

## The Stream – A Sufi Story <sup>1</sup>

“A stream, from its course in the far-off mountains, passing through every kind and description of countryside, at last reached the sands of the desert. Just as it had crossed every other barrier, the stream tried to cross this one, but found that as fast as it ran into the sand, its waters disappeared.

It was convinced, however, that its destiny was to cross this desert, and yet there was no way. Now a hidden voice, coming from the desert itself, whispered: “The wind crosses the desert, and so can the stream.”

The stream objected that the wind could fly, and this was why it could cross a desert.

“By hurtling in your own accustomed way you cannot get across. You will either disappear or become a marsh. You must allow the wind to carry you over to your destination.”

But how could this happen?

“By allowing yourself to be absorbed in the wind.”

This idea was not acceptable to the stream. After all, it had never been absorbed before. It did not want to lose its individuality. And, once having lost it, how was one to know that one’s identity could ever be regained?

“The wind,” said the sand, “performs this function. It takes up water, carries it over the desert, and then lets it fall again.”

“How can I know that this is true?”

“It is so, and if you do not believe it, you cannot become more than a quagmire.”

“But can I not remain the same stream that I am today?”

“You cannot in either case remain so,” the whisper said. When it heard this, echoes began to arise in the thoughts of the stream. Dimly it remembered a state in which it—or some part of it?—had been held in the arms of a wind.

And the stream raised its vapor into the welcoming arms of the wind, which gently and easily bore it upwards and along, letting it fall softly as rain once they reached the roof of a mountain, many, many miles away, where it then became a river.”

Storytelling in small groups or personal reflection. One by one, each person shares their answer to the first prompt below. Then go to the next question and so forth. A person can pass.

- 1) Share about an experience in your life where you came to a desert, something or someone telling you to make a change, to be able to move forward.** (i.e., relationship, work, teacher, parenting, way of thinking, health issue, etc.)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.questformeaning.org/quest-article/stream-sufi-story/> (accessed December 19, 2022).

- 2) Tell about an experience where you “dimly...remembered a state in which it—or some part of it—had been held in the wind” (held in a place you vaguely knew about, like having a sixth sense that you had been there before, and everything was going to be ok?) How did that remembered state, or sixth sense help you decide what to do next?**
- 3) Share a time when you allowed “yourself to be absorbed in the wind.” And how you worked through that “This idea was not acceptable to the stream [you]. After all, it [you] had never been absorbed before [trusted and let go]. It [you] did not want to lose its [your] individuality. And, once having lost it, how was one to know that one’s identity could ever be regained?” What did you learn about yourself?**
- 4) Share any insights that came to you as you heard the Sufi story, or while sharing your stories and experiences, or listening to others share theirs.**

Check out and download more small group storytelling reflections and prompts at:

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