

# nūrī's awakening

The summer heat was over and the days were getting cooler. The countryside was once again beginning to turn green and blossom.

One evening after dinner, Guruji said to his family, “Bhai Mardana and I will be leaving soon to continue our journey.”

“The children and I will wait for you to return,” replied Mata Sulakhanji lovingly.

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The next day, Bhai Mardana went into town to get supplies for their travels.

The shopkeeper could hardly believe that Guruji was leaving again. “Why are you going? Isn’t it dangerous? Don’t you get tired?” he blurted out.

“When I am with Guruji, I am in no danger, and neither do I get tired. He is my Light and I will go where he goes,” replied Bhai Mardana confidently, picking up the bundle of supplies.

On the day of their departure, Guruji and Bhai Mardana walked with Jairam *bharaji* and the children till the end of town. Guruji hugged his sons and said, “Listen to your Mataji, Bharaji and Bebeji. Don’t cause them any worries. I will be back as soon as I can.”

Guruji and Bhai Mardana crossed the River Beas in a ferry. They walked through many villages and slept almost every night under the starry skies. Everywhere they went, they spread the message that we are children of *Ik Oankar*, the One Eternal Creator, and are all equal. Guruji taught the people that it is our actions that make us high or low, not our birth.

“Guruji, it looks like we are going to get rain. I think we should find a place to stay in the next village,” said Bhai Mardana one evening, as he watched the grey clouds spread over the sky.

When the two men arrived at the next village, Bhai Mardana walked around town, asking everyone he met if he and Guruji could spend the night with them. Not one person agreed.

“If you were both Hindus, a Hindu family would be willing to let you stay with them. If you both were Muslims, a Muslim family would definitely share their home with you. But no one in the village will keep a Hindu and a Muslim together in his home,” explained one of the villagers.

“There’s a hut outside the village; why don’t you go there? I am sure Nuri would let you stay with him,” said another villager sarcastically.

Bhai Mardana returned to where Guruji was and repeated what the villagers had told him. Guruji smiled and said, “It is *Hukam* that we stay at this hut. Let’s go.”

Drops of rain began to fall as they walked to the end of the village. “Greetings! Can we stay with you for the night?” called out Bhai Mardana nervously, as they stood outside the solitary hut.

“Please do not come near me,” answered a faint voice from the hut. “I am a leper with an incurable disease. My family and the villagers have turned me out of the village. I don’t blame them. I am just waiting for death to put me out of my misery.”

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Guruji heard the despair in the man's voice. He and Bhai Mardana entered the hut. Nuri was shocked to see them. No one else had dared to visit him.

Guruji went over to Nuri's bed. He stroked his head and gently said, "When Ik Oankar, the One who has created everything, is forgotten, the mind becomes sick. When the mind becomes sick, diseases take place in the body. The cure for these diseases is to feel the presence of Ik Oankar within you. Be grateful to the Creator who has given you this body. This body is meant to serve humanity. When we don't serve, the mind and body become diseased."

Nuri listened carefully to Guruji's words. "I can barely walk. It is difficult for me do anything. How can I feel the presence of Ik Oankar within me? How can I serve? I am of no use to anyone," he said sadly.

"You are a spark of the Light of Ik Oankar. I want you to remember that the Light of Ik Oankar lives within you. Can you do that, Nuri?"

Nuri nodded a bit uncertainly. "How do I do that?" he hesitatingly asked.

“Remember Ik Oankar every moment. See the Light of Ik Oankar in all. Focus your mind on all that is alive within and around you. Try to live in gratitude. Nuri, don’t wait for death. Life is a precious gift. Connect with the Light of Ik Oankar and you will be healed from inside and outside. Even in your illness, find ways to serve.”

“How do I serve? Who do I serve?” Nuri eagerly asked.

“First serve yourself. Embrace life and recognize the Divine in all. Soon you will know the way you want to live the rest of your life.”

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Guruji’s words made a deep impression on Nuri. All night long, he thought about what he had heard. The illusion that his disease was incurable slowly lifted from his mind.

“You have given me hope,” said Nuri smilingly, as he bade goodbye to Guruji and Bhai Mardana the next day. “I will always remember your words. I hope I have the resolve to follow your advice.”

“Remember, Ik Oankar is always with you, and loves you,” replied Guruji, touching Nuri’s forehead.

Bhai Mardana bent down and whispered in Nuri's ear, "You are a very lucky man. Guru Nanak came to your home. If you follow his Teachings, I am sure you will be cured."

From that day onward, Nuri would wake up with a smile. He slowly began to see the beauty around him. He took delight in feeding the birds, and did his best to keep his home clean. He even planted a garden and joyfully watched the flowers grow and blossom. Often, he would think about Guruji and Bhai Mardana and wondered where they were. He felt extremely fortunate that they had stayed with him. He knew that they had showed him a new way of coping with his illness and that realization had changed his life.

Many months passed by.

One morning, Nuri felt strong enough to walk down to the river for his bath. After bathing, a strange sensation filled his body. Walking tall and straight, he returned to his village. His family and friends were shocked to see him walking so well. They quickly gathered around him and wanted to know how he had been cured.



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“What happened? Tell us everything!” they demanded.

Nuri softly replied, “One stormy evening many months ago, two *fakirs* came to my hut seeking shelter. One of them was very unique. His name was Guru Nanak. He spoke to me. Then he sang, while the other man played the *rabab*. His words entered my heart and mind and filled me with joy. His love for me made me want to live again.”

The villages wondered if it were Guruji and Bhai Mardana to whom they had refused shelter. They felt quite ashamed of themselves.

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“Please come back home,” they begged Nuri. “You are cured now,” added one of them. “There is no need for you to stay all by yourself in that hut anymore.”

Nuri smiled, and gently said, “Thank you for saying that, but I will continue to stay in my hut. My Guru-fakir taught me that we are all children of Ik Oankar and that the spark of Ik Oankar lives within all of us. My home will now become a *dharamsala* where everyone is always welcome.”



## Discussion Points:

1. Discuss the social conditions prevailing at that time in the sub-continent, particularly the division between the Hindus and the Muslims and among the various Hindu castes. Guruji's traveling with Bhai Mardana was revolutionary. Elaborate on why the term "revolutionary" is appropriate for Guruji.
2. Guruji and Bhai Mardana could have taken the easy way out. They could have taken separate lodgings, Guruji staying with a Hindu family and Bhai Mardana with a Muslim one. Have the children share their thoughts as to why they did not do that. Remind them of what Guruji said when he came out of the River Bein.
3. Guruji did not change his beliefs and values because of the circumstances of his situation, even though it would have made things easier. What do we learn from this action of Guruji's? Should we change our values and our beliefs according to our circumstances, just to fit in? For example, how would you feel if you and your best friend, who was different in some way from you, were not allowed to take part together in a sport? What would you do? Would you stick up for your friend?
4. Why was Nuri living in the hut? Do you think the people were afraid of him? Talk with the children about the concept of being an outcast, for example, being isolated and shunned due to an illness people don't understand. Explore the ways how ignorance and "the unknown" in general can lead to feelings of fear. Draw parallels in the children's lives by discussing experiences where they were afraid or where they were shunned. How did it make them feel and what did they do about it? How do we, as a society, deal with these issues? Discuss how, even today, we continue to isolate people when we are afraid of or ignorant about their circumstances or condition.

5. Do you think Nuri was really cured of his disease? Explain to the children how Guruji's words changed Nuri's mindset and gave him hope. When Nuri started following Guruji's words and believing in Guruji's message, his life completely changed. Some would say it was a miracle. What do you think? Explore how we, too, can experience a powerful sense of transformation when we adopt Guruji's Teachings in our lives.

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