

Battle on Historical Water: An Analysis Roots of conflict between India and Sri Lanka and Victimization of Arrested Indian Fishermen

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Abstract : The Palk Bay, a narrow strip of water, separates the state of Tamil Nadu in India from north Sri Lanka. The bay, which is 137 km in length and varies from 64 to 137 kilometers in width and is home to more than 580 fish species and chunks of shrimp's resources, is divided by the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL). The bay, bordering it are five Tamil Nadu districts of India and three Sri Lankan districts and assumes importance as it is one of the areas presenting permanent and serious challenges to both India and Sri Lanka with respect to the fishing rights in the Bay. Fishermen from both sides were enjoying fishing with hormones for centuries. Katchchadeevu is a tiny Island located in the Bay, which was a part of India. After the Katchchadeevu agreement 1974 it became a part of Sri Lanka and a fishing conflict arose between the two countries' fishermen. Fuelling the dispute over Katchchadeevu is the overfishing of Indian mechanized trawlers in Palk Bay and the damaging environmental and economic effects of trawling. Since 2008, more than 300 Indian fishermen have been killed by firing by Sri Lankan Navy, nearly 100 fishermen have gone missing and more than 3000 fishermen were arrested and later released after the trials for trespassing into Sri Lankan waters. Currently, more than 120 fishing boats and 29 fishermen are in Sri Lankan custody. This paper attempts to find out the causes of fishing conflict and who has the fishing rights in the mentioned waters, how the international treaties are complied with at the time of arrest and trials, how the arrested fishermen are treated by them and how they suffer from fishermen families without a breadwinner. A Semi-structured interview schedule tool was prepared by the researcher, which is suitable for measuring quantitative and qualitative aspects of the above-mentioned theme. One hundred arrested fishermen were interviewed and recorded their prison experiences in Sri Lanka. The research found that the majority of the fishermen believe that they have the right to fish in the historical water and that the Sri Lankan Naval personnel have brutally attacked the Indian fishermen at the time of the arrest. The majority of the fishermen accepted that they had limited fishing grounds. As a result, they entered Sri Lankan waters for their livelihood. The majority of the fishermen expected that they would also get their belongings back at the time of release, primarily the boats. Most of the arrested fishermen's families face financial crises in the absence of their breadwinners and this situation has created conditions for child labor among the affected families and some fishers migrate to different places for different occupations. The majority of the fishers have trauma about their victimization and face uncertainty in the future of their occupation. We can discuss more the causes and nature of the fishing conflict and the financial and psychological victimization of Indian fishermen in relation to the conflict.

Keywords : palk bay, historical water, fishing conflict, arrested fishermen, victimization

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