81083 - How Long Should Qunut Be?

the question

What is the ruling on reciting Du`a Al-Qunut and making it last for more than twenty minutes, which includes Du`a that resembles how people ordinarily talk?

Summary of answer

The Du`a the Prophet taught us is a brief and concise Du`a that only takes a few minutes. This indicates that what is appropriate in Du`a Al-Qunut is to make it brief and to stick to concise phrases.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Is Qunut in Witr compulsory?

Qunut in Witr prayer is Sunnah and recommended; it was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and there are some Hadiths which give the wording for Du`a Al-Qunut.

It was narrated that Al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) taught me some words to say in Qunut of Witr:

“Allahumma ihdini fiman hadayta wa ‘afini fiman ‘afayta wa tawallani fiman tawallayta wa barik li fima a’tayta, wa qini sharra ma qadayta , fa innaka taqdi wa la yuqda ‘alayk, wa innahu la yadhillu man walayta wa la ya’izzu man ‘adayta, tabarakta Rabbana wa ta’alayta (O Allah, guide me among those whom You have guided, pardon me among those whom You have pardoned, turn to

me in friendship among those on whom You have turned in friendship, and bless me in what You have bestowed, and save me from the evil of what You have decreed. For verily You decree and none can influence You; and he is not humiliated whom You have befriended, nor is he honoured who is Your enemy. Blessed are You, O Lord, and Exalted.)." (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 1425 and At-Tirmidhi, 464. Classed as sound by At-Tirmidhi and as authentic by Ibn 'Abd Al-Barr in Al-Istidhkar, 2/285 and An-Nawawi in Al-Adhkar, 86)

In Sahih Ibn Khuzaymah (1100) it is narrated that the people, at the time of 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), used to pray against the disbelievers in the middle of Ramadan, (saying): "O Allah, destroy the disbelievers who seek to prevent people from following Your path and who disbelieve in Your Messengers and do not believe in the Day of Resurrection. Create disunity among them and instil fear in their hearts, and send Your wrath and punishment upon them, O God of truth."

Then he would send blessings on the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and pray for the Muslims for whatever he could of good, then he would pray for forgiveness for the believers. He said: And he used to say when he had finished praying against the disbelievers, sending blessings upon the Prophet, praying for forgiveness for the believing men and women and asking for good: "O Allah, You (alone) we worship and to You (alone) we pray and prostrate; for Your sake we strive and worship. We hope for Your mercy, our Lord, and we fear Your inevitable punishment, for Your punishment will surely befall the one whom You oppose." Then he would say takbeer and fall down in prostration.

Al-Albani said: "Its chain of narration is authentic."

Following the wording of Qunut of the Prophet

Paying attention to the Du`a that was narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), then from his Companions after him, is better and is preferable and brings more blessings than making up flowery supplications and invented award, for which there is no guarantee that they will be free from mistakes in meaning or that they will not be contrary to

proper etiquette when calling upon Allah, may He be exalted, and it will be more likely to keep one safe from showing off.

Al-Qadi ‘Iyad (may Allah have mercy on him) said: “Allah, may He be exalted, has given us permission to call upon Him and has taught Du`a in His Book to His creation, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) has taught his ummah how to offer Du`a. The Du`a of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is based on three things: proper knowledge of Tawhid (the Oneness of Allah), proper knowledge of the (Arabic) language and sincerity to the ummah. So no one should turn away from his Du`a (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).”

Al-Mawardi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Al-Hawi Al-Kabir (2/200): “What is narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is what is more liked by us than anything else, but whatever a person says in Qunut of ‘Du`as narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and otherwise is good for that purpose.” (Both texts were quoted by Shaykh Muhammad Isma‘il Al-Muqaddim in his essay: ‘Udu ila khayr Al-Huda, pp. 45-46]

Ibn ‘Uqayl Al-Hanbali (may Allah have mercy on him) narrated that ‘Du`as narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) should be what is recited as regular Wird, and anything added to it is by way of a concession. He said: “What is recommended in our view is that which was narrated by Al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “Allahumma ihdini…” – the well-known Hadith. He said: If one adds to that the words narrated from ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), “Allahumma inna nasta‘inuka… (O Allah, we seek Your help)…”, there is nothing wrong with that. (End quote the comments of Ibn Muflih on Al-Muharrar, 1/89)

Indeed, some of the scholars spoke sternly about the issue of adding to the ‘Du`as narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him, to the extent that Al-‘Izz ibn ‘Abd As-Salam (may Allah have mercy on him) said – as it says in his Fatawa, 87 –: “It is not appropriate to add anything to or subtract anything from what the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said in Qunut.” (End quote from ‘Udu ila Khayr Al-Huda, p. 45)

Ruling of adding to the wording of Qunut

There is nothing wrong with adding to the wording narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) in Qunut words that may be appropriate to the situation, because this is the issue of Du`a (supplication), and the issue of du a' is broad in scope, and adding to it is something that is allowed in Islam. Concerning the Du`a narrated from 'Umar, it says: ... and he would pray for whatever he could of good for the Muslims, then he would pray for forgiveness for the believers.

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Al-Majmu` (3/477-478):

"Shaykh Abu 'Amr ibn As-Salah said: The view of those who say that one should limit Du`a in Qunut to that which is narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is odd and is not acceptable; it is contrary to the opinion of the majority of our companions and in fact is contrary to the opinion of the majority of scholars. Al-Qadi 'Iyad narrated that the scholars unanimously agreed that there is no specific Du`a for Qunut... The author of Al-Hawi said: It may be done reciting the Du`a narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) or by saying other Du`as. (End quote)

It says in Al-Mawsu`ah Al-Fiqhiyyah (34/63): "He may add whatever he wants of Du`as that are permissible to say during prayer." (End quote)

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) said in Ash-Sharh Al-Mumti` (4/52):

"If he adds to that, there is nothing wrong with that, because it is the matter of Du`a (supplication)." (End quote)

Do not add to the wordings of Qunut as regular practice

It is important to note that although adding (phrases not narrated in the Sunnah) to a Du`a narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is permissible according to the majority of scholars, it is not permissible to take that as a regular practice, thus neglecting the

Sunnah and missing out on the blessing (barakah) of following the Sunnah as a result of that. Indeed, one should not always combine the two and regard them as being the same in status. Rather the worshipper should do that sometimes and not do it sometimes, according to the situation.

Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“Undoubtedly dhikr and Du`as are among the best kinds of worship. Acts of worship are based on confirmed religious texts and adhering to the Sunnah, not on whims and desires and innovation. The Du`as and dhikrs narrated from the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) are the best that anyone can find of dhikr and Du`a’, and the one who limits himself to them will be safe and sound. The beneficial results that they bring cannot be put into words or fully comprehended by man. Any other Dhikrs may be haram or they may be disliked. They may involve shirk which most people may not realise and which would take too long to explain in detail.

No one has the right to prescribe for people any kind of dhikr or Du`a that is not narrated in the Sunnah and make it an act of worship that people should perform regularly as they perform the five daily prayers regularly. Rather this is a kind of innovation in religion for which Allah has not given permission… As for adopting a Wird that is not prescribed in sharee’ah and dhikr that is not prescribed in sharee‘ah, this is something that is forbidden. Moreover the Du`as and Adhkar that are prescribed in sharee‘ah are the best and lead to achieving all aims and goals; no one turns away from them and adopts innovated and invented Adhkar except one who is ignorant, negligent or a wrong doer.” (End quote from Majmu` Al-Fatawa, 22/510- 511)

How long should Qunut be?

How long should Qunut be? Is it prescribed to make it lengthy or not?

If we study the Hadith of Al-Hasan ibn ‘Ali quoted above, we will find that the Du`a that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) taught him is a brief and concise Du`a that only takes a few minutes. This indicates that what is appropriate in Du`a Al-Qunut is to make it brief and to stick to concise phrases.

It says in Mughni Al-Muhtaj, 1/369:

“It says in Al-Majmu`, narrating from Al-Baghawi: It is disliked to make Qunut lengthy, like the first tashahhud. Al-Qadi Husayn said: If he makes Qunut longer than is usual, that is makruh.” (End quote)

In fact, an-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) indicated that combining the Du`a of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and the Du`a of ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) in Qunut comes under the heading of making it lengthy, and one should pay attention to the people’s circumstances and find out whether they approve of that.

He said: “Our companions said: It is recommended to combine the Qunut of ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) and that which is mentioned in the Hadith quoted above. If they are combined, then the more correct way is to recite the Qunut of ‘Umar second. And if he wants to keep it short, he should limit it to what is narrated in the Hadith. Rather it is recommended to combine the two if he is praying on his own or if he is an imam of people who approve of making it lengthy. And Allah knows best.” (Al-Majmu`, 3/478)

If combining the two Du`as mentioned, even though they are brief, is regarded as a kind of making it lengthy, then how about what is mentioned in your question of making it last for twenty minutes or thereabouts? What about those who offer Du`a for double that time or more, which many imams do who do not care about anything except giving a performance in front of people, Allah forbid? People have seen strange things of that nature nowadays.

The best approach in all of that – and Allah knows best – is to be moderate, for the best of affairs are those that are moderate; and Islam forbids making things difficult for people, especially if there is a custom of doing that every night.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked the following question in Fatawa ‘Ulama’ Al-BaladAl-Haram (152):

In Ramadan, some of the imams in the mosques make the Du`a long, and some make it short.

Which is the correct way?

He (may Allah have mercy on him) replied:

“The correct way is not to exaggerate or to fall short. Making it so long that it causes hardship for the people is forbidden. When the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) heard that Mu‘adh ibn Jabal was making the prayer very lengthy when he led his people in prayer, he got angry in exhortation in an unprecedented manner, and he said to Mu‘adh ibn Jabal: “O Mu‘adh, do you want to put people off their religion?” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 6106 and Muslim, 465)

So what should be done is adhering to the words narrated (in Hadith) or one may add more to that.

Undoubtedly making it very lengthy causes hardship to people and exhausts them, especially the weak ones among them. Among the people are those who have work ahead of them but they do not like to leave before the imam, although it is difficult for them to stay with the imam. So my advice to my brother imams is to adopt a moderate approach. By the same token, they should refrain from offering Du`a on occasion, so that the common folk do not think that Du`a is obligatory.” (End quote)

Reciting Du`a Al-Qunut in a manner like reciting Quran

With regard to what you asked about reciting Du`a Al-Qunut (in a manner like reciting Qur’an) and beautifying the voice in it, if he exaggerates about that and is preoccupied with it and makes it his main concern, and he uses it as a means of attracting people’s attention to him, or he crosses the boundary between Du`a and exhortation or speaks as people ordinarily do, as in the case of the person referred to in your question, and as is done by many imams who toy with the people’s worship and emotions – if the situation is as described, then it is objectionable and is disapproved by everyone who knows the teachings of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) and is rejected by everyone who has a sound nature.

Al-Kamal ibn Al-Humam Al-Hanafi (may Allah have mercy on him) said, when discussing the

Mu’adhdhins who used to repeat the Takbir behind the Imam – in his time –

“With regard to what you are accustomed to in this city, it is not unlikely that it is wrong, because it usually involves elongating the first syllable in the words “Allah” and “Akbar”, or the second syllable in the word “Akbar”, and that is wrong. Even if it does not involve that, they still raise their voices too much, more than is needed to convey the words, and they focus too much on their performance of tunes to show their proficiency in doing so, which has nothing to do with carrying out the act of worship properly.

It is obvious that the purpose behind this is to impress the people. It is as if he is saying: Look at my beautiful voice and how I come up with nice tunes, and that is wrong. I do not think that this would come from one who really understands the meaning of prayer and worship!

If this is what he said concerning the Mu’adhdhins, then what about the imams who do that in the prayer itself?! It is no wonder that he commented further and said:

Similarly, I think that coming up with nice tunes in Du`a, as some reciters do in our times, is not done by one who understands the real meaning of Du`a and asking of Allah. That is no more than a kind of playing about. If you saw someone making a request of a king and he put on this kind of performance, with his voice rising and falling as if singing, he would be accused of mockery and fooling about, because the appropriate way to ask is with beseeching and humility, not singing!” (End quote from Fat-h Al-Qadir by Kamal ibn Al-Humam, 2/225-226)

With regard to paying attention to making the voice beautiful, without exaggerating or pronouncing the letters differently from the correct Arabic pronunciation, it seems that this does not come under the heading of blameworthy singing referred to above.

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked about this and he replied in detail.

He (may Allah have mercy on him) was asked the following question, as it says in Fatawa Al-Balad Al-Haram (153):

Some imams of mosques try to soften people’s hearts and move them by changing the tone of voice sometimes during taraweeh prayer and in Du`a Al-Qunut, and I heard that some scholars disapprove of that. What is your opinion of that?

His reply was:

“What I think is that if this is done within Shar`i limits, without exaggerating, then there is nothing wrong with it. Hence Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari (may Allah be pleased with him) said to the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): If I had known that you were listening to my recitation, I would have beautified it for you.” If someone has a beautiful voice or recites in a way that softens people’s hearts, I do not think there is anything wrong with that. But exaggerating with regard to that so that he does this with every single word of the Qur’an, as mentioned in the question – I think that this is excessive and should not be done. And Allah knows best.” (End quote)

Reference: See [in Arabic] the essays Du`a Al-Qunut by Shaykh Bakr ibn ‘Abdullah Abu Zayd; `Udu ila Khayr Al-Huda by Shaykh Muhammad Isma`il Al-Muqaddim.

And Allah knows best.