his remaining family were exiled to his father’s home in Kohistan. Khalili was eleven at the time.

The saddened young Khalili turned his attention to the classical literature of the region. His talent and ability with language soon became apparent to his teachers who were men of poetry, religion and mysticism. When King Amanullah was exiled from Afghanistan fifteen years after his ascension to the throne, Khalili’s family again came into power and he was made governor of Mazar-i-Sharif when still in his twenties. During the forty-year reign of Zahir Shah, Khalili held numerous positions in the kingdom including Secretary General, Minister of Information and Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and Iraq. At the time of the communist coup in 1978, he was Ambassador to Iraq. He quit this position and moved to Pakistan to work with the Afghan resistance.
Ustad Khalili died on May 4, 1987, after a brief illness. Thousands attended his funeral in Peshawar, Pakistan, where he now lies buried beside the great Pashtun poet, Rahman Baba. During his life, Khalili published nearly fifty works of poetry, fiction, history, travel and Sufi studies. He will be remembered as one of Afghanistan’s greatest poets.
ALL PROCEEDS FROM THIS WORK WILL BE DONATED TO THE DAR AL YATAM, THE ORPHANAGE FOR AFGHAN CHILDREN. FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS OR INQUIRIES MAY BE SENT TO:

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P.O. BOX 714
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جز فض توایی بی‌هار، آزادی می‌پیمایی
در پیش تا بهم برسه، درگیره این
آن میوه تکسیم که زیاد شده‌اند

کتاب: "کالیلی" 
نویسنده: علی شریعتی
نشر: انتشارات صدای مسجد