

Help yourself to get God's help

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

There was once a man, who stubbornly refused to believe that it is God who provides for and nourishes his creatures. His friends tried to make him understand this, but with no success. Finally, he decided to silence them by putting this notion to the test. Leaving his home early one morning, he went off to a jungle where he perched himself up in a tree. "If it is God who nourishes His servants, He will send me my food here too," he thought.

He sat in the tree the whole day, but found no food. He was about to leave when he saw some wayfarers searching for a tree they could pass the night under. They finally chose the very tree in which he was perched.

He decided not to reveal his presence. After setting up their camp, they began to collect firewood. Then they opened their bags and took out rice and pulses to cook a meal. When it was nearly ready, they threw a handful of chillies into the hot oil to season it. The spicy aroma rose up into the air and the man in the tree sneezed. Only then did the travellers learn of his presence, whereupon they invited him to share what they had cooked.

The man happily went back home and said to his friends the next morning, "What you said was quite true. But you hadn't told me the whole story. Of course, God does provide you with food. It's just that you have to sneeze and come down a tree to get it!"

Although humorous in tone, this little anecdote is serious in intent. It is, in fact, a parable which underscores the notion that God helps those who help themselves. And although man's role is a very minor one, it is nevertheless a very necessary one. A man must prove his worth to have his due share of God's gifts. We must never, therefore, neglect to make ourselves deserving of God's nourishment.