

Figure 11
Women's Knowledge of Some Plant Species

Local Names	Botanical Names	Uses	Remarks
Dabdabey	<i>Symplocos racemosa</i>	Fodder	Best fodder species
Nimaro	<i>Ficus auriculata</i>	Fodder	
Dhungre	<i>Ficus spp.</i>	Fodder	
Tanki	<i>Bauhinia purpurea</i>	Fodder	
Kutmiro	<i>Litsea monopetala</i>	Fodder	
Khanyu	<i>Ficus semicordata</i>	Fodder	
Syalkhasro			
Badahar	<i>Artocarpus lakoocha</i>	Fodder	
Daduchiple		Fodder	
Tooni	<i>Cedrela toona</i>	Fodder	
Bhakhre		Fodder	
Khallu	<i>Diospyros peregrina</i>	Fruit, Fodder, fuel	
Dhayeri and Mohini		Fodder	Easy to carry, small branches (esp. used in household)
Simali	<i>Vitex negundo</i>	Fodder, fence, broom	Not good for buffaloes, less milk
Asuro,	<i>Adhatoda vasica</i>	Fencing, green manure	Produces too much smoke when used as fuel
Khirro	<i>Sapium insigne</i>	manure	The milky juice of this tree is said to be poisonous
Aayar		fuel	Not used as fodder because it has an intoxicating effect on cattle
Ikhirra	<i>Imperata spp.</i>	Roof (thatch)	Not used as fodder as it is imperata spp. harmful (eyes of cattle)
Jhakrikat	<i>Actinodaphne angustifolia</i>	incense, religious rites	
Kokurtarul ritha	<i>Sapindus mukorossi</i>	soap	

Women's Perceptions of Changes

Discussions with elder women in the villages revealed their perceptions of the changes that have occurred over the past 40 years. Highlights of these revelations are presented below.

- Millet, maize, and uphill rice were the only crops grown earlier; however food was sufficient then. There were no markets, things were cheaper to buy from around the villages. Rice was not consumed daily, and the amount grown was enough for the family - no one would buy rice from outside. In the unusual circumstance of insufficient rice, villagers would collect different types of food from the forest and eat it with nettles. Nowadays, with the presence of the market and the opening up of roads, people dislike collecting forest foods; instead they must have rice, which is eaten at least once a day if not twice.
- Earlier, even though they made country liquor from maize, the quantity was sufficient for food as well; nowadays, even with the control of drinking (regulated by the women's group), the maize is never enough. The women feel this is due to the facts that (a) the soil is not as fertile as before due to continuous use, so the yield is poor, and (b) earlier there were just five families and there was plenty of land on which to grow crops, but today the village has an increased population and decreased land holdings.
- Forty years ago, they made their own clothes and every member of the household helped out in the evenings with the cotton weaving process. Clothes were either white or black, with dye made from *harra* and black mud. Material was never purchased. Home-made clothes were washed with ash water.
With the opening of the highway, different colours, styles, and fabrics replaced the home-made garments. Wood ash could no longer be used to clean fabrics. Now more money is spent buying these fancy clothes and washing soap.
- Coal and ash were used instead of toothpaste, *kokur tarul* and *ritta* were used as soap for face and hands, *pina* made a good shampoo along with ash water, and *asur* was also used as a body wash. Ten years ago, returning Gorkha army officers introduced toothpaste and soap, initiating a need for cash, and this was followed by debts.
- Medicinal facilities were missing then, so villagers relied on the village shamans and medicinal herbs. Also, due to ignorance, the child mortality rate was high. Today, people are more conscious and medicinal facilities are available so the child mortality rate is almost nil. However, the debts incurred from medical costs have soared.

- Fodder and fuel were found in plenty then and many people settled there because of the dense forest. Today, one has to spend almost eight hours a day fuel/fodder collection during the dry season.
- Garlic, onions, cumin, and coriander were never heard of, but the food tasted good cooked with just ginger and chilli for taste.
- With the awareness that oranges grow well in their villages and that they provide a good source of income, the number and size of the orchards have increased rapidly. Some women feel that the increasing population of monkeys is to be blamed for the declining orange harvest.
- Oil extracted from the *madeshi* oil seeds which are grown on rainfed land and a cotton wick were used for lighting. Then the returning soldiers introduced kerosene oil and now more money is required for lighting purposes.
- Earlier, there were no schools so there was no expense. Today school requires extra money for books, stationery, clothes, and other items.
- Today, though the *Gurung* are depending a great deal on army and outside income, the majority of the *Newar* group feel it is better to stay home and till the soil since even an army person needs to become a farmer after receiving his pension.
- Earlier money had greater value — it was hard to come by — but it was not difficult to obtain food. In summary, the women, particularly the older generation, feel that, although there is less sickness now and life is a bit easier in some ways, all the changes around them have not been totally positive. Clearly, their perception of a degrading natural environment affects their lives significantly and motivates them to take action to redress the situation.