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Dâr (Dâra Durmak, Dâra Çekilmek, Dârdan İndirme, Dâr Kurbanı)

Yayın Tarihi: 2 Temmuz 2025

Summary

In the Alevi belief system, the concept of dâr represents a multi-layered micro-centre where ritual, ethics, theology, and mythology are intricately interwoven. Functioning as a sacred threshold for both individual purification and communal accountability, dâr embodies foundational Alevi principles such as surrender (teslimiyet), declaration of faith (ikrar), consent (rıızalık), and justice (adalet). Through rituals like “standing before the dâr,” “being put to the dâr,” “releasing from the dâr,” and the “dâr sacrifice,” the relationship between individuals—both living and deceased—and the community is reaffirmed. Infused with mythological resonance through the story of Hallac al-Mansur’s execution, dâr also serves as a symbolic site where sacred time and cosmic justice are continually re-enacted. Beyond a ritual gesture, dâr is a stage for confronting truth, maintaining moral order, and fostering spiritual transformation.

Dâr as a Micro-Centre

The Alevi belief system is a multilayered cosmology woven from symbols, myths, and rituals. Within this cosmology, the concept of Dâr, although outwardly perceived as a simple ritual position, functions essentially as a *mikro merkez* (micro-centre) that embodies all the semantic layers of being at the sacred core. Dâr is much more than a spatial centre; it is a concept encompassing theological, ethical, and cosmological dimensions at both individual and collective levels.

The micro-cosmic nature of Dâr is not confined to a physically defined spot at the heart of the Alevi *cem* (ritual gathering). It also represents a state of consciousness, a space of ethical responsibility, and a field where theological truth manifests. This centre functions like a “ritual field of gravity”; everything in the *cem* assembly is arranged and oriented around it. Participants position and define their roles in reference to this centre. In this sense, Dâr becomes the intersection point of the sacred and the worldly, the individual and the collective, the *zahir* (outer/material) and the *batın* (inner/spiritual) (Erdem 2021, 165-76).

On the spatial level, the *Dâr meydanı* (Dâr square) lies at the heart of the *Kırklar Meydanı* (Square of the Forty). On the temporal level, it is a threshold where “mythical time” is relived and updated. In this regard, it overlaps with Mircea Eliade’s concepts of the “reactivation of sacred time” and the “actualisation of myth through ritual repetition.” Every act of *Dâra Durmak* (Standing Before the Dâr) signifies a re-experiencing of a transhistorical truth and cosmic justice. As the individual lays bare their essence, they enable the manifestation of the supra-temporal within space and time (Erdem 2021, 165-76).

In this context, Dâr is not merely a ritual site but a foundational threshold where key Alevi principles such as *ikrar* (declaration of faith), *rızalık* (consent), *adalet* (justice), *özgür irade* (free will), and *hesaplaşma* (reckoning) come to life. This threshold is neither solely symbolic nor purely physical; it transcends both, functioning as an *ontolojik merkez* (ontological centre) within the Alevi cosmology.

Etymology and Semantic Background

The word Dâr is etymologically of Arabic origin, and in its classical usage, it denotes notions such as “house,” “dwelling,” or “residence.” However, its usage in Persian expands and transforms this meaning, carrying more dramatic and sacrifice-centred connotations such as “gallows” or “execution platform.” These two semantic planes—one representing shelter, the other a site of punishment—are reconfigured in Alevism through a unique synthesis. In Alevi ritual practice, Dâr is understood simultaneously as a place of refuge and a site of reckoning (Erdem 2021, 165-76).

This semantic plurality aligns with one of the most distinctive features of the Alevi belief system: its multilayered structure and symbolic density. Dâr is, in a sense, the place “where the invisible becomes visible,” “where silence speaks,” and where the “self” merges with the “collective.” The “house” connotation embedded in its etymology symbolises unity within the *cem* (ritual assembly), while the meaning of “gallows” represents self-judgement and the process of transformation (Erdem 2021, 165-76).

At this point, it is possible to state that the concept of Dâr in Alevism has been transformed into a theological-ritual metaphor. Core elements of Alevi teaching—such as the act of making *ikrar* (declaration of faith), revealing one’s inner truth (*özünü meydana koyma*), and the institution of *düşkünlük* (ritual exclusion)—are direct manifestations of this metaphor. When a person stands in *Dâra Durmak*, they are, on one hand, “returning to their own home,” and on the other, “standing accountable before their own truth” (Korkmaz 2016).

This duality also resonates with mythological references in Alevi oral tradition. For instance, the execution of Hallac-ı Mansur after his proclamation “*Enel Hak*” (I am the Truth) has become synonymous with the concept of Dâr in Alevi collective memory. Thus, Dâr becomes not only a regulatory tool of the community but also a symbol of divine proximity and self-sacrifice on the path of love.

The Dâr Square: A Cosmic Micro-Centre

In Alevi *cem* (ritual gathering) practice, the most essential sacred space is the Kırklar Meydanı (Square of the Forty), which is spatially designed as a symbolic representation of the universe. At the very centre of this configuration lies the Dâr—not merely a physical point, but an ontological centre where sacredness is manifested, cosmic order is reconstituted, and the spiritual structure of the community attains equilibrium (Yaman & Erdemir 2006, 67-89).

This centre corresponds to the threshold described in Mircea Eliade’s theory of sacred space, marking a rupture from the linear time of the profane world and a transition into “mythic time.” In the *cem* ritual, turning toward the Dâr is not simply a spatial orientation; it is a direct relational act between the individual and the sacred time-space. In this relational act, the Dâr functions as an *axis mundi*: a bridge between the upper and lower realms, the *zahir* (outer/material) and *batın* (inner/spiritual), the human and the divine truth (Erdem 2021, 165-76).

In this respect, the Dâr meydanı (Dâr square) operates not only as the ritual centre of the *cem* but also as a miniature representation of the Alevi cosmological worldview. Every body oriented toward the Dâr becomes part of this micro-cosmic centre, participating in universal order and spiritual justice. The positioning of the physical body in this centre serves as a spatial reflection of the soul’s inner transformation.

The Theological and Symbolic Meanings of Dâr

The concept of Dâr in Alevism is not limited to a ritual position or a spatial centre; it represents an entire theological universe. Theologically, Dâr is the point where an individual stands before *Hakk* (the Truth or the Divine), reveals their inner essence (*özünü meydana koymak*), makes *niyaz* (a reverent prayer or supplication), and seeks *rızalık* (communal and divine consent). In this sense, Dâr marks the boundary where God, the community, and the individual’s conscience converge (Yaman & Erdemir 2006, 67-89).

For the *talip* (follower), Dâr is not only a moment of surrender (*teslimiyet*), but also a space for self-confrontation and assuming moral responsibility. The individual does not

merely seek to be “seen” or “forgiven”; the essence lies in standing bare before the truth and giving *ikrar* (a declaration of commitment and truth). Thus, Dâr becomes a stage of conscience where the individual’s personal truth is linked with the collective truth of the community (Erdem 2021, 165-76).

From the perspective of faith leaders such as *rehber*, *pir*, or *mürşid*, Dâr is the place where they carry out their responsibility to ensure justice on the path, uphold the principle of equality, and embody spiritual wisdom. The person addressed in the Dâr is not just an individual but part of an act that affects the entire community. In this way, Dâr symbolically and functionally embodies justice and responsibility in Alevism.

Dâr is also deeply embedded in mythological narratives. The execution of Hallac-ı Mansur and his utterance “*Enel Hak*” (I am the Truth) reinforce the role of Dâr in Alevi memory as a site of witnessing truth and paying its price. Here, Dâr is not only a space of reckoning but also, when necessary, one of self-sacrifice and annihilation in divine love. In this context, Dâr is at once the locus of justice, sacrifice, and divine manifestation (*tecellî*) (Yaman & Erdemir 2006, 67-89).

Rituals Formed Around Dâr

The Alevi belief system offers a holistic structure in which both individual purification and communal equilibrium are maintained through ritual. At the centre of this structure lies Dâr, not as a passive spatial element, but as a dynamic locus that marks both the beginning and end of ritual. Within Alevi ritual practice, the acts shaped around Dâr activate the core principles of the faith-justice (*adalet*), consent (*rızalık*), surrender (*teslimiyet*), and collective responsibility.

Dâra Durmak (Standing at Dâr): The Embodiment of Ikrar

Dâra durmak refers to the act of a *talip* or ritual functionary approaching the faith leader during the *cem* ritual to make *niyaz* (a gesture of reverence). Yet this act goes beyond physical positioning; it represents the individual’s internal orientation toward truth. The one who stands at *Dâr* confronts their past and, by “revealing their essence” (*özünü meydana koymak*), takes their place within the community’s conscience. In this way, *Dâr* embodies principles such as spiritual purification (*tezkiye*), clarity of intention (*ihlas*), and fidelity to the path (*ikrar*) through the ritualised body.

In harmony with Eliade’s (1959) notion of the “reactivation of sacred time,” *Dâra durmak* also functions as a temporal rupture and a sacred new beginning. Through this gesture, the individual leaves behind their profane existence and enters a time-

space of symbolic rebirth.

Dâra Çekilmek (Being Brought to Dâr): Manifestation of Communal Justice

In the Alevi path, one's life is not merely a private matter but is embedded in ethical bonds with the community. *Dâra çekilmek* refers to the process whereby an individual is brought before the *cem* assembly to be questioned regarding their fidelity to these communal bonds. This is not a punitive mechanism in the modern sense but rather a transformative practice aimed at reintegrating the person into the path. In certain cases, however, one may be declared *düşkün* (spiritually fallen) and temporarily or permanently excluded from the community.

This practice reflects *Dâr's* role in safeguarding justice and ethical equilibrium. *Dâra çekilmek* enables the clarification of individual wrongdoing in the conscience of the community and thus facilitates the purification of both the person and the collective. The primary objective here is not punishment but the reestablishment of *rızalık* (mutual consent and reconciliation).

Dârdan İndirme Cemi (The Ceremony of Bringing Down from Dâr): Consent and Forgiveness in Death

Dâr rituals extend beyond the living and include the deceased. The *Dârdan indirme cemi* is a special ritual performed after a person has *walked to Hakk* (passed away), aimed at peacefully resolving the individual's ties with the community. Through this ceremony, any debts, resentments, or unresolved matters are clarified. The goal is to bid farewell with *rızalık*. If the deceased was declared *düşkün*, this ceremony is not conducted, as their fallen status precludes ritual reconciliation.

This ritual reflects the Alevi understanding of death as not an end but a transformation—one that must occur with the community's approval. Even after death, *Dârdan indirme* continues the communal commitment to moral balance in collective memory.

Dâr Kurbanı (Dâr Sacrifice): Collective Mourning and the Continuation of Musahiplik Bonds

Musahiplik is a sacred brotherhood in Alevism, uniting individuals both in this world and the hereafter. When one member of this bond dies, the surviving *musahip* performs a *Dâr kurbanı* (sacrifice at Dâr), fulfilling the mutual responsibility and symbolising communal mourning. This is not a private act of grief but a collective farewell. It also enables the sacred release of bonds that remain between the deceased and the world (Korkmaz 2016).

This ritual aligns with Eliade's (1959) analysis of sacrifice as establishing a new order between the sacred and the human. The Alevi *Dâr kurbanı* signifies not merely death but transformation and demonstrates that *musahiplik* continues not only in this life but in the intermediate realm (*berzah*).

Additionally, a rich cluster of expressions has formed around the concept of *Dâr*, reflecting the ritual-centred nature of Alevi oral culture. Notable idioms include *dâra durmak*, *dâra çekmek*, *dârında durmak* (to remain at Dâr), *dâr kaldırmak* (to lift Dâr), *dârdan indirmek*, and *dâr-ı Mansur'dan geçmek* (to pass through the Dâr of Mansur). These expressions capture both ritual practice and the belief-driven social logic of communal life.

Mythological and Sufi Background

The profound meaning of the Dâr in Alevism is not limited to its ritual and social functions; it is also shaped by the intertwined layers of Alevi mythology and Sufi thought. In this context, the Dâr meydanı (Dâr square) becomes symbolically identified with the story of Hallac-ı Mansur, transforming a historical event into a mythical narrative and thereby into a sacred model. The journey of Hallac-ı Mansur, known for his declaration "*Enel Hak*" (I am the Truth), becomes in Alevi memory a narrative of sacrifice and surrender in pursuit of truth. Historically, Mansur was executed in Baghdad in 922 on charges of heresy. However, in Alevi tradition, this execution is seen as a sacred act of resistance-proof that truth cannot be silenced by worldly powers. Thus, Dâr emerges as the embodied space of this mythic narrative (Yaman & Erdemir 2006, 67-89).

Mansur's *dâra çekilmesi* (being put to Dâr) is not viewed as a mere punishment, but as the cost of attaining knowledge of the truth, the expression of divine love, and the peak of unification with inner reality. In this sense, Dâr is the place where "those who reach Hakk through love are tested." The phrase often repeated in Alevi sacred hymns (*nefes*)-"*Mansur dârına durdum*" (I stood at the Dâr of Mansur)-is the ritual articulation of this philosophy. Here, Dâr is at once a public square, a gallows, and a site of purification.

Sufistically, Dâr is closely linked to the concepts of *fenâ fillâh* (annihilation in God) and *bekâ billâh* (subsistence through God). To stand at or be drawn into *Dâr* is not merely an external posture, but an inner journey realised through the dissolution of the ego (*nefs*), the melting of the self, and the manifestation of divine truth. In this respect, Dâr becomes the ritual stage for *bâtınî* (esoteric) purification (Korkmaz 2016).

In the Alevi belief system, mythology is not merely the transmission of events from the

past, but a living corpus of narratives that guide ritual life today. The mythic story of Hallac is continuously re-enacted in this context. When an individual stands in *dâra durmak* during the *cem*, they are symbolically following Mansur's path-revealing their essence and surrendering to truth by renouncing the ego. Thus, each act of standing at Dâr becomes a contemporary echo of Hallac's story.

In conclusion, Dâr in Alevism is both a site of historical memory and a realm of mystical rebirth. The meaning shaped through Hallac-ı Mansur is deeply woven into the foundational values of the Alevi belief system-*adalet* (justice), *teslimiyet* (surrender), *aşk* (divine love), and *ikrar* (commitment). These meanings are passed down through oral tradition and kept alive through ritual practice across generations.

Sociological and Functional Dimensions

Dâr rituals in Alevi communities serve not only to establish a relationship between the individual and the sacred, but also function as a core social mechanism that reproduces the community's internal order, ethical system, and collective memory. These rituals act as a form of social regulation, ensuring that individual behaviour aligns with communal norms, while also providing a performative space for enacting moral principles such as *ikrar* (declaration of faith), *rızalık* (consent), and *musahiplik* (sacred companionship). The *cem*, organised around the unity of rituals centred on *Dâr*, is more than a site of worship-it is a living socio-cultural form where communal belonging is reinforced, intergenerational transmission is ensured, and mutual responsibilities between individual and community are reaffirmed.

In this sense, Dâr becomes a ritual axis through which the ethical memory of the community is materialised. It provides a structure where social relationships are organised on the basis of transparency and justice, and where *rızalık* functions as a foundational value on both individual and collective levels. As such, Dâr sustains the internal coherence and sustainability of Alevi social life.

Conclusion

The concept of Dâr in Alevism possesses a multilayered meaning, standing as one of the central structural pillars of the belief system through its symbolic power, ritual role, and societal functionality. As a micro-centre where the individual reveals their essence before *Hakk*, the community re-establishes its moral order, and collective memory is regenerated through ritual, Dâr embodies the core Alevi values of *ikrar* (commitment), *teslimiyet* (surrender), *rızalık* (consent), and *feda* (sacrifice). It is a site where both historical continuity and social transformation take place.

Maintaining its central position in the traditional *cem* structure, Dâr continues to shape the symbolic geography of sacred spaces, including within the architectural designs of contemporary *cemevis*. In this way, Dâr, as both a sacred and social centre extending from the past into the present, remains not merely a ritual posture but also a locus of ontological belonging and a space of encounter with truth in the Alevi world.

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