Journal of Current Researches on Social Sciences
(JoCReSS)
www.stracademy.org/jocress
ISSN: 2547-9644

Year:2017
Volume: 7
Issue: 2

Crossref doi: 10.26579/jocress-7.2.10

Secularization and Commercialization of Rumi

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Keywords
Mevlana, Rumi, Whirling Dervishes, Sema, Mevlevism.

Abstract
Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi (1207-1273) has been a universal figure for people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. He has been recognized as a literary and spiritual figure. Rumi's philosophy is rooted to an understanding of universe and existence through love. Love is the whole thing and we are the pieces. In the last decades, we clearly can observe a deterioration of Rumi, his spiritual philosophy and his traditional, sacred, worship ritual Sema. Love is fundamental in Rumi's philosophy. Popular media constantly dwells upon love, using the deep human feeling and longing for love. However, the media signifies this love not as an understanding of existence, but as a marketing strategy. Rumi and Mevlevism has been the target of secularization attempts cutting its ties with Islam and further packaging it as a secular, cultural phenomenon and a folk dance form. These attempts yielded authenticity issues and further exploitation of the unique Mevlevi heritage. Rumi's concept of love has also become 'à la mode' in the last decades. Sema as a form of Islamic worship is increasingly being commercialized and exploited. Whirling Dervish imposters can be seen whirling publicly in restaurants, bars, at openings, in hotel lobbies, and even in shopping malls in Turkey. These imposters are even hired for children's circumcision ceremonies, as background dancers in music concerts and performances, in engagements and weddings. Another misconception stemming from an Orientalist perspective is seeing Sema as a dance form, although, Sema is a Dhikr (Remembrance of God) and a prayer; it is a form of submission to divine love and unity; it is a form of worship.

Article History
Received
15 Aug, 2017
Accepted
9 Sep, 2017

1. Rumi's Life and Philosophy

The spiritual influence of *Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi* (1207-1273) has been expanding through not only *East* but also *West* over the last decades. It has been a universal figure for people from diverse religions and cultures. He has been recognized as a literary and spiritual figure. He was presented as being refined and sensual, sober and ecstatic, deeply serious and extremely funny, rarefied and accessible. It is a sign of his profound universality that he has been so many things to so many people (Helminski, 1999). *Jalâluddîn Rumi* was not only a philosopher, a poet, mystic, and the founder of a Sufi order, he was a man of profound insight

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into the nature of human existence and possibly the greatest mystical poet of any age. He described himself as a Muslim before everything. He could be described as a philosopher and mystical poet of Islam who advocated tolerance, reason and access to knowledge through love.

Jalâluddîn Rumi was born in *Balkh*, which is located in today's Afghanistan. At an earlier age his family left *Balkh* because of Mongolian invasion and settled in Konya, Turkey, which was then the capital of the Seljuk Empire. He lived during most of his life there, thus was called *Rumi*, which means Anatolian. His father *Bahaeddin Veled* was a famous religious and philosophy scholar of his time. He lost his father in 1230, then Mongols invaded Anatolia in 1243. Following year a strange man arrived from Tabriz, *Shams* (Shams of Tabriz). Rumi had been a close disciple of *Shams of Tabriz* until *Shams* left Konya because of local public pressures in 1247. Rumi and Shams' relationship was compared to Socrates and Plato (Keklik, 1987) or *Abraham*'s meeting with *Melchizedek*. Helminski suggested Murat Yagan's explanation about their relationship that: "A Melchizedek and a Shams are messengers from the Source. They do nothing themselves but carry enlightenment to someone who can receive, someone who is either too full or too empty. Mevlâna was one who was too full. After receiving it, he could apply this message for the benefit of humanity." Shams was burning and Rumi caught fire (as cited in Helminski, 1999). Jalâluddîn Rumi used stories based on metaphors to explain his philosophy and ideas. Helminski (1999) mentions about his great work *Mathnawi*:

> The *Mathnawi* can justifiably be considered the greatest spiritual masterpiece ever written by a human being. Its content includes the full spectrum of life on earth, every kind of human activity: religious, cultural, political, sexual, domestic; every kind of human character from the vulgar to the refined; as well as copious and specific details of the natural world, history and geography. It is also a book that presents the vertical dimension of life — from this mundane world of desire, work, and things, to the most sublime levels of metaphysics and cosmic awareness. It is its completeness that enchants us.

Islamic philosophers *Gazzali* and *Ibn-ul Arabi* fought against Materialism, Skepticism and Dogmatism; having been influenced by and following the same route, Rumi defended Spiritualism and Idealism against Materialism, Skepticism and Dogmatic Rationalism (Keklik, 1987).

2. The Mevlevi Order

Mevlana Jalâluddîn Rumi was a well-respected Islamic scholar of the thirteenth century. The story of his tradition from an intellectual to a love-crazed dervish is the creation story of the *Mevlevi order* (McClure, 2016). Upon his death, to systematize Mevlana's ideas, his son *Sultan Veled* (1226-1312), developed a rigid frame of belief and ceremony that depends on an idea of human being, divine love, and *Sema* ceremonies (Sarionder, 2004); established *Mevlevi Order* (Whirling Dervishes) and its principles in 1273. "Rumi's grandson *Ulu Arif Celebi* introduced the structure of the prayers and *sisila* as well, honoring his family lineage, which goes back to the prophet Muhammad" (McClure, 2016, p. 253). *Mevlevis* are also called as *Whirling Dervishes* due to their famous practice of whirling as a form of

Dhikr (Remembrance of God). *Dervish* is a common term for a disciple of *Sufi* path. Whirling is a part of the formal *Sema* ceremony, and participants are properly known as *Semazens*.

One of the reasons for preference for Mevlevism above any other was most likely influenced by the fact that the *Mevlevis* were always very passive when it came to politics. Sarionder (as cited in, 2004) noted based on Golpinarli that from the 16th Century in particular, Mevlevism moved away from villages and small towns and became an order of the authorities. By the 17th Century, Mevlevism was almost a state institution in Ottoman.

Mevlevihanes or *Mevlevi Lodges* are traditionally educational institutions, which served as centers to educate Mevlevi dervishes. Educational foundations of these lodges were based on religious education, moral education, spiritualism, literature, poetry, music, calligraphy and art education. Until the disbanding of all religious orders including Sufi order by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk in 1925, Mevlevi Lodges served as important educational centers (Osen, 2015; McClure, 2016). Between 1925 and 1957, the government held control over Mevlevi and Sufi practice. The Konya ensemble was founded in 1957 through a deal brokered by the *Konya Mevlevi* and the Turkish government. The Mevlevi wanted to practice the Sema in its full form, and publicly. The government agreed on the condition that the Sema was packaged as a cultural, folkloric ensemble (McClure, 2016). The political passivity of the Mevlevis in the Ottoman state may also have been the reason for their privileged status of existence as a semi-legitimate cultural institution in the Republican regime (Sarionder, 2004).

The training process for *Mevlevi Dervish*, codified by Rumi's family is called the *chilé* whereby the individual is brought into direct communication with the beloved across all areas of life. It lasts for 1001 days. This period includes various tasks that ultimately will force the initiate to confront himself in the lowliest of occupations and the dailiness of life. This process helps the initiate to submit his ego to his will. During this time, the initiate is given education in science, in the fine arts, music, and philosophy (McClure, 2016). The chilé and then Sufi's search for God has three stages: purification, enlightenment, and union (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012).

3. The Sema Ritual

Rumi's meeting with Shams Tabriz was the major life-changing experience for him. There are various controversial stories about Shams' disappearing for the second time in Konya. McClure (2016) claimed that he was murdered:

> They entered into private retreat, emerging weeks later on fire with the love of God. As the story continues, Shams eventually left Konya. Rumi was distraught beyond belief, and sent his son, Sultan Veled, in search of Shams. Shams returned to Konya, but only briefly, for in the end he was murdered. Rumi then entered into a state of deepest grief, and in this state the turning of the dervish is born. Upon hearing the hammering of the goldsmith, Rumi, in his grief, began to whirl in the marketplace (p. 252).

Another claim regarding the origin of Rumi's whirling practice was sourced to Nicholson (1973). He placed Rumi's Sufi instruction with *Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq*, a mystic disciple of Rumi's father. In this version, Rumi turns around the columns in his garden, rather than at the goldsmith's shop (McClure, 2016).

McClure (2016) noted that the Mevlevi Sema, eventually codified by Rumi's son *Sultan Veled* and his grandson *Ulu Arif Celebi*, and passed down for generations. It is in principle different from the solo, improvised turning of Mevlana (p. 253). Mirdal (2012) explained Sema as followed: the dervishes turn around with open arms, the right hand facing the sky and the left hand the earth, thus "distributing to Man what they receive from God". During whirling each time a Dervish puts his foot on the ground, he repeats the name of God, *Allah*, to enhance his meditation in the process (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012, p.140).

"Come, come, whoever you are.
Wanderer, idolater, worshipper of fire,
come even though you have broken your vows a thousand times,
Come, and come yet again.
Ours is not a caravan of despair."

A typical characteristic of human worship, not only in Mevlevi Sufi order but also in many mystical movements is the use of music. Music was defined as the single most important elicitor of the religious experience (Mirdal, 2010). In Sema rituals Mevlevis also perform whirling as a religious experience, a form of worship, along with a unique music. For the Mevlevi dervishes living in *Tekkes*, music-making had the highest priority among other art-related activities such as calligraphy or miniature painting (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012). Whirling and music, both has a power of inducing Mevlevis to ecstasy. Rumi's philosophy, his understanding of life and universe manifest itself as an ecstatic ritual, which is called *Sema*. The music accompanying a Sema ritual is specifically called *Mevlevi Ayini*, and it is the longest form of music in Turkish-Ottoman *makam music* tradition (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012). According to Yondemli, in Mevlevi tradition Sema refers to listening to music, singing, and chanting a measured recitation designed to bring about religious emotion and ecstasy. Sema also refers to non-musical phenomena such as spiritual knowledge, divine wisdom, and silence (as cited in Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012). In Turkish, Sema means sky and also means the whirling ritual of dervishes. In Turkish, Sema also represents union with God, in the belief that when one dies, one's soul will reach to God, to Sema/the Sky (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012).

A secret turning in us

Makes the universe turn.

Head unaware of feet,

And feet head. Neither cares.

They keep turning. (Mirdal, 2010)

In Rumi's philosophy, Passionate Love is considered fundamental for being part of flow of the universe. Whirling or Sema ritual as a whole is a manifestation of this flow, and this flow is only possible by letting go. Halman and And reported that for

Mevlana, Sema is an expression of adornment of the soul which enables to discover love, to feel the shudder of the encounter, to take off the veils, and to be in the presence of God (as cited in Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012).

Let go of your worries
and be completely clear-hearted
like the face of a mirror
that contains no images.

When it is empty of forms,
all forms are contained in it.
No face would be ashamed
to be so clear.

This is to love: to fly toward a secret sky,
to cause a hundred veils to fall each moment
First, to let go of life.
In the end, to take a step without feet.
To regard this world as invisible,
and to disregard what appears to the self (Mirdal, 2010)

Although, in Western popular culture, Mevlana is typically represented as a spiritual apart from a traditional religious belief system this view is misguided. Gokce (2007) notably reminded that Mevlana and his Mevlevi order is belong to Islamic belief system and cannot be considered distant from Islamic worldview and understanding.

Gokce (2007) further remarked Mevlana's own words: "Sacrifice the mind to Muhammad's path; declare your trust in Allah. After all, Allah is the one and only almighty" (p. 102). Similarly, he cited Mevlana's poems and gave many examples to point out that Muhammad is the absolute guide and pioneer in Mevlana's order. According to Mevlana, Muhammad is the last, and the greatest messenger of *Allah*. *Koran* is the perfectly complete word of *Allah*, it has never been, and neither it will ever be altered. Only way to salvation is the path to *Allah* through *Koran* and Muhammad, any other paths will guide you astray (Gokce, 2007). Many further narratives were cited explaining that Mevlana was indeed a devout Muslim follower of *Koran* and Muhammad without a doubt.

4. Secularization and Commercialization: Whirling Dervishes for Hire

In the literature we have seen such remarks as commercialization of Christmas and its secularization based on the life styles offered to us through capitalism. For example, American Christmas has become a seasonal cult involving participation by the majority but also has become so distant from its historic and Christian

religious origins. *Christmas* and *Easter* are each double festivals having separate secular and religious iconographies and separate religious and secular modes of celebration (Hirschman and LaBarbera, 1989). It is also possible to see and analyze these celebrations in terms of consumption practices.

Belk (1987) suggested "…If Santa is god, he is the god of materialism… Both Santa and attendant seasonal rituals (these include huge family feasts, office parties, New Year's Eve parties, and even the large circulation of Christmas issues of Playboy magazine) celebrate greed, gluttony, and hedonism… American society has reflected its deepest values onto Santa Claus." (p. 91).

Indeed, in a world of materialism and consumption we encounter similar approaches and understandings as taking particular cultural or universal values and transforming them into worldwide representations of materialization or furthermore commercialization. Similarly, we have been observing a vulgarization of Rumi's concept of love and the emphasis on his role as the timeless, spaceless, ecstatic, the master of Love, especially in the social circles where love of Rumi has became almost fashionable in the last decades (Mirdal, 2010). Today, there are many *Semazens* working in Turkey as giving tourist performances. One common misconception is seeing Sema as a dance form. It should be remembered that in Islamic culture, Sema is a *Dhikr* (Remembrance of God) and a prayer; it is a form of submission to divine love and unity. It is not a self-expression as typically thought for modern dances. Instead, it is losing and forgetting self in unity with all creation and fire of love. Dhikr includes chanting the names of God, praying, meditation, the singing and reciting of mystical poems, Koranic recitation, praise and music. Through the medium of Dhikr, a Sema ceremony represents a journey from the material to the spiritual (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012).

Rumi's philosophy has been popular for the last decades and it has been compared to Far East philosophies of Buddhism and Taoism. Izutsu (1983) suggested "they share on the philosophical level, the same ground. They agree with each other, to begin with, in that both base their philosophical thinking on a very peculiar conception of Existence which is fundamentally identical, (…) and that philosophizing in both cases has its ultimate origin not in *reasoning* about Existence but in *experiencing* Existence." (p. 479).

> *The cure for pain is in the pain*
>
> *Good and bad are mixed. If you don't have both,*
>
> *You don't belong to us.*
>
> *When one of us gets lost, is not here, he must be inside us.*

Mirdal (2010) described Rumi's philosophy as a form of mindfulness, "it is based on certain key attitudes, so-called attitudinal foundations: being non-judgmental and accepting or observing without evaluation; being patient; having "a beginner's mind", i.e., meeting every situation as if for the first time; trusting one's intuition; non-striving and experiencing the present moment without focusing on future goals; and letting-go, in the sense of neither grasping nor pushing away." (p. 1205). Mirdal (2010) further describes the key concepts in Rumi's teachings as follows: acceptance and acknowledgement of both positive and negative experiences;

unlearning of old habits and looking at the world with new eyes; decentering, changing one's focus from Self to Other; and attunement of body and mind through mediation, music and dance. He stresses the importance of openness to all forms of experiences. In contrast to "experiential avoidance" which refers to the escape from negative experiences, Rumi could be said to advocate a life strategy of "experiential approach" (p. 1207).

This being human is a guesthouse

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

some momentary awareness comes

as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,

who violently sweep your house

empty of its furniture,

still treat each guest honorably.

He may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,

meet them at the door laughing,

and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,

because each has been sent

as a guide from beyond.

— Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi (Mirdal, 2010).

Common deterioration and misconceptions regarding Rumi and his teachings may also be associated with political dynamics. After the disbanding of all religious orders including Sufi order by *Mustafa Kemal Ataturk* in 1925, Mevlevi Lodges served as important educational centers (Osen, 2015; McClure, 2016). Between 1925 and 1957, the government held control over Mevlevi and Sufi practice. The Konya ensemble was founded in 1957 through a deal brokered by the Konya Mevlevi and the Turkish government. The Mevlevi wanted to practice the Sema in its full form, and publicly. The government agreed on the condition that the Sema was packaged as a cultural, folkloric ensemble (McClure, 2016). Unfortunately, the Sema, as also known as *Whirling Dervishes* has been perceived as a cultural, touristic, folkloric dance form instead of an Islamic *Dhikr* (Remembrance of God) or a form of prayer. Laïque constitutional laws and ideology of Turkish Republic did not favor even Rumi's Sufi order as a religious ensemble. Consequently, today, Whirling Dervishes is much more commonly known in Turkey, than Rumi's spiritual, religious philosophy or teachings. The secularization attempt was

consistent with the new Turkish nation's laïque ideology and followed by disbanding Mevlevi Lodges, cutting its ties with Islam and further packaging it as a secular, cultural phenomenon and a folk dance form (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012). This could signify a turning point in its history later resulting with authenticity issues and further exploitation of the unique Mevlevi heritage.

As of today, time-to-time, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, Whirling Dervish imposters can be seen whirling publicly in restaurants, bars, at openings, in hotel lobbies, and even in shopping malls in Turkey. These imposters are even hired for children's circumcision ceremonies, as background dancers in music concerts and performances, in engagements and weddings. It has become commercial business and a job for many unemployed who have otherwise no clue about both Rumi or Mevlevi order and philosophy. In its tourist performances, it was observed that instead of performing the whole *Ayin-i Serif* (Sacred religious performance of Dhikr), which is approximately one-hour long, the sections were combined to accompany the whirling show. In such performances, the Ayin was usually performed in specifically selected forms and *makams* of music; in a way it creates proximity with European music and tonal system (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012).

In its over 600 years of Mevlevi order tradition, Dervish clothing is not just an outfit but has rather significant meanings associated with Rumi's philosophy and teachings of universe and existence. The white dress of *Semazen* is called *Tennure*, which represents cerement, a shroud for the dead in Islamic burial, to remind the Semazen of the falsehood and ephemeral worldliness of life. The *Sikke* for the head symbolizes a pillar as the tombstone. Sikke is the tombstone for the dervish who submitted his ego to his will and let go his *"self". Hirka*, which is the cloak covering on *Tennure*, symbolizes the grave of dervish who learned the secret of death before it comes, and killing of his ego to gave up on worldly desires. In fact, the *chilé*, which is the training and suffering process for Mevlevi Dervish, during which individual, is brought into direct communication with the beloved across all areas of life. It means literally *"suffering"* and lasts an exact 1001 days. This period includes various tasks that ultimately will force the initiate to confront himself in the lowliest of occupations and the dailiness of life. This process helps the initiate to submit his ego to his will. During this time, the initiate is given education in science, in the fine arts, music, and philosophy (McClure, 2016). There is always a risk when disconnected parts of a philosophy or religion are removed from its original context and wedged into an entirely different background (Mirdal, 2010). Perhaps, we should question whether Rumi's philosophy is being commercialized and marketed as an isolated spiritual philosophy removed from its Islamic roots and context?

Rumi's philosophy is rooted to an understanding of universe and existence from a larger perspective. Everything is connected and nothing can be thought as separable from others. "*Stop acting so small, you are the universe in ecstatic motion".* Everything you feel, think, see, and witness is part of the flow and being shaped constantly. Love is the whole thing and we are the only pieces.

In the last decades, we clearly can observe a deterioration of Rumi and his spiritual philosophy. Rumi's philosophy is based on love. Popular media constantly stress love, since we all have a deep feeling and longing for love. However, the media

signifies this love not as a *'bona fide'* understanding of existence, but as a marketing strategy, so love in this case is a marketing tool and is sold as sex, relationship, or sometimes as a new age religion. It is interesting how popular media takes Rumi from its original context and presents it as a 'love guru'. As previously mentioned, Rumi is Muslim and Rumi's philosophy is rooted to an Islamic worldview. It may be that, presentable and marketable aspects of Rumi, which is love in this case, is taken from its original Islamic context and being served to Western customers. Perhaps, it is much more agreeable and much more easy to use commercially in Christian West or worldwide.

I am the slave of Koran as long as I am alive,

I am the dust of the pavement Muhammad walked on

Whoever excerpts contrastingly,

That is an aspersion and I condemn (Gokce, 2007).

However, it should also be understood that Rumi or Mevlana is a universal figure. Although, Rumi himself is coming from Islamic tradition, his understanding of existence and universe through love represents universe within a holistic harmony. Helminski (1999) describes Rumi's tradition as neither East nor West, but something in between. Furthermore, the Islamic tradition, which shaped him, acknowledges that only one religion has been given to mankind through countless prophets, or messengers, who have come to every people on earth bearing this knowledge of Spirit. Even though, Rumi's own words seem to contradict; when we get to know his philosophy, they are not. Coming at the same time from Islamic tradition and being universal does not contradict, as it seems. A statement attributed to him confirms his universality.

I belong to no religion. My religion is love. Every heart is my temple. —Rumi

I come to you without me. Come to me without you. —Rumi

Any kind of duality, separation, classification, or dichotomy seems to contradict with his philosophy. There is no such thing as you and me, we are one. Rumi, at this point, is beyond Muslim and Christian, and beyond any cultural differences. Islam itself is a continuation of the Judeo-Christian or Abrahamic tradition, honoring the Hebrew prophets, as well as Jesus and Mary. Muhammad is viewed as the last of those human prophets who brought the message of God's love (Helminski, 1999). The word 'Islam' itself means *'submission'* and does not diverge from Rumi's philosophy. Being one with all the existence and creation, and being part of the flow without resisting, accepting what comes and goes means *'submission'*. Islam is submission to a higher order of reality. Without this submission, the real self is enslaved to the ego and lives in a state of internal conflict due to the contradictory impulses of the ego. The enslaved ego is cut off from the heart, the chief organ for perceiving reality, and cannot receive the spiritual guidance and nourishment, which the heart provides (Helminski, 1999).

Instead of resisting to changes, surrender. Let life be with you, not against you. —Shams Tabrizi

In Rumi's philosophy, spiritual maturity is the realization that the self is a reflection of the Divine. God is the Beloved or Friend, the transpersonal identity. Love of God leads to the lover forgetting himself in the love of the Beloved (Helminski, 1999).

Love yourself, the all the divine beauty and virtue is hidden in you. —Rumi

In the literature we have seen similar commercialization of Christmas, Easter and their secularization based on the life styles offered to us through capitalism. It is also possible to see and analyze these celebrations in terms of consumption practices. In a predominantly Muslim society, i.e. Turkey, entertainment choices and practices also depend on Turkish-Islam tradition. In Islamic tradition, dance as an entertainment form is limited and restricted. Dance as an entertainment and as self-expression contradicts with Islamic belief system and tradition. Use of music has also certain limitations as well. Music, other than the chanting of the *Adhan* and *Koran*, has no place in the Islamic rituals. Various Sufi sects have different attitudes toward music: for instance, while the *Hanefi* order strictly forbids music and dance, the *Mevlevi* order has a rooted tradition of music within the Sema ritual (Uyar & Besiroglu, 2012). Mevlevism and Whirling Dervishes is widely accepted and well respected among both public and scholars. Therefore, rather than using other forms of dance and music, Whirling Dervishes may be seen as a form of escape, and a safe and socially accepted convention in Turkish Islamic tradition.

In a study, Tanyildizi (2011) reported that the name 'Mevlana' is widely known among students, however, his philosophy and teachings were not known that commonly. When a spiritual is well known but not his teachings, it may be open to misunderstandings, misperceptions and misconceptions. As suggested, information on media was scarce and the public was informed neither about Mevlana nor other similar cultural figures sufficiently (Tanyildizi, 2011). Mevlana or Rumi, as a religious, spiritual, cultural figure; is typically well known among public. However, his sophisticated philosophy, his understanding of human nature and existence, teachings of love and divine love are not comprehended. As not being informed about sufficiently, Mevlana and Mevlevism seems open to exploitation, to misinterpretation and may even be open to abuse. Media exploitation is actually very common. A similar example is well known *'Santa'* who lives in *North Pole*, lovingly brings presents to kids while flying on a sleigh pulled by reindeers; but in fact he was a Christian Saint, *—Saint Nicholas—,* lived in Asia Minor, during 3rd Century AC. Currently known Santa figure is somewhat secluded from his Christian origin, and he is celebrated worldwide even in societies who are not Christian. As specified previously (Mirdal, 2010), when disconnected parts of Rumi's philosophy or teachings are removed from its original context, wedged into an entirely different background, and served to customers, commercially; we can talk about an abuse and exploitation, that is actually in progress.

5. Concluding Remarks

UNESCO listed Mevlevi Music and Sema Ceremony in "World Cultural Heritage List" following the International Mevlana Foundation's proposition. However, it was also reported that there have been problems regarding preservation of Mevlevi culture, tradition and rituals in general. Today, mostly musicians who play

in Sema rituals are trained in music conservatories instead of traditional training at Mevlevi Lodges. Traditionally, Semazens used to be given music training and also musicians used to be given Sema training, but today those are separated, therefore issues are being encountered during Sema in terms of unison, attunement, synchronization, rhythm and feeling the essence and spirit. Historically, *Meshk* was the foundational training method for Mevlevi musicians; this training was long and demanding. This method was abandoned and now musicians are learning through music notes, which caused quality issues and some unique musical arts are being lost in time. In addition, Semazens and musicians are training and practicing separately, which also causes problems regarding quality and excellence (Tiril, 2017).

Although, Mevlevi Music and Sema is currently in our cultural heritage list, we witness irresponsible practices of Sema and Whirling Dervishes. Their common commercialization causes degeneration, exploitation and further abuse of a unique, religious and cultural tradition. Whirling Dervishes are not dancers, nor Sema is a secular meditation form as seen from the West. Today, we see many dance performances on the Internet performing under the name Whirling Dervishes without any concern regarding authenticity. Perhaps, one can be inspired by Whirling Dervishes and create and transform new dance forms; but it should be remembered that there is a distinction between imitating, being inspired, impersonating, posing as, pretending, or being a Mevlevi Dervish as explained in this paper. We simply cannot take a religious ritual, as separating it from its cultural roots and use it in inappropriate ways. We should perhaps consider respect to other cultures and religions. Should we simply take a prayer or a religious ritual from a church, a synagogue, a mosque, arrange it with new tunes and beats, and deliver as a new dance form? That is not to say, Rumi is only belong to Muslims. Nevertheless, Rumi is a universal figure his philosophy is rooted to an understanding of universe and existence through love. In a world of materialism and consumption we are witnessing a vulgarization and commercialization of Rumi's concept of love without understanding its Islamic roots. It could be perhaps a lightweight, low calorie understanding of Rumi as expected in a consumer society obsessed with materialistic lifestyle.

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