

Cradle-laying

Cradle-laying (*gahvorabandān*) is a ceremony celebrated within a family on occasion of putting a newborn child to his or her cradle. It is occasion celebrated at the birth of the first child in the family after the newborn turn forty day old. It is usually women's parents who look after the logistics including purchase of a cradle for their grandchild. Cradle-laying is celebrated by a feast where relatives are called in a chosen day.

After the feast meal a cradle is brought into the room where the young mother and her baby is and put in the middle; a elderly and revered woman, who has her own children, grandchildren and her offspring are of good manner and health, is chosen to officiate the ceremony. A lady from the family circle brings *hazorispand* (*Peganum harmala* herb believed to fumigate from the evil powers) and smokes it around the cradle. When the cradle is set up an elderly woman pick up the child and puts him (her) in reverse order and asks «should I lay down to sleep this way?» next she repeats laying child in different odd positions and each time asks «should I lay down to sleep this way?» and women present in the room answer

«No» and urge by saying «grandmother put him/her to sleep in correct way!»; once she puts child in proper order everyone answer «Yes». Than child is tied into the cradle and afterwards she points by her index finger to child's mouth and spells out «I give my sleep to you». In some places the woman also pray that «may you posses the sleep from wolves, dogs and all neighbors».

When the ceremony finishes child mother brings some gifts to the elderly woman and some sweets, dried fruits and bread is poured to the presence of those gathered and they take those with them.

In some regions during the ceremony child's mother takes seven bites of bread and puts them under the child's bedhead signifying that child should have abundant life. There is also a tradition of putting knife or other iron tools under the cradle mattresses to ward off the child from the evil powers. A type of bead from evil eye is knotted in the cradle's handle to protect child from the evil eye.

Cradle-laying ceremony is a widespread traditional ritual and has great variety among Tajiks in both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

