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Lost Words

Doyir Ete

The story of lost words
haunting us
we are accused of
lacking history and authenticity
our oral stories rejected as hearsays
and so,
we suffer from an excess of absence
in all the tongues born out of a scribal world

In the beginning, our gods gifted
etched symbols
in leather, bark and leaf
lost in a tragicomedy
for it was munched in hunger
By goats, lamb or dogs
Or drowned
In raging flood and river
Even
Man, himself in hunger!
resorted to the fragments
and all was lost!

In memory then we survived
Our stories to narrate we aspired
from shaman's magic words

grandmothers grey with memories
eager ears and drowsy eyes
urging us to recollect
words faster than breath
all flowed
like a swollen river
lapped by the dry pen
marked and signed
so sang our stories
our words gone
but, mind is a game
to win is to remember
stories are enough
to fill the void of empty skies
My modern mind is
drawn to ancestors
Whose songs we still sing today.

Footnote:

Almost every tribe in Arunachal Pradesh does not have a written script. Surprisingly, each has a story of how they lost their script. In Galo tribe the written word is called as *Boi Bola*. The story goes that our Ancestor Abo Tani(Father Tani) was given the knowledge of script written in a dried skin of an animal by a benevolent Uii(Spirit). Due to hunger or by mistake Tani ate the dried skin and the knowledge of *Boi Bola* was lost to us forever. There are different versions of how the script was lost.