



Pregnancy tourism in Aryan village in Ladakh

Manzoor Ahmad Khan

Assistant Professor, Travel and Tourism, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India

Abstract

It was in the year 2015 that I heard about the four villages in Ladakh region claiming of being pure Aryan. Many tourists throng these villages to have a first-hand glimpse of these Aryan people. In the meantime I also came to know about "Pregnancy Tourism" being practiced in these villages. All this created a great curiosity in my mind to know about these claims and practices, which forced me to visit these villages. In the year 2017, I went to these villages of Ladakh region and tried to have these claims assessed. This paper is my attempt to give the authentic form and acquire the first hand information about these claims and practices in these villages.

Keywords: Aryan, brogpas, drogpas, mongolian, polygamy, endogamy, brokskad, DNA, USP, genetics

Introduction

At the elevation of 3000 metres (10,000ft) above mean sea level in the state of J&K (India) in Ladakh region are Dah, Hanu, Darchik and Garkon villages. The main occupation in these villages is agriculture. While women folks work in their agricultural fields, men folks mostly work as civil labourers in a nearby army camp. All these four villages are situated on the banks of Indus (Sindhu) River. The inhabitants of these villages called themselves as Brogpas or Drogpas. These Brogpas are believed to have remained isolated both culturally and genetically for centuries. The Dah and Hanu villages fall under the jurisdiction of Leh district, while Darchik and Garkon villages are in Kargil district. The latter two villages were out of bound for all civilians except the locals, due to some security reasons. Their features are pure Indo Aryan/Mediterranean and they believed to have preserved their racial purity down the centuries. The Aryans of Ladakh are tall statured, sharp-featured with the blue coloured big eyes and a fair complexion, high nose and high cheek bones. Their facial features are totally different from the Mongolian features which the people of Ladakh normally exhibit. The inhabitants of Dah village speak a language known as Brokskad which is quite different from Ladakhi language. The inhabitants of Aryan villages do not marry outsiders. Their first preference is to marry among themselves in the village itself. If not, the second preference is to marry with the inhabitants of other Aryan villages to keep the purity of their Aryan breed intact. But they mainly practice endogamy. In the recent past, they also practiced polygamy and polyandry. One curious cultural feature of Aryan villages is that the inhabitants of Aryan villages are generally vegetarian, though during important festivals they indulged in eating non vegetarian. They do not drink cow's milk and milk products though they do own cows and bullocks for agricultural operations. They also do not eat chicken and eggs. For the inhabitants of these villages, sheep and goats are most sacred and important animals. The Dah and

Hanu villages are situated comparatively at lower altitudes, therefore these villages experience a climate that is little warmer than that of Leh. In Pakistan administered Kashmir, the same race is called as Dards. These Aryans believe that they are the descendants of the army of Alexander the great, when some of them stayed back here after Alexander returned back. Besides this, they have many stories and myths to claim of being pure Aryan race.

Who are Aryans?

It is widely believed the Aryans originally belonged to central Asia from where they migrated to India around 2500 B.C. they crossed the north-west passes and settled in the areas around the river Indus and its tributaries, driving the Dravidians inland. "Aryan" is a term meaning "noble", which was used as a self-designation by Indo-Iranian people. The word was used by the Indic people of the Vedic period in India as an ethnic label for themselves and to refer to the noble class as well as the geographic region known as Aryavarta, where Indo-Aryan culture was based. The closely related Iranian people also used the term as an ethnic label for themselves in the Avesta scriptures, and the word forms the etymological source of the country name Iran. It was believed in the 19th century that Aryan was also a self-designation used by all Proto-Indo-Europeans, a theory that has now been abandoned. Scholars point out that, even in ancient times, the idea of being an "Aryan" was religious, cultural and linguistic, not racial.

Drawing on misinterpreted references in the Rig Veda by Western scholars in the 19th century, the term "Aryan" was adopted as a racial category through the works of Arthur de Gobineau, whose ideology of race was based on an idea of blonde northern European "Aryans" who had migrated across the world and founded all major civilizations, before being degraded through racial mixing with local populations. Through the works of Houston Stewart Chamberlain,

Gobineau's ideas later influenced the Nazi racial ideology which saw "Aryan peoples" as innately superior to other putative racial groups. (Source Wikipedia).

Analysis and Observation

It was in the month of July 2017, when I took a decision to visit Dah and Hanu villages to know the credibility of the pregnancy tourism in these villages. I boarded a bus in the main Leh town towards these villages. When I reached the village, I decided to take up homestay. After a search, I chose the house of Nawang, who is also a local guide in the area. On the first day of my stay I visited the whole village and met with different people of the village. The people were very friendly, good looking differently dressed from rest of Ladakhi's. Met with different domestic and foreign tourists as well, tried to be friendly with them and wanted to know their real purpose of visit to these villages. In the meantime I attempted to get friendly with my guide Nawang and gain his confidence. I stayed here for almost 20 days and during the course of time gained the confidence of my guide. My purpose was to know the reality about the pregnancy tourism in these villages, of which I have heard from many offline and online sources. In the first instance, my guide tried to deny such practice in the village and hesitates to tell me about such practice in the village. But during course of time he opened up and accepted that some foreign female tourists mainly from Europe and America come here to get impregnated by the local Aryans, but very rarely. My guide narrated that these foreign female tourists during their stay choose their partner, who mainly is physically well build and stays with him for one week or more, in the exchange these foreign tourists give them money as well as some gifts also. In order to confirm about all this, I talked to some 180 foreign female tourists during my stay. But among them only one foreign girl in her mid-twenties confessed that she came here to get impregnated, her nationality was German. She narrates that she only got to know about this village of pure Aryan race through internet and then she decided to visit this village in Ladakh to conceive. She also told me that most of the Germans are race conscious, so was she and that was why she wants to give birth to pure Aryan baby. The rest of female tourists narrated that they wanted to see this pure Aryan race, interact with them, besides seeing their life styles they also were interested in photographing and video graphing them. Most of these tourists got to know about this place through internet or through word of mouth publicity. Some of them came to know about these villages only when they reached Ladakh and then decided to visit these villages also.

But unfortunately, there is no authenticity of their claim of being pure Aryan race. Neither any DNA/ genetic testing or any scientific measures were taken to authenticate their claims. They claim to be pure Aryans just on the basis of their physical appearance and some inherited stories, folklores, myths, about their being pure Aryans. It may also be a gimmick of the locals of these villages or travel fraternity to attract more and more foreign and domestic tourists to these villages and to get the publicity.

Conclusion

With the course of time, Ladakh is attracting more and more

both foreign and domestic origin tourists. There are various tourist attractions in Ladakh region, be it a sightseeing, adventure or Buddhist tourism. Now these Aryan villages are also emerging as the main source of attraction, particularly to foreign tourists. But the main thing is that their claim of being pure Aryan needs to get authenticated by the government authorities or by other agencies. And in case it turns to be correct, it will not only boost tourism to these villages but also their claims of being pure Aryan race could be used as a USP (unique selling proposition) in tourism of J&K.

References

1. Ahluwalia HPS. Hermit Kingdom: Ladakh, 1980.
2. Drew, Fredric. The Jammu And Kashmir Territory. 1875.
3. Mukherjee, Chaitali, Brokpa: The Outsider Documentry.
4. Sengupta, Sudipta, Alexander's Lost Army: The Brokpa Community of Ladakh, 2015.
5. Singh Ranjan Kumar. The Aryans Documentary.
6. Sivan, Sanjeev. The Achtung Baby. Documentary.
7. Sivan, Sanjeev. The Aryan Saga Documentary.