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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.