

Stake Net Fishery in Negombo and Chilaw: Status of Traditional Fishing Rights and Cultural heritage

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Stake net, Kattudel, fishery is one of the traditional fishing methods practiced by fishers in Negombo and Chilaw lagoons. This paper examines the evolution of fishing rights and its cultural bindings of stake net fishery in Chilaw and Negombo lagoons. Primary data were collected through administering semi-structured questionnaire surveys with 15 fishers and conducting 2 Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA). Data were collected on socio-economic characteristics, fishing rights and cultural linkages of fishers. A majority of fishers (40%) was in the range of 60- 74 years age group while over 33% had between 40 to 49 years of experience in the fishery. The pioneers, 3 families in Negombo: Mihindukulasuriya, Kurukulasuriya and Warnakulasuriya and 3 families in Chilaw: Mihindukulasuriya, Kurukulasuriya and Jayasuriya have still been entitled the traditional fishing rights for this fishery. The locations where the stake nets are being operated called Kattudel paduwa. Seventeen (17) Kattudel paduwa have been identified by the Negombo (Kattudel) fishing regulation and fishing rights have been distributed among four Kattudel Fishermen Associations (KFA): Grand Street KFA, Sea Street KFA, Duwa- Pitipana KFA and Pitipana KFA. In Chilaw fishing regulation, five areas have been reserved for Kattudel fisheries among the sub groups of Pitipana Street, Aluthwatte and Sea Street. Presently, 22 fishing sites in Negombo and 8 fishing sites in Chilaw are being operated. Only married, Christian male descendants have the ownership rights of stake net fishery in both lagoons. It is needed to protect fishing rights and cultural heritage in stake net fishery because it is one of the traditional fishing practices in Sri Lanka.

Key words: *Cultural heritage, Fishing rights, Kattudel paduwa, Stake net fishery*