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Interpretation and Medicinal Potential of Yaqtin - *Lagenaria siceraria* (Molina) Standley (Family-Cucurbitaceae): A Review

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Abstract: In the present paper an attempt has been made to compile an up-to-date review article on Yaqtin [*Lagenaria siceraria* (Molina) Standley (Family Cucurbitaceae)] covering views of Islamic Scholars and folk medicinal uses. The word *Yaqtin* has been mentioned once in the holy Qura'n in one sura, As-Saaffat, with reference to Prophet Yunus (Jonah) Alaissalam. Almost all the Islamic Scholars have interpreted *Yaqtin* in the meaning of creeping plant or gourd (*L. siceraria*) in their commentaries (Tafaseer) on the Holy Qur'an. The gourd is one of the excellent fruits gifted by God to human beings having composition of all the essential constituents that are required for good health. Its various parts have been widely used in traditional medicine. They have also been used as folk remedies to treat various ailments such as skin irritation, jaundice, diabetes, ulcers, fever, asthma and other bronchial disorders. The fruit is diuretic, tonic for the liver and brain, antipyretic, aphrodisiac, purgative, cooling, excellent remedy for heart problems, urinary disorders. The fruit juice is helpful in constipation. It helps in losing weight quickly, because of its high dietary fiber and low fat and cholesterol content. Its seeds are vermifuge.

Key words: Yaqtin · Lagenaria Siceraria · Traditional Uses · Cardio-Protective

INTRODUCTION

The Holy Qur'an is the last revealed Book and the only complete Divine Guidance that exists in the world for mankind [1]. It is the eternal and everlasting basis of Islam. It contains signs and verses which have been leading people of different ages and of different academics and intellectual background to believe in Islam. The Holy Quran, again and again, invites mankind to study in depth and ponder over the creations of Allah. Islam, being an international and universal religion, is a complete code of life. The Holy Quran from the very start has a claim that it covers every aspect of life and is full of wisdom [2]. Almighty Allah says, "We have neglected nothing in the Book, "Al-An'aam:6:38" [3].

Lagenaria siceraria (Cucurbitaceae) fruit commonly known as bottle gourd is used as a vegetable in India. The fruit is traditionally used as a cardiotonic, aphrodisiac and general tonic, liver tonic and against liver disorders and pain, anti-inflammatory, expectorant and diuretic agent. Further, antihepatotoxic activity of fruit pulp, analgesic and anti-inflammatory activity of fruit juice and hypolipidimic activity of the fruit have also been evaluated. Recently, the antioxidant activity of ethanolic extract of epicarp and fresh juice of *L. siceraria* fruit have been reported [4].

Gourd (louki) was favorite and cultural vegetable among Babylons. In Hebrew it is called Oqtellon. The Arabic word *Yaqtin* is possibly of Hebrew origin [5]. It has been mentioned once in the Quran. The Holy Quran says, "*And We caused a plant of gourd to grow over him* [3].

There are two types of food all over the world, first vegetables and second non-vegetables. Holy prophet Muhammad (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) used both foods to tell his followers that they are

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equally good. Louki was a favorite vegetable of Holy prophet Muhammad (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) [5].

1. Narrated Ishaq bin 'Abdullah bin Abu Talha: I heard Anas bin Malik saying, "A tailor invited Allah's Apostle (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) to a meal which he had prepared." Anas bin Malik said, "I accompanied Allah's Apostle (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) to that meal. He served the Prophet with bread and soup made with gourd and dried meat. I saw the Prophet (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) taking the pieces of gourd from the dish." Anas added, "Since that day I have continued to like gourd" [6].
2. Narrated Anas: I was a young boy when I once was walking with Allah's Apostle (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam). Allah's Apostle entered the house of his slave tailor and the latter brought a dish filled with food covered with pieces of gourd. Allah's Apostle (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) started picking and eating the gourd. When I saw that, I started collecting and placing the gourd before him. Then the slave returned to his work. Anas added: I have kept on loving gourd since I saw Allah's Apostle (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) doing what he was doing [6].
3. Narrated Anas bin Malik: A tailor invited the Prophet (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) to a meal which he had prepared and I went along with the Prophet (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam). The tailor presented barley bread and soup containing gourd and cured meat. I saw the Prophet (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) picking the pieces of gourd from around the dish and since then I have kept on liking gourd [7].
4. Anas bin Malik reported: A tailor invited Allah's Messenger (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) to a meal which he had prepared. Anas bin Malik said: I went along with Allah's Messenger (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) to that feast. He presented to Allah's Messenger (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) barley bread and soup containing pumpkin and sliced pieces of meat. Anas said: I saw Allah's Messenger (Sallallaho Alayhi Wassallam) going after the pumpkin round the dish, so I have always liked the pumpkin since that day [8].

History of Bottle Gourd: Bottle gourd or calabash gourd has been reported to be the only cultigens most widely dispersed and common both to the Old World and New World since ancient historic times. Archaeological reports on the occurrence of this pan tropical species were recorded from several regions of the world, viz. Ocampo cave, Tamaulipas (7000 BC), Coxcatlan cave, Tehucan valley (5000 BC), sites near Ancon, Peru (2700 BC), Njora river cave, East Africa (1000 BC),a fifth dynasty Egyptian tomb (2500 BC), Spirit cave, Thailand (7000 BC) and China (2000 BC). According to Decker-Walters *et al.* (2001), molecular analysis suggested the dispersal of bottle gourd fruits from Africa to Asia and the Americas during pre-Columbian times, followed by independent domestication on all three continents [9]. Asian bottle gourds have been discovered in China and Japan by approximately 8,000-9,000 years ago and it is likely that the earliest domestication of the bottle gourd occurred someplace in Asia, some three to four thousand years before that. [10].

Taxonomic Aspect:

Scientific name	:	*Lagenaria siceraria* (Molina) Standley
Family	:	Cucurbitaceae
English Name	:	Bottle Gourd
Quranic name	:	Yaqtin
Arabic Name	:	Yaqtin, Daba, Qar'a
Sanskrit		Alabu
Hindi		Lauki or ghia
Urdu		Lauki, Kaddu

Description: Annual, climber or trailer. Tendril 2-fid. Stem densely hairy. Leaves palmate, broadly ovate, reniform or sub-orbicular, cordate, obscurely 3-5-lobed, lobes rounded, 3.0-23 x 4-23 cm; petiole 2.7-13 cm long with a pair of small apical lateral conical glands. Both male and female flowers solitary; male penduncle as long as petiole, female somewhat shorter. Corolla white, petals of male flower obovate, apiculate, 2.7-4.5 cm long, 1.8-3.7 cm broad. Staminal filaments 3-4 mm long; anthers oblong, coherent, included; thecae triplicate. Petals of female flowers c. 30 x 24 mm. Ovary ovoid, villous, 11-17 mm long, 6-8 mm across. Fruit large, subglobose, ellipsoid, lageniform, sometimes biventricose, green or greenish-yellow, hairy, indehiscent. Seeds white, oblong, compressed, slightly tapered, slightly 2-horned on the shoulders, 7-20 mm long.

Distribution: Geographically bottle gourd is a pantropical species of Asian and African origin. It is extensively cultivated in the plains of Pakistan all the year round for its young and tender fruits eaten as popular domestic vegetable called *Lauki* or *Kaddu* [11]. It also occurs throughout India and is now cultivated worldwide [12].

Tale of Prophet Yunus Allaihissalam with Reference to Yaqtin: Part of the details of the event relating to Prophet Yunus (Jonah) Alaihissalam, has been mentioned in the Qur'an while some of it has its proof in reports of Hadith and history. According to these sources, the people of Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam lived in the well-known place, Nineveh near Mousel, Iraq. Their number has been given as more than one hundred thousand in the Holy Qur'an. It was for their guidance that Allah Ta'ala sent Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam. He preached to them for a long time, but they paid no heed to his words. Allah Ta'ala asked him to warn these people that Divine punishment was going to overtake them within three days. The Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam made the announcement before his people. He then moved out of his dwelling place during the night as Divinely commanded. When morning came, the Divine punishment, in the form of a cloud-like black smoke started hovering over their heads tending to be descending down closer to them. They left homes, came out on open grounds, women, children and animals all huddled there. Wearing rags, weeping, repenting and begging refuge from Divine punishment, they made the whole area resound with a massive collective plaint. Allah Ta'ala accepted their repentance and removed the punishment from them. On the other side, Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam was waiting outside the township expecting that the Divine punishment will be about to hit the people there. When the punishment stood removed, he started worrying about himself for his people would now declare him to be a liar because he had announced that the punishment would strike within three days. According to the law of those people, if a person whose lying was known did not produce a witness in his support, he would be killed. Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam was concerned apprehending that he would be declared a liar and killed. At that time, he naturally grieved that he had made the announcement as Divinely commanded and now it was because of the announcement he made he would be declared a liar. He started off with the intention of getting out of that town until he reached the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. There he saw a boat being boarded by people. They recognized Yunus Alaihissalam and let him board gratis. The boat sailed. But, when it reached off shore, it stopped suddenly. It refused to move any further, neither forward, nor backward. The boat people made an announcement. They said that Allah had made their boat special. When an oppressive sinner or a slave in flight boards it, the boat stops on its own. So, they said, let that person show himself up so that others do not suffer because of one person. Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam spoke out that he was the sinner and the fleeing slave. So he said, 'Throw me into the sea and be spared of the punishment. The people of the boat would not do that. They drew lots so that the person thus named could be thrown into the sea. By chance, the lot drawn had the name of Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam on it. They were intrigued. They drew lots again and again. But, as Divine decree would have it, the name that kept appearing repeatedly was that of Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam. The Holy Qur'an mentions this drawing of lots "and he drew lots and was among the losers - 37:141."

On the one hand, names were being drawn in lots. On the other hand, a large fish under Divine orders was waiting for the incumbent to be thrown into the sea and right into her belly. Allah Ta'ala had already commanded the fish that the body of Yunus Alaihissalam that was to be deposited in her belly was no food for her, instead, was his home for a while. When Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam was lowered into the sea, the fish received him. Hazrat Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said that Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam lived in the belly of the fish for forty days. It would take him down to the sea bed and to nautical journeys far and wide. The period of his stay in the belly of the fish has also been reported as, five and one day and few hours. (Mazhari). Only Allah Ta'ala knows the truth about it. Living in that state, Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam made the following du'a.

- "*There is no God but You. Pure are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers* - 21: 87."

Allah Ta'ala accepted this prayer and Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam was put on the shore alive and unharmed. But, the heat in the belly of the fish had left no hair on his body. Allah Ta'ala caused a gourd vine (*Yaqtin*) to grow near him. Even the shade provided by the leaves on it became a blessing for Prophet Yunus Alaihissalam. And signaled by Allah Ta'ala, a wild goat would come every morning and evening, stand near him and he would have milk to drink.

In this story, as for parts that have been mentioned in the Qur'an, or stand proved from authentic narratives of Hadith, they are certain. The rest of them come from historical reports and no ruling of Islamic law can be based on them [13].

Views of Islamic Scholars about Yaqtin: The Arabic word *Yaqtin* is possibly of Hebrew origin [5]. It has been mentioned once in the holy Quran in one sura, As-Saaffat, Chapter # 37, Verse # 146 in relation to Prophet Yunus (Jonah) Alaissalam. Almost all the Islamic Scholars have

Table 1: Views of Islamic scholars about the interpretation of YAQTIN mentioned in Holy Quran.

S. No. Name of the commentator	Views	Reference
Abdul Hameed Swati	Creeper-Gourd	17
Abul Kalam Azad	Creeping plant	18
Abdullah bin Ahmad bin Mehmood An-Nusfi	Gourd	19
Abdullah Bin Mas'ud	Gourd	20
Abdullah Yousaf Ali	Gourd plant or some fruitful tree like it	21
Abi Muhammad Al-Hussain Bin Mas'ud Al-Baghvi	Gourd plant	22
Abis Sa' ud Muhammad ibn Muhammad.	Creeping plant	23
Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Abu Bakr al-Ansari,	Gourd	25
Abul A'la Mawdudi	Creeper like spreading plant	24
Abu Muhammad Abdul Haq Haqqani	Gourd like plant	26
Abu Tahir Muhammad bin Yaqoob Al-Ferozabadi	Gourd	27
Al Hafiz Jalal Al ud Din Sayouti	Gourd	28
Ali Muhammad	Plant having no trunk	29
Hafiz Nazir Ahmad	Creeping plant (gourd)	30
Iqtedar Ali Farooqi	Creeping plant	26
Ismail ibn Kathir	Creeper like tree without trunk	20
Marmaduke Picthal	Gourd	31
Maulana Ahmad Ali Lahori	Creeping plant	32
Maulana Ahmad Saeed	Gourd	33
Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi,	Gourd	34
Maulana Fateh Muhammad Jallendhri	Gourd	31
Maulana Hifzur Rahman Seoharvi	Creeping tree	35
Maulana Muhammad Junagarhi	Creeper	36
Maulana Salahud din Yousaf	Creeper having no trunk to stand upon	36
Mufti Muhammad Shafi	Gourd	13
Muhammad Abdur Rashid No'mani,	Gourd	22
Muhammad Ashraf Ali Thanawi	Creeper	37
Naasir-ud-Din Abi Al Khair Abdullah bin Umar bin Muhammad Al-Bayzawi,	Gourd	38
Qazi Muhammad Sana Ullah Pani Patti	Creeping plant	39
Saeed Bin Jubair	Every creeper	20
Shabir Ahmad Usmani	Creeping plant of gourd	40
Shah Abdul Qadir	Creeping plant i.e. gourd	41
Shah Rafi-ud-Din Muhadis Delhvi	Gourd	41
Sheikhulhind Maulana Mahmudul Hassan	Creeper	40
Syed Ameer Ali Maleeh-abadi	Gourd	42
Syed Hamid Hassan Balgrami	Creeping plant	43

Table 2: Dietary Constituents of Bottle Gourd

Sr.	Constituents	With Peel (g/100g of dry ghiya)	Without Peel (g/100g of dry ghiya)
1	Total sugar	5.870	8.290
2	Reducing sugar	5.220	7.920
3	Non-reducing sugar	0 .650	0.290
4	Starch	1.310	1.570
5	Curd fiber	4.450	3.400
6	Neutral detergent fiber	22.710	21.160
7	Acid detergent fiber	16.260	15.670
8	Hemicellulose	6.450	5.580
9	Cellulose	16.070	16.400
10	Lagenin	0.193	0.167

Source: Reference [44].

Table 3: Mineral Content of Bottle Gourd

Sr.	Minerals	With peel (mg/100g of dry ghiya)	Without peel (mg/100g of dry ghiya)
1	Iron	11.87	2.33
2	Phosphorous	240.33	187.33
3	Potassium	3320.00	3356.67
4	Zinc	3.77	3.47
5	Magnesium	162.33	146.33
6	Copper	0.19	0.24
7	Sodium	27.88	36.68
8	Manganese	0.26	0.31

Source: Reference [44].

Table 4: Amino Acids Present in Bottle Gourd

Sr.	Amino Acids	Fruits (g/100g ghiya)	Seeds (g/100g ghiya)
1	Tryptophan	0.003	0.431
2	Threonin	0.018	0.903
3	Isoleucine	0.033	1.264
4	Leucine	0.036	2.079
5	Methionine	0.004	2.079
6	Cystine	……..	0.551
7	Phenylalanine	0.015	1.222
8	Valine	0.027	1.972
9	Arginine	0.14	4.033
10	Histidine	0.004	0.681

Source: Reference [44].

Table 5: Vitamins Content of Bottle Gourd

Sr.	Vitamins	Fruits (mg/100g ghiya)	Seeds (mg/100g ghiya)
1	Vitamin C	10.100	1.900
2	Thiamin	0.029	0.210
3	Riboflavin	0.022	0.320
4	Niacin	0.320	1.745
5	Vitamin B6	0.040	0.224
6	Pantothenic acid	0.152	0.339
7	Vitamin E	16.02/g	1.000

Source: Reference [44].

taken it in the meaning of creeping plant or gourd [*Lagenaria siceraria* (Molina) Standley] in their commentaries (Tafaseer) on the Holy Qur'an. Their views have been summarized in Table 1.

Medicinal uses of *L. siceraria*: Bottle gourd (L. siceraria) is one of the excellent fruits gifted by God to human beings having composition of all the essential constituents that are required for good health and quality of human life. It forms an excellent diet being rich in vitamins, iron and minerals (Tables 2-5). Since ancient times it has been known for its curative properties and has been utilized for treatment of various ailments [12]. The *root* is applied in the treatment of dropsy [14]. *Leaf:* Leaf juice is widely used for baldness [12]. In Curacao, a leaf decoction is taken for flatulence. Decoctions containing a combination of L. siceraria and Rivina humilis are given for gas in pregnancy. In combination with garlic, a decoction is taken for gas pain in the heart area. Leaves with salt or coconut oil are often used as poultices for mange, skin irritation and tumors. A poultice of the crushed leaves has been applied to the head to treat headaches [12,15]. Decoction of leaves, mixed with sugar is given in jaundice [16]. Flower: The flowers are an antidote to poison [12,15]. *Fruit:* Bottle gourd is one of the excellent fruits gifted by the God to human beings having composition of all the essential constituents that are required for good health of humans [16]. The fruit is sweet, diuretic, antipyretic, antibilious, tonic for the liver, vulnerary and antiperiodic. It can cure muscular pain and dry cough. In Punjab, the pulp is applied to the soles of the feet of those with "burning feet." The rind of the fruit is good for piles, while its ash is styptic and vulnerary [14]. The fruit pulp is used as an emetic, sedative, purgative, cooling, diuretic, antibilious. *L. siceraria* juice is an excellent remedy for heart problems, digestive and urinary disorders and in diabetes. [9,12]. It cures pain, ulcers, fever, asthma and other bronchial disorders. *L. siceraria* fruit is traditionally used for its cardioprotective, cardiotonic, general tonic, aphrodisiac and acts as alternate purgative [16]. The *seeds* are fattening, cooling, anthelmintic and a brain tonic; they can cure cough, fever, scalding urine and earache; they also reduce inflammation (Unani). Their oil can be applied for headache (external application) by mixing the seed oil with castor oil. [9,14].The seed is vermifuge. Taken with Achyranthes spp. the seed is used to treat aching teeth and gums, boils, etc. Pulverized seed kernels are taken to expel intestinal worms. In many parts of China, 3 g per day has been used as a single treatment for diabetes mellitus [12,15]. Seeds are nutritive and diuretic, are used in dropsy and as anthelmentic. The seeds (wt of 100 seeds, 15 gm) are edible. In china, they are boiled in salt water and eaten as an appetizer. The seed oil is applied in headache [16].

Home Remedies of *L. Siceraria* (Lauki) Juice: Dietary fiber present in *L. siceraria* helps in constipation, flatulence and even in piles. Topical application of a mixture of *L. siceraria* juice and sesame oil on scalp gives beneficial results in baldness (hair loss). The juice also shows better effects in the treatment of insomnia, epilepsy and other nervous diseases. Moreover it helps break up calculus (stones) in the body. In summer or hot conditions, *L. siceraria* juice prevents excessive loss of sodium, satiating thirst and giving a cooling effect [12]. Cardiovascular disorder is claimed to be relieved following regular intake of bottle gourd juice for about 4-6 months [16].

Other Ethnobotanical Utilization of *L. Siceraria*: The dry hard shells of bottle gourd fruits used for various purposes in India. Domestic utensils like bottles, bowls, milk-pots, spoons and containers of several types are made out of the dried shells. In the tribal-dominated pockets of Khammam district the ethnic groups are mainly using the dry shells for carrying country liquor, honey and water. In some of the pockets it is being used for making stringed and wind musical instruments and pipes [9] and for making ladles, pipes, blowing, horns, snuff boxes etc [11].

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