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## A threatened, endangered, endemic plant: Patwa

A very rare, endangered, endemic plant Patwa which is known as *Butea pellita* Hook. and now renamed as *Meizotropis pellita* (Wall. ex Hook, F & Grev.) Sanjappa is blooming just 12 km from Talli Tal (Naini Tal) in a place known as Patwadanger. Patwadanger is known after the plant Patwa and botanists all over the world know this place owing to the existence of this plant here.

Plant Patwa, an angiosperm, belongs to the family Papilionaceae. This plant is a shrub with stout, woody perennial rootstock from which several erect

shoots up to 6 feet high and 0.75 inch diameter are annually produced. Stems are ribbed with a large pith. Leaves, stem, inflorescence and pods are densely clothed with spreading white or pale brown tomentum. Leaves are 18-30 inches long. Flowers are 0.5-1 inch long in fascicles of usually 3 or 5, arranged in erect terminal and axillary simple raceme. Corolla has bright red wings, keel changing to orange towards the base inside. The plant will reappear in a year from the same root stock in April/May.

This species occurs more gregariously on flat hill tops as well as on the valley slopes near dry ridges and in open Chir forest at around 5000 feet in May-June. Plant Patwa was first reported by Osmoston in 1925 at Patwadanger (1530 m). He had also seen this plant in Kali Kumaun and subsequently its presence was also reported from Doti district of Nepal.

The population of this rare, endemic and endangered plant is on the decline due to deforestation, habitat fragmentation, forest fires, human interference

and ignorance of the people. This species has very small population and grows in a very specialized and sensitive habitat/s, therefore any further change and ecological disturbance are bound to cause their total extinction from this region.

According to Y. P. S. Pangtey, an eminent botanist of this region, this plant is a national asset and it is our duty to preserve/protect this plant for prosperity. We should educate the younger generation about its existence and importance. Efforts should be made to preserve this plant at the Forest Department level otherwise this rare plant will vanish from this region within 25 years.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. I thank CSIR, New Delhi for financial assistance.

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*Butea pellita* renamed as *Meizotropis pellita*.