CHAPTER - I

General Introduction
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The Indian subcontinent represents one of the greatest emporia of ethnobotanical wealth. Here many living groups of peoples, still more or less isolated from the influences of the modern world and who continue do live in close association and vital dependance on their vegetation, provide opportunities to the scientist for profound research. Besides, India also presents variety of meterological and climatic conditions, as well as flora. This vast region, therefore offer unique combination of situations and circumstances to carryout ethnobotanical researches.

Ethnobotany deals with the relationship between human societies and plants. It has been recognised as a multidisciplinary science comparising many interesting and useful aspects of plant science, history, anthropology, culture and literature. It's importance has been realised chiefly in respect of the varied economic uses of plants among the primitive human societies. It brings to light numerous little known or unknown uses of plants, some of which have potential of wider usage. Ethnologies on tribes living in different parts of the world, works on indigenous medicines and botany and sometimes even forestry and travel accounts contain data of ethnobotanical significance. It also includes material, cultural and madico-religious relationship of the tribes with the plants around their dwellings.

India is very rich in ethnobotanical information about 80 percent of populations lives in villages, with a rough estimate indian sub-continent is
inhabited by over 550 tribal communities belonging to different ethnic groups living in remote forest areas. The different traditions, beliefs, and cultures of the various tribes and the diversity of the flora in India richly contribute to plant folklores. With the advent of technological progress of the so-called civilized societies, the age-old cultures of tribal communities have now threatened an extinction. Their age-old, time-tested cultural values, rich traditional skills, and above all the oral folklore knowledge system are fast disappearing and are likely to be lost forever. This phenomenon has caused a great concern to the scientists as well as the government agencies leading to facing this challenge and to conserve this valuable knowledge and wisdom of the tribals/aboriginal communities for the posterity. One way of fighting this challenge is concerned with ethnobiology which obviously includes the folklores of plants as well as animals since this endeavor is related with plants, hence only ethnobotanical considerations are included whose multidisciplinary facets include anthropology, medical and economic botany, besides the other usual branches. De (1968) has rightly regarded ethnobotany as the study of interrelationship between the people and the plants. The practical knowledge of various uses of plants may be obtained either by a thorough survey of the literature and/or by field studies among primitive people. The study of plants amongst the primitive people is now receiving much attention from botanists and other research workers throughout the world besides, the aboriginals have also learnt about the traditional treatment of diseases by the method of trial
and error and more often than not, at the heavy cost of human life. The term primitive or aboriginal refers to the indigenous people of the region with little or no technological development, no written language, having a distinct culture of their own and living in small and economically isolated groups (Jain, 1967). These primitive people still prefer to live in perfect dependence on nature and solved their problems following their own traditional method such studies constitute the science of ethnobotany.


With the perusal of foregoing literature it has revealed that no systematic and sustained ethnobotanical surveys of Bundelkhand region have been under taken except the works of saxena (1983). There are many forest areas in Bundelkhand region which are inhabited by tribals like Kols, Gonds, Lodhies, Sahariyas, Mogia and Nath etc. These tribes live in remote areas of the region in deep forest and in other localities, provide a good scope for the studies of their folk-lores and folk claims. The systematic ethnobotanical studies on these primitive people may be helpful in the explanation and exploitation of plant resources of this area.

However, some aspects of ethnobotanical works on Kols, Gonds and Lodhies tribes of Bundelkhand region have been carried out by Saxena (1993). The ethnobotanical studies of 'Nath' aboriginal people remain untouched. 'Nath' is the aboriginal people of the central provinces wandering jugglers and rope dancers (Sherring, 1974). This tribe is distributed in various parts of Bundelkhand region (Teekamgarh, Chhatarpur, Banda, Hamirpur, Jhansi, Mahoba & Jalaun districts).