CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION
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There is much public awareness about utility of the ethnobotany especially because of the use of plants in several systems of medicines like Ayurveda, Homeopathy and Unani. In comparison to this, there is very little knowledge of ethnozoology, though it was widely used in the primitive society and even now it is being utilized in this society to a certain extent. Because of the impact of modern civilization and due to the tremendous progress of allopathy, the ethnozoology is being neglected. Added to this, scarcity of wild animal wealth also has deteriorated the situation. Even in the present society the utility of animals for food and drugs has only increased. Because of the poverty of the vast masses of India who otherwise can not afford rich proteinous food as well as costly allopathic treatments. With a view to record the available knowledge on ethnozoology, a survey was undertaken in eastern U.P.

Ethnozoology is a sub-field of anthropology, concerned with the relationship between animals and humans throughout human history. Zooarchaeology and Archaeozoology, which
primarily focus on the identification and interpretation of animal remains from an archeological context are disciplines included in Ethnozoology. The discipline of Ethnozoology represents and focuses on the ways in which animals influence the people they interact with (Vohra, 1978).

Ethnozoology, a modern branch of biological sciences, is very old in concept but is new in its execution. The subject enquires into the status of relationship of modern tribal people with animals, their interaction and evolution. During their long history the primitive people constituted important element in the complex web of plants and animals and they exploited varieties of opportunities related to nature for their survival. Among such elements, animal community played a significant role in their economic, social and cultural life and their intimate relation with these organisms is noteworthy.

Ethnozoology also deals with studies among the tribes and rural people for recording their unique knowledge about animal wealth and search of new sources of animal drugs and other aspects of animal products including domestication and conservation of useful and economically important animals. As
the importance of animal drugs is being increasingly realized in
the developed countries the medico-ethnozoological studies
gaining enhanced status in research.

The medico-ethnozoological system makes extensive uses
of large number of drugs of zoological origin. These remedies
are beneficial or claimed to be so, in a variety of human ailments.
The contemporary society may benefit much from the tribal
experiences in its fight against disease and sufferings. However,
this system is likely to suffer from drawbacks pitfalls and
ostentations. It is high time to pay more attention to the animal
Kingdom and record such animals before these eliminated from
the area of there occurrence. Therefore, a survey has been made
to collect information about Tharu tribes of Devipatan Division
of Eastern U.P.

Gonda, Bahraich, Shravasti and Balrampur districts of
Devipatan division of eastern U.P. situated in the north-eastern
Terai region of the Indo-Nepal border and commonly known as
Terai districts were surveyed from ethnozoological point of view
and data were collected regarding the relationship between tribals
and animals, viz. utility of animal in food, medicine, fertilizer,
fuel, dye, pets, witchcraft, astrology, mechanical uses, omens, folklores, myth etc. Among these districts of Devipatan division Bahraich, Shravasti and Balrampur districts are richly inhabited by Tharus. No Tharu villages are located in Gonda district. Hence the three above mentioned districts have been chosen as study area.

Tharus are only tribals who could survive in the malaria affected areas of Terai region. The socio-economic condition of this tribal group is very poor. In fact, they have been struggling hard to survive against the natural forces for centuries and have led to a secluded life. Even today, the Tharus depend upon the outside world of only such articles as salt, kerosene oil and cloth. They make use of many animal species to meet their day to day needs.

The Tribal population of Uttar Pradesh is 107, 903 at 2001 census, constituting a meager 0.1 percent of the total population (166, 197, 921) of the state. The tribal population of the State is predominantly rural with 88.8 percent of them residing in villages. District wise distribution of tribal population shows that Kheri district has the highest proportion of tribes (1.2 percent), followed by Balrampur (1.1 percent), Shravasti and Bahraich.
(each 0.4 percent) districts, Nine (9) districts, each having a proportion of 0.1 percent tribal population whereas remaining fifty seven (57) districts have negligible proportion of tribes population.

The state has a total of five (5) Tribes namely Tharu, Buksa, Bhotia, Jaunsaria and Raji. Out of five Tribes, Tharu is the most populous tribe, having a population of 83,544; they constitute 77.4 percent of the total tribal population of the state. Buksa is the second major tribe, having a number of 4,367, followed by Bhotia, Jaunsari and Raji. These four tribes along with generic tribes constitute the balance 22.6 percent of total tribe population. At the level of individual tribe, Tharu are primarily concentrated in Kheri, Balrampur, Shravasti and Bahraich districts.

According to 1991 census, the Tharu population in Devipatan division was 24,670, distributed in districts Bahraich (6,110), Shravasti (3,340) and Balrampur (15,180). The Tharu population was negligible in Gonda district. They live along Indo-Nepal border in a number of forested villages (Kumar et al., 2006).
According to 2001 census, the literacy rate of Tharu was 34.9 percent but the females literacy rate is 20.0 percent only. Among the Tharu literates, 8.1% are without educational level, 38.8% below primary level, 25.1% primary level, 16.3% middle level, 9.7% higher secondary level and 2.0% graduate and above level.

Indigenous remedies have originated directly or indirectly from folklore’s rituals, magic, and superstitions. The practice of oral tradition is still prevalent among the tribes. In Devipatan division, the Tharu tribes use many animals and plants species for healthcare practices and have enormous knowledge about their medicinal usage. The knowledge, which is mostly undocumented, is transmitted orally from generation to generation. Since due to various reasons, both natural resources and Tharu culture are depleting at an alarming rate. Therefore, there is urgent need to explore and document this unique and indigenous knowledge before it is lost forever. Keeping this in mind, the present study was undertaken with a view to explore the possibilities of utilizing the ethnozoological wealth of this remote Terai region of eastern U.P. for the socio-economic
upkeep of Tharu population and search for new sources of economically and medico-ethnozoological animals utilized by Tharus. The animal specimens along with detailed informations on the ethnozoology would form a valuable record for future reference and study.

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