

## Who is a True Moulana and a True Aalim?

(by Hazrat Moulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Rahmatullahi Alaih)

- Moulana is a person who knows the Ahkaam (Commandments of Allah Ta'ala), not one who merely is versed with the Arabic language. Abu Jahl also knew the Arabic language, but his title was 'Abu Jahl' – the Father of Ignorance. He was not called 'Aalim'.
- A Moulana is an Aalim who practises upon his knowledge. You may call him *Sufi* if you wish. We do not regard a person who does not practise on his knowledge to be a Moulana. Merely being able to speak the Arabic language does not qualify one to be a Moulana. In Egypt and Beirut you will find Christians fluently speaking the Arabic language. So, must we take them to be Ulama in our Deen?
- A Moulana is one who is attached to his *Maula* – his Master – Allah Ta'ala. He possesses knowledge of the Deen and he is a Muttaqi (repository of Taqwa). He bears Akhlaaq-e-Hameedah (Praiseworthy Character), such as Fear for Allah Ta'ala, etc.
- A man does not become a Moulana by virtue of expertise in the Arabic language, regardless of being an orator or writer in the Arabic language because Abu Jahl was also an expert in the Arabic language. In fact, the Arabic orators of today can hardly be compared to Abu Jahl in Arabic speech. He should thus be an expert Aalim, whereas his title was 'Abu Jahl' (the Crown of Ignorance). This shows that being versed in the Arabic language only, does not qualify one to become a Moulana.
- An Aalim is an adherent of the Sunnah.
- The word Moulana is related to *Maula*. A Maulana is thus a *Maula Wala*, that is, an Allah Wala – a Friend of Allah Ta'ala. As long as he is a Friend of Allah Ta'ala he is a Moulana and qualified to be taken as a guide in Deen. And when he changes his colours then he is at once stripped of his title, Moulana and he is not worthy of being followed. His association should be abandoned.
- For one to become an Aalim, Ilm is a preliminary requisite whilst fear for Allah Ta'ala is a vital condition. This divine fear cannot be acquired without

Ilm, however, it does not follow that fear for Allah Ta'ala is a necessary corollary of Ilm. Ilm does not necessarily produce this fear. For fear of Allah Ta'ala there is the need for a separate effort (which is to practise upon the knowledge one has gained).

- Some moulanas are jaahils (ignoramuses). In fact, one should rather say that some jaahils are moulanas. A true Moulana is he who is a Friend of Allah Ta'ala and this is achieved by adhering to the Shariah. But the sad state of affairs today is that a person is crowned with the title of 'moulana' by merely studying a few books on Arabic.
- If one becomes a Moulana just by studying Arabic literature, being fluent in Arabic speech, and possessing skill in writing in the Arabic language then Abu Jahl and Abu Lahb deserve to be leading Moulanas in view of them being masters of the Arabic language.