5965 - Who was ‘Umar al-Khayyaam?

the question

Who was ‘Umar al-Khayyaam and what was his belief (‘aqeedah)? I hope you canm give me an idea about him.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

His full name was Abu’l-Fath, ‘Umar ibn Ibraaheem al-Khayyaami al-Naysapoori. He was a poet and philosopher from among the people of Naysapoor, where he was born and died.

He was born in 408 AH, in the town of Naysapoor, where he died and was buried in 517 AH, or it was said, 515 AH.

He was a scholar who was well versed in mathematics, astronomy, language, fiqh and history.

Because of his brilliance as an astronomer, he was appointed as director of the observatory in Baghdaad, and because of his interest in philosophy, his name is associated with that of Ibn Seenaa (Avicenna), who wrote articles filled with kufr which put him beyond the pale of Islam.

He is also famous for his poetry, the best known of which is al-Rubaa’iyaat, which is filled with ideas of kufr, promiscuity and heresy. No wonder the West took such an interest in publishing and distributing this book! It has been translated into many languages, such as English, French, Russian, German, etc. The British sought to spread the ideas of immorality and promiscuity advocated by al-Khayyaam in al-Rubaa’iyaat, so they spread it in the countries which they colonized, such as India and Iran, and attributed it to one of the Muslims, rather one of the greatest of them – or so they claimed.

One of the verses about wine – in al-Rubaa’iyaat – says:

Drink wine, for it is the relaxation of the soul

A cure for the soul and heart, and entertainment.

If you are overwhelmed with stress and grief,

Save yourself through it, for it is like the ship of Nooh.

Denying the idea of resurrection after death, he said:

Get up before death seizes you

And take the rose-coloured (liquid) [i.e., wine] to expel darkness

O fool, you are not a piece of gold

To be buried and later brought forth

His words of promiscuity and immorality include the following:

As much as you can, follow the people of immorality

Destroy the structure of fasting and prayer

Receive the best words from al-Khayyaam

Drink, sing and pursue the good things

His mocking of the sharee'ah, his insolence towards his Lord and his attitude towards repentance may be seen in the following words:

Every day I have the intention to repent

If night falls and I feel that I want to repent from drinking wine

Then the season of flowers comes and then,

O Lord, I repent from my intention to repent

Some researchers, such as al-Zarkali, said that later he repented and performed Hajj. Others, such as ‘Abd al-Haqq Faadil, expressed doubts about the attribution of al-Rubaa’iyaat to him.

Whatever the case, the Rubaa’iyaat do not indicate that he repented, because they contain clear statements of kufr, wilful neglect of virtuous attributes and rejection of the idea of repenting and turning to Allaah. Indeed, they contain no indication that their author believed in Allaah and the Last Day.

The doubts about whether he wrote these words are outweighed by number of people who attributed them to him. Allaah knows best what is really the case.

For more details on his life, see al-A’laam by al-Zarkali, 5/38; Mu’jam al-Mu’aalifeen by ‘Umar Ridaa Kahhaalah, 2/549; ‘Umar al-Khayyaam bayna al-Kufr wa’l-Eemaan, by Ihsaan Haqqi; Thawrat al-Khayyaam by ‘Abd al-Haqq Faadil.

May Allaah bless our Prophet Muhammad.