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Pakistani story  
(from real to comic)  
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I

When they call me Paki  
they do not know that back home  
the word means 'pure'.

I cover eight thousands miles  
leave behind droning afternoons of Lahore;  
a patched & dust-friendly sky;  
a book of history shoved into a wrong shelf;  
and a map burned at edges.

Oil slick and grease of the English waters  
sits on my postcode and cheekbones,  
*the tongue is heavier than ever*  
*the eyes are blurring than ever*  
*but the nose is sharper than ever.*

*Oui ! paki-hairs, paki-drag,*  
*Paki wife, paki kiddos,*  
*smelling basmati\*and lamb's fats*  
*lovely! your flab and flaps!*

My mother stitches a white cap,  
embroidered kurta and *shalwar*  
I wear it on Fridays  
but the English winters

shape me for jackets and corduroys.

With a Paki flourish  
I slip into a white butcher's coat  
chop the grammar, skin the verbs  
mince the personal pronouns  
separate bones  
from the fleshy sounds  
hook broths with a gruff  
thump the gurgling till  
with the English huff.

II

My wife fries Paki *puris*  
a touch fluffy than the Indian  
for the sake of name  
*sava, suji* or semolina  
the desserts are same  
borders merge in cuisines  
*but* Paki shops are decked  
in green Paki hopes  
*the land of pure*  
and pennies  
are in their orbs—  
invested in fat boys  
ganging around  
*desi* clubs  
girls gyrating in jeans  
tiptoeing to their jobs  
inside Hijabs  
a wink of uncertainty  
stuck in their eyes  
heaving mascara  
contact lenses  
and jilted ties.

III

Paki women lag behind  
curled in yards of clothes  
they simper in mimes  
make babies  
scrub grimes  
herd dole-nourished children  
whine for extra wages and time.

On Eids their dreams  
return with vermicilli  
sprinkled with nuts and tears  
women release from etched duppatas  
their wages of domesticity  
but men stay in *namaz*\*caps,  
yell and curse at the western sins  
flatter their dyed beards with a grin.

IV

After years of travelling  
in the underground  
the seat next to me has a ghost  
I hug it and it follows me  
to the gas stations and roads  
speaks nothing but asks for more—  
the passport is punched  
Home office is in my abode  
I speak for the Queen but  
bathe in the local streams.

Scrubbing, scarping, counting quids  
end up buying a cheap day travel pass  
never take a day off  
and cab around  
the Trafalgar Square  
watch pigeons  
picking grains and seeds,  
feel for my licence and deeds  
what if I am baled and dumped  
in Thames and left to bleed.

I turn on a nazam\*  
*Hum Ka thehere ajnabi*  
*itni Mulaqaton ka bad\**  
the cab halts abruptly  
the Tower bridge folds  
the Paki cab becomes  
a dream toad  
hops over the bridge  
the eyes go wide  
the English search me  
in their data base and tides.

\*prayer cap

\*The literary meaning of Nazm is Poetry. Nazm is a poem fully dealing with a single subject or thought.

\* 'after so many meetings, we are still strangers '; *Matla* (The opening She'r/couplet of a Ghazal or a poem) of Faiz Ahamd Faiz' ghazal.