



## INCIDENCE OF KLEPTOPARASITISM ON JELLYFISH *RHOPILEMA HISPIDUM* FROM THE PAMBAN COAST OF PALK BAY, SOUTHEAST COAST OF INDIA

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### Abstract

Brittle stars are the largest group among the living echinoderms with 2,064 described species. During regular survey and monitoring work on the jellyfish swarming along the Palk Bay coast of Pampam in 2017, huge jellyfish species *Rhopilemahispidum* (*Modachori* in tamil) were observed during summer months and upon closer inspection of the specimens, there were numerous brittle stars associated with the oral side of the jellyfish. These specimens were further studied taxonomically and identified as *Ophiocnemis marmorata*. Among the ten jellyfishes sampled, about 100 to 150 brittle stars were found in each jellyfish. This kind of association by the brittle stars is attributed for getting food, protection and a dispersal strategy by the brittle stars with jelly fishes. Interestingly, brittle stars are particle feeders and steal the planktonic material available on the oral gelatinous side of the jellyfish and feed. This kind of relationship is termed as 'Kleptoparasitism'. Brittle star an echinoderm was found to have association with jellyfish in the wild.

**Keywords :** Kleptoparasitism, brittle stars, Rhopilema, Jellyfish