**The Cem ceremony and why it is important in Alevism**

We asked a small group of Alevi about the Cem ceremony to try to find out why it is an important part of their community and their life.

1. **What do you do at the Cem ceremony?**

We sing and dance together (semah).

We learn Alevi values and traditions and customs from the past.

We make sure that everything is about justice, by sharing food and respecting each other.

Responsibility for Cem is shared around. Anyone can be one of the 12 Servants.

We listen to the Dede

In Cem, we remove our shoes, sit, dance, listen, sing, eat a communal meal (lokma), share, love, learn, teach, rest and make an inner journey.

At Cem, we follow ritual practice, including music, hymns/poems and dance (Semah). It starts with everyone giving their consent to allow the Dede to lead the Cem. Then any disputes are resolved before the ceremony can begin. The ceremony is conducted through 12 Servants (hizmetler) who perform particular tasks that help us to worship as a community. This helps s to follow the guidelines for a successful Cem ceremony

But what we really do is reach that inner peace and question ourselves in order to become Insan Kamil (the perfect person)

During the service and through the rituals, we surrender our soul so that we become selfless, so that as a community we become as one.

1. **What do you get from the Cem ceremony?**

Equality, food, love, peace;

Music, dance, poems, friendship, brotherhood;

Drama, respect, sharing.

We get a sense of spiritual power and growth. We get stronger spiritually and leave with self-confidence

Emotionally we get a sense of contentment, peace and tranquility.

Socially, we gain a sense of equality, recognition and sharing.

Spiritually we gain a sense of unity and blessing.

I get time to reflect on me and my life.

It is a chance to reach inner peace.

It helps me practise the spiritual side of my belief.

1. **Why is the Cem ceremony important to you and others?**

It is full of spiritual interpretation and significance. By surrendering yourself through prayer, ritual, music and dance you become selfless – you lose yourself in the ritual and become one energy or life-force. You realise that you are one with Hakk. The whole community is as one and we make promises to live better lives and commit to a sense of brotherhood.

It is like every soul gets rid of their problems and we become one soul.

Listening to the ‘deyisler’ (hymns), I try to understand the true meaning behind the words and how I can use the teaching in my own life.

As Zakir sings the hymns, I make a journey to another level and start dancing semah, getting rid of ll my wrong feelings and freshening my mind and memory.

Through Cem, we learn about our faith.