

The Fig: Qur'an, Cross-Traditional Scripture, and Biomedical Perspectives

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This paper is dedicated to my wife, Prof. Dr. Munira Borhany, Consultant Haematologist & Oncologist-an exceptional clinician and scholar whose compassion, rigour, and integrity enrich the lives of her patients. Her steadfast dedication to patient care, and her inspiring commitment to academic excellence, are recognised worldwide and remain a constant source of motivation and inspiration. May Allah grant her a long, healthy life, bless her with continued strength and wellbeing, and increase her in honour and success in all she does.

Abstract: *The fig (Ficus carica) is a soft, bell-shaped fruit with a reddish, mildly sweet pulp containing numerous seeds, belonging to the mulberry family. Revered in both Qur'an and Biblical Literature, it is among the five fruits mentioned in the Qur'an and is symbolically linked to the Garden of Jannah. Islamic traditions, including Hadith, highlight its medicinal virtues, with historical figures such as Al Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as), Ibn Sirin and an eminent Ismaili Da'i, Philosopher and Great Doctor, Al Shaikh al-Raees, Bu Ali Sina (Avicenna) recommending it for a wide range of ailments. Nutritionally, figs are rich in dietary fibre, potassium, magnesium, vitamins A, B, and C, and antioxidants-particularly phenolic compounds-offering potential protection against oxidative stress, cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. Traditional and modern medicinal uses attribute to figs therapeutic properties such as aiding digestion, relieving piles, gout, and arthritis, improving respiratory conditions, supporting kidney and liver function, and enhancing skin health. Notably, fig leaves exhibit anti-diabetic activity, while fig-based compounds have shown anti-tumour potential in Japanese medical research. With a broad spectrum of bioactive components, figs serve as both a nourishing food and a natural remedy, aligning religious reverence with scientifically recognized health benefits. Beyond botany, the fig holds a distinctive place in sacred and healing traditions: the Qur'an opens Sūrah al-Tīn (95:1) with an oath "By the fig and the olive," and classical Tafsīr links this oath to blessings and benefit. Islamic devotional literature and wider Biblical Literature have likewise preserved an enduring association between the fruit and wellbeing. Nutritionally, figs provide water, natural sugars and dietary fibre, and contribute minerals such as potassium and magnesium. These attributes support their traditional use as a wholesome food and as a gentle aid for bowel regularity. Contemporary phytochemical research further characterises figs as a dietary source of phenolic compounds and related antioxidant activity, with analytical studies reporting measurable polyphenol levels that vary by cultivar and skin colour.*

Keywords: *Ficus carica; Anjeer Fig; Ayurveda; Qur'an, Nabawi medicine; constipation; Medicinal benefits, cancer prevention, diabetes management, digestive health.*

Qur'an says:

Wal-tyni wal-Zaytun

"By the fig and the olive."

In Shi'i (and broader Muslim) Tafsir, this ayah is read first as an oath or Qasam. The "Fig" and "Olive" are most straightforwardly taken as the two known fruits, sworn by due to their sign - value and the thematic lead-in to what follows in the Surah. However Shi'i commentaries also preserve non-literal inner meaning. Some exegetes link "Fig" and "Olive" to two regions - Damishq-Jerusalem, aligning them with the next oaths - Sinai; and Makkah. Symbolic-historical associations: Biblical reports connect "Fig" with covering of Adam (as) by fig leaves, and "Olive" with the olive branch marking the end of the flood of Nuh (as) i.e., moral-symbolic memory embedded in the oath. Alongside the outward sense, some Shi'i Ismaili Tafsir transmit a Tawil in which "the Fig and the Olive" are taken to refer to Al Imam al-Hasan (as) and Al Imam al-Husayn (as).

Fig in its original form is a soft, bell shaped fruit whose pulp is reddish and has mild sweet taste. The sweet soft reddish pulp contains numerous crunchy seeds. Fig belongs to the mulberry species. It is available in various colours. It is one of the five fruits mentioned in the Qur'an, others being grapes, olives, pomegranates, and dates. Qur'an mentions the fig tree in the Garden of Jannah. In fact, fig is also the most discussed Biblical fruit [1] whose benefits are amazing. According to Biblical Literature, it is said that fig leaves provided the first clothing for human beings. Fig is also discussed in the preliminary Ayah 1 of Surah 95 [2] which confirms its medicinal values and advantages.

Hadith Literature provides us with an event in this regard conveyed by Abu Darda: [3]

"Someone presented figs to Rasulullah (S) and he, in turn, distributed it amongst his Ash'ab. He (S) mentioned its resemblance to the fruit of Jannah, where all fruits will be seedless".

He (S) further complemented its value by stating:

"Eat it as it cures various diseases among which are Piles, Gout, and Arthritis (curable rheumatism)."

Ibn Sirin, [4] the celebrated Muslim occult scientist, informed:

"Figs, if seen in dreams, denote wealth and prosperity."

The various benefits of fig are listed among the endless mercies of Allah. Out of an extended range of its medicinal benefits, few are listed below:

It is high composition dietary food and a rich source of magnesium as well as potassium. Moreover, they are relatively high in vitamins A, B, and C and low in calories, amounting to 50 calories each.

Another advantage of their consumption was advised by Moula Abi Abdillah Al-Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (as): [5]

"Eating figs eliminates foul breath."

A raw fig, approximately of 65 grams, contains 77.5 percent water and yields 0.8 g protein, 0.2 g total fat, 23 mg calcium, 0.4 mg iron, 50 I.U. vitamin A, 2.1 g dietary fibre, 3.8 mcg foliate, 0.3 mg niacin, and 1 mg vitamin C. It also helps to reduce some forms of cancer. Furthermore, it is the best food to maintain health in the long run. According to experts: [6] Choosing figs more frequently as food is very beneficial for your health. Moreover, according to the California Fig Advisory Board: [7]

It has been proved that the antioxidants in fig protect against several diseases. In a study done by the University of Scranton, it was determined that dried figs had a much higher level of the phenol makeup, which is rich in antioxidants. Phenol is used as an antiseptic to kill micro-organisms. The quantity of phenol present in figs is much higher than that in other fruits and vegetables. Moreover, it is considered as an ideal food for losing weight and is also known to provide strength and energy. The nervous system is highly benefitted due to the phosphorous content of the fig. The above mentioned reasons make it extremely beneficial for everyone's consumption, especially for athletes and children.

The eminent and renowned Shi'i Ismaili Da'i, Philosopher, intellectual Doctor of Medicine and Surgery, Al-Shaikh al-Raees, Bu Ali Ibn Sina (Avicenna), recommended: [8]

"Fig facilitate the treatment of constipation, liver problems, urinary problems, heartburns, chest pains, piles, and epilepsy".

To eliminate piles completely, it is recommended to consume about five figs early in the morning regularly for about four to ten months. It also benefits pregnant and nursing women in reducing acidity, rheumatism, and helps the brain. Furthermore, its ash when combined with oil is used to treat pimples, skin pigmentation and whiten teeth. Its extract also provides similar effects. For treating wounds, it is used combined with hot milk.

Fig therapy has been recommended by the Japanese Dr. Kochi [9]. He is known for using figs for its medicinal value and has treated around twenty kinds of cancers with it. Thus it is genuinely a blessed and beneficial fruit. Fig contains proteolysis enzyme that is considered to aid digestion and is extensively used by the pharmaceutical industry. Due to its high alkalinity it is highly recommended to people who wish to quit smoking. It can dissolve and expel the stones from the kidney and urinary bladder.

- 1. Those suffering from kidney failure, who are advised kidney transplantation and dialysis, if a diet containing solely of fig is taken, In sha Allah by the order of Allah al-Shafi, the sick organs can be rejuvenated and restored to a stable condition.*
- 2. It is an excellent nourishing tonic and provides protection against the effects of toxins.*
- 3. It is useful in pharyngitis, chest congestion, heaviness and bronchitis.*
- 4. It is also useful for liver and spleen ailments.*
- 5. It is an excellent expectorant.*
- 6. During fevers, if it is chewed, the patient obtains relief from the dryness of the mouth. It clears the obstruction of the liver and gall-bladder and relieves inflammation of the kidney and urinary bladder.*
- 7. It clears intestinal obstructions.*
- 8. It acts as a carminative and expels the gases from the intestines.*
- 9. It is also useful in colic and is an excellent diuretic.*
- 10. It is useful for mental illness if it is taken regularly with syrup made from 'Methi' (Fenugreek) seeds.*
- 11. Mixture of Figs and honey is beneficial in treating cough and Bronchial Asthma.*

12. Bake dry figs till they are adequately roasted, crush it to make the powder. The powder is used for dental ailments and regular use of this powder removes different stains. Similarly, this powder can also be used for clearing spots on the face and skin.
13. Fig leaves have anti-diabetic properties and can reduce the amount of insulin needed by those who take daily insulin injection. Thus it helps widely in Diabetes Mellitus.
14. Figs and its syrup, benzaldehyde, have helped to shrink tumours, according to Japanese studies.
15. It also serves as a laxative and has anti-ulcer and antibacterial powers.
16. It contains the digestive enzymes for all the three components of the diet that are proteins, carbohydrates, and fats.

Dr. M. Laiq Ali Khan, an eminent scholar, has stated the following about figs: [10]

"No reference to the existence of figs is available before the advent of Muslims in India. Therefore, it is considered that either the Mughals or the Mongols from Asia Minor or the Muslim physicians introduced it to India. Figs of Turkey and Greece are famous. A native of western Asia and the Mediterranean area, fig is one of the earliest fruits which is known to mankind."

Fig is indeed a miraculous creation of Allah and truly a blessing for mankind. There are many more added benefits of Figs than listed above for how great Figs are for our overall wellbeing. I hope we all benefit from this information and incorporate figs into our diet.

Fig in Ayurvedic Medicine:

In seven thousand five hundred years old Ayurvedic health practice, fig is widely referred to as Anjeer and is described in modern Ayurvedic summaries under fruit/dietetic categories (often linked to the classical name Phalgu in such summaries). It is generally profiled as: Madhura (sweet) rasa, Guru (heavy) and Snigdha (unctuous/moist) guna, Sita (cooling) virya, and Madhura vipaka, with a tendency to pacify Vata and Pitta when used appropriately. Traditional Ayurvedic indications (as commonly summarised today) include:

Constipation/bowel sluggishness (dietary support via fibre and moistening quality) and hemorrhoidal discomfort where constipation is contributory.

Sore throat, cough, and mild respiratory irritation, often as a soothing dietetic adjunct.

Debility/fatigue and convalescence, reflecting its nutritive character in diet.

Common modes of use described in contemporary practice include soaked figs (taken as a simple dietary measure for constipation), and lehya/jam-like preparations combining figs with honey and mild spices for recuperation and throat comfort.

Cautions (good practice): because figs contain natural sugars, portion size matters for those monitoring glycaemic intake; additionally, some individuals may experience sensitivity to fig's latex-like sap or gastrointestinal discomfort with excess intake. Therapeutic use for medical conditions should be individualised and clinician-guided, particularly where insulin/anti-diabetic medicines, anticoagulants, or significant comorbidities are involved.

Fig (Ficus carica) emerges as a nutritionally valuable fruit with deep cultural and scriptural resonance and a long record of traditional medicinal use. The most defensible, evidence-aligned benefits relate to dietary fibre-supported digestive regularity, mineral contribution, and antioxidant potential linked to phenolic compounds. Ayurvedic descriptions of Anjeer as

sweet and cooling, used as a supportive food in constipation, throat irritation, and convalescence, align broadly with these nutritional and phytochemical features. However, claims extending to definitive treatment of serious diseases should be presented cautiously and, where relevant, restricted to adjunctive dietary support unless substantiated by robust clinical evidence. Accordingly, figs can be recommended as part of a balanced diet, with mindful portioning and appropriate medical oversight for individuals with diabetes, allergies, or complex medication regimens. Some traditional narratives extend to serious diseases, the most consistent support at present relates to nutritional density, fibre-linked gastrointestinal benefits, and antioxidant potential. Therapeutic use is therefore best framed as adjunctive and evidence-informed, with attention to individual risks (including glycaemic load, latex-related sensitivity, and potential drug-diet interactions) and with clinical care guiding any claims that go beyond nutrition and supportive symptom management.

Bibliography:

- 1). *The Bible*
- 2). *Al Qur'an, Ayah 1, Surah 95*
- 3). *Hadith*
- 4). *Abu Bakr Muḥammad ibn Sirin, c. 33–110 AH / 653–728 CE) was a leading Muslim scholar of Basra from the generation of the Tabiun. Renowned for his piety and sharp legal and ethical judgment, he was also a transmitter of reports and an influential voice in early Islamic learning circles. He is best remembered in popular tradition for Tabir al-Ruya (the interpretation of dreams). Many later works on dream interpretation are associated with his name-most famously compilations circulated as Tafsir al-Aḥlām or Tabir al-Ruya.*
- 5). *"Tib al-Imam al-Sadiq (as)", Beirut, it is a work in the broader Shi'i "medicine of the Imams" (Tibb al-Aimmah) Nabawi-medicine literature: a compiled collection of narrations and attributed dicta (dietary guidance, hygiene, herbal remedies, and general health counsel) associated with Al Imam Jafar al-Ṣadiq (d. 148 AH / 765 CE). In the academic literature, this material is generally treated as part of a traditional hadith-based medical genre that also helped shape the imam's image in popular religion.*
- 6). *Dr. Oliver Alabaster, Director: Institute for Disease Prevention, George Washington University Medical Centre*
- 7). *Published Report by the California Fig Advisory Board*
- 8). *Al-Shaikh al-Raess, Bu Ali Ibn Sina*
- 9). *Dr. Kochi, Japan: When people refer to "fig therapy by the Japanese Dr. Kochi," they are most often (based on the traceable scientific record) pointing to Dr. Mutsuyuki Kochi, who is listed as affiliated with Ichijo-Kai Hospital (Ichikawa, Chiba, Japan) in a classic line of work on fig extracts and benzaldehyde.*
- 10). *Figs, Dr. M. Laiq Ali Khan, Director, Shah Faisal Institute of Hadith & Medical Sciences, Kasganj.*

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