

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE OF FRUITS IN ISLAM: A STUDY OF QURANIC TEACHINGS AND ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE

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Abstract

Fruits in the lives of humans and animals occupy an unquestionable strategic position in the teachings of Islam as they remain a source of nourishment and nutritional value, economic buoyancy, a systemic mechanism for repairs of body damaged tissues, duration for environmental landscaping, forms of beautification and thankful makers for those who use them. The existence of fruits such as figs, dates, pomegranates, grapes etc. has therefore examines and establishes their socio-economic and religious importance of fruits from the perspective of Islam using a qualitative doctrinal research methodology as the study relies strongly on the primary sources of Islam, and classical Islamic literature and other related contemporary works. The research reveals fruits serve multiple purposes and advantages for humans in particular; religious verbal usages for Satanic's bittering sorrows and means for humans to ailments, resources and rehabilitation for his society; and as economic cultivation for security purpose. Some fruits/flowers are of importance as well, in paradise. The research reveals the problems farmers are not receiving enough care and are under attacked by humans. The paper concludes after discussions that Islam encourages and promotes cultivation, distribution, consumption of fruits are paramount to humans and their environment as they contribute to economic development. The paper recommends that Islamic schools and institutions should continually promote awareness of Qur'anic and Hadith teachings on fruits, agriculture/production and environmental conservation.

Keywords

*Socio-economic,
 Religious Importance,
 Fruits in Islam.*

1. Introduction

Agriculture and horticulture form a considerable thematic discussion in the Glorious Qur'an. For example, a thematic study of nutrition in the Qur'an identifies seventy four (74) verses from 4 basic directly related to food and nutrition, many dwell in various verses on crop production, fruits and agriculture. Abdollah in his own research identified 137 Qur'anic verses that specifically mention nutrition, plants, livestock. It references directly related to agriculture, in addition to the numerous 54 chapters (Surahs) that expatiate on plants, products, crops, harvest and other agricultural operational systems. The Qur'an portrays fruits as Allah's signs: *"... And we produce gardens of grapes, olives and pomegranates, similar yet different. Look at their fruits when they bear fruits and ripen indeed, in that are signs for a people who believe."*

Aside the nutritional values, fruits are a catalyst reflection about spirituality, economic prosperity, environmental sustainability and decorative ornamentation. Islam law encourages ownership, trade, cultivation and charitable deed, Zakat and Sadaqah of which fruits remain same.

Kahf states that Islam can help mankind achieve sustainable development through Zakat and Sadaqah. Khaldun associates this with agriculture, commerce and industry as the foundation of economic prosperity. Consumption of fruits and giving the one thereof on the day of harvest as voluntary charitable (or charitable gifts (Sadaqah)) for the giver. The Prophet (PBUH) strongly recommended cultivation and giving out of money from the agriculture produce.

"If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person, or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as charitable gift (Sadaqah) for him."

The study examines the significance of fruits from the perspective of Islam and Islamic law and also highlights

the economic contributions, the ordinance and structures, its religious relevance, health benefits and legal implications but within the Islamic sociological background.

2. Research Method

Relevant materials were gathered from both primary and secondary sources of Islam and the study therefore adopts a qualitative and doctrinal method. The primary sources include the Glorious Qur'an, the Prophetic Ahadith, and classical works of Islamic jurisprudence. Meanwhile, secondary sources include authorities on Islamic studies, Islamic law, journal articles, theses and academic publications that discuss agriculture and food in general.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

Examine the religious importance of fruits in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Analyze the socio-economic contributions of fruits within Islamic society.

Explore Islamic jurisprudential principles governing fruit cultivation and trade.

Assess the role fruits play in promoting social welfare and environmental sustainability, decoration and beautification.

Explore the relevance of Islamic teachings on fruits to contemporary socio-economic development and food security.

3. Literature Review

Many scholars of Islam have discussed food, agriculture and cultivation. Mohammad admits that Islamic law promotes public welfare (maslaha) through economic activities that preserve life and ensure human well-being. Food, he observes, however, derives its importance from fruits as nutritional value requiring in every human developmental stage. Izzi Ben closely posited that environmental stewardship is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings concerning land use and agriculture. Mohammad also linked economic activities with Izzi Ben's ideas, pointing to economic activities for preservation of life and human well-being.

This study therefore seeks to fill the gap by specifying on the importance of fruits as nutritional value, economic development, and legal and spiritual relevance of fruits to humanity.

4. Theoretical Framework

Life is sacred and must therefore be preserved. Classical scholars like Ahmad Al-Ghazali, Ibn Ashur, al-Shatibi and others maintained that Islamic law tends to preserve: religion, life, intellect, lineage and property. The objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shari'ah) is the theoretical framework of this research. Life is preserved when food is consumed; and of course, food cannot be consumed except that it is cultivated. Fruit is part of what humans consume to give strength, energy and replenish some tissues of the body, thereby improving the consumers' health status. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) stipulates that:

Body growth and tissue repair depend on nutrients such as: proteins, vitamins, and minerals, and that fruits are important sources of vitamins and minerals, essential for these functions.

Fruits are essential in protecting our bodies from diseases; rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds that help protect against heart diseases, diabetes, certain cancers and bowel diseases.

In corroborating Howard's assertion, Wang opines that:

Fruits are major sources of potassium, magnesium, fibre and polyphenols, nutrients strongly linked to cardiovascular health and longevity; and that regular fruit and vegetable consumption is associated with lower risk of death from cardiovascular disease, cancer and respiratory diseases.

5. Discussion

Fruits as Signs of Allah's Mercy

Soil is a natural phenomenon that produces divergence fruits and crops in conjunction with water and other nutrients which demonstrates Allah's divine wisdom and the expository mercy for mankind and other creatures. Without soil, fruits cannot germinate proportionately and such reflects, as a sign of Allah's divinity and eternal existence. Allah states:

And we send down from the sky rain in measure and cause it to soak in the earth (Q 23:18)

Fruits in Paradise

Rewards shall be accrued to the believers have committed themselves solely to Oneness worship and also follow His dictates. Different fruits are listed in the Qur'an which includes among many others: Olives, pomegranates, fig, grapes, dates, bananas etc. In this regards, the listing does not just stand as fruits but also as a source of spiritualism but as part of believer's rewards in the hereafter. Qur'an says:

In both of them are fruits and date-palms; and pomegranates

In confirmation and affirmation of the above quotation, Q 2:25 specifically mentions fruits in general, such fruits humans were provided with in this world will have a similitude of same but with a higher grade of difference, better than those (fruits) consumed while living in this world.

And give good news to those who believe and do righteous deeds that they will have gardens beneath which rivers flow. Whenever they are provided with fruit therefrom as provision, they will say, 'This is what we were provided with before.' And it is given to them in resemblance. And they will have therein purified spouses, and they will abide therein eternally.

Fruits as Food Security

Food security for every nation is a paramount need for the entire populace of human race. Aside fruits' supply of essential and required vitamins and minerals for healthy growth, the availability of fruits in humans' nutritional requirements complete a balanced diet. The cultivation of fruits, therefore, contributes to availability food and nutritional security as codified in the primary objectives of Islamic law (Maqāsid al-Shari'ah); in relation to the preservation of life. Jamnadass (2013), McMullin et al (2019); and Antonio Guterres (2021) excercerated that: fruits are indispensable components of food and nutrition security because they enhance food availability, dietary diversity and access to essential nutrients are continuously renewed, beautiful in appearance, and incomparable in taste to worldly fruits.

Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) confirmed that fruits are among delights of Paradise:

The first group to enter Paradise will have faces shining like the full moon... their vessels will be of gold, and their combs of gold and silver... and they will have therein fruits and whatever they desire.

In abundance and many never seen fruits will be available. The Lote tree is a fruit tree in Paradise where under the shade; a rider could travel for a century without having a cross over. The prophet said:

Indeed, in Paradise, there is a tree under whose shade; a rider could travel for one hundred years without crossing it (al-Bukhari & Muslim)

Fruit as Environmental Security and Protection

Fruits and flowers trees serve as environmental security, a means of barricade, decoration, natural phenomena that increase the psychological being of humans. Besides other environmental usages, according to Omotayo who argues that indigenous fruit trees contribute not only to food and nutrition security, but also to ecological sustainability through biodiversity conservation and sustainable land-use systems. Fruit trees help maintain environmental resilience and support ecosystem health. Furthermore, fruit trees such as cashew, mango, tangerine, banana, and orange trees are prominently use in Nigeria by landowners and possessors, known in common law as right of exclusive possession, thereby preventing or excluding other users from encroaching, trespassing, alienating, transferring or other illegal usages. Md Horrul Azri Ponari et al linked agricultural biodiversity and fruit production with environmental protection which include: fruit-tree-cultivation, promotion of ecological sustainability, environmental stewardship and resilience of food systems. Stewardship meant by Ponari may include shade opportunity, serving as charitable for the public which is free from commercial value making.

Charlie et al's work demonstrate that fruits or fruit species strengthen environmental security by supporting resilient ecosystems aside their multifunctional forest resources that contribute to biodiversity conservation.

Fruits and Their Socio-Economic Value

Income-generation and Employment Opportunities

Planting and cultivation of fruit trees are a means of economic buoyancy, both locally and internationally, for individuals and groups as well, as it provide livelihood for farmers and their employers, traders who engage in selling of fruits, transporters who move them in their conveyances' means from farm to market and those who export them; especially to countries that have poor (er) agricultural landscaping or good soil system. Saudi Arabia, for example, imports large quantities of fruits because its harsh desert climate, water scarcity and very limited arable land constrain domestic agricultural production. Consequently, the kingdom relies on fruit imports from several countries, to satisfy consumers' demand and ensure food security.

In view of the above therefore, countries like: Egypt supplies citrus and grapes, South Africa imports citrus fruits, apples, pears and grapes. India imported in 2024, edible fruits and nuts; Turkey also supplies citrus fruits and also Spain and Morocco.

The act of importation creates employment for many workers in fruit production, likewise the international countries involve enjoy tax and stamp duty in addition to visa, passport, accommodation and other logistics involved while trading on fruits. The legal or law aspects here is on registration, production date, expiry date, the content etc. Which must have been registered under National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and

Control NAFDAC. NAFDAC regulations therefore, prohibits the importation of food and drugs and marketing of unregistered, adulterated, contaminated or unwholesome food products, and empowers the agency to recall, seize and destroy such products.

Al-Zuhayli explains that Islamic law prohibits all forms of commercial deception and requires traders to disclose defects in goods. According to Usmani, trade in defective goods without disclosure is unlawful because it violates the Islamic law principles of honesty and fair dealing. Prophet (P.B.U.H) said:

"Whoever deceives us is not one of us."

The Hadith remains the basis for Islamic commercial law as it is applicable to the buying and selling of counterfeit, adulterated, expired, under-standard food, fruits and production in general, which is applicable to importation and exportation of fruits. The glorious Qur'an condemns acts of selling counterfeit, expired or sub-standard trade or commercial items. It says:

O you who believe, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly, but only (in lawful) business by mutual consent - Q 4:29

Islamic law prohibits any form of deception, frivolities, exploitation, substandard, counterfeit, deceitful acts and other dishonest transactions that involve fruit food and other domestic human use items, including all forms of agricultural production. It is hereby sectioned that the defect(s) in the product must be disclosed to the buyers.

Fruits and Islamic Social Welfare

One of the objectives of Islamic law (Maqāsid al-Shari'ah) is social welfare. Islam as a divine religion, promotes unity, solidarity, care and humanitarian concerns for all and sundry. In an advance to achieve this, Islam established Zakah, Sadaqah and waqf institutions. Fruits, such as: Dates and grapes are Zakatable, especially dried as raisins. Maliki and Hanafi supported the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H):

There is no Zakah on less than five "Awsuq" of dates or grain

According to the majority, five "awsuq" is equivalent to approximately 653 kg; though, Hanafi school extends Zakah liability to a wider range of agricultural produce. From an Islamic legal perspective, payment of Zakah on fruits serves as a form of social welfare as it provides food for the poor and the needy; it enhances food security; a means of redistribution of equitable wealth; an avenue for poverty reduction, a means to cement social cohesion, unity, love and brotherhood. Crops, trees that produce fruits, seeds, grains etc. attract rewards of charity for the planters as birds, humans, ants etc benefit from the consumption.

The Prophet Said:

No Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, except that it is regarded as charity for him.

Major Fruits mentioned in Qur'an

There are several fruits created by Allah. In the Quran a number of them are mentioned in different chapters and verses. Below are some of them.

S/N	Name of Fruits (English)	Arabic	Chapters	Verses
	Dates	(Al-Nakhl) or (Al-Tamr)	Q 6: Q 6: Q 16: Q 19: Q 36: Q 50:	99 141 11 25 34 10
	Grapes	al-'Ināb	Q 6: Q 6: Q 16: Q 17: Q 18: Q 36:	99 141 11 91 32 34
	Olives	(al-Zaytūn)	Q 6: Q 6: Q 16: Q 23: Q 24: Q 80: Q 95:	99 141 11 20 35 29 1
	Pomegranates	(al-Rummān)	Q 6:	99,

			Q 6:	141
			Q 55:	68
	Bananas	(Talh)	Q 56:	29
	Figs	(al-Tīn)	Q 95:	1
	Fruits' name in general	(al-Fākīhah)	Q 2:	25
			Q 36:	57
			Q 47:	15
			Q 55:	52
			Q 55:	68
			Q 56:	20
			Q 77:	42

Finding of the Study

The study reveals reverts the following:

Fruits cultivation as a means to giving charity to Allah's creatures that attracts charity.

Fruits play a paramount role such as food security and an avenue for enhancement of health.

The Glorious Qur'an and Hadith mention, explain and clarify the importance of fruits to humans and their environment and other animals as well.

Plants, trees and fruits serve as security for human's environment and their usages extend to securing one's possession/ownership especially land.

Under Islamic law trade, fairness, justice and proper commercial transaction, without cheating, gambling or deceit should be practised.

6. Conclusion

The research exponents that fruits, as foods, occupy an integral part or portion of the Glorious Qur'an; and as well as Hadith, being only as nutritional value but as instrument of spiritual growth, an avenue to expect consumption of fruits in the Paradise, social, wealth, economic development; environmental stewardship, a means of income for individuals, public and countries, and for the purpose of securing and retainment of ownership of land. Legality of production and standard commercialisation of standard fruits without deceitful act, or supply of counterfeit or substandard fruits.

Fundamentally, Islamic Jurisprudence establishes that production, cultivation, distribution and especially consumption, from Islamic perspective on fruits remains highly revered, relevant, important and assist tremendously as food and environmental security for human race, and important to animals as well; for sustainable global agricultural development.

7. Recommendations

The following valuable recommendations are made, hence the contextual discussion:

All Islamic oriented institutions: primary, junior and Senior Secondary Schools and tertiary institutions must promote the teachings of Qur'an and Hadith on Agriculture, production of foods (fruits).

Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) and other equivalent Commissions globally should introduce into the curriculum of Islamic Studies, the awareness of fruits and immense of agricultural production.

All tiers of government should support farmers and agricultural fruits production while government establish new fruits production and processing companies.

Islamic Shariah Courts should enact laws that prohibit all manners of corruption in fruits (food) production.

Farmers should be encouraged to embark on soil texture test before planting, in order to have the best results while harvesting.

Islamic scholars and institution should encourage individual and group farmers, including the Companies producing fruits to give out their compulsory charitable dues (Zakah) to the deserving recipients or beneficiaries.

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