

At the outskirts of the desert there lived a hermit.

One day, a young man visited him
and poured out his troubles before him.

“I have read so many holy texts,” he said.

“I became absorbed in the beauty of the words.

I want to hold on to them all
and preserve them in me as a reflection of the Eternal Truth.

However, I’m not successful. I forget everything.

Isn’t the hard work of reading all in vain?”

The hermit listened to him well. As he was done with talking,
he had him pick up a basket encrusted with dirt
that was sitting beside the hut.

“Draw water for me from the well over there,” he said.

“Didn’t he understand my question,” the young man thought.

He took the dirty basket reluctantly and went to the well.

The water had trickled out as he returned.

“Go once again,” the hermit said. The young man obeyed.

He had to go a third and a fourth time.

“The old man is testing my obedience
before answering my question,” he thought.
Again and again he filled water into the basket.

Again and again it leaked out.

After the tenth time he got permission to stop.

“Look at the basket,” the hermit said.

“It’s pretty clean,” the young man responded.

“That’s the way it goes with those words
that you read and ponder,” the hermit spoke.

“They go through you; and you consider your effort as useless.
But without you noticing it, they clarify your thoughts
and make your heart pure.”