



SMUGGLING OF RED SANDAL WOOD IN INDIA: A REVIEW STUDY



V.Raj Mahammadh¹

*¹Assistant Professor & Head, Department of History, Govt Degree & PG College
Kadiri, Anantapur Dist, Andhra Pradesh, India*

ABSTRACT

Red Sandal Wood or Red sanders are one of the most valuable tree species in Indian forestry. The botanical name of the red sandalwood is '*Petro Carpus Santa Linus*'. It is an important export product that is highly traded illegally in the international market. It provides significant cash incomes and adds considerable value to the national economy. This wood is highly expensive and used in not only medicinal purposes, but also in various industrial uses, and thus being over exploited from their natural habitates. These trees are naturally growing in the forest and since there is no systematic cultivation, at the face of increased exploitation, Red sandalwood has become an endangered species in the country. A prohibited item for export, red sanders is a banned item in the list of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This paper highlights the red sandal wood and its uses and also deals about how the smugglers were exploited wood from forest and recent incidents and controlling measures are discussed.

KEY WORDS: Red Sandal Wood, Petro Carpus Santa Linus, Endangered, Exploitation, Smuggling etc.

INTRODUCTION

Red sandalwood is a gift of natural world. The natural distributions of Red sander trees are located in the world from Indonesia in the East, Chile in the West and Hawaiian in North and New Zealand in South. In India, the Red sander trees are extended in the states of Andhra Pradesh and parts of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. It is small to medium sized hemi parasitic tree distributed widely in India. Apart from, Kadapa, Chittoor and some parts of Nellore, Kurnool, Prakasam and Anantapur districts in Andhra Pradesh having rich sandalwood trees and rare medicinal plants and variety of spices in the country. The Palakonda hill ranges in Kadapa and Seshachalam hill ranges in Chittoor district have its principal geographical range. The popular name of red sandalwood in Telugu language is called *Raktachandanam*, locally it is used in the preparation of agricultural tools, and household articles and also used talcum powder from times immemorial. These trees are occupied more than 5200 km an area. The tree grows in dry plains of Eastern Ghats and dry deciduous forest areas. It also grows on dry, hilly, often rocky ground and occasionally found on precipitous hill sides also. It is generally found at altitudes of 150 to 900 meters with normal rainfall of 90-110 cm received from monsoons. About twenty three percent of red sanders formation is dense and thirty four to thirty six percent has moderate and remaining is open.

HISTORY OF SANDAL WOOD

Red sandalwood had a prospective economic resource had occupied prominent importance in the history. It had played an important role in the Ancient and Medieval periods. It is an important ingredient in *Homa*. Buddhists were burnt sandalwood during

prayers and meditation for good smell. Vijayanagara and Tipu sultans had given good importance to sandalwood. Tipu sultan had declared '*Sandalwood tree is a Royal Tree*' and took over sandalwood trade of the state on a monopoly basis. Later Mysore Maharajas and other kings had continued this practice. Under British rule, the red sandalwood is exploited and huge quantity of wood sold and also exported to England. The British government declared reserved forests under Forest Acts for the protection of valuable trees.

USE OF SANDAL WOOD

Red Sandalwood has traditionally been used as an astringent, disinfectant, or diuretic, but recently it is used as a natural dye to color herbal mixtures and toothpaste and has become one of the most popular natural dyes used today. A decoction of the wood may be helpful for Indi-digestion and fever and externally for skin problems, especially those of bacterial origin. There are different uses of sandalwood in variety of purposes in not only India but also in other countries. The higher caste people used sandalwood for burning of dead bodies. Furniture is also made using this variety of wood rarely, because wood samples are abundant in organic and inorganic compounds. The physical and chemical properties are rich in the wood. It also contains ferric iron, nickel and copper. It is used as colorant in food, alcoholic beverages, wood polish, metal varnish, textiles, wool, silk, leather, jute, and dye for Skin (Sun-tan), medicines, tablet coating colorant, and as dye for dye sensitized solar cells etc. It is also an effective color additive to body powders and scrubs. It is an astringent and a cooling agent and is used in several skin care preparations. It is used in the treatment of pimples, acne, wrinkles, and soaps as an ingredient which can be added at first trace to produce a mottled light brown soap that is an excellent exfoliates.

The heartwood useful part of plant is extremely hard and blood red in colour with occasional light yellow streaks. The heartwood of the tree is good source of a red dye and it is used as a red colorant for fish processing in European countries. It is an exquisite material for carving intricate designs. The carved designs of gods and mythological figures have a high demand in the market. African Blackwood is the most expensive wood in the world and red sandalwood is the second highest value. The wood mainly used in medical industry, it is anticoagulant, improves local circulation and used for traumatic wounds, abrasions and bruises. It is used for treating digestive tract problems, fluid retention, coughs and blood purification. The powder used in skin rashes, sunburn, blemishes and pre mature aging. It is an antiseptic, wound healing agent. It's been extensively used in Ayurveda to treat fever, digestive problem, treating high blood pressure and lowering the Sugar level of diabetic patients. It is used in face pack for dry skin, acne and black spots.

The bark of the tree looks like a cobra skin or crocodilian scales, it works as anti-hyperglycaemic activity. It also used in numerous astringent remedies like bleeding piles, hemorrhages and dysentery in indigenous system of medicine. Wood paste is applied after bathing for cooling purposes and it's also cleaned for skin syndromes. The paste is integral to rituals and ceremonies; it is also distributed to devotees, who apply it to the forehead or neck and chest. Red sanders are used in the making of oriental musical instruments like *Shamisen, Koto and Erhu*. A wide variety of articles such as boxes, cabinet panels, combs, jewel cases, picture frames, hand fans, pen holders, card cases, letter openers and bookmarks are made from sandalwood. Chips

and powder of this wood also exported to European countries for preserving natural colours of food-stuffs and dyeing purposes.

Commercially sandalwood is known as the East Indian sandalwood and its oil called it as the East Indian sandalwood oil. This oil is abstained from steam distillation of heartwood powder. It is extensively used in perfumery, cosmetics, aromatherapy, and pharmaceutical industry. The market rate of five grams oil is more than 1500-2000 rupees. The oil is used as a flavouring substance in food products such as frozen dairy desserts, candy, pan masala, baked food, gelatin, puddings and also in alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. The FAO/WHO and other expert committees on food additives approved the use of this oil. The oil is also used for its therapeutic effects in Ayurveda, Chinese and Tibetan medicinal systems. It is used in the treatment of common colds, bronchitis, fever, dysentery, piles, scabies and infection of the urinary tract, inflammation of the mouth and pharynx, liver and gall-bladder complaints and as an expectorant, stimulant, carminative, digestive and as a muscle relaxant. The oil elevates pulse rate, skin conductance level and systolic blood pressure and brings about higher ratings of attentiveness and mood in humans. The products of red sanders are used for making house furniture and musical instruments widely in many European and Asian countries. These are the reasons for exploitation of the red sandal wood illegally.

SMUGGLING OF RED SANDER WOOD

Red Sandal Wood had the prominent importance in the international market. Increased demand for the wood in the global market is the reason for its large scale smuggling. The confident of sizable earnings as red sanders has good demand in foreign

countries like China, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Myanmar, where they are used for medicinal as well as house hold furniture purposes. The Government of India and the Government of Andhra Pradesh banned the trade of sandalwood in the open market and also banned the felling of the trees. But the smugglers exploited the wood illegally and sold in the market. Sandalwood is most commonly used incense material by the Japan and Chinese in worship and used in various ceremonies. Chinese people believed Red sandalwood furniture is lucky at homes. Generally it attracts more demand in the market. A medium sized twenty five year old tree, sells for as much as one lakh rupees in the international market. This demand for Red Sanders has fueled by an aggressive timber mafia that furtively cuts and exports large stand of the endangered tree. A crime in which the profits far outweigh the risks involved. In July 2012 alone, police in Andhra Pradesh seized Red Sanders logs worth Rs 2.6 crore.

The governments of India's Go-downs have 15,000 tonnes of seized stock of red sandalwood worth 5,000 crore rupees value in 2013 (Hindustan Times, 11th August, 2013). In Andhra Pradesh it has more than 9,000 tonnes of seized stocks in Go downs. The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department alone seized about 3,067 tonnes of red sandalwood during 2001-2007. In view of the continued illegal removals and the seizures of smuggled Red sandalwood from different parts of India and abroad, the failure of the restricted trade policy is evident. While the wood is not known to have much usage in India, it is a rare and valued item for traditional medicines and woodcraft across China, Myanmar, Japan and east Asia, where the market price for 'round logs' is high. International demand is always high (GOI, 2011), and this situation encouraged the illegal

trade. The official sources said that the international smuggling gangs of the red sandalwood is piling up in state Go-downs and ware houses across the country as the government is at wits' end on how to dispose of the growing stock. The disposal of the huge stock of seized red sandalwood is a cause of worry. The seized stock take up a lot of Go-down space and its cost of its maintenance is also very high. A prohibited item for export, red sandalwood is a banned item in the list of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

In a crackdown on sandalwood smugglers using the state as a transit point, two persons were arrested and 13,220kg of red sandalwood worth Rs 5.5 crore in the Indian market was seized by the officials of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) from Araria in Patna. Acting on a tip-off, a DRI team of Patna and Muzaffarpur officials along with an Araria police team intercepted a red sandalwood container bound for South Korea via Kolkata port. The driver and conductor of the freight vehicle were coming from Nepal and had a Customs Transit Document (CTD) for exporting carpets and chairs. However, when Police checked the vehicle they found it contained red sandalwood, one of the most-sought-after forest items by international smuggling gangs. On the basis of the information provided by the arrested persons, another freight container which was already at the Kolkata port was also seized. It contained 8,000kg of red sandalwood, all brought from Andhra Pradesh via Delhi. Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) said that Sandalwood powder mixed with ivory dust is a primary ingredient in some anti-ageing creams popular in China. That is also one of the reasons the value of red sandalwood increases almost fifty

times in the international market. The people used alternative routes to smuggle the products and international syndicates were involved in the smuggling. The DRI officials seized a red Sandalwood consignment worth Rs 1.5 crore in Muzaffarpur. (Times of India, 8th April, 2014). A huge consignment of red sandalwood meant to be smuggled out to China has been seized by the Delhi Police Crime Branch in coordination with the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence from a warehouse at Janakpuri in West Delhi. The consignment is estimated to be worth Rs.2 crore. In the recent past, large seizures of red sandalwood used for medicinal purposes apart from the extraction of oil and manufacturing of incense sticks and handicraft items have been made in different parts of the country revealing that organized gangs operating in Delhi, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. Instances of attempts to smuggle red sandalwood consignments to Dubai have also been recorded in Gujarat and Punjab. (The Hindu, 14th December, 2012).

In November 2013, About 110 kg of rare red sandalwood along with foreign and Indian currency worth about Rs 24 lakhs was seized from three Chinese nationals at the Kochi airport here as they were about to board a flight to Malaysia. The red sandalwood cut as small logs and kept in four bags appeared to have been procured from Karnataka. There are many such cases found at Ahmedabad International Airport. Forest officers on April, 2014 seized 22.76 tonnes of red sandalwood worth over Rs 1.59 crore from three trucks near Shirwal village, about 75 km from Satara in Maharashtra. The truck drivers, who were from Chennai were arrested and booked under article 41(2B) of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, which identifies transport of red sandal wood without permission as a crime. (Times of India, 12th April, 2014).

Another instance in Ahmadabad International Airport that Customs officials checked two Chinese citizens luggage and found 127.9 kg of red sandalwood in the form of garlands made out of sandalwood beads. (Times of India, 13th May, 2014). Earlier, the Customs department nabbed a group of nine Chinese nationals with 419.5 kg of wood at Sardar Vallabhai Patel International Airport. The Chinese national were trying to smuggle red sandal wood by air route via Singapore. They were carrying heavy wooden blocks and garlands of wooden beads containing 146 kg and 273 kgs in 2014. Another case on 5th May, 2014, four Chinese nationals were held at the airport while trying to smuggle 174.9 kg of sandalwood. The Customs Department recovered the property. According to Customs Officials, red sanders cost between Rs 1,500 and Rs 2,000 and more per kg. With tight security at ports in Chennai and Mumbai, the air route is emerging a new trade way for red sanders smuggling. The cases of red sanders smuggling has increased in the country in the last three years was 24 cases in 2011, 71 in 2012 and 85 in 2013. (Times of India, 24th April, 2014). Another instances in recent past that, a team of the Gandhinagar Range's Rapid Response Cell of the state police caught three persons with 11,000kg of red sandalwood near Chiloda. Police have booked the trio under sections of IPC and Indian Forest Act. During investigation, it was found that the truck had 11,195kg of sandalwood. Another case was found in Coimbatore city. Smugglers has stolen nine tonnes of red sanders from the Container Corporation of India (CONCOR) at Irugur on 25th April, 2014. The police cracked a red sanders theft case on May, 2014 and recovered four tonnes of logs in Salem with the help of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence. (Times of India, 11th May, 2014).

In Andhra Pradesh, many cases have been registered every day in the police stations. Recently, a mob of Tamil smugglers were arrested by the police at Badvel (Kadapa dist) in Lankamalla forest area of Andhra Pradesh. More than one hundred fifty labour smugglers were run away. The police recovered one crore value of red sandal wood from them. (Sakshi,

8th September, 2014). The police forces of Chittor, Kadapa, and Nellore have arrested 917 members in 2014 August. These labour smugglers were from Andhra, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Manipur. The following red sander smugglers were arrested by police in various places.

Table: 1

S.No	Name of the Place	Total Number of Smugglers
1	Chittor, Andhra Pradesh	40
2	Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh	36
3	Kadapa, Andhra Pradesh	42
4	Nellore, Andhra Pradesh	36
5	Tamil Nadu	18
6	Karnataka	24
7	Total	196

Source: Sakshi News Paper, August, 2014

The table shows the Andhra Pradesh is the only state that is highest smuggling cases have been registered. The experts say that only ten percent of the red sandal wood is caught by the police and ninety percent went to illegal export through various routes. The smugglers sometimes hacked the police with axes, and other dangerous instruments. For instance, in December, 2013 an Assistant Beat Officer David Karunakaran, and Forest Officer Sridhar (Andhra Pradesh Forest Department) were beaten up by smugglers and they were dead in Seshachalam forest. In this case 346 smugglers were arrested and sent to jail. There are fifteen labourers were dead during the firing session between smugglers and police forces in Sheshachalam forest. These are all from Tamil Nadu, they belongs to tribal community.

(Sakshi, August 7th, 2014). If any labour smuggler is dead, the mediator will pay ten lakhs forcompensation; if they are wounded they will pay one lakh rupees. The official sources said that the smugglers were well trained under the leadership of late Verappan.

Most of the recovered red sandalwood is preserved (14,800 tonnes in the hands of Government of Andhra Pradesh) in Kadapa, Rajampet, Proddutor, Tirupati, Chittor, Nandyal, Giddalore, Nellore, Venkatagiri and Bakarapet police stations. The police and Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) recovered huge quantity of sandal wood near the sea ports. (Sakshi, July 2014). The following table shows the recovered sandal wood from June to July, 2014 in Kadapa and Chittor districts of Andhra Pradesh.

Table: 2

District	Quantity of Sandal Wood	Approximate Cost or Value
Chittor, Arpedu Mandal, Kotta Virapuram Village	25 logs	50,00,000
Kadapa, Sambe Palli Mandal	64 logs	1,25,00000
Kadapa, Kodur Mandal, ST Colony	156 logs	2,50,00000
Kadapa, Badvel Mandal	101 logs	1,000,0000

Source: Sakshi, 21st July, 2014, and Enadu, 2nd June, 2014. (Note: The logs cost is based on the approximate value only, Price is depends on the quality and demand in the market)

In the international market, one metric tonns of red sandal wood costs twenty to fifty lakhs rupees. In 1st June 2014, the police forces arrested two hundred and thirty six labour smugglers in Renigunta railway station at Tirupati in Chittor district; they are all from Tiruvannamalai, Selam, Dharmapuri, Kanchipuram, Koyambattor in Tamil Nadu and other places. If the government wants to sale the red sandalwood, they would take permission from the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species(CITES) and Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT). Recently, the Government of Andhra Pradesh got permission and invited global tenders to sale 4,159.693 tonnes through e-action- cum e-tender.

The traders sell the wood based on the grading. Generally 'A' grade wood, which means no defects, would pay high prices, and 'B' grade wood means, logs with bend and small defects would also get good price. 'C' grade means logs with many defects will get low price, and 'D' grade means logs with all defects, which are not sold in the market.

According to sources, the big smuggling traders were Myanmar and Bangladesh. Hamid, Katikina Halli, in Karnataka was an international big smuggler having Hundreds of laboures and having good contacts in Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Kolkata traders. He preferred road ways while

transporting the wood. He has good contacts in many international smugglers. Another smuggler namely Laxmanan from Delhi was also an international wanted smuggler having own Go-downs in Agra, Lucknow, Patna, Manipur, Assam, Barma and Bangladesh. He exported sandalwood to Hon Kong and China mainly. Riyaz and Fayaz is another smugglers from Katikina Halli in Karnataka, they were the right hands of Hamid. They deal with Andhra smugglers. They have to collect wood logs from forests and exported through the sea ports like Chennai, Visakapatnam, Mumbai and Kandla etc. (Enadu, 16th July, 2014). The illegal trade adversely affects the population structure of the species with removal of superior phenotypes.

SMUGGLING STAGES OF RED SANDAL WOOD

There are five stages of smuggling of red sandal wood. In the first stage some of the traders contact to middle men in medium towns near the forest areas and pay them advances to recognize cutting of wood. In the second stage, the middle men contact the local people; those were very poor and uneducated people and pay them advances for going to the forests and cutting red sander trees and bringing the timer logs from the forests. The locals are paid by weight based on the market value. Generally, the middlemen would pay low prices in this stage. In the third stage, several cycles of

transportation like laundering often changing ownership, locations, conveyance, and drivers through middlemen. In the fourth stage, red sanders logs normally concealed under the agricultural produce or any such item and transport to destination. In the final stage, the material either in log form or in converted form is transported to various destinations within the country or outside the country.

They used road, air and sea routes for transportation. During the transportation from one place to another place, they created fake permission letters and documents. Generally forest check post staffs are not highly educated and they are lower grade cadre, most of the staff is under the control of political leaders. Moreover they will get commission from the smugglers, so they will allow the vehicles illegally. Another reason is that they are not able to distinguish whether the documents are original or fake due to the ignorance. So the government has to strengthen and appointed the staff with highly educated persons in the targeted areas. Legal trade is limited to occasional sale of confiscated timber by the Government of Andhra Pradesh. Recently, the Andhra Pradesh Government announced to sell seized stock of red sanders (4159.63 tonnes) in the form of logs through e-action- cum e-tender process. Interested groups from countries like China, Japan, Singapore, Australia and UAE have visited Go-downs across the state to check the quality of the precious wood (*The Statesman*, 19th August, 2014). Indian sandalwood has lucrative market for smugglers as high price is paid for this wood in China Japan and Hong Kong. Red sandalwood is banned from export and cannot be ferried or sold without proper permission.

ACTS AND RULES

The central and state government passed several acts for the protection of red sander trees and banned the felling of trees. The regulation and possession of Red Sander and Sandal Wood is being dealt under Andhra Pradesh Sandalwood and Red Sander wood transit Rules, 1969 and Andhra Pradesh Red sander Wood Possession Rules, 1989. These provisions should be followed scrupulously. These Rules provide detailed provisions for verification of the material, issue and checking of transit permit, registration of property marks and fixing of marks on the trees and felled logs etc.

Conditions for Import, Export and Movement:-

1. No person shall import sandalwood, sandalwood chips, sandalwood powder or red-sanders wood, red-sanders wood chips, red-sanders wood powder into, or export sandalwood chips, sandalwood powder or red-sanders wood, red-sander wood chips, red-sanders wood powder from, or move sandalwood or red-sanders wood within, any place in the whole of the State, unless such sandalwood or red-sanders wood is accompanied by a permit prescribed in Rule 4.
2. No piece of the wood and other materials specified in sub-rule (1) or bags containing saw dust or chips of such wood shall be transported unless they bear and authorized marking or seal of the Government as provided in Rule 7.

The government should implement the rules strictly in this connection and make necessary arrangements for the protection of red sander trees. The government should have

an eye on politician's movements of day today activities in this connection. For that the government should appoint a powerful task force commission with efficient IPS officers as members. The forest officers should follow the rules and regulations, while they are in duty and follow the ethical and moral values without resorting to corruption. The government should have an eye on the followers of Verappan. It is strongly suggested that to fit Cameras with high resolution mega pixels in the forest area to connect with main branch. It is also suggested to use the satellite technology to find out the movements of thief's in the reserved forest areas. The government should pay incentives to those who sincerely work in the red sandal wood areas; it helps to reduce the corruption in the department. It also suggests that the Vanamohostava Committees should be strengthened and more priority should be given to local people as members. The government should not transfer the efficient and sincere police officers without reasons. The government should take initiate to distribute the reds sandal plants with free of cost and encourages to NGOs for more plantation. Controlling the smuggling of red sandalwood from India to China via Nepal, India has to seek the Government of Nepal's help. Thus every citizen should protect these Red Gold or Red Sandal trees.

REFERENCES

1. Rc.No.5357/2003/F5 Office of the Prl. Chief Conservator of Forests, Date: 22-04.06, Govt of Andhra Pradesh.
2. Hindustan Times, 11th August, 2013
3. Times of India, 8th April, 2014
4. The Hindu, 14th December, 2012
5. Times of India, 12th April, 2014
6. Times of India, 24th April, 2014
7. Times of India, 11th May, 2014
8. Sakshi, 8th September, 2014
9. Sakshi, August, 2014
10. Sakshi, July 2014
11. Sakshi, 21st July, 2014
12. Enadu, 2nd June, 2014
13. Enadu, 16th July, 2014
14. S.Vedavathy, Cultivation of Endemic Red Sanders for International Trade, Natural Product Radiance, Vol.3 (2), March-April, 2004.
15. A. N. Arun Kumar, Geeta Joshi and H. Y. Mohan Ram, Sandalwood: History, Uses, Present Status and the Future, Current Science, Vol. 103, NO. 12, 25th December, 2012.
16. A. Bhagya Raj and D.V.Ramana, Status of Red Sanders in Business, Indian Journal of Applied Research, Vol. 3, Issue: 7, July 2013.
17. The Statesman, 19th August, 2014.
18. <http://forest.ap.nic.in>
19. V.Raj Mahammadh, Exploitation of Forest Economy under British Rule in Cuddapah District of Andhra Pradesh, EPRA International Journal of Economic and Business Review, Vol.2, issue-3, March, 2014.
20. V.Raj Mahammadh, British Forest Policies and its Impact on Colonial South India, EPRA International Journal of Economic Growth and Environmental Issues, Vol.2, June-May, 2014.

