

## **HOW GLOBALIZATION IMPACTED MONGOLIAN NOMADIC FAMILY LIFE**

**Tumendelger Dashdorj.**

The Executive Leadership Academy of the Law Enforcement, Police captain,  
Senior lecture of the Management Professor's team

**Globalization has brought many positive changes and development to mankind; however, we cannot ignore how a “small” and “vulnerable” nation states have been influenced by the western and eastern giants that gradually to assimilate them.** It is my belief that in the globalization era, developing countries such as Mongolia risk losing the national identity of their nomadic lifestyle. In this essay I will argue how Mongolian nomadic lifestyle is affected by globalization by way of exemplifying my own family life as a daughter of a herder. However, I will not criticise the globalization, as I can see that Mongolian people's life as well as my family lifestyle have changed over the last few decades.

**Mongolians lived nomadically for their long rich history from the ancient time.** Generally, scholars agree that it developed approximately 11,000 years ago at the same time as the start of agriculture, although some argue that it preceded farming. It was a major improvement like agriculture over the hunting and gathering way of life that forewent had been universal. Pastoralists depended on animals and plants but they determined their movement and harvested their products, such as milk, meat and skins some of which they consumed and some of which they bartered. Also, my ancestors were all pastoralist as my parents say. Moreover, this is easily verified because we have a “family tree” book that is written about the all generations that inherited from the great-great parents to the present offspring.

**Nomadic pastoralism was one of the great advances in human cultural development.** Keeping the animals healthy and reproducing is one of the success factors on which the pastoral endeavour depends, ensuring a continual source of these products. In order to maintain the products herders move their animals to exploit the seasonal ebb and flow always changing the place during the year.

Therefore, sometimes a single herder-family has to move 20-30 times a year depending on the climate and grass-growing matter. When I was a child, my family used to move all the time. Initially, as a child, this was very happy to make new friends and see new places then it became too tiring by the time I became a teenager. We are six siblings from the parents with three daughters and three

brothers and we all lived nomadically with our parents until we got to the school age. As a daughter of a herder I had to help my parents all the time to herd the sheep and goats. Basically, children's duty is to herd small cattle such as sheep and goat and help parents to make dairy products that we tell each other is a never-ending job from the dawn to late evening. Luckily, we all grew up very healthy and stayed fit due to everyday duty as a child. In addition, my brothers and sisters all had a very good knowledge about the traditions and customs of the nomadic life that makes people closer to live with nature and to be a nature lover.

**In my opinion, Mongolian nomadic lifestyle has been affected during the last hundred years, particularly after the two major revolutions of political regime changes** that happened last century. The first public revolution was held in 1921, that Mongolians were freed from Chinese oppression with the assistance of former Russia. From that time Mongolian lifestyle began being influenced by western nations, particularly Russian lifestyle because many students went to study in Russia, Germany and Soviet community countries. Those youths brought back western culture which was the initial influence to change the Mongolian nomadic way of life. As a Mongolian, I do not blame those youths who were cultural "messengers" to the "out-dated community" of my country because it was too isolated from the modern civilization. At that time there was not any larger factory that manufacture essential necessity of clothes and shoes, but a single family could produce their own everyday needs. Also, Mongolians were initially introduced to western clothes such as suits and coats because nomadic Mongolians used to wear solely "*deel*" that is Mongolian traditional clothes.

**From the cultural perspective, during the socialist period from 1921 to 1990, Mongolians' nomadic lifestyle was less affected except for changing clothes from "deel to western suits.** This means that there was not much changes in the majority people's mind and consciousness but the clothes definitely changed. Most people were still living nomadically by herding the five kinds of livestock: horse, camel, cow, sheep and goat. They kept on riding horses and camels to move seasonally for their livestock.

**During the socialism** centralization and urbanization which occurred with the development of industrialization and agriculture, people began to settle down in the cities. To put it another way, **Mongolian nomadic lifestyle was affected gradually by the western and Russian culture and people began to be westernized however, it did not quickly reach the extent as it is nowadays.** My father said that after my parents got married, my uncle went to study in Russia. Then he came back and he convinced and inspired my parents to live and study in

the city for a better life. However, my grandparents did not permit my parents to move to the city so that my parents had to live in the countryside because their livestock was the single source of income to feed children who lived in the school dormitory but we always helped our parents during the school holiday.

**Then we met the second change of way of life and political regime of democratic revolution which occurred in 1990.** Since that time Mongolian people's life, particularly nomadic lifestyle was affected severely. With the advent of democracy and the free flow of people and goods there has been an intensifying globalization which has made possible certain changes, prominently in the fields of world trade, international policy agreements, and politics. In this situation fuelled by low-cost air transportation, the ever-growing tourism industry, multinational companies and the western supremacy, something called the "clash of civilizations" has swept across the Mongolian steppe.

**Statistically, Mongolia has 3.1 million population, with approximately 130,000 of them, particularly young adults aged between 20-40, living abroad for a better life and money.**

**Many traditional pastoral herders and cattlemen have chosen to give up the nomadic lifestyle** to sell their belongings and live off underpaid coal mining jobs or move to Ulaanbaatar's impoverished yurt slums as a result of not only the urbanization but also severe climate condition, called "*druz*" that decimated their livestock so that there is a real risk of the abandonment of millennia-old traditions. Obviously, they have less likelihood to return to their homeland and keep their traditional way of life. Even in my family, none of the six of us want to stay as a nomad to live in the countryside, as we all prefer the cosmopolitan life to the traditional lifestyle which is probably the influence of the globalization. Now all my siblings left my parents and motherland and are living around the world. My two brothers live and study in Korea and a sister studies in the US and my younger brother studies in Russia and I am here in Australia but my parents still live traditionally as nomads. **Unfortunately, my parents say that my family's nomadic life ends with our parents' lives. Beyond us, many family lives are the same in Mongolia affected by the changes of globalization.**

### **Conclusion**

It is my belief that **Mongolian democracy came with globalization** that brought Mongolia development and the right to choose to move freely but we are at the edge of nation states losing control of holding their traditional lifestyle. Actually, the government policies concerning nomadic culture are in stagnation because of the citizens' privileged rights.

**In this gap between cultural identity and globalization,** Mongolians need a tough long-term policy to preserve the national identities and cultural practices, such as nomadic and cultural lifestyle. Unless we do that we will be in a danger of assimilating into bigger countries such as China or war, leading national pride to collide with the principles of no boundaries and worldwide acceptance of the same life principles. I have an understanding that the essential source of conflict in this new era of globalization will not be primary ideological or primarily economic. The great division among mankind and dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Also, the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations although the nation states remain the most powerful actors in the world.

**In addition, Mongolians are in the clash between tradition and the growing globalization and have one of the last remaining nomadic cultures nowadays.** The tradition of thousands of years of wandering the Mongolian steppe is now at risk as a consequence of the changing economic and political and environmental landscape. Mongolia has seen an increasing westernization after the fall of the communist regime in 1990.

**Whereas, during the socialism era Mongolians changed “clothes” however, in the globalization era we have changed our “mind” that caused us to lose our cultural identity.**