

## ❖ NEW GER-WARMING FEASTS

There is a saying: “A hearth starts from the smoke of the trivet, a *ger* starts from a hut.” Erecting a new *ger* is part of the marriage ceremony. Some families renew their *gers*. This is very common among the people. During the ceremony dedicated to the raising of a new *ger*, it is customary to say a benediction and to give a blessing. The blessing of the new *ger* is giving when the felt is put on the *ger* for the first time. The benediction is recited when feast starts.

As soon as the new *ger* is erected, the guests are invited in and seated. The head of the family ties a *khadag* (sacred scarf) to the *toono* (crown of the *ger*). The house-warming feast starts when words of blessing are uttered and when milk is sprinkled upon the crown, *uni* and *khana* (latticed wall of *ger*). When the blessing ceremony is over, the best pieces of meat are offered to the fire. Four pieces of cheese are placed in four directions under the vault of the *ger*. They will be kept there for three nights. This type of custom of blessing a new *ger* is probably linked to ancient fire-worship practices.

The texts of *ger* benedictions state specific items of each particular *ger* and eulogize them. This eulogy starts from the door or crown of the *ger* and then continues with eulogies to the walls, ceiling spokes, roof, felt coverings of the walls, crown cover, narrow ropes, decorated straps over the roof-covering, and so on. This eulogy follows the order of erecting a *ger*.

The roof-covering and wall-coverings are much eulogized. They are noticeable. In some ways, these are very



similar to a felt eulogy:

*These white wall coverings  
And roof coverings are  
Made of the wool of ewes,  
Which were cleaned  
And sprinkled with  
The water of a sandy river  
And drawn by strong horses*

Actually it is possible to learn much about the skills of Mongolian felt-making, felt rug quilting, and wood-working by listening to the words of the *ger* benedictions and *ger* blessing poems. After the utterance of the new *ger* benediction, a new *ger* warming feast starts according to established rules of the Mongolian feast.

## ❖ WEDDING CEREMONIES

The wedding ceremony is basically a confirmation of marriage of a young couple and a chance to wish them a happy life together. This is also a chance to show the high trust in them from their parents, relatives, and communities. All those who attend the wedding ceremony wish them to be firm and to have a happy family. The traditional wedding ceremony of Mongolia is comprised of several parts: beseeching a bride and taking a betrothal gift to the bride-side; preparing for a wedding; undertaking the wedding ceremony; and holding ceremonies after the wedding. Those proceedings are to be conducted according to custom.

The proceeding starts by sending out two horsemen whose compatibilities are suited to this event. These matchmakers ride on white horses to beseech a bride who was chosen to be a wife for one's bride-groom. This is the start of the wedding. The matchmakers reach the bride's family and offer an honourable scarf to the father of the bride, saying to him:

*We have a deer hunter,  
You have dove-tailor of sables;*

*A horse is treasured to bring far near,  
A girl is treasured to make kin*

These words are terse and witty in a poetic manner. The parents of the daughter do not give their consent immediately but say they will consult among relatives and shall have a definite answer later. Then the two matchmakers leave.

After a few days, the paternal or maternal uncle, with a bride-groom and bearing presents, visits the bride's family to try to get the consent of the bride's parents. After getting the bride's parent's consent, they visit the bride's side few times and confirm their consent. This signifies that their parents want their children to have a firm marriage and a happy life.

On the last visit of the marriage confirmation, both sides agree on the specific betrothal gifts and wedding date.

Before the wedding day, the bride-groom can give presents to his bride's close relatives. It is considered to be a betrothal gift, but the gift consists of materials such as utensils and cloth, which the couple could use to sew a dress for the bride. But the most important items among the betrothal