

Bachnee – Kailash Puri

The protagonist of the story, *Bachnee* is a migrant Punjabi woman who reflects on her life in England and the various tensions that are created by working life. Here is a selection of paragraphs from the story, translated by Virinder S Kalra.

- .
- “Life in the village is worse than hell, the hot season, wearing a face covering, oversized dresses, the smokey, cow-pat fires on which she made *chappati* after *chappati*, dish washing, water carrying, patting dung cakes, she was busy with one chore after another. She needed permission from her mother-in-law to wash her clothes and she even told her how to dress. And even if she made an effort to comb her hair and put on a *bindi* and lipstick, only God could save her from the chattering of the village women’s teeth! Who in the village could endure a women dressed with high heel open shoes, hair flowing free and a fancy hand-bag.....[she falls asleep]
- Conscious thoughts stir an unconscious mind and all of her troubles began dancing before Bachnee. Like a machine joined to a machine, Bachnee was standing at the conveyor belt her arms moving at high speed, Jageero and Ammro were talking loudly too each other and one of them erupted in laughter. On hearing this, Eileen and Rosemary, broke from their mumblings and showing the status of their race and colour, in their usual manner, barked: ‘Bloody bitches’
- Hearing this, Bachnee flew into a rage. She didn’t know how, but in a split second, she found herself standing over Rosemary asking her: ‘Rosemary, you what say?’ Rosemary was looking confused, when a loud slap landed on her left cheek.....
- Suddenly Bachnee woke up...where was she? Village, England, factory or at home....yet deeply troubled.