give, keeping nothing for ourselves. The whirling dervishes revolve around their own axis and around a circle just like the planet revolves in its own axis and around the sun. At this stage one dancer stands in the centre and the others dance around him. The first whirling symbolises the creation of the world, its animals and plants. This continues for four salutes which are the means for the humans to reach divine reality intoxicating the soul. The ritual continues as the Sheikh recites the verse 115 of the second chapter of the Holy Quran, which says, (interpretation of the meaning) " And to Allah belongs the east and the west. So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face

There is a dress code for both men and women.



Whirling Dervishes perform in the Galata Mevlevihane (Mevlevi Lodge), Istanbul.

while the left hand touches the right shoulder with their bowed heads looking at the floor.

The dance starts slowly at first but gradually it picks up speed and towards the end, they complete a circle in just a second. While dancing with eyes shut, the hands are extended with the right palm pointed upward and the left palm pointing downward. This signifies that we receive from god and to men we of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.". The Sema ends with the first chapter of the holy book.

The performance is of about an hour and the small auditorium accommodates about 200 spectators. There is a dress code for both men and women. Men cannot wear shorts and women cannot show their legs. Photography is not allowed. ■