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Rati Agnihotri

A not so orchestrated howl
scratches the surface of the night,
reams and reams of leaves rustle .
The pavement dwellers across the city
feast on smoke, chill and broken dreams
A gang of eloquent speakers arrest the moonlight.

Placards, banners and posters at India Gate
and elsewhere
A rotten corpse lies open to sedimentation somewhere
Elsewhere in the city
a song and dance sequence
ruptures the night
Eyes closed, eyes open
or perhaps blindfolded
recording the sequence of things.

Then,
At many many places
All at the same time
Verbal wars being waged at the click of a mouse
Grandiose declarations being made
Fine, muslin like, silly vows being exchanged
All at the click of a mouse

Next morning in the papers
Something happened

Nah... a lot happened
Somewhere forests got burnt,
Daughters got raped,
Several men died in an industrial accident,
the United Nations tribal chieftain said so and so things about India and ..

Then at the click of a mouse
Good, old intelligent, play it safe, hardworking middle class life.

Sigh, vent out,
Vent out, sigh

Please say something that sounds convincing enough
I promise it will be out in the papers the next morning.

Bio-Note:

Rati Agnihotri is a bilingual English-Hindi writer, poet and television journalist. She did her BA (Hons) in English Literature from Miranda House, University of Delhi, and MA International Journalism from University of Leeds, UK. She runs the poetry group 'Moonweavers: Chaand ke Julaahe' in the city along with other fellow poets. Her book of poem, *The Sunset Sonata*, was published by the Sahitya Akademi. Her English poems have appeared in *Indian Literature*, *South Asian Ensemble*, *Nether Magazine*, *Dead Flowers: A Poetry Rag*, *The Challenge*, *Muse India*, *Kritya* and others. Her Hindi poems have been published in *Pakhee*, *Retpath*, *Samvadiya*, *Yuddhrat Aam Aadmi*, *Parikatha*, among others. She also translates poetry and nonfiction from Hindi to English. Agnihotri's previous assignments include a fellowship at Radio Deutsche Welle's south Asian department in Bonn, Germany. She currently works as a correspondent for China's CNC World TV and based at their office in New Delhi.