

Oiling the hands

Oiling the hands in Tajik «ravghanrezon» is a feminine ceremony celebrated during the wedding, which takes place after the bride's arrival in the groom's house. This ceremony is also known as «dastcharbon» and «surfabaron». The principal goal of this ceremony is extremely symbolic and based on the meaning of imagery of elements used in the ceremony. At the heart of the ceremony is performing a ritual invoking a life full of happy and blessings to the newly wed bride.

The structural process of the ceremony goes as following: on the wedding day groom's mother invites her lady neighbor and relatives and spreads a tablecloth used for making bread dough (*surfa*) with flour on the yard. One of the elderly and respected women from the gathered will take the new bride's hand and circles around the *surfa* three times in each step bestowing special prayers of blessings on her. After the third circling the bride sits at the *surfa* and she is given milk, oil and flour to prepare dough. While she is mix-



ing the dough someone from the groom's family or the same elderly lady will be pouring oil in her hands streaming into the dough. From the prepared dough a bread will be baked which is called «kulchai arus» (*bride's bread*).

In Faizobod district a new bride makes soft dough, which she uses to knead noodles and *chapatti*. Those gathered for the ceremony will cook the noodle soup (*ugro*) and taste the bread and in exchange invoke well wishes and prayers to the new bride.

The same ceremony in Panjakent city is called «dastcharbon» and it takes place on the second day after the wedding party. In this area on the *surfa* bride is given sheep fat-tail to chop. There is a custom that until this ceremony is performed a new bride is not permitted to engage in any of the house chores in her husband's house.

In its other meaning *ravghanrezon* is an inaugural ceremony initiating newly arrived bride to her new life and chores that she will continue in her life. After the ritual women will play frame drum and sing and dance and celebrate a birth of new family.

