

## **Faunal Metaphors in Shekhawati's folksongs- An Ethno cultural Interpretation**

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### **Abstract**

Folk songs are a natural way for people to express their thoughts. Folk songs have also given local animals and birds a lot of weight. Folksong related to fauna is studied under ethnozoology. The study of the historical, economic, sociological, anthropological, and environmental facets of human-animal relationships is known as ethnozoology. Domestic animals have a special place in the vast repertoire of eroticism-related symbols that folksong has produced. Metaphors based on how animals behave toward plants, animals, and humans are used to describe erotic love, where the sexual act is symbolized by symbolic images. It is challenging to incorporate folk songs from every province because the language, fashion, attire, and customs of Rajasthan change every 40 Kos. In order to learn more about the role of animals in folk songs and sociocultural practices in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, the current study has been conducted. Using a variety of instruments, including semi-structured interviews and participatory rural appraisal, the ethnozoological data regarding folksong were gathered using an emic approach. 161 folk songs about birds and animals were discovered during the study. 86 (53.41%) folk songs are related to the class Aves, followed by 59 (36.64%) in the class Mammalia, 8 (4.9%) in the class Reptilia, and 8 (4.9%) in the phylum Arthropoda. It is concluded that folk songs are rapidly disappearing from the modern world because the younger generation does not see their value. It is crucial to preserve and promote folk arts because they convey stories of deep human emotions and environmental consciousness.

### **Key words**

Folksong, Symbolic, Metaphor, Traditional knowledge, Ethnozoology

## Introduction

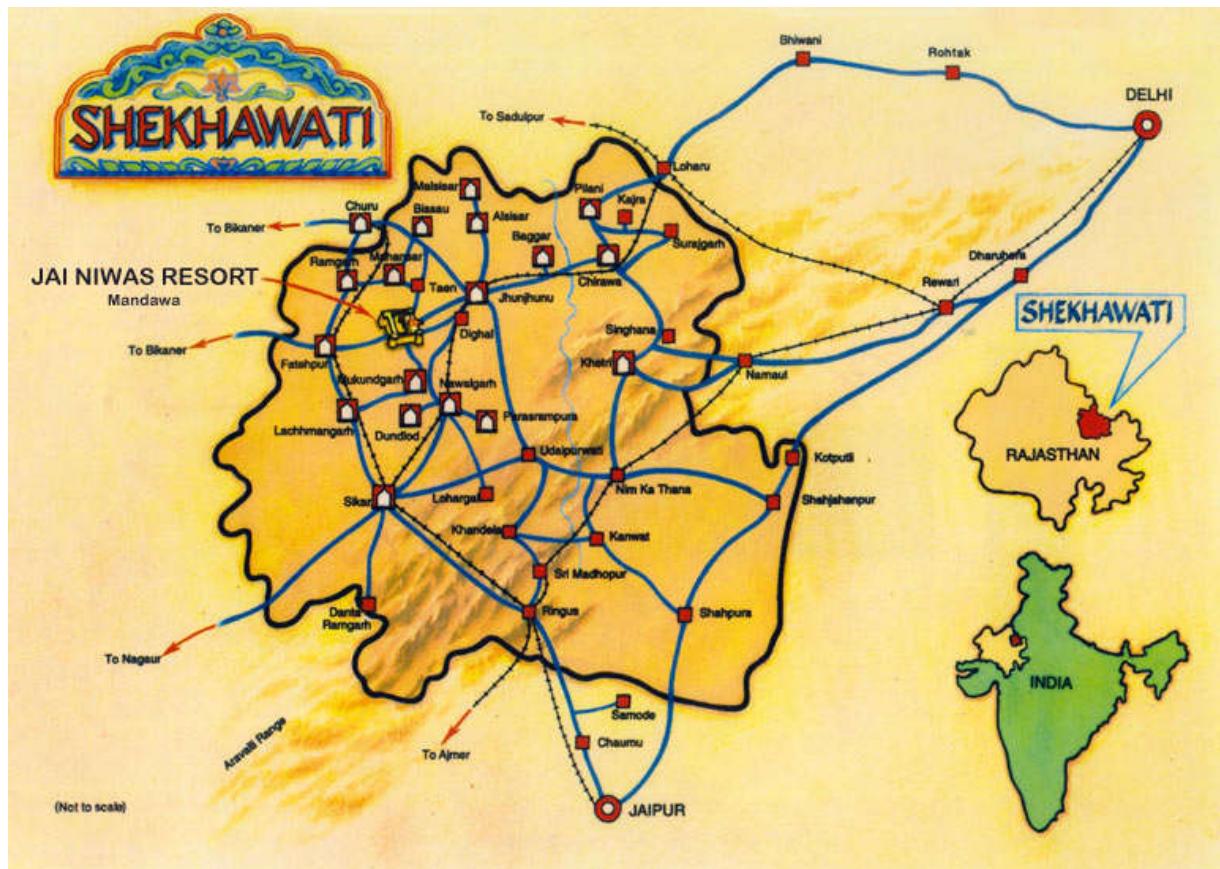
Art pervades every particle of this land of Rajasthan, which is full of zeal and enthusiasm, which is reflected in songs, paintings, costumes, food, attire, and festivals. Folksongs are natural expression of human mind. The melodious songs emanating from the sweet throat of a housewife, along with auspiciousness, contain racial pride, regional culture, lifestyle, customs, fasts and festivals, traditions, beliefs and motherly love. Local birds and animals have also been given full importance in folksongs. Study of Fauna releted folksong is under ethnozoology. The study of the historical, economic, sociological, anthropological, and environmental facets of human-animal relationships is known as ethnozoology (Alves & Souto, 2015). Over the ages, human societies have amassed a vast body of knowledge about animals that is intricately woven into many other facets of culture. This zoological knowledge is a significant component of our cultural legacy (Alves & Souto, 2015). People value animals not only for their financial worth but also because they are engrained in our cultural traditions and have become a part of our sense of place (Silva et al., 2005). The importance of animals in culture has been conveyed through literature, art, mythology, symbolism, and religion, among other important aspects of human civilization (James, 2023). Animals have been acknowledged in literature, art, music, religion, and other human cultural manifestations in addition to their practical significance (Alves & Albuquerque, 2012). Folk music has the power to convey a wide range of interpretations and stories. Stories of identity are woven throughout the songs, which are cultural specimens (Attri, 2018). Social transmission of knowledge is facilitated by the social contexts in which songs are performed as well as the imagery in the lyrics that strengthens a sense of location and connections to resources (Post, 2019). Folksong is one of the means by which oral traditions and expressions are used to transmit knowledge, cultural and social values, and collective memory in both African and Igboland societies (Okpokwasili, 2023). They also tell the stories of how women deal with life's emotional traumas and serve as a vehicle for expressing their aspirations, desires, ideas, and emotions (Shekhawat, 2020). Folk art, theater, dance, music, and crafts abound in rural India. Rajasthan is not an exception to the rule that every region has its own folk art that is highly valued and significant there (Pareek, 2017). Although studies indicate that songs are an untapped storehouse of biocultural memory, ethnobiologists have yet to investigate the myriad ways that examining songs and music from an ethnobiological perspective could highlight the complex interactions between people and their biological environments (Fernandez & Lepofsky, 2019). Slovenian and European folklore, literature, and cultural studies necessitate links between animals, nature, and human connections because of new ecological and ethical discoveries in the larger social and cultural context as well as a changing global order that has moved the focus from anthropocentrism to egocentrism (Kaucic, 2015). However, this often turns into irony due to certain ethical considerations, concealing the appalling nature of some human actions toward animals (Kaucic, 2013). Chinese folk ritual music supports biodiversity conservation in three ways: (1) by promoting sustainable practices like traditional farming methods and the preservation of wetland ecosystems; (2) by fostering ecological understanding through symbolic representations of animals like carp and water buffalo; and (3) by enhancing community cohesion and the transmission of ecological values across generations (Liu & Song, 2025). One of the main ways that Indigenous knowledge is passed down is through the encoding of sociocultural performance of everyday activities, local speech, and other oral manifestations like stories and songs (Reyes, 2019). Bulgarian poetic folklore reflects an agrarian culture that is deeply connected to the land and the natural world (Ivanova et al., 2021). One can study the portrayal of birds and their interactions with humans through the oral genre of folksong. The findings demonstrate that people use birds as a means of observing their

environment and sharing their firsthand knowledge of the natural world (Mdoka, 2025). Due to their agricultural heritage, the Osing people have a number of customs and values that are carefully preserved in a language that is enhanced by names for plants and animals. Thousands of traditional expressions serve as a representation of the norms and values (Munir & Indiarti, 2015). Additionally, folk songs serve to define and identify the area and aid in understanding its natural features, including its climate, seasons, topography, agriculture, flora, and fauna (Sharma, 2020). The ideas, customs, and culture of various people are reflected in their folktales, which offer amusement as well as insight into their historical and contemporary practices (Mahato & Singh, 2024). We discovered the theme of nature conservation in folk songs, which makes them unique (Khan, 2017). To understand the importance of folklore, traditional knowledge can be summed up as a synthesis of knowledge, culture, and development. Therefore, it is imperative that this ethnozoological knowledge be recorded before it is completely lost (Soni et al., 2025). Songs and folklore from the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, are used in performances to symbolize environmental education and knowledge, its implications in the 21st-century globalized world, and the ongoing fight for environmental sustainability in Africa (Inyang, 2017). Farmers keep a variety of crops on their farms for a variety of biological, socioeconomic, ecological, ethnological, and cultural reasons, according to folk songs (Mekbib, 2009). Folksong produced a vast array of eroticism-related symbols, with domestic animals holding a particular position. Animal behavior toward plants, animals, and humans serves as the basis for metaphors referring to erotic love, in which symbolic images stand in for the sexual act (Kielak, 2022). The crane is revered and thought to represent the god of the sky. Since it is a migratory bird, its primary meaning is the taking and bringing of news. The prevalence of songs with insect titles and the range of titles and lyrics for the same song demonstrated the pastoral character of folk music (Manard & Coelho, 2019). To illustrate their indigenous knowledge, worldview, philosophy, religion, and environmental knowledge about Akan fauna, the Akan people employ animal metaphors (Arhine et al., 2023). It is challenging to incorporate folk songs from every province because the language, fashion, attire, and customs of Rajasthan change every 40 Kos. In order to learn more about the significance of animals in folk songs and sociocultural practices in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, the current study has been conducted.

## Study Area

Shekhawati is a historically semi-arid area in northeastern Rajasthan, India. It includes Churu, Sikar, and Jhunjhunu districts. Rajasthan's Shekhawati region, renowned for its opulent havelis and lively culture, has a long history of folk songs that are essential to its identity. These songs frequently recount love tales, religious or devotional themes, and heroic exploits. They often have folk dances to accompany them, which reflects the vibrant and expressive character of Shekhawati's artistic legacy. Themes that are frequently conveyed through metaphors and symbolism include love, separation, nature, and daily life. Essential components of the rich Shekhawati culture are folk dances and music. Folk songs are typically ballads that tell tales of love and valiant acts, as well as religious or devotional songs called banis and bhajans. Maharaja Shekha ji declared his sovereignty in the year 1471 violating the feudalism of Amer and the region was named after him. The Shekhawati region lies between 27°02' north latitude to 29°00' north latitude and 73°02' east longitude to 76°06' east longitude. The total area of Shekhawati is 13784

square kilometers, out of which the area of Sikar is 7855 square kilometer, Jhunjhunu's area is 5929 square kilometer and Churu's area is 13858 square kilometer.



**Figure 1.** Map Shows the Shekhawati Region of Rajasthan

## Methods

Using a variety of instruments, including semi-structured interviews and participatory rural appraisal, the ethnozoological data regarding folksong were obtained through an emic method (Alves, 2012; Kushwah et al., 2017; Quave et al., 2010; Supiandi et al., 2023). Using pertinent and accepted literature, the scientific names and species of the animals were identified (Ali, 2011).

### 1). Conversations

Data on fauna titled folksongs were collected through semi-structured interviews.

## 2). Recognition and categorization

Most creatures could be identified down to the species level, but only a small number could be identified down to the generic level. Large creatures were identified based on the folk descriptions of each species and the pictures that were shown to them.

## 3). Rural Participatory Assessment

The distribution of village resources, the crops that will be planted, the festivals that will be observed, and the significance of the animals to them can all be learned through this helpful method.

### Data analysis

Descriptive statistical methods were used to summarize and analyze the collected data. 161 folk songs about fauna were discovered by the study. These folk songs were first arranged according to class, and then they were grouped according to specific animals. The number of folk songs about a specific animal was then determined, and all the data was put into a tabular format. The table can be found below. Once the table was created, the percentage of data by class was determined, and the results were then displayed in a pie chart. The class Aves has the majority of the folk songs, followed by Mammalia, Reptilia, and Arthropoda. Based on their order, the data from these classes was interpreted in a bar diagram.

The study found **161** of fauna titled folksong in which-

**Aves- 86, 53.41%**

**Table 1. Aves Related Folksong are Highest in Number, in Which Following Orders have Following Frequency**

Order	Galliformes	Cuculiformes	Psittaciformes	Passeriformes	Columbiformes	Gruiformes	Charadriiformes	Anseriformes
No. of related folksong	26	11	15	19	4	2	1	8

**Mammalia- 59, 36.64%**

**Table 2. Mammalian diversity in Folksong of Shekhawati**

Order	Eulipotyphla	Artiodactyla	Perissodactyla	Proboscidea	Primate	Rodentia	Carnivora
No. of folksong	2	24	15	6	1	1	10

**Reptilia- 8, 4.9%** Squamata- 8

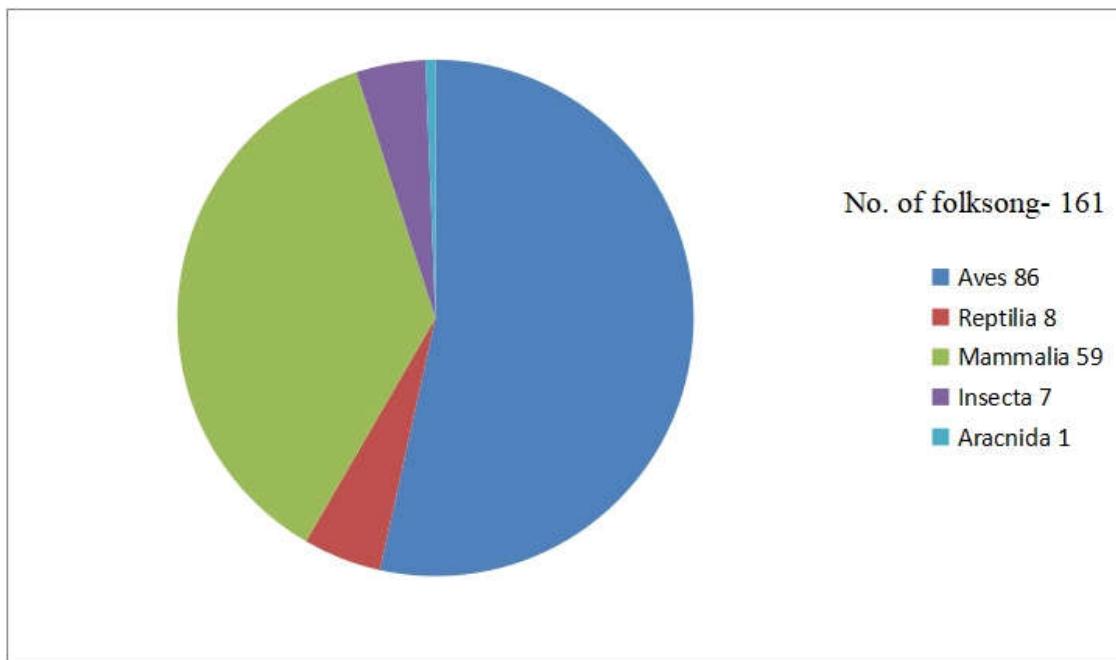
**Insecta- 7, 4.34%** Hemiptera- 2, Diptera- 3, Hymenoptera- 2

**Arachnida- 1, 0.62%** Scorpiones- 1

## Results

The result obtained indicates that animals and birds are very important for people of Shekhawati region. They use a variety of animals in their dialect or folksongs. The study found 161 bird and animals titled folksongs. In which class Aves related folksongs are highest in number that is 86 (53.41%) followed by class Mammalia 59 (36.64%), followed by class Reptilia 8 (4.9%), and phylum Arthropoda 8 (4.9%).

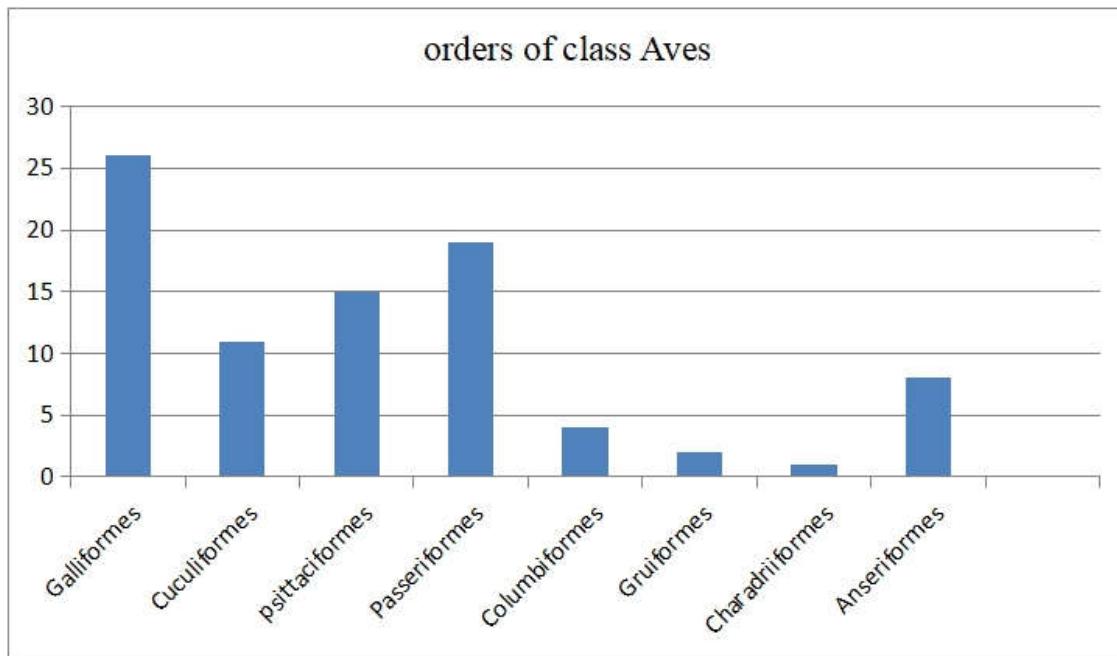
Figure 2.



**Figure 2** No. of faunal titled Folksong of Shekhawati Region, Rajasthan

In class aves the order Galliformes have highest number of folksong (26) related to them followed by order Passeriformes(19) which followed by order Psittaciformes(15)then order Cuculiformes(11) then order Anseriformes(8) then order Columbiformes(4) followed by order Gruiformes(2) followed by Charadriiformes(1).

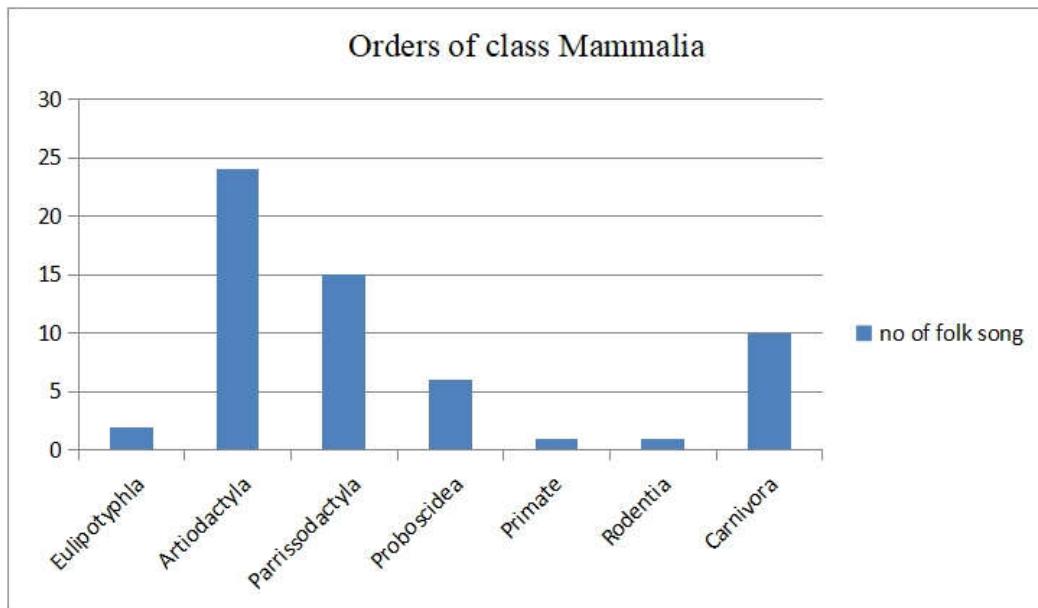
Figure 3.



**Figure 3** Orders of Class Aves with their Respective Number of Folksong

The study found that in class Mammalia the order Artiodactyla (24) have more diversity in folksong of Shekhawati region followed by order Perissodactyla (15) followed by order Carnivora (10), then Proboscidea (6) followed by order Eulipotyphla (2) followed by order Primate (1) and Rodentia (1).

Figure 4.

**Figure 4** Orders of Class Mammalia with their Respective Number of Folksong

**Table 3. Faunal Diversity in Folksongs of Shekhawati with their local Name, no. of titled folksong, english Name and scientific Name, Classification Up to Order and role of fauna in folksong of Shekhawati, Rajasthan**

s. n o.	Local name	No. of fol k son g	English name	Scientific name	Class and order	Role as
1.	Moriyo,murlo	19	Peacock	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	C- Aves O- Galliformes	<b>Lover</b>
2.	Papaiyo	4	Hawk-Cuckoo	<i>Hierococcyx varius</i>	C- Aves O- Cuculiformes	Welcome of rain
3.	Murglo,kukdo	3	Hen	<i>Gallus gallus domesticus</i>	C- Aves O- Galliformes	Mother seeta's reared
4.	Suvatiyo, Toto	15	Parrot	<i>Psittacula eupatria</i>	C- Aves	Omniscient

					O- Psittaciformes	
5.	Bulbul	1	Bulbuls	<i>Pycnonotus jocosus</i>	C- Aves O- Passeriformes	Marriageable girl
6.	Kabutar	2	Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>	C- Aves O- Columbiformes	Messenger
7.	Maina	4	Starling	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	C- Aves O- Passeriformes	Princess
8.	Kurjaan	2	Demoiselle Crane	<i>Grus virgo</i>	C- Aves O- Gruiformes	Religious sister
9.	Titudi	1	Red Wattled Lapwing	<i>Vanellus indicus</i>	C- Aves O- Charadriiformes	Applicant about rain
10.	Titar	4	Grey Francolin	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	C- Aves O- Galliformes	Lover
11.	Kagaliyo	7	Crow	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	C- Aves O- Passeriformes	Messenger about guest
12.	Kamedi	2	Eurasian Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>	C- Aves O Columbiformes	Praying person
13.	Koyaldi	7	Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus micropterus</i>	C- Aves O- Cuculiformes	Bride
14.	Chidkali	6	House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	C- Aves O- Passeriformes	Childhood memories
15.	Hansa	8	Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i>	C- Aves O- Anseriformes	Spiritual perfection
16.	Lele	1	Song Bird	<i>Cinnyris asiaticus</i>	C- Aves O- Passeriformes	Bride
17.	Katmal	2	Bedbugs	<i>Cimex lectularius</i>	C- Insecta O- Hemiptera	Wicked
18.	Makhi	3	Fly	<i>Musca domestica</i>	C- Insecta O- Diptera	Mind diverter
19.	Kidi	1	Ant	<i>Camponotus compressus</i>	C- Insecta	Helpless

					O- Hymenoptera	
20.	Bhanwro	1	Carpenter Bee	<i>Xylocopa campestris</i>	C- Insecta O- Hymenoptera	Spouse
21.	Chakchundar	2	Shrew	<i>Sorex araneus</i>	C- Mammalia O-Eulipotyphla	Disturbing
22.	Naag, Kalo	8	Snake	<i>Naja naja</i>	C- Reptilia O- Squamata	Lord gogaji
23.	Bhens,Padi	3	Buffallow	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>	C- Mammalia O- Artiodactyla	Milking
24.	Gau,Surhi	12	Cow	<i>Bos Taurus</i>	C- Mammalia O- Artiodactyla	Goddess
25.	Ghodi, Ghodo	13	Horse	<i>Equus caballus</i>	C- Mammalia O- Perissodactyla	Heroism
26.	Hasti,Hathi	6	Elephant	<i>Loxodonta Africana</i>	C- Mammalia O- Proboscidea	Monarchy
27.	Bakri	1	Got	<i>Capra aegagrus</i>	C- Mammalia O- Artiodactyla	Foodie
28.	Unt, Karwa	5	Camel	<i>Camelus bactrianus</i>	C- Mammalia O- Artiodactyla	Son in low's vehicle
29.	Hiran,Mirg	3	Deer	<i>Cervus nippon</i>	C- Mammalia O- Artiodactyla	Conscience
30.	Bandro	1	Monkey	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>	C- Mammalia O- Primates	Lord hanuman
31.	Sher,Nahar	5	Lion	<i>Panthera leo</i>	C- Mammalia O- Carnivora	Powerful but soft hearted
32.	Gadho	2	Donkey	<i>Equus asinus</i>	C- Mammalia O- Perissodactyla	Ride of goddess Sheetla
33.	Kutto	3	Dog	<i>Canis lupus</i>	C- Mammalia O- Carnivora	Pet
34.	Gidar	1	Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>	C- Mammalia	Gidar dance

					O- Carnivora	
35.	Reenchh	1	Sloth Bear	<i>Melursus ursinus</i>	C- Mammalia O- Carnivora	Lazy person
36.	Musak	1	Rat	<i>Rattus norvegicus</i>	C- Mammalia O-Rodentia	Ride of lord ganesha
37.	Bichhchhu	1	Scorpion	<i>Hottentotta tamulus</i>	C- Arachnida O- Scorpiones	Horrible

### Discussion

Folksong born from the vibration of human heart surprising thing is Folksongs are not written down anywhere. In a joint family, everyone used to learn by listening to each other. There was no need for any training or where any efforts made for it. It was as if these were inherited qualities. The songs are not songs about fauna; the songs speak of human emotions and feelings, while the fauna are metaphors and symbols. Animals have been given a very high status in the folk songs of Shekhawati. From small arthropods to primates, they have been portrayed likewise-

### Arthropoda

“Je satyug me kidi hoti, pandu paanv kathe dharta, Je satjug me makhi hoti, pandu bhojan kathe karta”

(If there were ants in the Satyuga then where the Pandavas would have placed their feet and if there were flies in the Satyuga then where would the Pandavas have eaten their food?)

### Reptilia

“Goga Aak bale aakdiyo, Goga maay bale kalo naag”

(Goga ji Maharaj is present inside the black snake)

### Aves

#### *Pavo cristatus* (Peacock)

1. “Dhola mor morni nache re ab lagyo sawan bhaduvo indraja gaj re”

(Dhola, the peacock and the peahen are dancing and Indra Raja is thundering, meaning that rain is about to come)

2. “Soni ka beta charat sujan, mhare memad par betha de ban ko Moriyo”

(A woman is so attracted by the beauty of the peacock that she asks the goldsmith to make a peacock on her head ornament and asks the carpenter to make a peacock on the wall of her palace.)

***Gallus domesticus* (Cock)**

“Kukda kathé jalmyo kathé upjyo, kathé bajya thara thal ji,

Chatrai syu boli kukda, mata seeta ka palya kukda”

(A woman says to the rooster, “Oh rooster raised by my mother Seeta, you speak such nice words.)

***Acridotheres tristis* (Mynah)**

“Mohan madan bai ka dada banni ne parnay dinyo ji,

Pinjare me chhodi dou dou maina, baan baagan me uda dijyo ji”

(In this song, the daughter has been called a mynah and it is said that to marry her, she should be freed from the cage.)

***Grus virgo* (Demoiselle crane)**

“Tu chh Kurjan mhare gaanv ki, lage dharam ki bhaan,

Kurjan ae mhara bhanvar mila dyo ae, sandeso mhara piya ne puga dyo ae”

(In this song, considering Kurjaan as sister, she is told that Kurjaan, my husband also works at the place from where you have come, you come every year but my husband has not come after marriage, when you go, give this message of mine to my husband, my sister, please met my husband.)

***Corvus splendens* (Crow)**

“Dagaliye bethyo kagaliyo bole ji, Aankh faruke hichki mhane aawe ji, Aaj bai ji mhare kun aawsi ji”

(When the crow sitting on the roof of the house crows, then the woman asks her sister-in-law which guest will come to our house today.)

***Passer domesticus* (House sparrow)**

“Mai to babul re baaga ri Chidkali, Pardesi suvatiyo re lar babul gathjod karyo”

(In this song the daughter is called a bird who is getting married to a boy from another state who is called a parrot. This is a farewell song.)

**Mammalia**

***Bos Taurus* (Cow)**

“Gau mata gaave baikuntha ra bas, sunaniya ra paap sharira jhad pade”

(Cow is called mother who tells the story of Vaikuntha and listening to which gives a place in heaven.)

### ***Equus ferus caballus (Mare)***

“Ek ghodi mhari Chandramukhi indra lok se aai ji, Thare karan Dashrat kulnandan ghodi Ram pathai ji”

(In this song, Dasharat's son Ram ji is getting married and a mare has been called for him to ride whose face looks like the moon.)

### ***Camelus dromedarius (Camel)***

“Kala sa karwa javai jeen chadyo, kala thara mriganainy ra kesh, Surgyani javai ji, kale kesha me ji anti khub rai”

(In this song, the son-in-law is being praised and mocked that son-in-law, how will you sit on a black camel when your wife's hair is black?)

### ***Macaca mulatta (Monkey)***

“Bander banko re lanka nagri me mach gayo hanko re, bander banko re”

(In this song, the monkey is said to be Lord Hanuman who created havoc in Lanka.)

## **Conclusion**

Folk songs are a natural way for people to express their thoughts. Along with auspiciousness, the melodies that come from a housewife's sweet throat also contain racial pride, regional culture, lifestyle, customs, fasts and festivals, traditions, beliefs, and maternal love. Folk songs have also given local animals and birds a lot of weight. It is challenging to incorporate folk songs from every province in Rajasthan since the language, fashion, attire, and customs change every 40 Kos. Ethnic people keep detailed records of how these changes have affected their way of life and maintain holistic beliefs that nature and humanity are inseparable. Their views on environmental changes are therefore different from those of the scientific community. Since folk songs convey stories of deep human emotions and environmental consciousness, it is crucial to preserve and promote them. In the modern era, folk songs are rapidly disappearing, and the younger generation does not recognize their significance.

## **Recommendation**

To understand the importance of folksongs, traditional knowledge can be summed up as a synthesis of knowledge, culture, and development. Therefore, before this ethnozoological knowledge is completely lost, it must be documented.

## Declarations

- **Ethics approval and participation consent**

For this study, ethical approval was not required.

- **Consent to publish**

This study does not require consent.

- **The accessibility of data and resources**

An emic approach was used to gather the ethnozoological data regarding folksongs, including focus groups discussion, semi-structured interviews, and participatory rural appraisal. Articles were found by searching specialized journal websites and international online databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar. Folksong, symbolic, metaphor, traditional knowledge, ethnozoology, and so forth were among the search terms used.

- **Conflicting interests**

The authors declare there are no conflicting interests.

- **Funding**

UGC in New Delhi, India, provided funding for this study.

- **Contribution of the author**

Shikha Soni created the study, gathered and examined the data, and wrote the manuscript. Anima Sharma, Khemchand Soni and Subhash Chandra supervise the data analysis and made revisions to the manuscript.

- **Acknowledgement**

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