

forests and grasslands and grabbed the land through forged and fake pattayams.

4. ROLE OF THE FOREST DEPARTMENT

The entire tract which forms Kurinjimala Sanctuary was earlier 'Revenue Tharishu'. Despite this legal status, the Forest Department has been raising commercial plantations of Wattle and Eucalyptus Grandis since long and extracted as per the working plan prescriptions of Munnar Division. The raising of plantation crop is a long term activity; hence it is expected that it would be done with the formal or informal concurrence of Revenue Department. According to the Forest Dept., the total extent of Wattle and Eucalyptus Grandis plantation in this area is about 900.40 ha. The oldest plantation appears to be the Wattle plantation at Banthar from 1978.

Out of the above 900.40 ha, an area 102 ha of 1982 Eucalyptus Grandis plantation at Banthar was handed over to Hindustan Newsprint Ltd for raising captive plantations. The Forest Department was collecting lease rent for this area. The company has raised plantations and extracted the same in these areas before the declaration of the Sanctuary.

Thus, the Forest Dept. has over the last 20-25 years taken over unoccupied Revenue lands that are forest in nature and planted Eucalyptus Grandis on them. Forest Dept. has signed MoUs with the paper industry without Revenue Dept. being a party, for supply of Eucalyptus Grandis. Forest Dept. collects lease rent from the industry for the purpose. Forest Dept. using Government funding has planted Eucalyptus Grandis on them. Eucalyptus Grandis requires very little maintenance but is not food for the soil or the water table. On maturity, the lessee, viz. the paper industry harvests and takes away Eucalyptus Grandis leaving the land barren and unprotected. Forest Dept. as the lessor allows the land to be exploited with