

Religious and Cultural Use of Plant Resources by Baram Tribe**Balak Devkota***balak.devkota@sac.tu.edu.np***Sanothimi Campus, Bhaktapur**

Abstract

Plants have been used by the humans since the ancient times. Indigenous people have sound knowledge of using floral species in their cultural rituals and customs. The use of such resources depend on indigenous knowledge gained from ancestral experience. So this study was carried out to explore the traditional use of plant species in their culture and religious customs of Barams in their ancestral place (Barpak-Sulikot Municipality of the Gorkha district) under ethnographic research design. Total of six elder people having the socio-cultural knowledge (are also the healers) were selected purposively for the study. In-depth interview and observation with etic perspective was done frequently from 2076 to 2078 BS. Following the qualitative technique of data analysis, information was analyzed and interpreted thematically. The result shows that Barams have rich indigenous knowledge of using plant resources. They depend on floral resources for medicine, food, fodder, timber and firewood etc. aligning with the cultural and religious use. Total of 29 species were used in total of six worships or festivals and total of 13 species were used in four different cultural rituals of the Baram.

Key words: *Baram, ethnobotany, flora, Gorkha, indigenous knowledge.*

Background of the Study

Indigenous knowledge is the innovative and experimental knowledge of the local people living in close contact with nature (World Bank, 1998) and has the influence in the environment. Ethnobotany is the scientific study of indigenous knowledge and customs of a people concerning plants and their medical, religious and other uses. It is multi-disciplinary science, which studies the relationships of a given society with its environment and the plant through the traditional knowledge and art of using plants by the group of people sharing the same culture and tradition (Manandhar, 2002). It is the relationship of the people with the surrounding environments (Martin, 1995) and the understanding of knowledge systems through the use of anthropological methods (Shengji, 2002). Ethnobotany has been evolving as a scientific discipline that focuses on the people-plant relationship in a multidisciplinary manner, incorporating not only collection and documentation of indigenous uses but also ecology, economy, pharmacology, public health, and other disciplines (Gomez-Beloz, 2002; Manandhar, 2002; Kunwar and Bussmann, 2008). It investigates the relationship between human societies and plants, how humans use plants- as food, in technology, medicine, and in ritual contexts, how they interpret and understand them, and their symbolic and beneficial role in a culture (Manandhar, 2002). The traditional habits of collecting and utilizing plant resources from the wild have now been developed in culture (Oli et al., 2005). However, documentation and analysis of such knowledge is deficient and on the verge of extinction. Thus, it is our responsibility to conserve indigenous knowledge systems on using the floral resources in the culture and religion of the ethnic tribe. This research therefore was conducted

to explore the indigenous knowledge of Barams towards the use of floral species in their culture and religion.

In Nepal, the first ethnobotanical study was probably done by Banerji (1955) with the publication of a paper on medicinal plants and food plants of eastern Nepal (13 species; of which 9 medicinal and 4 food plants) (Oli et. al., 2005). After that several such works were done by several researchers. Study of a particular community had been started by Scherer (1979) on a plant used by the Sherpa community of Rowaling near the Northern border of Tibet. Ethnobotanical work of certain ethnic groups have been undertaken by several researchers such as on Tharus of Dang, Musahars tribe of Dhanusha, Danuwars of Siwalik hills, Chepang tribe of Makawanpur district, Danuwar tribe of Kamalakhaj in Sindhuli district, Tamang tribe of Kavreplanchowk, and Rautes of Far Western region by Manandhar (1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1989a, 1989b, 1990a, 1991, 1998); Tamang tribe of Kathmandu district by Shrestha (1988) and so on. The ethnobotanical works in the Baram tribe are still lacking. Little description on use of some plants was mentioned in Baramu, 2066. Gorkha district is expected as an unexplored area in terms of study of indigenous knowledge of Barams in relation to cultural use of plant resources in medicine, religion and others.

Barams are one of the marginalized indigenous ethnic groups among 125 caste/ethnic groups inhabiting rural areas as reported in the census 2011. The Baram/Brahmu (alternate Names: Brahmu, Baram, Brahm Bhatt, Baram Bhatt, Biram Bhatt, Bhat) are one of the ancient indigenous ethnic groups of peoples/nationalities of Nepal. Joshua Project (2017) has identified the Barhamu only in Nepal. Nepal Federation of Indegenous Nationalities (NEFIN) and National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities (NFDIN) placed Baram as the highly marginalized caste of Nepal (Baramu et. al., 2066). They are scattered in various areas of the country. They are found in 29 districts of Nepal including Gorkha district. Among these districts, more than 90% of Baram live in Gorkha (CBS, 2011). Moreover, Gorkha district is the origin place or ancestral place of Baram (National Census Report, 2011; Baramu, 2066). Although they have been immensely influenced by Hindu religion and culture, they have their own original culture and they are in fact, animists or worshipers of nature. They worship their family gods such as Chandi, Bhume, Forest gods and goddesses. They have blind faith in their traditional Shaman who perform overall rituals, culture and do treat illness. They are rich in their distinct culture, religion, rituals, identity, customs and lifestyles. They make use of dhamis - jhakris (shaman) to perform and/or worship rituals and to treat illnesses. Barams have their own mother tongue called Balkura, which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family. This language is on the verge of disappearance. Even though their population is spreaded over 13 different districts, the language of Baram, Balkura is spoken only in Takukot and Pandrung of Gorkha district (CBS, 2011; Baramu, 2066). Barams use plant in different ceremonies, cultural rituals, festivals, and worship their god and goddess. During the birth, death, marriage and other cultural programs, plants are commonly used. So, the documentation of proper use pattern of the plant species, identification of such plant species may be important for the conservation of indigenous knowledge and may be fruitful for awareness of conservation of such resources. So, this study will help to explore the indigenous knowledge of Barams ethnic tribe on use of plant resources in their culture and religion in their ancestral place, Gorkha district (Barpak Sulikot Rural Municipality) of Nepal.

Methodology

This study was based on the social constructivist research paradigm because social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which

they live and work. Social constructivism (often combined with inter-pretivism) is such a perspective, and it is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research and ideas came from Mannheim and from works such as Berger and Luekmann's (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality* and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*. The constructivist researchers address the processes of interaction among individuals and focus their interpretation flows from their personal, cultural, and historical experiences. The research design was based on qualitative (descriptive exploratory) research design utilizing the ethnographic research tradition and the data were analyzed to get the detailed information about the use of plant species in their culture and religion. The knowledge consistency was studied on the basis of their ethical underpinnings of social construction (Creswell, 2014). Ethnographic research designs based on qualitative research process for describing, analyzing and interpreting the behavior, beliefs in their shared pattern (Creswell, 2012). Such types of research is done in such cultural groups like Baram which has developed shared values, beliefs and language.

Gorkha district is an unexplored area in terms of study of indigenous knowledge of Barams. Moreover, socioeconomically they are classified as highly marginalized janajati (Baramu et. al., 2066). Though there are some research works on socio-lingual study of Barams, an extensive socio-cultural and religious use of plant species in terms of scientific value is still lacking. So, I explored the use of the plant resources in their culture and religion their ancestral place in Gorkha district which was a part of my M.Phil. research. I selected Barpak Sulikot Municipality (Pandrung, Takukot etc.) from all together five Rural Municipalities of the Gorkha district where highest Baram population are found and is considered as the origin place of Baram in Gorkha. By using purposive sampling method, I selected the sample of (six) resource persons including local healers (Dhami/Jhankri), elder people and community leader through the primary consultation with the social leaders and school teachers who are familiar with the social context and understand the research objectives. These people were considered as the source for the knowledge for this type of study.

Study of use of such plant species in different socio-cultural phenomena is important in this study. For this, I used etic perspective, used field observation and, in-depth interview was taken by using semi-structured open ended questionnaire. The use pattern of the plant species was assessed, observed directly and recorded. I have identified the species locally with the help of local healers, local people. I began to collect information and created an ethnographic record by the use of field notes depending on my field observation, prepared interview notes during the course of in depth interview with the participants and taken some photographs. Data were sorted out, reduced, linked and displayed in the form of chart, tables and summaries. These qualitative findings are triangulated with the literatures where is appropriate and possible.

Analysis and Discussion

The result is based on the in-depth interview with the participants and field observation conducted through etic perspectives. The information is interpreted on the basis of personal logic, interpretation, discussed with theoretical and empirical literatures.

Introduction of Baram Community

Barams/Brahmu/Baramo are one of the hill indigenous nationalities (aadibasi janajati) among fifty subgroup (CBS, 2014) and indigenous ethnic groups among 125 caste/ethnic groups of Nepal (Joshuwa project, 2017) reside on rural areas as whose population is 8140 as reported in the census 2011 (CBS, 2011; Baramu et al., 2066) but the population become

7859 (male: 3720 and female: 4139) in 2021 (NSO, 2021). This shows the decrease in the population. NEFIN and NFDIN placed Baram as the highly marginalized caste of Nepal (Baramu, 2066). According to the census 2011, 63.25% of the total population are literate.

Baram is one of the ethnic group scattered in various areas of the country sheltered around the bank of river and near the forest (Baramu et al., 2066). They are found in 29 districts of Nepal including Gorkha district, Dhading, Lalitpur, Lamjung, Tanahun, Syangja, Makawanpur and Nawalparasi (CBS, 2014) but NPHC 2021 showed their distribution only in 14 districts. Moreover, Gorkha district is the original origin place or ancestral place of Baram (CBS, 2014; Baramu, 2066) and having total population 6,740 (2.486% of the total population of Gorkha and more than 90% of the total population) (CBS, 2014) but in 2021 the population become 6244 (NSO, 2021). Only 1539 (0.01%) persons speak their own language balkura as their mother tongue (NSO, 2021). The main occupation of Baram is agriculture from the past to present. Most of them follow Hindu religion.

There is no exact place and evidences that from where and how Baram come to present inhabitant place. The habitat of Baram was the region called "Ghagra", east of the Kali Gandaki River (Baramu et al., 2066). Grierson (1903) gave his view that Baramu was one of the tribes from Nepal Terai. According to Bista (1903), Barams inhabited the Terai and inner valleys, living in hot, humid and very malarious areas. Grimes (1992) assumed that the habitat Baram to be the North of Gorkha district, Gandaki Zone, along the Daraudi River and its tributes (Yadab et al.2060). It is claimed that Baramus arrived Gorkha from Likhukhola area crossing through Nuwakot and Dhading (Baramu et al., 2066).

Barams belong to Mongoloid people exhibiting the features clearly with skin stretched across the oval or round face, black hair and the eyes which exhibit the mongoloid or epicanthic fold, the nose are small and flat among some. They are of medium in height. Male has minimal beard and moustache, the lips are thin and prominent. They seem simple, kind, generous and honest.

Language and Dresses

The language of Baram is "Balkura" which means "human language" in Nepali. Balkura is spoken only in Takukot, Pandrung and by the women who reached to another place but originally from these places (CBS, 2011, Baramu et al. 2066) and in the verge of extinction. According to the national census of 2011 of their total 8,140, only 155 people speak balkura. Baram language Balkura has not its own script yet. So Barams use Devanagari script. The Baram male generally wear the ordinary kachhad (Wrap-On-loincloth) or, white trouser or Dhoti (a kind of loincloth) and woolen gadha and bhoto (vest) or cloak (daura). The Baram female wear phariya or sari or lungi and closed blouse, Ghalac, generally white heavy patuka but sometimes yellow patuka) or mujetro (shawl like) coverlet (Pachhura) on the head.

Religion and Rituals

Most of the Baram people follow Hinduism. They worship different types of gods and goddess like: chandi, kuldevata, mandali, Bhume, Thani etc. Some typical worships of Baram are Aaitabare puja, Bai puja, kulpuja, Bhumi puja, Birpuja, Gothapuja, Aashamukhipuja, Thanipuja etc.

Aaitabare puja is a kind of unique culture of Barams. Baram used to worship their god during every Sunday of kartic and chaitra months. This puja indicates their ancestor. There are two types of Aaitabare puja: uvuali and udhau. During the puja, they use dhanusband, dhungra, comb, chura, of *Dendrocallamus strictus* (bamboo). In addition, they use chamalko (Rice: *Oryza sativa*) puwa (cooked food from the rice flour), millet bread (*Eleusine coracana*), egg, soyabean (*Glycine max*), maize (*Zea maize*) bread, Dhup (incense),

Akshyata (rice rain) and oil lamp in puja. They sacrifice a pair of hen and cock during Aaitabare puja (worship done on Sunday) and they believe that it makes their ancestor (pitri and god) happy.

Baipuja is another important puja of Baram tribe. Where Baram worship their deceased ancestors like past parents, grandparents or the relatives. Baram used to worship their ancestor in the day, the day after full moon of Baishakh. This worship is done under the tree trunk (in the base of the tree). They make 'than' (a special place for the pitri and their worship) under the tree. They make 'than' status of their casters. They sacrifice cock or hen. During puja they make use of Akshyata (of *Oryza sativa*) alcohol (fermented and distilled product from *Eleusine coracana*), rice powder, bread, coin, sindur and saal dhup (exudate of *Shorea robusta*). They prepared rice [Haja (B.) ie. chamaal] and other scarified cock's or hen's meat. First, they offered to their gods and distribute themselves to their whole family accept as Prasad if their ancestors Baram tribe accept there as a signal of purity their ancestors as a god.

Barams also celebrate dashain festival as other Hindus celebrate. They decorate the wall of their house by using red and white clay and they applying the pest or paint prepared by cooking the bark of *Schima wallichii* (Chilaune) and *Myrica esculenta* (Kafal) in the doors and windows. Ghatasthapana is the first day of Dashian where they plant Jamara (Sprouts of *Zea maize*; maize or *Hordeum vulgare*; barley) on tapari, a plate specially prepared by using leaf of *Shorea robusta* (Sal). The celebration of Dashian starts from phulpati (the seventh day) Baram community of the village collectively cut "he buffalo" (Rango) and distribute the meat themselves for every household. At the midnight of 8th day, they worship the God Kalratri on the main pillar of their house and sacrifice cock or black hegoat alternately in every year. In the morning of 9th day or Navami they worship the Goddess Durga, cut *Benincasa hispida* (kubindo) and sacrifice other animals like he-goat or cock, this day is specially known as Baram Dashain. On the 10th day or Dashami they take bath early in the morning and wear new clothes and receive Tika and Jamara from elder family members, their relatives and seniors. During the festival time they play cards, take alcohol, meat and other delicious item. They entertain themselves through dancing and singing also.

Tihar is another important festival of Baram Community. In Tihar, laxmi-the deity as in the form of wealth is prayed. They believe that they will become rich when they prayed to laxmi. This festival starts from kagg (crow) Tihar and they offer sel roti made from rice (*Oryza sativa*), fruits and other ingredients which are placed in Tapari (a bowl made from the leaves of Saal; *Shorea robusta*) and are placed outside and the next day is kukur (dog) Tihar on this day worship dog to it The next day is Gai Tihar (cow Tihar) and on this day they worship cow put garland to cow and all prayer go through uader cow and a gives pido (mixture of Barely; *Hordeum vulgare*, Til; *Sesamum indicum*, Maize; *Zea mays*, Ricecoat; *Oryza sativa*, pieces of sugarcane; *Saccharum officinarum*, kubindo; *Benincasa hispida* etc). They made a long garland called 'Toran' wich is made up of rope of babiyo (*Eulaliopsis binata*) and using by different types of flowers like sayapatri ful, Gaitehare (*Inula cappa*) flower and bukiful (*Anaphalis bussuwa*). Finally, Toran is tightly stretched over the cowshed and their houses. In the evening they worship Laxmi Deity and celebrated dipawali. Houses are decorated with various kinds of lights and candles and in the evening boys and girls play Deusi (a kind of song). The next day is Ox Tihar (also known as gobardhan pooja) on this day they worship the ox and give Pido. The last day of Tihar is Vai Tika; they prepare very delicious food items like sel roti, fried items, liked papad and other food items. On the same day married women return back to Maiti (mother's home) and bring jand (home made liquor) sel roti, different types of fruit like orange (*Citrus reticulata*), penut (*Arachis hypogea*),

Kattus (fruit of *Castanopsis indica*), Okhar (*Juglans regia*) and kissmiss, meat condiments along with them. On this day, vai (brother) tika made up of seven color called saptarangi tika, sisters put tika and garland of makhameli ful and sayapatri ful to their brothers and give delicious food items prepared by them and give blessing, in return their brothers give money cloths and other gifts to their sister.

Maghesankranti is another popular and important festival of Bramas. This festival is celebrated in the first day of the month of Magh. This day is the first day of the year according to their calendar "**Barga**" in Baram society they use Barga in place of year. On this day Barga is changed from one Barga to another Barga. In this festival they dig out yam (*Dioscorea alata*) and distribute it by making different food items. Similarly, they use black gram (*Vigna mungo*), rice bean (*Vigna umbellata*), airpatoto (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) etc. By preparing delicious food item invites their relatives they especially called 'kutumb' (son in law and nephew). Married woman returns back yo maiti, the mothers home, with selroti, Jand (non-distilled alcoholic item), 'Biramla', a food from Black bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris*) etc. They entertain themselves by dancing and drinking alcohol.

Shrawan-sankranti and Aago puja is related to the belief of getting relief from all the skin related disorders. This festival is celebrated on the first day of shrawan month. This month is month of rainy and there is risk of different types of skin disease. They invite their kutumba and feed delicious foods and entertain themselves by dancing, drinking, alcohols and they start to eat new harness maize on this day, they collect plants like kurilo (*Asparagus racemosus*), kukurdaino (*Smilax aspera*), Bhalayo (*Semecarpus anacardium*), Amba (*Psidium gaujava*), Nibuwa (*Citrus niImbu*), Naspati (Pear; *Pyrus pyrifolia*), Panisara (*Cutleya spicata* (J. E. Smith) Baker) etc. After eating food, they establish a stone god on either side of the ground and make it pure by using cow dung. Arranging all the materials, burn on fire wood down and worship the god. After worshiping god, they throw burning firewood downward, believing that by throwing burning wood, disease will go far away from them. This puja is important for conservation of plant species.

Total of 29 species were identified used in total of six worships or festivals of the Baram (table 1). The species includes food plants including *Zea maize*, *Eleusine coracana*, *Oryza sativa* etc. They use some of the wild fruits like *Myrica esculenta*, wild plant having high medicinal values like *Bennincasa*, *Inula*, *Dioscorea* etc, some cash crops like *Saccharum officinarum*, *Hordeum vulgare*, *Sesamum indicum* etc. They emphasized on the use of such plant species in their worships or the festivals to increase knowledge of their use value, respect these plants and increase the awareness for their conservation.

Table 1

Religious use of plant species.

SN	Worships/festivals	Name of plant species used
1	Aaitabare puja	<i>Dendrocallamus strictus</i> , <i>Oryza sativa</i> , <i>Eleusine coracana</i> , <i>Glycine max</i> , <i>Zea maize</i>
2	Baipuja	<i>Oryza sativa</i> , <i>Eleusine coracana</i> , <i>Shorea robusta</i>
3	Dashain festival	<i>Schima wallichii</i> , <i>Myrica esculenta</i> , <i>Zea maize</i> , <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> , <i>Shorea robusta</i> , <i>Benincasa hispida</i>
4	Tihar	<i>Oryza sativa</i> , <i>Shorea robusta</i> , <i>Hordeum vulgare</i> , <i>Sesamum indicum</i> , <i>Zea mays</i> , <i>Oryza sativa</i> , <i>Saccharum officinarum</i> , <i>Benincasa hispida</i> , <i>Eulaliopsis binate</i> , <i>Inula cappa</i> ,

		<i>Anaphalis bussuwa, Citrus reticulata, Arachis hypogea, Castanopsis indica, Juglans regia</i>
5	Maghesankranti	<i>Dioscorea alata, Vigna mungo, Vigna umbellata, Dioscorea bulbifera, Phaseolus vulgaris</i>
6	Shrawan-sankranti and Aago puja	<i>Asparagus racemosus, Smilax aspera, Citrus nimbu, Pyrus pyrifolia, Cutleya spicata (J. E. Smith) Baker (Panisara)</i>

Life cycle rites

Birth rites

The birth of child is on occasion of happiness in any community and also Baram community. The new born baby and mother are believed to be untouchable for 11 days till Nwaran of the baby Baram does Nwaran generally on 11th day sometimes they do Nwaran on 3th and 7th day. In Nwaran they call Brahmin priest and sometimes kutumba to perform the necessary activities for the chhaiti on the sixth day where they believe god arrives and writes the destiny of the child on its forehead. In nwaran, the baby is named supposed that they made mother and baby holy. The Brahmin priest purify mother and baby by sprinkling Gaunhut (urine of cow) and seed of Bhalayo (*Semecarpus anacardium*). He made Tilak and applied to the forehead of mother and child also tell the name of baby. The plants like Dubo (*Cynodon dactylon*), leaves of mango (*Mangifera indica*), leaves of bel (*Aegle marmelos*), wood of saal (*Shorea robusta*) etc are used during Nwaran.

Chhaewar rites

This is a ritual of hair cutting ceremony or chhaewar and done at the early age of childhood. All maternal relatives, Kutumba and cousins are invited along with other guests. The maternal uncle cuts the hair and if he be absent then a member of the maternal kin group has to perform this function. This is done near the tree like mango orange or any other tree. It is believed that the boy will become human after their chhaewar. After this boy wore new cloths and eat delicious food and ritual is over. For the girls there is no such ceremony but they do receive Gunew Cholo. During the ceremony plants like banana (*Musa paradisiaca*) (Umse (B.)), leaves of mango (*Mangifera indica*) Belpati (*Aegle marmelos* and *Artemisia vulgaris*) and different types of flower are used.

Marriage rites

There are two kinds of marriage in Baram people, which are Bhagi bihe and Doli bihe (arrange marriage). Baram tribe has a culture to have a right to marry their cross cousin (Baramu, 2066). When the daughter reaches a mature age mama should ask his bhanja to marry his daughter because Bhanja has a right to mama's daughter first. Mama can search for another grow for her daughter only in the case that bhanja refuse to marry her. If the girl's parents agreed called 'Kura chinne', the numbers of Janti are invited. After fixing the date of marriage like they buy new clothes, make up ornaments etc. In the marriage ceremony they use plants like banana (*Musa paradisiaca*), Saal (*Shorea robusta*), mango (*Mangifera indica*), sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum*) etc and they prepared delicious foods like Roti, Kasar etc from rice (*Oryza sativa*), use diferent types of fruits, flower during the ceremony etc.

Death rites

In human tradition, the dead are cremated on the banks of the holy river. It is the ultimate wish of a Hindu to the cremated along the river bank. When a Baram dies other people cut the bamboo to make a bamboo structure where the body of deceased is covered in

white clothes and tied to it at five places once they cut the bamboo for these they have to carry this and can't throw away because of some reasons. The Baram place the dead at confluence of two rivers and burn there. The fire is lit from the side where the head is raster. This is called Daagbatti. It is performed by the son of the deceased and if the deceased don't have son then a kale relatives or the priest performs the rituals. After reaching home all the malamis drink sunpani, don't eat food and sleep on the floor without mattress. The sons sit for the Kriya and are known as kriya Putri. Generally, there is a mourning period of 13 days on these days they need to stay pure and clean. Every day they performed pujas for the peace of the departed soul on the 13th day many people are invited and a Hindu priest will set up a ceremony where gods and goddess are invoked and worshipped in the name of the deceased. The kriya putris are believed to be holy when they touch the sisnu (*Urtica dioca*), timbur (*Zanthoxylm armatum*) and drink urine of the cow (gauhoot).

Birth, chhewar, marriage and death rites are the four major cultural rites of the Baram. Total of 13 species were identified as used in total of four rites of the Baram (table 2). The species includes food plants, wild edible fruits, cash crops, medicinal plants, timber plants etc. including *Semecarpus anacardium*, *Cynodon dactylon*, *Mangifera indica*, *Musa paradisciaca*, *Aegle marmelos*, *Artemisia vulgaris*, *Musa paradisciaca*, *Shorea robusta*, *Saccharum officinarum*, *Oryza sativa*, *Urtica dioca*, *Zanthoxylm armatum* etc. They use some of the wild fruits like *Myrica esculenta*, wild plant having high medicinal values like *Bennincasa*, *Inula*, *Dioscorea* etc, some cash crops like *Saccharum officinarum*, *Hordeum vulgare*, *Sesamum indicum* etc. They emphasized on the use of such plant species in their worships or the festivals to increase knowledge of their use value and increase the awareness for their conservation.

Table 2

Plant species used in cultural rituals.

SN	Rituals	Name of the species
1	<i>Birth rites</i>	<i>Semecarpus anacardium</i> , <i>Cynodon dactylon</i> , <i>Mangifera indica</i> , <i>Shorea robusta</i>
2	<i>Chhaewar rites</i>	<i>Musa paradisciaca</i> , <i>Mangifera indica</i> , <i>Aegle marmelos</i> , <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>
3	<i>Marriage rites</i>	<i>Musa paradisciaca</i> , <i>Mangifera indica</i> , <i>Shorea robusta</i> , <i>Saccharum officinarum</i> , <i>Oryza sativa</i>
4	<i>Death rites</i>	<i>Urtica dioca</i> , <i>Zanthoxylm armatum</i>

Most of the baram people of the study area are farmers. They mostly depend on the use of plant resources in medicine, food, fodder, firewood and in their religious use. They have the knowledge of using plant species for different purposes like medicine, food, fodder, timber, firewood, religious purpose and other purposes (in making baskets, making furniture and so on). Use of higher number of plant species in different purpose shows that there is still the indigenous knowledge of the people on using the local floral resources. The social learning theory also supports that the juniors are learning from the seniors involving in their social phenomena (culture and rituals). The individuals can understood by going outside and examining the social and cultural process from which it derives (Palmer, 2004; p. 35). According to Vygotsky, child is able to copy actions and is able to perform much better

when guided by adults than when working alone. Moreover, peoples' learning can be accelerated by the guidance and or in collaboration of more capable peers (Palmer, 2004; p.35). People have immense plant lore, folklore which they pass on from generation to generation just through oral conversation (Rao and Shanpru, 1981) as a social and cultural process. Human beings have been using animals and plants perhaps since the beginning of the civilization. It investigates the relationship between human societies and plants, how humans use plants- as food, in technology, medicine, and in ritual contexts, how they interpret and understand them, and their symbolic and beneficial role in a culture (Manandhar, 2002). Moreover, today's treatment system is mainly supported by the use of medicinal plants and has its own basis on indigenous knowledge, gained from ancestral experience (Manandhar, 1998). Different ethnic groups have their own beliefs and use pattern towards the use of plant resources and taking benefits from a large number of forest products in their daily life (Ghorbani *et. al.*, 2012).

Conclusion

Barams have rich indigenous knowledge of using plant resources. They are using higher number of floral species in their cultural rituals and religious worships. They depend on floral resources for medicine, food, fodder, timber and firewood etc. Use of floral species in their customs and religious worships has increased the importance of the plants. They should be aware on the availability and sustainability of the floral resources. Domestication of wild species and their cultivation, appropriate methods of collection of plant parts they followed and their blind beliefs towards the resources etc. support in the conservation and management of the floral resources. The formal education system, therefore, should start to reflect indigenous knowledge and skills of such ethnic groups. The local curriculum should focus on the content related with such types of indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge, therefore, should be incorporated as curricular content to improve the educational performance of indigenous learners including Baram within the formal education system. Furthermore, domestication policy and support in it with government subsidies may be important for the sustainable conservation of the floral species. Development of appropriate plan and policies for the conservation of knowledge of local healers is urgent which may encourage people for commercial cultivation of such useful and threatened plants.

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