

A bubbling stream reached a desert, and found that it could not cross it.

The water was disappearing into the fine sand, faster and faster.

The Stream said aloud, "My destiny is to cross this desert, but I can see no way."

This is the situation of the disciple who needs a master, but who cannot trust one, the pathetic human situation.

The voice of the Desert answered, in the hidden tongue of nature, saying, "The Wind crosses the desert, and so can you."

"But, whenever I try, I am absorbed into the sand; and even if I dash myself at the desert, I can only go a little distance,"

"The Wind does not dash itself against the desert sand."

"But the Wind can fly, and I cannot."

"You are thinking in the wrong way; trying to fly by yourself is absurd. Allow the Wind to carry you over the sand."

"But how can that happen?"

"Allow yourself to be absorbed in the Wind."

The Stream protested that it did not want to lose its individuality in that way. If it did, it might not exist again.

This, said the sand, was a form of logic, but it did not refer to reality at all. When the Wind absorbed moisture, it carried it over the desert, and then let it fall again like rain. The rain again became a river.

But how, asked the Stream, could it know that this was true?

"It is so, and you must believe it, or you will simply be sucked down by the sands to form, after several million years, a quagmire."

"But if that is so, will I be the same river that I am today?"

"You cannot in any case remain the same stream that you are today. The choice is not open to you; it only seems to be open. The Wind will carry your essence, the finer part of you. When you become a river again at the mountains beyond the sands, men may call you by a different name; but you, yourself, essentially, will know that you are the same."

So the Stream crossed the desert by raising itself into the arms of the welcoming Wind, which gathered it slowly and carefully upward, and then let it down with gentle firmness, atop the mountains of a far-off land.

“Today you call yourself such and such a river only because you do not know which part of it is even now your essence.”

“Now,” said the Stream, “I have learned my true identity.”

But it had a question, which it bubbled up as it sped along: “Why could I not reason this out on my own; why did the sands have to tell me? What would have happened if I had not listened to the Sands?”

Suddenly a small voice spoke to the Stream. It came from a grain of sand. “Only the Sands know, for they have seen it happen; moreover, they extend from the river to the mountain. They form the link, and they have their function to perform, as has everything. The way in which the stream of life is to carry itself on its journey is written in the sands.”