

IS ZULF AFGHANI? NO

I was born in Dhaka which is northeast of India, around 1480 miles from Kabul, Afghanistan.



I have never been to Afghanistan in my life. In Afghanistan the major languages are *Pashto* and *Dari* and 42% ethnicity is Pashtun and 27% ethnicity are Tajik. In Bengal where I was born (the country Bangladesh is part of a larger Indian region called Bengal), the ethnicity is mostly Bengali and the language is Bengali.

The linguistic history of these languages differ. Bengali is derived from Sanskrit. Pashto is an Eastern Iranian language whose script is more similar to Persian. They are very different languages.

1. MY ACTUAL STRONGEST CULTURAL INFLUENCE IS ENGLAND

You see England ruled India for a long time. The British East India Company arrived in India in 1600, and after various struggles and so on the end of British Raj was in 1947. That is a total of 347 years of English presence in India. So my English influence did not come from visiting England but was part of my background. My father's family was highly Anglicised, and had English *Victorian* manners including

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tea-time, study of English literature and history in addition to Bengali history and literature. I was born in 1973, but English cultural influences had been absorbed in Bengal.

I was reading Shelley and Byron from very young age, six or seven. I had become atheist at six in 1979. I am highly cultivated in English literature and history. So much so that I simply consider myself American with Bengali ethnicity and strongly English values and culture. It's nothing abnormal for many Indians.