

Felt rug/carpet making

Felt rug/carpet making refers to traditional production of a rug or carpet with felt. Felt is a textile material that is produced by matting, condensing and pressing fibers together. Felt can be made of natural fibers such as wool. In Tajik felt rug making is called *namadrezi* and it is widespread among the pastoralist communities of mountain areas of Tajikistan. The size of the felt rugs depends on the purpose for which they are made and usually can be 2x3 m or even bigger with the thickness of 0.5 to 1 cm.

Felt from wool is considered to be the oldest known textile. Many cultures have legends as to the origins of felt making, such as at the time when the first sheep was domesticated etc.

Felt making is still widely practiced by semi-nomadic peoples across the world. In Central Asian cultures felt rugs are used for tents and clothing and home furnishing.

Traditional felt in Badakhshon province is made in this manner: first a sturdy cotton blanket is spread out. Then dyed pieces of wool is spread following a pattern the felt maker has in mind. Afterwards the «designed» wool pieces is covered by dark color dyed felt this is then covered by another layer of wool. After the layers has been placed a hot water is sprinkled evenly on top of the wool and then the sheet is taken from end and rolled tightly and tied up in places so the wool pieces inside does not roll-out



or mix. Afterwards the 'rolled' wool is placed on the floor and few people sit and begun rolling it against the surface by their hands. There are usually five people who take part in rolling the felt. After rolling it for sometime the roll is opened and soap is applied to give the wool sticky texture and the wool is again rolled as in the first instance. After this the wool is rolled among the sheet for 3-4 hours. After this it is unrolled and left in the sun to dry and to be used.

The wool for the felt making is dyed from naturally extracted elements that are from tree peels or plants. According to the local tradition every household must own a felt carpet. The plain felt is used to cover the floors and on top

another rug is spread. This is to make the floor warm and soft. There is also a tradition to lay a newborn baby on the felt or also to cover the dead body with the felt rug on the funeral.

In Ishkoshim district when a felt carpet is made for the wedding usually an elderly women who has healthy marriage and children is invited to decorate the felt carpet that way she transfers her happy life into the bride to-be girl. There is also a special prayer dedicated to the felt carpet making, which is recited prior to starting felt making process. This prayer is always recited by a felt maker who his ancestors are known to be following this profession for several generation.

