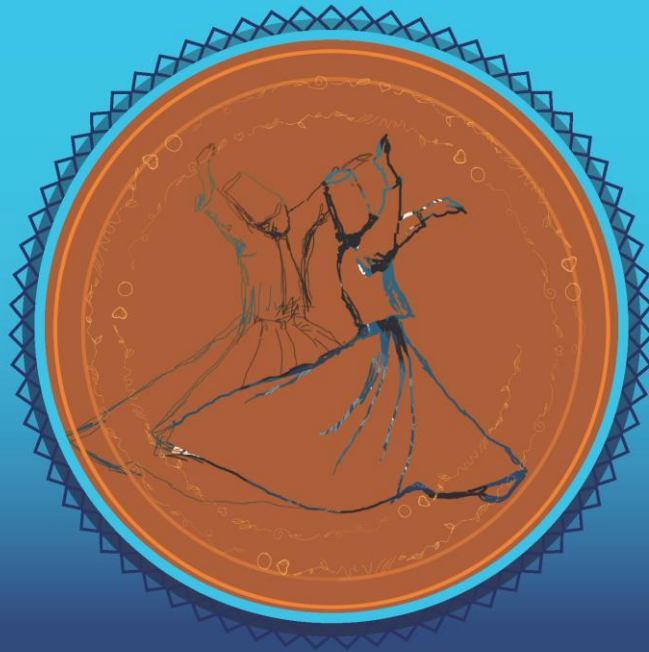


# Sema

dervishes dance

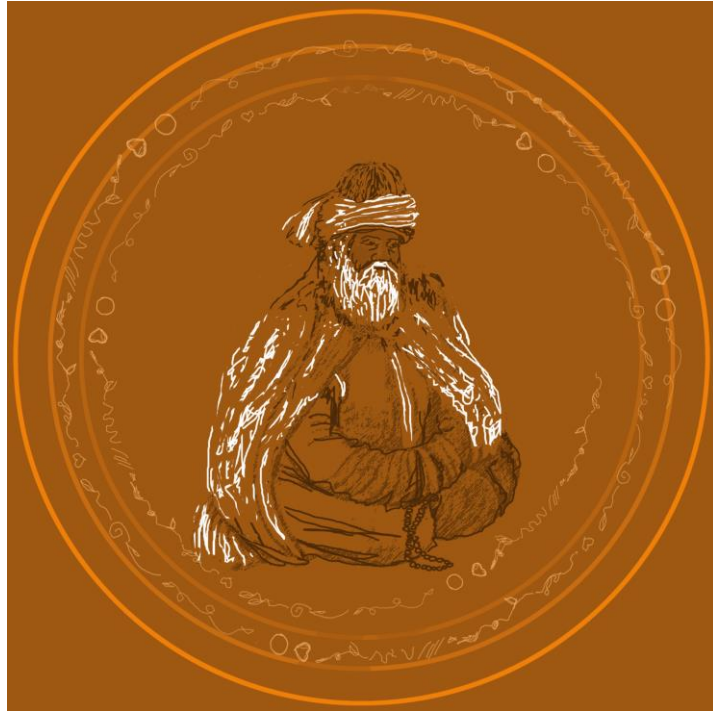
سماع



Author: Ali Soleimani  
Translated into English: Piety de Vries  
Illustrations and coverdesign: Ilse Meijer

**Dedicated  
to  
the spinning fools!**





# Rumi

**Mohammad Jalal (Djalal) ad-din Balkhi  
Rumi (Romi; Molana; Molawi; Mevlana)**

**( Persian: مولانا جلال الدین محمد بلخی رومی )**

**Born: Balkh, 30th of September 1207 –  
died: Konya, 17th of December 1273**



# Sema

# سماع

Author: Ali Soleimani

Translated into English: Piety de Vries

Illustrations and coverdesign: Ilse Meijer

**Publisher:**

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## Short Notice

All publications from Het Talenhuis (literal translation; The House of Languages) are published digitally online.

A number of publications are also published in English, digitally and online. The English publications are a translation from the published Dutch books. Here you will find the English version of the book Sema.

A few volunteers from Het Talenhuis have taken care of the English translation, led by Piety de Vries. All those who have contributed to the English translation are thanked, especially Patrick Veenstra and Sven de Haan.

To thank Piety de Vries as well, her preface is included in this book, mentioning her name as the translator.

Het Talenhuis,  
Ali Soleimani.



## Preface by Piety de Vries

“I was dead, then alive.  
Weeping, then laughing.  
The power of love came into me,  
and I became fierce like a lion,  
then tender like the evening star.”

-Rumi

The dervish dance is a whirling dance that visually expresses the mystical way, from releasing the resistance to cherishing everything. The dervish dance comes from the tradition of Sufism. Dancing dervishes rotate around their axis. Each step symbolizes the reverse, back to connectedness within our infinite self.

Sema or ‘spinning dance’ is the name of the Sufi ceremony that got acknowledged through Rumi, and after Rumi’s death his name became associated with Sema. Sema refers to multiple meanings such as listening, paying attention to, giving ear to, a statement that has been heard, a good reputation and a memento.

Before I volunteered for Het Talenhuis (literal translation; The House of Languages), I had never

heard of a dervish or dervish dance before. When this was explained to me, I thought it was a rather strange idea for a dance. But when I got to see some videos and listened to some stories about this dance, I began to understand why this dance is so unique.

When I got the opportunity to translate this book from the original Dutch to English, I learned so much about the dervish dance.

The passion and energy these people have for this dance is great. Some even gave up all their belongings for Sema.

These people did exactly where Sema stands for.

I also got the chance to see someone perform this dervish dance and I have so much respect for the people who put so many hours and energy into this. It is amazing to see how much love and passion they have for Sema.

I would like to thank the author of this book, Ali Soleimani, for giving me the opportunity to translate this book, as well as anyone else who contributed with the translation of Sema dervish dance.

Many roads lead to Rome but the dervish dance is a direct path: no detours, no step outside their spot, but still so much movement!

Drachten, 26 may 2018,  
Piety de Vries

## Foreword

مولوی (ملای روم):

”ہج آدابی و ترتیبی مجو

ہرچہ می خواہد دل گشت بگو!“

Rumi:

“Do not limit yourself in words, let yourself go,  
Say what you want to say, spontaneously!”

There is a party going on. Nobody knows when this party has started nor when it's ending. But that a party is going on, can not be denied. Everyone is brought to this party at any given time and everyone will also be removed from the party at some point. This is known to everyone and everyone knows this.

They become foolish from the first moment that they notice that their participation to this party is

only temporary and they will be removed. So, everyone that joins this party is a fool. It is actually the party of the fools. The team of bouncers continuously removes partygoers whose time has come. This happens while the party goes strong. The new partygoers are brought in and the bouncers remove the previous ones. There is no set time for participation: some stay longer than others. You become foolish by the knowledge that the party could end for you at any moment and that you could be removed. Some people call this knowledge the big secret of existence.

Whoever does anything, does this to make the foolishness somewhat bearable. One lets himself submerge in a sea of wine and the other surrenders to work, day and night, seven days a week. Some put the prophet's mantle on, others even say that they are god, that they are the truth and... Everyone does something, and sometimes nothing at all, to think the least possible about the removal from the party.

A lot of so-called mystici call this knowledge the secret of existence and the meaning of life. Whoever deciphers this secret is not allowed to publish it. Years ago one or more persons have already chosen to make the truth "You will be removed from the party soon" somewhat tolerable by means of spinning.

I have not followed a particular order during the writing of this writing. Moreover I have tried not

to try. The order of the papers is pure coincidence and not academical, neat and tidy.

In this writing terms are used which have a completely deviating meaning for others, expert or no expert. For example the word 'sema' and the word 'derwisj' (darwish; darvish). Sema is here an objective as well as a subjective subject.

Sema is nothing else than just a physical and at the same time mental exercise that can be performed by everyone at every age. Things that are so-called spiritual, mystical, something unexplainable or belong to something different, play no role in this. Sema consists of sportive dance-moves with both feet on the ground. Sema is not a ritual and is accessible for everyone, without restrictions.

A derwisj is a person who performs sema. No spiritual and/or mystical character is assigned to a derwisj. The derwisj is a person that tries his best to spend his daily life full of joy, as far as possible. A derwisj is everyone who tries to live inside a safe world build on three foundations: reality, morality and responsibility.

For a large part, my memory has been used as a source and reference during the composition of these papers. Some specific things came from the internet. All things that are described in this writing can be interpreted and practiced differently. For example: when it is suggested to take three



steps or spin three times, people could spin two or four times instead.

The suggested things are absolutely no command and have nothing to do with spirituality, mysticism or something like that.

At the end of this writing, the ode 'You and I' from Rumi will be displayed as a blessing.

Finally I would like to show my appreciation and thanks to everyone, especially to Marianne Romijn-Ottink, Geeske Brederveld, Claudia Hageman-Cullens, Ilse Meijer and Marike Buitendijk for their contribution to write this in Dutch.

This writing is at the same time the farewell song of the writing.

Have joy and spin!

Your affectionate,  
Ali Soleimani,

Drachten,  
March 2015.

## **A reading about the sema, or dervishes dance**

The sema literally means listen and everything that belongs to listening. In the jargon of the dervishes, sufis and mystici sema means taking distance from yourself and fusing with the greater existence. The dervishes believe that people enter a state of peace and joy because of the sema. The celebration, or the sema dance, usually takes place on a round floor. The round shape symbolizes the daf instrument, an enlarged tambourine. The daf instrument itself is a symbol of happiness and exuberancy. So, people dance on the rhythm of joy. It usually does not take long before the dance begins. The dance involves only one movement: spinning. Spinning has many different types and variations. Spinning itself symbolizes the movements of planets, stars, the universe and existence. Everything spins. In order to give an example of the meaning of spinning, people say that it reflects the orbiting of planets around the sun. So the dervishes spin around the center of their dancefloor. The dancemaster usually stands in the center. However, many masters choose not to stand there out of modesty.

The round shape is also a symbol of infinity. When circling, people will continuously come back to the place they came from and leave behind what they have achieved as well as where they have arrived. There is absolutely no downtime.

The sounds of the daf instrument and the flute are the leading sounds of the dance. Sung poems, especially the odes from sufis, have to be added to this. The rubab-instrument, the tambourine and different kinds of sitars are also being used. The drums can not be missed either. The most sung odes are from Rumi. He believed that things that can not be explained in words can be explained in poems instead. A poem will be more understandable for everyone if it coexists with music and dance. Everything in the world, in particular in Konya in Turkey, that nowadays occurs around the sema, or devishes dance, is done to the reading of Rumi. Rumi lived in the thirteenth century.

The celebration of the sema happens all year long, especially in the period around the birth-or death date of Rumi. The sema dance is then being danced a couple days in a row.

A sema usually starts by reading out poems of Rumi. These poems are being read out in Persian (the language Rumi writes his poems in) as well as in Turkish. After this, people play the flute. The dervishes enter the dancefloor while people

play the flute. All dervishes wear a black or brown cape (overcoat) and under this they wear a white skirt, white, tight trousers, a white shirt, a black belt and a white, airy jacket. They also wear a high felt hat (headpiece). The danceshoe (footwear) is a leather mule with a high heel, usually of the color black.



The dervishes enter calmly after each other, bow to the center of the floor out of respect and then proceed to sit in a circle. Usually the master, or

the danceleader, is already present on the dancefloor before the dervishes enter. The dervishes walk calmly and slowly to the master, bend in front of him out of respect and ask for permission to start their dance. After the dervishes gain permission they start their anticlockwise spinning movements, one by one. The way this dance is executed, is shown at the end of this article.

The dance can take a couple of minutes to many hours. It does not take long before the dervishes get into a trance.

Greeting is an essential part of the sema dance. The dervishes greet both the four directions and the master. The greeting is done in silence. Each greeting has a meaning:

The first greeting is to the love;

The second greeting goes to the knowledge;

The third greeting is intended for the truth;

The fourth greeting is to the ethics.

As stated before, one greeting goes to the master as well.

The dervishes take off their capes before they walk past the master. They lay these capes on the ground on the edge of the dancefloor. This symbolizes taking distance from things you are attached to.



The master himself wears his black or brown cape during the whole dance.

Music and singing accompany the whole dance. In ancient times candles were lit and used as lighting. Nowadays people tend to use stage lights instead. Watching the sema dance is fascinating and the watchers experience a kind of trance as well. When the dervishes have finished their dance, they bow four times in the four directions. Finally, they bow to the master and

return to their capes. All movements, the spinning included, are performed calmly, slowly and composed.

Almost all dervish groups that perform the sema dance do this in a circle that is not accessible for outsiders.

In Konya (Turkey) stands a house that is intended for every outsider who would like to attend a performance of the sema dance. This house is called "the house of Alibaba". This house is also known as "House 25" since its house number is 25. This house is attached to a small shop, the Sirri Market. This house can be found in the same district as the tomb of Rumi. Every evening around 18:00 a sema dance starts here that goes on till deep in the night. The guests are welcomed with a simple evening meal. Furthermore, bowls with fruit and sweets are present. The entry is free. There is a collecting-box for voluntary contributions. This house has three rooms, of which two are connected to each other. One room is for the men and the other one for the women. The women and men are sitting in a circle. The third room has two big displays. This room is intended for the spectators. One wall of this room contains a big window through which the other two rooms, in which the dance takes place, can be seen.

The dance begins and ends as described. The first poem that is read out at a sema is usually the following poem of Rumi:

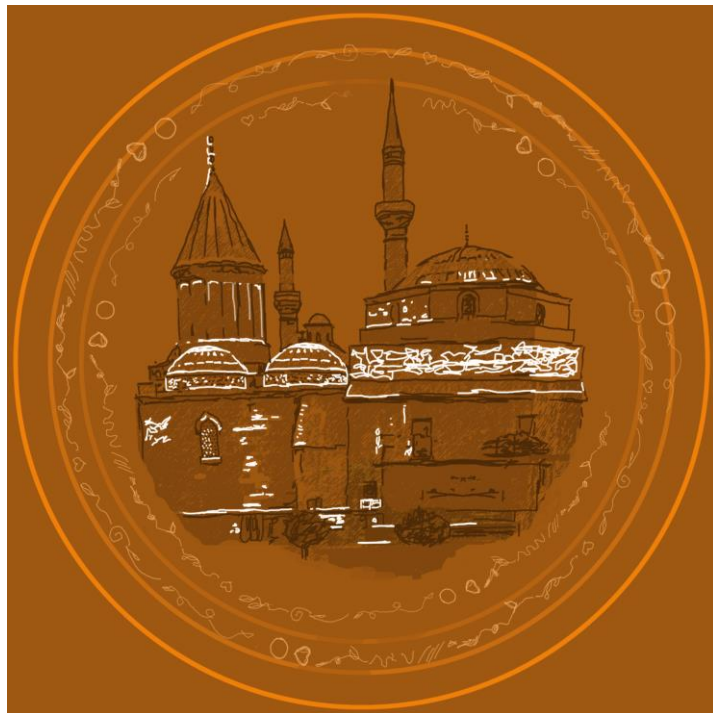
Come, come, you are the soul of our sema,  
come, come, you are the soul of our sema.  
Thousand stars gain their light from you,  
you are the moon in the heaven of our sema.  
Come, you are the soul and the face of existence,  
come, you are the wonder of our sema.  
Come, the market of love knows no customers  
without you,  
come, you are the priceless gold of our sema.  
Come, those that desire you are getting impatient,  
come into our circle, you are the sun of our sema.  
Come, there is no trade at the market of love,  
come and bring customers into our sema.  
Come and bring meaningful sugar,  
you are the Shams Tabrizi of our sema.

### **Architecture of sema houses**

A sema house is a building where the sema is practiced. The most famous sema house is located in the city of Konya in Turkey. This house lays against the tomb of Rumi, also known as the Green Dome (Kobba al-Khazra). It is part of a small mosque. This mosque has been built in the



seventeenth century during the time of the Sultanate of Kanuni Sultan Süleyman I (Trabzon, november 6th 1494 – near Szigetvár, september 6th 1566), the tenth sultan of the Ottoman Empire.



The walls of this house are decorated with wooden planks. Pictures of musicians and semadancers have been hung on the walls. Poems of Rumi are also calligraphed on them.

The best known artist of these paintings is Mahboeb Afandi, around 1888. He also is the creator of the lobby of the Green Dome.

The well-known first eighteen verses of the Masnavi from Rumi are engraved in the lobby:

‘Listen to the flute, when he narrates;  
he complains about every separation...’

The whole tomb is decorated with sema-motives, tapestries and many gifts. Over time these have been gifted by celebrities and they are admired by everyone.

### **Beginning of the sema and the movements**

The sema starts with the reciting of Koranic verses. After this, a musician plays the flute, followed by a special sema-orchestra.

Subsequently the dervishes, usually forty, get on the floor. The dance is guided by the dancemaster or his assistant. All dervishes wear felt hats. The dancemaster wears a hat with a strap draped around it. After executing the greeting rituals the spinning starts.

The story goes:

“Question: ‘When did humans dance for the first time?’

Answer: ‘The creation of humans was a dance. Afterwards humans did not dance anymore!’

Question: 'How come humans used to dance but stopped dancing afterwards?'

Answer: 'At first humans did not differentiate between head and feet, that is why humans danced. Then reason came to visit mankind, causing mankind to start differentiating between head and feet. People started reasoning, shaking their heads. That is how humans stopped dancing for a moment. Humans started thinking again and then the thoughts started to dance. Finally, the thoughts of people and the dance of the thoughts were in harmony. That is how the mind-dance replaced the body-dance. The thoughts of all children from Adam dance day and night.'

Question: 'When did humans start to dance with their bodies?'

Answer: 'There is no space for hand clapping inside the small space of thoughts. Humans were silenced by the dance of their thoughts. This was a cage for humans, but it was unable to hold them for long. In short: The cage started to dance as well and all other cages danced with it'

Question: 'Have humans wasted their chance to keep on dancing?'

Answer: 'Humans created a world out of their thoughts. Humans have lost themselves in the dance of the world they created for their own. That is why humans do not succeed at dancing anymore. A correct dance means: let the thoughts go, being thoughtless is the start of the dance.'

Break the world of thoughts, allowing the dance to begin!’

Question: ‘How does the world of the thoughts break?’

Answer: ‘Because of the blessing or the restlessness. Restlessness means: I am very thirsty, but my body can not take more than a full jug. A poem from Rumi as example:

‘I, the stupid, have a dream,  
everyone is deaf for each idiom.  
My shortcoming prevents me from speaking,  
apparently the others can not hear!’

Then the restlessness causes the spinning of the arms as well as the whole body and the world of thoughts will subsequently break underneath the feet of the spinner.”

### **Mystery of the word ‘sema’**

Sema is listening to and speaking with the person who you absolutely can not be without. Although speaking precedes listening and understanding, sema is a unity of these three concepts. Speaking brings understanding and listening together. If there is no call, the ears will not hear anything and there will be no understanding.

Each word has an exterior and an interior. The exterior is the intonation, or the sound that is heard. The interior is that what is understood. A word is susceptible for many explanations and interpretations. Just as there is a bond between listening, thinking, seeing and other capacities, there also exists a bond between the word that is spoken and the meaning that is lend to it. A natural balance exists between the exterior and the interior of a word. Hereby people can think about the poems that are used during sema, in particular the odes. In sema two body parts contribute more than the rest: the head and the feet. The feet help the head so the head can bring the feet in trance.

So, sema is back to 'I am you', a fusion between the one who speaks and the one who listens.

### **The beginning of the sema**

Little is known about the beginning of the sema. The origin of the sema does not lie in the islam. The oldest information that can be found about this leads us to Mithraism, or worshipping the sun (the fire). It is known that there were no sema meetings in the starting period of the existence of the islam. The first sema meetings inside the history of the islam took place in the seventh

century of the Islamic calendar, or the fourteenth century of the Gregorian calendar.

Back then, the mystici came together in the schools of Baghdad. Zalnoun from Egypt was the first muslim scholar who gave permission to do so. In those meetings the attendees sang poems.

Over time, more stimulating elements were added. Music, clothing, rituals and traditions developed. The Iranians had the most influence on the development of the sema.

As stated earlier, the first meetings were meant for reading poems.

One of the famous poem lines, that was popular back then, goes as follows:

'I always run away from the laity,  
I have nothing to discuss with them!'

And such a statement obviously does not make you any friends.

### **Habits and rituals of the sema**

The insiders felt disturbed because the sema was visited by many, despite the aforementioned repellent poem line. As a consequence rules had to be made about being permitted into a sema. These rules included the following:

- The sema house is not accessible for laity and laymen;
- People need permission to join the sema;
- The sema is only allowed for the one whose ego is destroyed and whose heart is the only thing alive.

Aboe Nasr Seraj and Hajwiri were two of the sema leaders who applied the restrictive measures.

### **Meaning and description of the sema**

The name of the whole ceremony is 'sema'. Performing the sema or taking part in it is only accessible for the one whose heart is alive. During sema, everyone is obedient to the commands of the flute, the roebab, the tambourine and the other musical instruments.

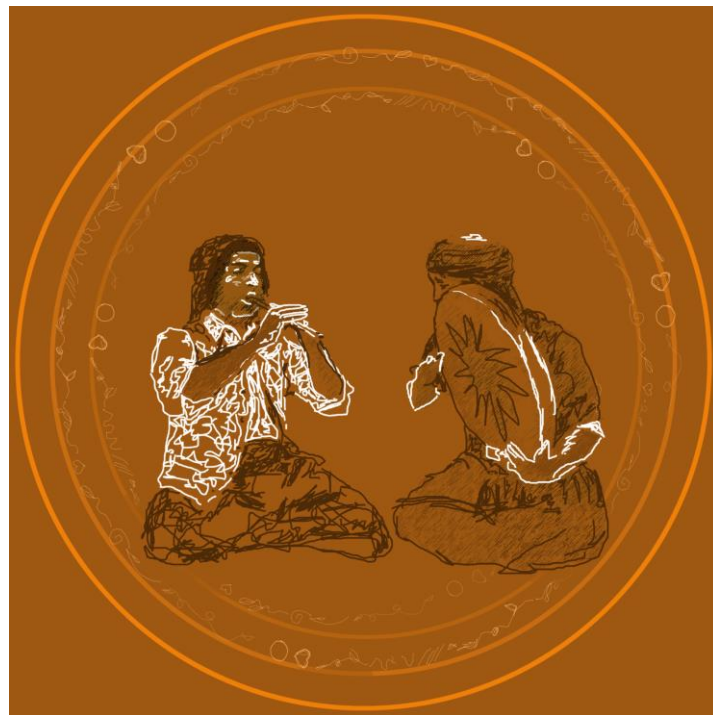
In this case, obedience means spinning in harmony with the music.

The sema is the story of the sublime part of the soul. The sema knows an own world. The sema is impressive, even for the one without knowledge of Rumi and his ideas.

Not only is Rumi internationally famous for his poems, he also symbolizes the sema: obedience, spinning, trance.

The sema is a rendition of the ideas from Rumi. He has united poems, music and dance in order to make the invisible visible. Historians have written that Rumi has been seen while dancing on the streets and in bazaars. People say that at the request of Rumi the corpse of the mysticus Salaheddin Zarkoeb was guided to his grave with music and dance.

### **Meaning of the musical instruments**





The flute symbolizes nature's harmony. This musical instrument is the spiritual representation of the land humans originally came from. The flute's sad and effective sound leads the complaints of humans to God. By singing, the flute, or the reed, wants to go back to the reedlands out of which it is cut and created. The human life process can be found in the story the flute sings: belonging to a reedland, getting cut, getting transported and ending up in a strange environment.

All scholars state that God Almighty created all creatures, from the smallest to the biggest, out of His own existence. However, He only gifted His mind to humans. He has blown His mind into humans with His breath. When people play the flute, it is as if they do the work of their Creator. The inside of a flute is empty. The sound is heard because breath is blown into that emptiness. One end of the flute is resting between the lips of the flute player and the other end is open. If someone is a perfect human being, the sound he creates with the flute will be equal to the sound of God. Humans also look like a flute. As soon as he becomes perfect, he will become empty inside and his sound will then be His sound. Then a perfect human is a reflection of God.

The sound of the tambourine that is heard, is created by hitting the skin of the tambourine. It is

a rendition of the command of God: "Happen!" God said this command at the beginning of existence. After He said "Happen", it happened. So, the sound of the tambourine was the first sound that was heard in existence. This is immediately followed by the sound of the flute. The music that the flute and the tambourine create, is the sound of existence. After all, this music reads: "O dead bodies, come to life and swirl!"

Perhaps the order of playing the flute and tambourine during sema is derived from the above. During a sema it seems that, after hearing the flute and tambourine, the leader and the other dervishes come to life and their movements become even more perfect, until on a given moment everything comes together in harmony and unity.

### **Accompanied sema**

Inside the dervish order an accompanied sema is called a "waladsema". Walad means: the birth, the baby, the child, the son, and in particular the oldest son. Walad is also one of the names of Rumi's son. This son is also known as Sultan Walad. He was the favourite child and the successor of Rumi.

An accompanied sema actually symbolizes the need for a mentor, predecessor, leader or precursor. This leader is expected to know the path, the route and the meaning of the journey. This predecessor often is an experienced dervish who has been through a lot and knows everything about sema. Nowadays this predecessor is considered to be the leader at a sema dance. A leader knows how the sema dance should be executed. He guides the dervishes who take part in the sema. The dervishes follow him and his instructions. The leader usually does not spin or spins very slowly. His presence is considered to be a blessing for the sema. The dervishes move very calm before the spinning actually begins. First, they ask permission from the leader and after a bow from the leader, as a sign of permission, they will start their movement which subsequently turns into spinning. It is as if they follow the leader. At an accompanied sema at least two dervishes are present. One is the leader and the other one follows. However, the usual amount of participants is three. These three symbolize the three directions of gaining knowledge: The dervishes spin three rounds around their leader, in the hope of reaching a trance which they see as a confirmation of their purity. In ancient texts, this purity equals the believe in God.

### **Individual sema**

This sema is an extremely individual happening which enables the dervish to create a peaceful state for and inside himself, so he can get into a trance.

### **Sema, means or goal?**

The meaning of sema is one of the most disputable issues. Over time, many people, both inside and outside the order of dervishes, have expressed different views about the meaning of sema. One group assumes that sema represents a series of acts for glorification and heart joy. Another group believes that sema means: giving attention to the essence. However, it is certain that the sema that exists nowadays is very different. Perhaps, before the beginning of the islam, sema consisted of a series of rituals, in particular rituals to repel evil and glorify the good. The sema that we know now and that was established after the islam, in particular during the life of Rumi, includes a series of ceremonies and actions. The most important elements of the current sema, or the sema after Rumi, are these three ingredients: spinning, music and singing.

Within some groups that perform sema, the most important ingredient is the recitation from the Koran. This takes place before the participants start spinning. People within these groups consider the recitation from the Koran to be a blessing and spiritual enrichment. In other groups sema is performed without religious elements. In these groups sema often starts by playing the flute. Sometimes this music is accompanied by either solo or choral singing. At the performance of semas, spinning is the primary ingredient. The presence of music, usually a special type of music, originates from the Greek tradition. After all, the reading reads that Pythagoras and Plato thought that music and harmonious sounds remind people of their bliss and of good times.

About these good times two readings exist:

The first one reads: Humans experienced these good times in paradise, in the beginning.

The second one reads: Humans experienced these good times in the uterus.

Therefore, music leads humans into a state of carelessness. Music provokes all fine and cheerful memories of humans. A couple of important islamic scholars consider music to be an enrichment of the mind. Two important islamic

physicians, Farabi and Avicenna, have used music as medicine. Another muslim scholar, Ghazali, has said the following about sema: “ The sema, fine singing and harmonious sounds provoke the most fantastic and fine feelings of humans and create salvation. Then humans are entrusted to salvation and joy and they are not their own boss anymore. This happens because human nature is godly and heavenly.” Perhaps, because of all these facts, many have tried to turn sema into a spiritual and/or mystical happening. Almost everyone, who somehow had to do with sema, agrees about the following case: sema means gone with the pain, have joy! The most beautiful description of sema is possibly the following citation of Rumi: ‘Sema is a rope that can be used to descend into a pit, or climb out of it.’

**The most famous muslim personalities who performed sema are the following:**

Around the ninth century:

1. Omar, son of Osman Makki; 2. Zonnun Mesri; 3. Sara Saqti; 4. Joneid Baghdadi; 5. Mamshad Dinewari; 6. Yahya, son of Maazed Razi; 7. Abol-Hasan Daraj; 8. Abol-Hosein Nouri Sam-noun

Mohib Abou Saeed Kharaz; 9. Abou Ishaq Shami Chashti

Around the tenth century:

1. Abou Abdollah Khafif Shirazi; 2. Abou Saeed Abou al-Kheir; 3. Abou Ali Roudbar; 4. Abou al-Qasem Nasr Abadi; 5. Abdollah, son of Mohammad Rasebi; 6. Baghdadi; 7. Abou Bakr Roudbari; 8. Abou Osman Maqrebi; 9. Abou al-Hasan Hasri; 10. Abou Bakr Shebli; 11. Ahmad, son of Yahya.

Around the eleventh century:

1. Abou Es'haq Kazerouni; 2. Ahmad Ghazali; 3. Abou Yousef Chashti.

Around the twelfth century:

1. Esmail Ghasri; 2. Ein al-Qozat Hamedani

Around the thirteenth century:

1. Sheik Shahid Najm ad-Din Kobra; 2. Sheik Shahid Majd ad-Din Baghdadi; 3. Rouzbehan Bhaghli Shirazi; 4. Seif ad-Din Bakhrazi; 5. Baha ad-Din Zekr Bamaltani; 6. Hamid ad-Din Naqouri; Saad ad-Din Hamawi; 7. Sjams (Shams) Tabrizi; 8. Ohad ad-Din Kermani; Razi ad-Din Ali Lala; 9. Jamal ad-Din Gili; 10. Farid ad-Din Attar Neishabouri; 11. Sultan al-Olama, the father of Rumi; 12. Baba Kamal Joneidi; 13. Fakhr ad-Din Eraghi; 14. Nezam ad-Din Olia; 15. Jalal ad-Din

Mahmoud Molawi Khorasani; 16. Amir Khosrow Dehlawi.

Around the fourteenth century:

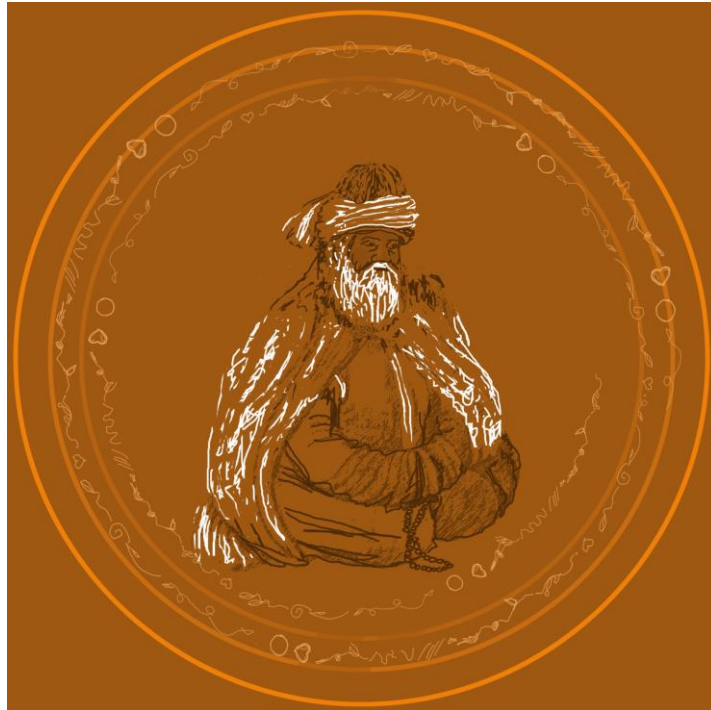
1. Rokn ad-Din Ahmad Ala ad-Dola Semnani; 2. Safi ad-Din Ardabili; 3. Mohammad Shirin Maghrebi; 4. Shah Nematollah Wali.

Around the fifteenth century:

1. Khaje Mosafer Kharazmi; 2. Sheik Mohammad Shams ad-Din Lahi'ji



## Rumi and the sema



### Rumi

Mohammad Jalal (Djalal) ad-din Balkhi Rumi  
(Romi; Molana; Molawi; Mevlana) (Persian: مولانا  
(جلال الدین محمد بلخی رومی))

Born: Balkh, 30th of September 1207 – died:  
Konya, 17th of December 1273

Rumi has defined sema as a way of joy and he has passed this on to the generations after him. The current attention for sema is thanks to Rumi.

Rumi had never executed a sema till the age of thirty-eight. He was a big islamic theologian just like his father, Baha ad-Din.

Then Shams came into his life. Because of this acquaintance, Rumi left the school and the book behind and he started spinning. Shams believed that sema is not allowed for those who search lust. However, for those who search the essential it is allowed, in fact, it is mandatory. Furthermore, he believed that sema is the real life. Rumi gave away all his possessions for sema. His love for sema was that big that he performed a sema after he received the message about the murder on Shams.

## Order of the dervishes dance (Sema)

### Round 1. Greeting

- a. The dervish appears with his hands placed crosswise on the shoulders: The right hand on the left shoulder and the left hand on the right shoulder.

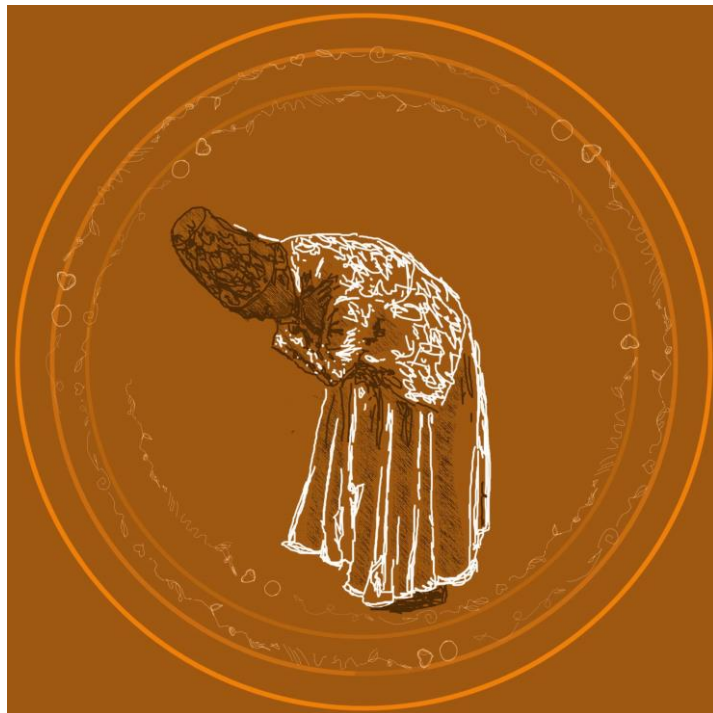


- b. The dervish walks 7 steps forward in a slow and calm way, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;
- c. The dervish bows to the audience out of respect, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;



- d. The dervish spins a quarter to the right on the toes of his left foot, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;

e. The dervish bows to the audience out of respect, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;



f. The dervish walks 7 steps in a slow and calm way, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;

g. The dervish bows to the audience out of respect, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;

- h. The dervish spins a quarter to the left on the toes of his right foot, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;
  - i. The dervish bows to the audience out of respect, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;
  - j. The dervish walks 7 steps in a slow and calm way, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;
  - k. The dervish bows to the audience out of respect, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;
- (The proceedings of c until k can be repeated)

## **Round 2. The dervishesdance**

- a. The dervish bows to the audience out of respect, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;
- b. The dervish spins to the left (anticlockwise), while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;
- c. The dervish does 3 steps, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders;
- d. At the 3rd step, the dervish starts spinning on the toes of his right foot, from left to right (clockwise), while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders. The right foot stays

on the ground, the left foot drives the spinning and touches the ground twice per rotation;  
e. At the 3rd rotation, the dervish lowers his hands to the height of his belly button.  
(The lowering of the hands from the shoulders to the belly button is done during 3 rotations).



f. The dervish tilts his head towards the right. He does this simultaneously with the lowering of the hands.

g. The dervish makes 1 to 3 more spins with the hands on the height of the belly button.

h. During 3 spins, the hands go up with the palm of the hands aiming at the shoulders. The hands are parallel, the right hand against the right shoulder and the left hand against the left shoulder. The dervish keeps spinning, from the right to the left (anticlockwise).



i. The hands go straight up. Then, the dervish spreads his arms sideways. During this, the right



palm should face upwards and the left palm downwards; The dervish keeps spinning from the right to the left (anticlockwise).

j. The dervish spins as long as he wants. He at least performs 70 rotations. The story goes that the highest amount of reachable rotations is 70 times 70 = 4900 rotations.

### **Round 3. Completion**

As soon as the dervish has finished his dance, he stops spinning on his right leg.

a. The hands return to the shoulders during 3 spins; The dervish keeps spinning.

b. The hands are lowered to the belly button during 3 spins; The dervish keeps spinning.

c. The dervish makes 1 to 3 more spins with the hands on the height of the belly button.

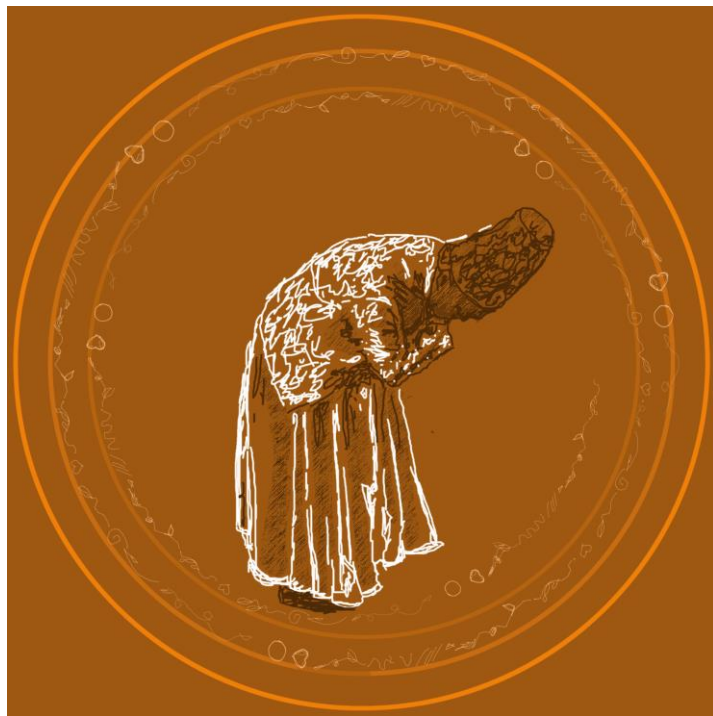
d. The dervish rises his hands from the belly button to the shoulders. This happens during 3 spins. (at the 3<sup>rd</sup> spin, the hands have been risen to shoulder height)

e. The dervish keeps spinning and at the third spin the hands are placed crosswise on the shoulders again. The left hand on the right shoulder and the right hand on the left shoulder;

f. The dervish then brings his left leg next to his right leg.

g. The dervish bows to the audience out of respect, while the hands are still placed crosswise on the shoulders.

h. While remaining silent, the dervish bows in four directions out of respect. Each bow has its own meaning. The first bow is addressed to the love. The second bow goes to the knowledge. The third bow is intended for the truth. The fourth bow is for the ethics.



**End of the dervishes dance (sema)!**

## **Scheme for performing sema, or dervishes dance**

In general, people can learn how to perform a sema in less than 40 days.

Discipline is the guidance of sema. This means that people have to follow the scheme shown below:

### **Day 1:**

- a. In the morning, at a fixed time, e.g. at 8 O'clock, make 1 spin. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.
- b. In the afternoon, at a fixed time, e.g. at 13 O'clock, make 1 spin. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.
- c. In the evening, at a fixed time, e.g. at 21 O'clock, make 1 spin. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.

### **Day 2:**

- a. In the morning, at a fixed time, e.g. at 8 O'clock, make 2 spins. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.

- b. In the afternoon, at a fixed time, e.g. at 13 O'clock, make 2 spins. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.
- c. In the evening, at a fixed time, e.g. at 21 O'clock, make 2 spins. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.

You have to add 1 spin each day, until you reach day 40.

**Day 40:**

- a. In the morning, at a fixed time, e.g. at 8 O'clock, make 40 spins. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.
  - b. In the afternoon, at a fixed time, e.g. at 13 O'clock, make 40 spins. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.
  - c. In the evening, at a fixed time, e.g. at 21 O'clock, make 40 spins. Do not make any speed and spin in a way that does not make you dizzy.
- After the 40th day, the spinning does not cause dizziness anymore and you can perform a sema of more than 3 minutes.

Weekly exercise and dance guarantee an everlasting competence.

The costume, the music and the other stimulating attributes can be used whenever you want.

**For the record;**

Discipline and adherence to the scheme lead to success, the ability to perform the art of spinning and the resulting experience and trance.

The following things are recommended:

- do not spin with a full stomach;
- wear flexible and comfortable shoes during the spinning, e.g. soft ballet shoes;
- spin in front of a mirror;
- stretch your body briefly before you start spinning;
- stay calm during every action, there is no hurry.
- because the ankles, the calves and the upper arm muscles will be very stressed during sema, it is recommended to strengthen these bodyparts by doing exercises. Five exercises are described below:

Prior to the body movements, try to become relaxed by using your breath: Breath in and out a couple of times.

**1. For the ankles and calves:**

Sit down on a chair and lift one foot from the ground, while your leg is stretched. Move the toes towards the knees in two ways:

- With the foot bend outwards;
- With the foot bend inwards;

Keep your foot straight while doing this exercise.

This exercise does not only strengthen the calves but also the shin muscles. Repeat regularly and progressively.

**2. For the upperarm:**

Lean against a wall with one hand, while standing sideways. Place the hand at the height of your head. Bend the arm and lean closer to the wall. Stretch again. Repeat regularly and progressively.

**3. For the head:**

- Stretch the neck sideways, alternate between both sides;
  - Stretch the neck forwards and backwards;
  - Roll the head in a circular motion.
- Repeat regularly and progressively.

**4. Stretching exercises.**

- Stretch your arms above your head with the handpalms touching each other. Repeat regularly and progressively.
- Bend over and stretch your hands towards the ground without bending your knees. Try to touch the ground with your fingertips. Over time, try to touch the ground with your handpalms.

**5. An exercise for the knees:**

Put your feet at an angle of 90 degrees (heels against each other). Bend the knees outwards,

bring them inwards and stretch your legs. Keep your back stretched and your hands folded on your back. Repeating this creates a spinning movement.

A variant is: First bend the knees against each other, then move them outwards and subsequently stretch.

To end these exercises, walk 2 to 3 minutes. Stand still and relaxedly move your body in slow motion.

- After spinning more than 15 minutes, you should give your body 1 week to recover properly.
- Stay hopeful, stay calm and patient and intensify.

**For the blessing**



**من و تو**

‘You and I’



**Rumi:**

I am out of control, you are out of control, who  
brings us home?  
I often insinuated: Why not two or three cups  
less?

In the city I see no sober person, in the moonlight  
the one is even crazier, even more foolish than the  
other.

My dear, come into the winery and experience the  
pleasure of spirit and soul;  
in absence of your love, pleasure of the soul can  
not exist.

Drunk people are sitting in every nook and  
cranny, musing, through heavenly chalices out  
the hand of the inkeeper of the existense.

You are a gift to the winery, your salary is wine,  
just like your expenses;  
Don't let your salary go to the untouched sober  
people as gift.

Oh, jolly harpplayer, which one of us is most  
drunk, you or me?  
In presence of a drunk person like you, does my  
drunkenness seem false.

Once, as I left the house, I encountered a roaming  
drunk person,  
hundreds of gardens and houses went up in  
smoke in front of him.

He drifted about like a out of controll ship, then  
to east and then to west;  
hundreds of wise men and scientists desired to  
stand in his shadows.

I asked him: "What are you part of?" He laughed  
contemptuously at me and said:  
"Oh, darling, I partly come from Fergana, partly  
from Turkstan.

I am partly water and clay, partly hart and soul;  
A part is lover and the rest lays on the beach of  
the ocean.

I said to him "Marshall yourself a bit more  
friendly, because I am related;"  
he spoke "I don't make a distinction between  
related and stranger."

I am heart- and turbanless, I am located in the  
winery;  
I have a chest full of words, do you want to  
undergo their sound?"  
In the company of cripple people you should  
walk crippled;

Did you not listen to the wisdom of the brahmans.

A person, drunk by that good stuff, is nothing less as a piece of wood, right?  
These names placed Oston Hannana\*, Prophet's support, into a crying state.

Why, Sjams Tabrizi, son of God, do you seclude yourself from the nation?  
Exactly now, now you have created hunderds of beautifull rebellions.

---

\* **Oston Hannana** was a withered palm tree where the Prophet Mohammed leaned against when he prayed. Later, when he obtained a preaching chair in the mosque and because of that no longer preached underneath the palm tree, cried the palm because of the absence of the prophet. Also, this piece of wood obtained a special value because the prophet used to lean against it.

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## Sema *dervishes dance* سماع

The sema literally means listen and everything that belongs to listening. In the jargon of the dervishes, sufis and mystici sema means taking distance from yourself and fusing with the greater existence. The dervishes believe that people enter a state of peace and joy because of the sema. The celebration, or the sema dance, usually takes place on a round floor. The round shape symbolizes the daf instrument, an enlarged tambourine.

The daf instrument itself is a symbol of happiness and exuberancy. So, people dance on the rhythm of joy.

It usually does not take long before the dance

begins. The dance involves only one movement: spinning.

Spinning has many different types and variations.

Spinning itself symbolizes the movements of planets, stars, the universe and existence. Everything spins.

In order to give an example of the meaning of spinning, people say that it reflects the orbiting of planets around the sun. So the dervishes spin around the center of their dancefloor. The dancemaster usually stands in the center. However, many masters choose not to stand there out of modesty.

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