

# Banko Janakari

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## Conservation of Red Sandle Wood (*Pterocarpus Santalinus*): need greater cooperation

Red Sandle Wood (*Pterocarpus Santalinus*) a small to medium-sized, deciduous tree is known to an endemic plant to India's Eastern Ghats. The tree is slow-growing and highly valued for its heavily pigmented heartwood. The wood, with a deep red to purple colour, has greater economic importance. Economically, the plant is well-known for its characteristic timber of exquisite colour, beauty and outstanding technical qualities. The red wood yields a natural dye santalin, which is used in colouring pharmaceutical preparations and foodstuffs. Its timber is highly prized for house posts and used for agriculture implements for poles, shafts and bent rims of carts and for picture frames, boxes and other joining purposes. The timber is especially used in the manufacture of musical instruments and carving into dolls and images.

Medicinally, the wood is reported to have a bitter in taste with a flavour, anthelmintic, aphrodisiac, alexiteric useful in vomiting, thirst, eye diseases, cures diseases concerned with blood, mental aberrations and ulcers. The wood of *P. santalinus* is considered astringent, tonic and diaphoretic. An infusion of the wood is used in the control of diabetes. A paste of the wood is used to give cooling effect, applied externally for inflammations and head-ache. The powder is excellent medicine for bilious affections and skin diseases. It has been also reported that the wood is used in treating headache, skin diseases, fever, boils, and scorpion sting and to improve sight. Heart wood is known to possess isoflavone glucosides, calocedrin and triterpene. The lignan isolated from the heartwood is known to inhibit tumor necrosis factor- $\alpha$  production and T-cell proliferation. The heart wood contains isoflavone glucosides and two anti-tumour lignans, viz., savinin and calocedrin. The ethanol extract of *Pterocarpus santalinus* L.f. (Fabaceae) showed gastroprotective effects.

The species is classified as 'Endangered' in the IUCN Red List, with threats involving a combination of over harvest and habitat alteration. Hitherto, the species is not recorded in Nepal but its handsome forest lies in the southern part of India. Presently Nepal is under rebuilding process of the Nation and it is the transition period, people are waiting for permanent peace and development however the country is facing several problems notably timber smuggling from south to the north. Nepal is a signatory member of CITES, that compels it's to

obey the rules and regulation mandated by the CITES. Red Sandle wood is enlisted in Appendix-II of CITES, it cannot be transported or marketed with taking especial permission from the country of origin. Unless grater cooperation and collaboration among India and China Nepal's effort remains futile to combat smuggling of this valuable species.

China, India and Nepal are all Parties to CITES, and all three have legal and institutional instruments in place to address wildlife trade issues. However, illegal wood trade has become more organized, demand has increased for red sandal wood and their products and smugglers have more sophisticated systems for transporting consignments. In order to combat this worrying trend driven by increased, international demand, it is now high time for all the three countries to step up efforts such as enforcement at cross-national borders, regional level advocacy, policy analysis as well as collaboration with non-conventional stakeholders such as transport companies.