

Man needs spiritual food

By Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

Jesus Christ said: "Man cannot live by bread alone." This is also a teaching of the Quran. Apart from physical food, man also needs spiritual food. Addressing the Prophet the Quran says: "Do not regard with envy the worldly benefits we have given some of them, for with these we seek only to test them. The provision of your Lord is better and more lasting" (20:131).

From the very items that make for our physical food, we can extract spiritual food through contemplation. For example, if you take some food like bread and rice, and think how could soil produce such items, you will discover that this was possible due to God's blessing. This kind of thinking gives you divine inspiration; you develop love towards God. Acknowledging God, you say: "O Lord, you are merciful and compassionate towards mankind."

Then you think that although these things were in our earth, they were there in terms of potential. Who turned this potential into actual? You, then, realise that this was due to the efforts of farmers. This discovery inculcates in your heart a great love towards mankind. You say: "O people, I am thankful to you, due to your valuable contribution it was possible that I have such delicious items for lunch and dinner."

This is like extracting spirituality from physical items. This extraction, on the one hand, makes you able to acknowledge God's blessing, and on the other hand, it enables you to acknowledge man's contribution towards you and towards civilisation.

Divine provision in this verse does not mean that the reward will be given to the believer only in the later period of life. Certainly believers will receive reward in the world hereafter, but in the present world too they will receive provision. This provision will be spiritual provision, the provision that a believer extracts from the worldly experiences.