

THE OAK SEEDLING

AMONG WEEDS

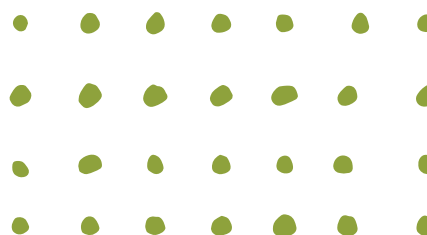
In a fertile corner of a vast forest, a tiny oak seedling took root amidst a thicket of imposing weeds. Overshadowed and stifled, the oak seedling believed it was merely another weed, destined to remain diminutive and overlooked.

As seasons passed, the weeds flourished while the seedling struggled for sunlight and nutrients. However, over time, a series of natural events, storms, rains, and the shifting shadows of the forest, gave the resilient oak seedling sporadic opportunities to catch glimpses of sunlight.

Seizing these moments, it dug its roots deeper and stretched its leaves higher.

Slowly, but surely, the seedling began to outgrow the very weeds that once suppressed it. It transformed into a majestic oak tree, standing tall with its branches reaching for the heavens.

Just as the oak seedling realized its true nature and potential, we too must recognize our inherent identity. By understanding and embracing our true identity, we can rise above the influences that seek to overshadow us, standing tall in our authentic potential and purpose.



Who am I?

In today's fast-paced world, amidst the cacophony of social media, fleeting trends, and the evolving dimensions of pop culture, the age-old quest of "Who am I?" resonates now more than ever. Some resonate with their homeland's anthem, defining themselves by national boundaries, while others are defined by their roles or professional accolades. There are also those who identify with and alter their identity based on society's ever-shifting standards, peer expectations, or the allure of material wealth. They are in essence slaves, not to the Divine, but rather to the superficial standards that they aspire to, and the unimportant people who they strive to emulate and oblige.

The Islamic Solution

Yet, in the midst of this identity tempest, Islam offers a beacon of unwavering clarity. As Muslims, our foundational identity is built on our cherished relationship with Allah: that of a servant to the Divine. The purpose of our creation is servitude to Allah as mentioned in the verse, "I did not create jinn and men except so that they worship Me" (51:56). This isn't a demeaning servitude, rather it is a badge of honour worn with pride, one that even prophets, despite their lofty statuses, proudly identified with.



The Qur'an bears ample testimony to this as stated in many verses such as, "And remember Our servants: Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, and Ya'qūb —the men of strength and insight." (38:45), "And Our word [i.e., decree] has already preceded for Our servants, the messengers." (37:171), and "Glory be to the One Who took His servant (Muḥammad) by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose surroundings We have blessed." (17:1).

BENEFITS OF IDENTIFYING AS SERVANTS OF ALLAH

Understanding our profound role as Allah's servants provides a multitude of benefits. When our duties to Him are prioritized, we are empowered to make decisions that align with our core beliefs, even if they clash with external demands, such as a demand made by a worldly superior that goes against Islamic teachings.

The Prophet (ﷺ) has said,
لَا طَاعَةَ لِمَخْلُوقٍ فِي مَعْصِيَةِ
الْخَالِقِ

"There is no obedience to the creation when it involves disobedience to the Creator."

With Allah as our Master, we are liberated from submitting to any other undeserving being no matter their worldly status, thus affording us with the honour and dignity reserved by Allah for every believer. By recognizing our place in the vast cosmos, we achieve unparalleled contentment and tranquility, understanding the grandeur of our Creator and His universe's intricate design. And as His servants, our obedience is an act of love, embodying the spirit of Islam. Through this unwavering dedication and righteousness, the doors to eternal paradise beckon.



Belonging To The Ummah

Moreover, being stitched into the rich tapestry of the Muslim Ummah offers another layer of identity, one that is deeply communal and interwoven with shared experiences. The beloved Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), on many occasions, spoke about believers as parts of a singular entity, with each part intricately connected. Our bond with the Ummah not only ties us to our ultimate purpose but also lends strength during tumultuous times, allowing us to transcend minor differences and lean on the Ummah for support. This was eloquently illustrated by the Prophet (ﷺ) when he said, "The believers are like a building, they support and strengthen each other." The Prophet (ﷺ) then clasped his hands together, with the fingers interlaced to further demonstrate this point.

Furthermore, our shared identity fosters empathy and a profound sense of brotherhood, urging us to assist fellow Muslims during trials and tribulations. This is exemplified in a narration in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The believers, in their love, compassion, and mercy for each other, are like a single body. If any part of the body is in pain, the rest of the body reacts with sleeplessness and fever."

Conclusion

On this Heritage Day, as we celebrate the rich tapestry of our past, let's delve deep into our Islamic heritage and identity. Just like the seedling who rediscovered his innate strength, we too have the power to realize our true potential. Let our Islamic identity be the compass, guiding us through life's maze, ensuring that we stand tall, dignified, and true to our Divine calling.

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