

## **Sema [Samā']**

**THE SEMA RITUAL** began with the inspiration of Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi (1207-1273) and was influenced by Turkish customs and culture....

**Contrary to popular belief, the semazen's goal is not to lose consciousness or to fall into a state of ecstasy. Instead, by revolving in harmony with all things in nature -- with the smallest cells and with the stars in the firmament -- the semazen testifies to the existence and the majesty of the Creator, thinks of Him, gives thanks to Him, and prays to Him. In so doing, the semazen confirms the words of the Qur'an (64:1): Whatever is in the skies or on earth invokes God.**

**An important characteristic of this seven-centuries-old ritual is that it unites the three fundamental components of human nature: the mind (as knowledge and thought), the heart (through the expression of feelings, poetry and music) and the body (by activating life, by the turning). These three elements are thoroughly joined both in theory and in practice as perhaps in no other ritual or system of thought.**

**The Sema ceremony represents the human being's spiritual journey, an ascent by means of intelligence and love to Perfection (Kemal). Turning toward the truth, he grows through love, transcends the ego, meets the truth, and arrives at Perfection. Then he returns from this spiritual journey as one who has reached maturity and completion, able to love and serve the whole of creation and all creatures without discriminating in regard to belief, class, or race.**

**In the symbolism of the Sema ritual, the semazen's camel's hair hat (sikke) represents the tombstone of the ego; his wide, white skirt represents the ego's shroud. By removing his black cloak, he is spiritually reborn to the truth. At the beginning of the Sema, by**

**holding his arms crosswise, the semazen appears to represent the number one, thus testifying to God's unity. While whirling, his arms are open: his right arm is directed to the sky, ready to receive God's beneficence; his left hand, upon which his eyes are fastened, is turned toward the earth. The semazen conveys God's spiritual gift to those who are witnessing the Sema. Revolving from right to left around the heart, the semazen embraces all humanity with love. The human being has been created with love in order to love. Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi says, "All loves are a bridge to Divine love. Yet, those who have not had a taste of it do not know!"**