

Immigration: the best and the brightest?

Anthony Scholefield

The leaders of the major British political parties are all in favour of the 'best and brightest' immigrants coming and settling in the UK. They also promote the benefits of diversity.

What is astonishing about immigration from the Indian sub-continent, which is by far the main source of non-EU immigration into the UK, is how undiverse it is, being drawn mainly from immigrants from peripheral rural areas in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These areas do not provide the elite of their own countries and can hardly be said to provide 'the best and brightest'. Moreover, immigrants to the UK are highly concentrated from just a tiny handful of these rural areas.

This immigration is not of the 'best and brightest', nor is it 'diverse'.

There are, of course, some immigrants from the sub-continent who are from the elite and also from the middle-class business community, especially from Gujerat, but they are a modest part of the total migration.

David Cameron said, "It is right that we should attract the brightest and the best to Britain". Ed Miliband, in his speech to the IPPR think-tank on 22nd June 2012 said, "Our economy has gained from being open to talent from across the world". Theresa May told the Conservative Party Conference on 5th October 2010, "Of

course, Britain has benefited from immigration ... We want to make sure the best and brightest can still come."

Thus, the party leaders assert that immigration has attracted 'the best and brightest' and should continue to do so, even if not all immigrants fall into this category.

So one would expect that 'the best and brightest' immigrants would be sourced widely among the sending countries or, if already educated by the sending countries' educational institutions, would be mainly from the cities where there is the best higher education.

The British elite is also focussed on the notion of 'diversity'. David Cameron, on 7th August 2012, stressed that London was "the most diverse city in the world". Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, said at the Conservative Party Conference on 4th October 2012, "success depends on encouraging a talented and diverse workforce to London. We want a well-managed immigration system that secures our borders and allows the best and brightest to come here, contribute and thrive". Even the Director of the British Museum, Neil MacGregor, 4th October 2012 in *The Evening Standard*, spoke about London's "unique diversity".

Only this is not correct. Immigrants from the Indian sub-continent are by far the largest group of immigrants to

London or the UK as a whole. According to the 2011 Census there were just over 10 million people in England from non-British ethnic groups, out of a total population of 53 million. In rough terms, Asians (defined as being from sub-continental ethnic groups) comprised around 3.8 million, 1.8 million identified as Black, 2.4 million were whites of European, Commonwealth, etc. origin, and 571,000 were Irish. The majority of the immigrants from the Indian sub-continent are drawn from a tiny number of obscure rural areas and are much less diverse than the stream of immigrants pouring into Karachi, Bombay or Dacca from the interior of the sub-continent.

The Office of National Statistics on 19th May 2011 estimated the ethnic groups from the sub-continent in the UK totalled in mid-2009 (in thousands):

India	1,434
Pakistan	1,007
Bangladesh	392

According to the World Bank, the populations of the countries of the sub-continent (2011) are as follows:

India	1,241 million
Pakistan	177 million
Bangladesh	150 million

Within these countries the principal migrant sending areas were as follow:

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[Taken from recent censuses]

	Population	Population as % of National Total
Pakistan Mirpur speaking area (Mirpur, Kotla, Bhimber)	1,132,000	0.62
India Punjab (Jullundur)	27,704,000 2,181,753	2.23 0.20
Bangladesh Sylhet division	9,800,000	6.53

The percentage of the relevant countries' migration from these areas to the UK is estimated as follows by various studies (see Appendix for sources):

Mainly from ...	
India/Punjab/Jullundur	60%
Pakistan/Mirpur	75%
Bangladesh/Sylhet	95%

Thus the vast majority of immigrants come from extremely limited sending areas. 60 per cent of the Indian immigrants come from Indian Punjab – which has about two per cent of India's population and much of this from Jullundur which has 0.2 per cent of the Indian population. Jullundur district, which is the principal source of migration to the UK, is only the 209th most populated district in India, out of 640. 75 per cent of Pakistani immigrants come from the Mirpur area – which has 0.6 per cent of Pakistan's population, and 95 per cent of Bangladeshis come from Sylhet – which has about six per cent of Bangladesh's population.

Because of family reunification, there is continuing immigration from these narrow areas despite a general tightening up in immigration rules. According to BBC News in 2005, 55 per cent of British Pakistanis are married to first cousins.

In no way can this immigration be described as sourcing 'the best and brightest' nor does it contribute to the stated goal of diversity. Indeed, the internal immigrations within the sub-continent to Karachi, Bombay or Dacca are far more diverse since migrants to these cities come from many areas of the sub-continent. The Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani population in the UK is not diverse – it draws from a very narrow part of their native populations.

If the political leaders seriously wanted to attract the 'best and brightest', one would expect to see immigrants sourced from across all the regions of the sub-continent with a bias to the area where the elite and elite educational institutions exist. Immigration to the UK from the Indian sub-continent is very 'undiverse'. A comparison would be if 60 per cent or 75 per cent of British emigrants to, say, the USA or Australia were to come from, say, Middlesbrough (with a population of rather over 0.2 per cent of the British population) – or approximately the same percentage as Jullundur bears to the whole of India or Mirpur bears to the whole of Pakistan.

Would anyone say that this was attracting 'the best and brightest' or was encouraging diversity?

Appendix

Source of estimates of origins of South Asian migration.

The published sources all emphasise the concentration of migrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, are from tiny rural areas.

Robert Leiken whose study, *'Europe's Angry Muslims'*, published by the OUP in 2012, said on page 143, quoting Roger Ballard:

"Indeed as many as three quarters of British Punjabis (themselves three quarters of British South Asians) may well be either Jullundaris or Mirpuris

in origin."

The Digital Resources Study 2011 said "... at least 75% of Pakistani immigrants have come from Mirpur".

Katy Gardner, *'Global Migrants. Local Lives'*, OUP 1995, quoted a House of Commons' study on Bangladeshis *'Over 95% are Sylhetis'* of an estimated 200,000 Bangladeshis in Britain at that time. She also pointed out that the emigration was even more concentrated than simply referring to Sylhet *"the concentration of British immigrants in Sylhet is not however a monopoly which all thanas (police areas) share equally."*

The 95 per cent share was confirmed in the Durham University *Anthropology Journal* Spring 2008.

Professor Ceri Peach in *'South Asian Migration and Settlement in Great Britain 2006 from 'Contemporary South Asia' Volume 15, p.133-40*, estimated 80 per cent of Pakistani immigrants came from Mirpur and over 80 per cent of Bangladeshis from Sylhet.

Roger Ballard commentated on Indian immigrants from the Punjab *"the great majority came from central and eastern parts of the Jullunder Doab."*

Ceri Peach estimated that 80 per cent of British Sikhs originated in Jullundur (28 per cent of British Indians are of Sikh origin).

Anthony Scholefield the author, also produced a pamphlet called *"Warning: Immigration can seriously damage your wealth"* in 2007. (available from the June Press £6.60 including P&P)