

Deconditioning the Conditioned: Therapeutic Powers of *Masnūn* Supplications

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Abstract:

Our identity, perceptions and preferences are conditioned by our past experiences. At times, distorted perceptions, misconceptions and patterns of thoughts get embedded into our mind and lead to psychological and social problems. These fixed patterns exist as everyday part of behavior. We need tools of behavior therapy which can liberate us from these mental shackles. Psychotherapists offer several ways of deconditioning our mind of these compelling intricate patterns. Besides, there are other remedial alternatives. Certain texts could also help in unlearning the learnt distortions. Some poetic and religious texts have therapeutic powers. While studying therapeutic texts from linguistic perspective, researchers are interested in the choice of words and their effect on the listener or reader. In this study, the authors look at some of the linguistic marvels bequeathed by the Prophet (ﷺ). This descriptive study explores how psychological wonders can be attained with the linguistic splendors of the *Masnūn* supplications. The focus of the current article is on those *Masnūn* supplications that start with ‘praise be to Allah’. Against a background of absence of law and order, rampant violence, spiritual barrenness and moral hollowness in society reported by newspaper and celebrated works of literature, if therapeutic powers of the *Masnūn Adhkárs* are effectively channelized, we can bring about a psychological sea change in our life. The authors have tried to bring home the idea that using these *Adhkárs* and supplications day and night can help us not only in improving our familial, social and professional roles but also in regaining the lost consciousness of man being vicegerent of the Almighty in the world.

Keywords: Linguistics, Islam, *Masnūn*, deconditioning, therapeutic powers, prayers, supplications, *Adhkár*.

Background:

Humans and some species of animals seem to be conditioned by their experiences and environment. They perceive and respond to new experiences in relation to their previous experiences. Human mind is in constant motion. The motion of the mind is made up of flow of information—streams of new and old information move like traffic. New schemata are built

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and old ones are destroyed. Our perception of reality and our everyday behavior are influenced by the schemata that get fixed in our mind. In the course of construction of new schemata, certain distortions may get built. These programmed distortions may become part of our identity. Our true identity as a human being is hidden beneath this mask on the surface. In other words, the distortions exist as a smokescreen. We are not able to see reality and this inability prevent us from elevating our consciousness. We need deeper insights, spiritual energy and psychological alertness to remove these soft sets of smoke and mirrors and masks.

At home, at workplace and among friends we may witness behavior and attitude deviating from our expectations and norms. Such behavior and attitudes know at our relationships. Domestic abuse at home reported by wives, parent-child distorted relationships and inimical relationship among colleagues at workplace are some of the examples of such behaviors. It seems that some people's behaviors are based on their distorted sense of identities.

There are areas in the world where suicidal tendencies are high despite high literacy rate. Why has the phenomenon of death tourism emerged in Switzerland? Rich people from different parts of the world visit Switzerland to get Swiss doctors' help in committing assisted suicide. Why is it that wealth and education in these two instances cannot dissuade people from committing suicide? Are these deviations result of the conditioned distortions of mind? This article shall try to answer these and other such questions.

The above-mentioned questions may sound weird in the context of our digital age where information and education are in the access of most of people in urban areas. Knowledge seems to have expanded unprecedentedly if we compare the number of universities in modern times with the number of universities in the past. But modern education seems to do little to help man enhance his inner peace. Better education should have made modern man happier. We should ask these questions to ourselves, "Is modern man happier than man in the past? Do we need to change the lenses with which we see the world? Let us see how modern thinkers reply to these questions.

Modern Thinkers on Modern Man

Technology has its limits. Machinery brings ease and comfort in our life but it does little to make us mentally and spiritually healthier. Man's search for inner peace and spirituality is innate. Therefore, we see that there have been thinkers and intellectuals in the East and the West who opposed man's heavy reliance on machines. They talked about harmful effects of machine on human nature. Wasif argues that 'machines have robbed man of his decency'³. He

³. Wasif Ali Wasif. The beaming soul. Lahore: Kashif Publications. 1995, (Before we begin).

further explains that man ‘has become a part of machine—emotionless, feeling less, loveless and faithless’⁴. Dickens, a Victorian novelist, has also conveyed similar messages in his novel ‘Hard Times’. Eliot’s ‘The Waste Land’ depicts crisis of modern man’s life through images of barrenness, hollowness and desertedness. The modern poet seems to be afraid of an impending mass spiritual disaster. Figuratively, the line ‘HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME’ implies a warning about the ending of the time⁵. Iqbal, Meinke and Bly made similar allusions to the spiritual emptiness and desolation of the modern world. Why did they talk about desolation and emptiness despite unprecedented spread of educational institutes in modern age?

Modern Education

We have already mentioned Dickens, ‘Hard Times’ in our discussion. In this novel, Dickens shows how machines and advent of industrialism affected man’s view of education⁶. He criticized mechanic orientations towards educationists. In those days, educationists like Gradgrind of ‘Hard Times’ believed that they should teach children only facts. There was no room for creativity and imagination. They began to look at education as business and students as products of their business. Resultantly, education and knowledge lost their true worth and time-honored characteristics. Actually, spread of knowledge should be measured in terms of enlightenment and psychological transformation of knowledge seekers and not in terms of heaps and piles of degrees and spread of educational institutes. Wasif explains that in modern world, ‘knowledge is on the increase and is available to more and more people. But as the libraries overflow with books, man’s heart becomes emptier of peace and tranquility’⁷. In such an environment, a true knowledge seeker might become a misfit in society. In this context, Wasif further argues that ‘if Socrates were reborn now, he would be forced to drink hemlock again. Feelings are dead now. Today’s tragedy is that tragedy itself is dead and no one can spare a moment to mourn its demise’⁸.

Man’s Search for Peace

The question is ‘How can man gain inner peace?’ Muhaiyaddeen observes that ‘man says he wants to bring peace to others, but in order to do that he must find it within his life. How can anyone who has not found peace within himself hope to bring peace to others?’⁹.

⁴. Wasif Ali Wasif. The beaming soul. Lahore: Kashif Publications. 1995, p.92.

⁵. Eliot, T. S. The waste land and other poems. Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press. 2011, p. 69.

⁶. Dickens, Charles. Hard Times. Champaign, Ill: Project Gutenberg, 1990. Internet resource.

⁷. Wasif. A.W. The beaming soul. Lahore: Kashif Publications. 1995, (Before we Begin).

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Muhaiyaddeen, M. R. B. Islam & world peace: Explanations of a Sufi. Philadelphia: The Fellowship Press. 2004, p.8.

Thus, outer peace necessitates inner peace. Muhaiyaddeen further observes that in order to achieve inner peace, modern man must stop thinking in possessive terms like ‘My family! My wife! My children! I must rule the world! I must advance my position in life! When a man has all these selfish ideas, how can he possibly create peace for others?’¹⁰. Thinking in possessive terms fills human heart with misconceptions about his own status in the world. We are given to possessions or as Wasif argues, ‘man has come to be possessed by his own possessions’¹¹. He begins to think that he is the real owner of physical and non-physical aspects of his own existence. He fails to see wonders and blessings of Allah. He takes for granted the wonders created by Allah. Wasif explains that ‘wonders stare us in the face but we pay no heed. What a miracle the ordinary stupid-looking brute, the cow, is. It is a marvel of Nature. It is a wonderful feat—great miracle of converting grass into milk. Why don’t we consider?’¹². Why are we not able to see wonders? Actually, all these miracles and wonders seem to be less important to us than our materialistic concerns. We see those things which we have on our list of priorities and this list consists of mostly materialistic items. We dislike the things which seem to thwart our attempts at materialist gains. We think that we have been wronged. We blame others and criticize others. We sorrow over our lot. Wasif argues that ‘to sorrow over your lot, to have sympathy for yourself, to prove yourself pitiable among people, is to be ungrateful to Allah. Allah burdens no man with more than he can bear. Ailing and feeble spirits always complain whereas healthy souls give thanks’¹³. His words ‘healthy souls always give thanks’ are important here. If we are ungrateful to God, then perhaps our souls are suffering from spiritual ailments. Being grateful to Allah is an indication of having a healthy soul and this is why we see that *Masnūn Adhkārs* of morn and eve overflow with sense of gratefulness for Allah Almighty.

The beauty of *Masnūn* supplications is beyond description, It goes without saying that human description cannot encompass all the beauties of the revealed books. Those who have eyes to appreciate beauty know that God’s last word is full of splendors of language and meaning. This light in language form was revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ). Allah selected the Prophet’s (ﷺ) heart to reveal His last word to. We see some glimpses of the purity of that noble heart when we study the supplications and *Adhkār* of morning and evening whispered

¹⁰. Muhaiyaddeen, M. R. B. *Islam & world peace: Explanations of a Sufi*. Philadelphia: The Fellowship Press. 2004, p.8.

¹¹. Wasif. A.W. *The beaming soul*. Lahore: Kashif Publications. 1995, p.116.

¹². *Ibid*, p.17.

¹³. *Ibid*, p.18.

by the Prophet (ﷺ).

Believers are enjoined to remember Allah in the morning and evening. For instance, Allah enjoined prophet Zakariya (AS) to celebrate his praises in the morning and evening:

وَأَذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ كَثِيرًا وَسَبِّحْ بِالْعَشِيِّ وَالْإِبْكَارِ¹⁴

‘And remember your Lord much and exalt [Him with praise] in the evening and the morning’.

The noble Quran tells us that Allah Almighty subjected the mountains to celebrate His praise with Hazrat Dawood (AS). Birds also used to celebrate Allah’s praises with the prophet (AS)¹⁵. Thus, prophets and believers of bygone times used to remember Allah in the morning and evening. Remembering Allah Almighty day and night is associated with being grateful to Allah.

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ¹⁶

‘And [remember] when your Lord proclaimed, 'If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, my punishment is severe.’

By showing gratefulness to Allah, we are acknowledging the undeniable ground reality. All blessings have been granted by Allah. Another ayah of the noblest and the holiest of all books says,

وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُونَ¹⁷

‘And few of My servants are grateful.’

When we express gratitude to our Creator, we actually acknowledge His indescribably all-encompassing contribution in our lives. There are different ways of being grateful to Allah. Reciting *Masnūn Adhkār* and supplications is one the several ways of remembering Allah in the morning and evening. Using these expressions in our daily life helps us be among those bondmen who are thankful to the Creator.

Masnūn Adhkārs and Supplications

The nobility of the character of Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) inspired countless people not only in his own lifetime but also even after his departure from this life of trials. During his life time, his beautiful and truthful personality won sincere companions wherever he went.

¹⁴. Āl-Imran,41:3

¹⁵. Şad,18:38

¹⁶. Ibrahīm,7:14

¹⁷. Saba,13:34

Similarly, his sayings have been transforming people's lives for centuries. This is why time-honored poets like Firdosi, Hafiz, Saadi, Rumi and Ghalib confessed their inability to comprehensively versify the majesty, magnificence and beauty of his noble character. Similarly, the beauty of *Masnūn* supplications is beyond explanation.

The *Masnūn* entreaties contain multiple layers of meanings, effects and paralinguistic aspects. We can feel these dynamic aspects with our hearts but it is very difficult to define the true 'sweetness' of these doses of honey.

As we have already pointed out that the purity of words of the *Masnūn* whispers shows us some glimpses of the purest of all hearts that cherished these unique *Adhkárs*. They describe human humbleness in front of Allah Almighty. They help us regain a lost treasure. They gradually acquaint us with true status of our existence in the vast universe—vicegerent of the Almighty. This sense of man being vicegerent of the Almighty has been lost in the course of our love for things (materialism) and unproductive education. Our sense of being Allah's salve is a fundamental component of our consciousness of being Allah's vicegerent. For instance, the translation of the meanings of one of the *Masnūn* supplications, reported by Imam Ahmad, begins like this, 'O Allah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your female slave, my forelock is in Your hand, your command over me is forever executed and Your decree over me is just. . .'¹⁸. Here we see element of parallelism. In parallelism, a pattern is repeated again and again to bring home the idea. The idea brought home is that a man is genealogically a slave of Almighty. This prayer can be used to get rid of anxiety, distress, sorrow and sadness. We can use this and other such prayers as weapons to fight modern psychological ailments. Similarly, these prescribed prescriptions purge our heads of all the misconceptions we have about our own existence. In this way, purity of expression found in these *Adhkárs* and supplications purify believers. Moreover, these supplications civilize and educate us about how to ask Allah for our needs. Since, these are the *Adhkárs* and supplications that were honoured and accepted by Allah, if we use them with sincerity, we might win Allah's pleasure. In fact, intoning these *Adhkárs* day and night expands one's appreciation of one's life. These text-based tranquilizers have no 'side-effects'. They have strong therapeutic powers that need to be explored and channelized despite our given inability to do so comprehensively. They are the cool breezes which our hearts can feel and sense. They help us manage psychosis. They make our hearts more fertile and energetic and consequently we begin to perform our familial and

¹⁸. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, Muhammad ibn Abī Bakr, and Abdul Rahman Abdullah. Healing with the medicine of the Prophet. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Darussalam. 2003, p. 178.

professional roles more efficiently in our daily lives. These are the remedies for our world-weary hearts.

These *Masnūn Adhkārs* draw our attention towards everyday blessings and bounties of Allah that we normally ignore in the heat of our hectic life. So, we become more appreciative and grateful for countless blessings given to us by Allah. They purge our sense of self-pity. Wasif argues that ‘your sense of yourself is important, but most important is your sense of Him who endowed you with the sense’¹⁹. Molana Muhammad Ashiq Elahi Buland Shehri has presented an anthology of *Masnūn* supplications and Adhkārs in his famous booklet. The subtitle of the booklet reads, ‘using these Masnūn expressions and supplications is the highest stair for the achievement of success in this life and the hereafter’²⁰. How can we achieve success in this world through these supplications and expressions of gratitude? In the foreword of the book, the renowned scholar explains, ‘When we think about the meanings of these supplications, we come to know that these prayers contain great teachings of Islam. Reading and understanding these prayers can help us reach high realms of Tauheed’²¹. He further argues that ‘this is incumbent upon man that he should ascribe ease and comforts of life to Allah. When he enjoys ease and comfort, he should be grateful to Allah and at every moment of life man should remember Allah and reiterate his own servitude and Allah’s greatness’²². He explains that these expressions and supplications are important because these expressions were inspired by Allah to the Prophet (ﷺ). Therefore, they were honoured and accepted by Allah. By using these ‘accepted whispers’, we are following sunnah. The renowned scholar argues that ‘some *saleheen* known for their piety used these supplications and expressions of gratitude and reached their desired spiritual destinations’²³. These *Masnūn* expressions show intense love of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) for his *Khalil*, as one of the sayings of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) tells us-

لَوْ كُنْتُ مُتَّخِذًا خَلِيلًا لَاتَّخَذْتُ أَبَا بَكْرٍ خَلِيلًا ، وَلَكِنَّهُ أَحْيَى وَصَاحِبِي²⁴

‘If I were to take a Khalil other than my Lord, I would have taken Abu Bakr as such, but (what relates us) is the Islamic brotherhood and friendliness.’

¹⁹. Wasif. A.W. The beaming soul. Lahore: Kashif Publications.1995, p.77.

²⁰. Muhammad Ashiq Elahi Baland Shahri. Masnun duain. Karachi: Qadimi Kutub Khana.

²¹. Ibid, p.6.

²². Ibid.

²³. Ibid.

²⁴. Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī al-Naysābūrī, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Dar ul Ahya al Turas ul Arbi, Beyrot.2010 , Book: Fazail e Sahaba, Bab, Chapter: Fzail Abu Bakar Saddique, Ḥadīth no: 4397.

Hazrat Molana Qasim Nanotvi explains that *Khalil* means intimate friend whose love is borne in the innermost core of the heart²⁵. Thus, the following supplications are the products of love. They offer us newer and cleaner lenses to see the world through. They shatter smoke and mirrors of misdeeds and misconceptions. Consequently, we begin to appreciate his countless blessings.

Getting up in the morning appears to be an ordinary thing. This happens every day, therefore, it does not seem to be a miracle. But, vestiges of the bygone times tell us that there were peoples who lost their life while they were asleep. So, being alive in the morning is a blessing of Allah. Being alive in the morning means we have been given another day to live. In other words, we are given 86400 coins every day. It depends on us whether we make wise use of those coins or waste them. We should not take available time for granted. The following *Masnūn* expression of gratitude helps us start our day by glorifying Allah.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ مَا أَمَاتَنَا، وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ²⁶

‘Praised be Allah Who made us alive after death and to Him we have to return’.

Abid-u-Rehman has studied the frequency of the afore-mentioned supplication and points out that this *Masnūn Du‘ā* has been mentioned at 106 places in various Islamic sources²⁷. The afore-cited expression shows ideal humbleness that a human being should have in relation to his Creator. He or she should acknowledge the numerous bounties and blessings of Allah at every step of life in the day and at night. At sunrise, the *Masnūn* expression of gratitude is:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَقَالَنَا يَوْمَنَا هَذَا، وَلَمْ يُهْلِكْنَا بِذُنُوبِنَا²⁸

‘Praise be to Allah who granted us reprieve today and did not punish us for our sins.’

This afore-cited *Du‘ā* has been mentioned at 16 places in Islamic sources²⁹. We see the sunrise, take it as a blessing and reprieve because we did not deserve it. This afore-cited supplication thanks Allah for the reprieve we get every day. It confesses fatality and deadliness of human sins and thanks Allah for not punishing humans. The foregrounded features of the

²⁵. Thanvi.A.A. Arwah e Thalatha. Lahore: Maktaba e Rahmania. 2006. P.219.

²⁶. Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān bin al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī, Sunan Abi Dāwūd, Dar ur Risalata al Almiata.2009, Chapter: Ma Yoqala Inda al alnom, Ḥadīth no:5049.

²⁷. Abid-u-Rehman. Bagheecha –e-janat. Bahawalnagar: Khanqah Dar-ul-Aman.2012, p. 3.

²⁸. Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj , Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Dar ul Ahya al Turas ul Arbi, Beyrot.2010 ,Chapter: Al Anazair alti kana yaqra biha, Ḥadīth no 1413.

²⁹. Abid-u-Rehman. Bagheecha –e-janat. Bahawalnagar: Khanqah Dar-ul-Aman.2012, p.14.

supplication contain messages of alertness and shake off our inertia and passivity. This expression seems to invite believers and nonbelievers to explore sweet realms of relationship between Allah and his steadfast slaves. Every sunrise signifies that we have been given another day to become a better human being. This realization imparts us mental energy which is devoted to positive and productive behavior than the mundane jaundiced cycles of mind. One way of becoming a better human being is to remember Allah in day-to-day affairs of life. When we wake up, we relieve ourselves and there is a *Masnūn* expression for entering lavatories and there are *Masnūn* expressions for remembering Allah when we have relieved ourselves. For instance, the following expression glorifies Allah for giving us power to get rid of unhealthy and unwanted matter in our body.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنِّي الْأَدَى وَعَافَانِي³⁰

‘Praise be to Allah Who cleanse me of filth and granted me relief.’

This supplication has been mentioned at 86 places in various Islamic sources³¹. Going to water closets is an everyday matter and apparently, there appears to be nothing miraculous but there is a favour of Allah in this seemingly mundane affair of life. People realize this favour when they develop medical problems related to final stage of digestion. When we have relieved ourselves, we wash our limbs to prepare ourselves for the prayer.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَطْعَمَنَا وَسَقَانَا وَجَعَلَنَا مُسْلِمِينَ³²

‘All the praises are for Allah Who fed us and gave us water to drink and made us Muslims.’

This *Du‘ā* (supplication) has been mentioned at 74 places in Islamic sources³³. This supplication thanks Allah Almighty for the physical and spiritual blessings. Faith is his spiritual blessings. Faith and Allah’s remembrance are the food of soul while eatables and drinkables are the needs of body. So, this is a brief but comprehensive supplication which glorifies the Sustainer and the Maintainer for all sorts of blessings. Thus, the above-quoted supplication praises Allah for all kinds of spiritual and physical blessings. This accepted whisper points to sublime level of existence which is defined by man’s incessant gratefulness for the innumerable bounties and blessings showered by the Creator. It is a sublime level because it makes

³⁰. Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājah , Sunan Ibn e Mājah, Dar ul Risal Alalmia,2009, Chapter Zakar allah Azawajal, Ḥadīth no: 297.

³¹. Abid-u-Rehman. Bagheecha –e-janat. Bahawalnagar: Khanqah Dar-ul-Aman.2012, p.4.

³². Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān bin al-Ash’ath ,Sunan Abi Dāwūd,Chapter: yaqool al Rajul Iza Taum,Ḥadīth no: 3850.

³³. Abid-u-Rehman. Bagheecha –e-janat. Bahawalnagar: Khanqah Dar-ul-Aman.2012, p.7.

apparently ordinary moments of life special. It is love which makes apparently ordinary life special, and of all forms of love, the most dynamic and the ultimate love is the love between Allah and His slaves. While we enjoy physical blessings at dining mat, we should not forget spiritual blessings of Allah. This supplication is comprehensive, like other Masnūn supplications because it thanks Allah not only for the blessings of food and drink but also for the blessing of faith or belief. So, both material and spiritual blessings have been acknowledged. When one is leaving meal and tablecloth, one should recite the following Du‘ā.

الحمد لله حمداً كثيراً طيباً مباركاً فيه غير مكفٍ ولا مودع ولا مستغنى عنه ربنا³⁴

‘Praise be to Allah, all never-ending, pure and blessed, praise belongs to Allah. O Lord, we are leaving this food not with airs of indifference, independence or needlessness.’

This Du‘ā teaches us to treat food or remaining food with respect when we have finished eating a meal. One should not leave dining mat with an indifferent and cold attitude towards the food we have eaten. In the morning, we take off night dress and put on new clothes. Ideologically and theoretically, we know that clothes have been given to us by Allah. But, do we punctually acknowledge it verbally when we put on clothes? The beautiful *Masnūn* expression or *Du‘ā* of gratitude for wearing clothes is:

أُحْمَدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي كَسَانِي هَذَا الثَّوْبَ وَرَزَقَنِيهِ مِنْ غَيْرِ حَوْلٍ مِنِّي وَلَا قُوَّةٍ³⁵

‘Praise be to Allah Who has clothed me with this (garment) and provided it for me, though I was powerless myself and incapable.’

This supplication has been mentioned at 80 places in Islamic sources³⁶. We put on clothes every day and we tend to take it for granted. Since this blessing appears to be a routine-way thing, we ignore it as a blessing. In other words, this routinized behavior makes us forget that it is a great blessing. So, with the afore-mentioned *Masnūn* supplication we can acknowledge this great blessing of Allah. While doing everyday tasks of life, if we punctuate our tasks with these and other Masnūn expressions of thankfulness, our life can become beautiful and peaceful because sense of gratefulness will drive away dependency in our life.

الحمد لله الذي عافاني مما ابتلاك به وفضلني على كثير ممن خلق تفضيلاً³⁷

³⁴. Abū ‘Īsā Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā, Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi, Dar Ul Gharb Ul Islami, Bayroot. 1998, Chapter: Ma Yaqolo Iza Fragha Min Altaam, Ḥadīth no: 3456.

³⁵. Ibid, Ḥadīth no: 4023.

³⁶. Abid-u-Rehman. Bagheecha –e-janat. Bahawalnagar: Khanqah Dar-ul-Aman. 2012. p.31

³⁷. Muḥammad ibn ‘Īsā, Jami‘ at-Tirmidhi, Chapter: Ma Yaqolo Iza Raa Mubtla, Ḥadīth no: 3431.

‘All praises due to Allah, who has kept me safe from that which He has involved you with, and He has granted me graces over most of those whom He has created gracefully.’

We have heard that life is not bed of roses. There are trials which measure our patience. We can cure our despondency, dejection and depression with the following Masnūn expression of gratefulness which means Allah deserves praise in every situation.

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ³⁸

‘Praise be to Allah in all circumstances.’

Drenched in love for Allah, humbleness and gratefulness, this expression encourages truth-seekers to rise above self-pity, and materials pursuits. By glorifying our Creator in adverse circumstances, we show strength of our faith in Him. A true salve’s trust in his Creator should not weaken in moments of difficulties and trials. True Muslims smile in difficult situations. Death is one of the most difficult situations of life. One of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), when he attained martyrdom, said, ‘I have become successful’. In one of books on *malfoozat-e-Iqbal* published in Urdu, Iqbal explains that when a Muslim dies, he dies with a smile. Muslims with firm faith have smiled in all adverse circumstance. A recent instance of this behaviour has been reported by Terry Holdbrooks Jr, a Guantanamo guard, who converted to Islam after witnessing the beauty of faith of Muslims prisoned and tortured at Guantanamo. Daily News of New York reports his story of convert and explains in one of its news reports that ‘

‘As a teenager, Holdbrooks had searched for truths in several different religions. He came to Guantanamo convinced that all monotheistic religions were evil. But over the course of several months, as Holdbrooks started speaking to the detainees and reading the Quran, he began to find some truth in Islam. “The Quran is the simplest book in the world to read. It doesn’t have magic. It doesn’t contradict itself,” Holdbrooks said. “It’s simply an instruction manual for living.” The faith lives of the detainees seemed to be proof that the instruction manual could work. Holdbrooks took the leap in December 2003. In the presence of the prisoners, he read out a statement of faith that confirmed him as a Muslim.’³⁹

³⁸. Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājah, Sunan Ibn e Mājah, Chapter, Fazal ul Hamdin, Ḥadīth no: 3804.

³⁹. Carol Kuruvilla. Guantanamo guard converts to Islam, demands release of detainees. May 29, 2013. Para 7-9. Retrieved November 15, 2016, from

The American convert to Islam was attracted by the smiling faces of people being tortured by his colleagues. In the newsreport he explains, “I had all the freedom in the world . . . But I was waking up unhappy while these men were in cages, smiling and praying five times a day”⁴⁰. Jim Roope of CNN reported the same story and, in his story, the convert to Islam said ‘One of the things that kind of amazed me about Guantanamo was that the detainees could wake up each day and smile’⁴¹. The word ‘smiling’ is significant in these reports. These reports serve as evidence of Islam as a living religion. It points to firmness of faith of people detained at Guantanamo. The afore-mentioned Masnūn Du‘ā is an antidote to the poison of materialism and blind ambitiousness. At the same time, it deconstructs dark discourses propogated by differnet sources around us. It is a pity that today in colleges and universities modern Muslim youth is taught the views of jaundiced and diseased minds who sow seeds of skepticism and atheism in the green minds. Their views can create horrible and nighmarish cracks in the faith of the youth. Our educationists and policy makers should rethink their policies. Our policy makers and educationists should not only equip students with skills required for moderen challenges but they should also introduce edcuation which links Muslim youth to the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Nasiruddin Khan *Khākwani* explains, ‘using *Masnūn* supplications and following *Masnūn* deeds are great ways of developing spiritual contact with the Prophet’ (ﷺ)⁴². This development of spiritual contact with the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is vital for a believer. In fact, this is the most valuable possession of a Muslim.

In this article the authors have attempted to point to spiritual and psychological benefits of using *Masnūn* supplications. In the beginning, it was mentioned that there are places where there is high suicide rate despite literacy rate. For instance, Kerala is situated on the tropical Malabar Coast in South India. It is one of such regions which is flanked by this paradox.⁴³

We also mentioned suicide tourists who visit Switzerland solely for the purpose of committing suicide⁴⁴. Some questions were raised about people committing suicide despite

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/gitmo-guard-converts-islam-demands-release-detainees-article-1.1357918->

⁴⁰. Ibid, para 6.

⁴¹. Jim Roope. The Gitmo guard who converted to Islam. April 5th, 2013. Para 2. Retrieved November 15, 2016, from <http://cnradio.cnn.com/2013/04/05/the-gitmo-guard-who-converted-to-islam/>

⁴². Abid-u-Rehman. Bagheecha –e-janat. Bahawalnagar: Khanqah Dar-ul-Aman.2012. p.2.

⁴³. Khalid Baig. The Accepted Whispers (Munajat-e-Maqbool). USA: Open Mind Press. P.2.

⁴⁴. Murphy Halliburton, Suicide: A Paradox of Development in Kerala. Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 33, No. 36/37 (Sep. 5-18, 1998), p. 2341-2345.

education and wealth. What is the answer? Actually, psychologically problems in our life occur because of wrong hierarchy of preferences and distorted sense of identity. Once an individual realizes his or her true identity, behavioral patterns improve. What is our true identity? We have already quoted a *Masnūn* Supplication reported by Imam Ahmad, ‘O Allah, I am Your slave, son of Your slave, son of Your female slave, my forelock is in Your hand, your command over me is forever executed and Your decree over me is just. . .’. This supplication embodies our true identity. Once this identity is distorted, the whole life gets disturbed. Modern hectic life revolves around machines, things (materialism) and ruthless work regime. In the cycle of machines and work routine we seem to have ignored ourselves and our relationship with Allah. In this context, the answer to the questions raised in the beginning is that belief in Allah saves us from such problems. So, we have to fix our belief in Allah. If people have true belief in Allah, they’ll seek his help in all affairs of life. Khalid Baig argues that ‘We should make du ‘a for big and small. . . We need du ‘a in all circumstances and all times. But in the dark ages that we are living in today, we need them even more’⁴⁵. Moreover, we have to rectify the direction and flow of love and personal preferences. They should not be totally linked with things (materialism), blind work routine and machines. They should be linked with the Creator and the Created. The *Masnūn* supplications are antidotes to the poison of self-pity, materialism and blind ambitiousness. They activate energetic consciousness and alertness which in turn deconditions distorted perceptions and behavior. So, the conditioned chaotic mental maps begin to disappear. Lenses are changed and our mind regains thankfulness to Almighty Allah. In the long run, we begin to gain high level emotional intelligence.

We can round off this a study with another *Masnūn* supplication which is used when our positive desires and wishes are fulfilled or when we see beautiful things or things we love.

الحمد لله الذي بنعمته تتم الصالحات⁴⁶

‘Praise be to Allah through whose mercy (and favours) all good things are accomplished-’

All beautiful and comfortable things and blessings are given by Allah . The authors thank Allah Almighty on completion of this article with the said supplication, ‘Praise be to Allah through whose mercy (and favors) all good things are accomplished.

Conclusion:

Masnūn supplications have great therapeutic powers because they cleanse our heart

⁴⁵. Saskia Gauthier, Julian Mausbach, Thomas Reisch and Christine Bartsch. Suicide tourism: a pilot study on the Swiss phenomenon Journal of Medical Ethics, Vol.41, No. 8 (August 2015),p. 611-617

⁴⁶. Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājāh, Sunan Ibn e Mājāh, Chapter Fazal ul Hamdin, Ḥadīth no: 3803.

and mind of unhealthy thoughts, pessimistic tendencies and negative attitudes towards life and people. In other words, they help us decondition or unlearn negative attitudes and behaviours that we pick or may pick from social, cultural and educational discourses around us. They usher in a deep personal change or paradigm shift. Therefore, using the Masnūn supplications frequently enhances our personal and social excellence. In short, these sweet and sincere expressions are linguistic and literary miracles in the sense that they are matchless jewels of beauty in the world of language and literature. Their subtle beauty can be perceived and appreciated by the faithful and by the truth-seekers who contemplate in the cosmos and in their communion with Allah, they say, ‘Our lord, you have not created (all) this without purpose, glory to You!’ For centuries, Allah’s true salves have been cherishing these time-honored precepts of gratefulness. Even today, these expressions impart rays of the same treasure of love to believers and seekers. As humans continue to discover undiscovered places on the earth and fathom out the known aspects of life, there are aspects in the Messenger of Allah’s (ﷺ) personality that the world or ages will continue to discover in newer contexts and shades.