

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE GULF OF MANNAR

P. Nammalwar
and
V. Edwin Joseph



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ICAR

CENTRAL MARINE FISHERIES RESEARCH INSTITUTE

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Front Cover : Mangrove forest of Manoli Island of the Gulf of Mannar managed by Tamilnadu Forest Department, Mandapam.

Back Cover : Satellite picture of Gulf of Mannar Islands by Institute for Ocean Management, Anna University, Chennai.

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FOREWORD

India is endowed with rich and varied biodiversity of marine biota. The Gulf of Mannar which forms an important ecosystem along the Indian coast has been the focus of anthropogenic interferences and as a result attracted great deal of attention of scientific community. The development of marine fisheries in this ecosystem requires thorough knowledge on the relative abundance of various commercially exploitable shellfish, finfish and other organisms and their biology for designing appropriate management strategies for sustainable production, besides conserving the marine biodiversity. In order to document the information base on these aspects from the Gulf of Mannar in Tamil Nadu, an attempt is made here to compile all the published information and publish the same in the form of a special publication of the CMFRI. Literature on various subjects are included in 1938 references in the book. Dr. P. Nammalwar and Shri. V. Edwin Joseph who took up the onerous task, deserve all appreciation for bringing out this publication for the use of scientists, planners, resource managers and all others interested in the Gulf of Mannar region.

I have great pleasure in thanking the Department of Ocean Development, Govt. of India for sanctioning the project on Development of GIS based information system for critical habitats in the coastal marine areas- collection of quantitative and qualitative data on fisheries- Gulf of Mannar. This bibliography forms part of the investigation under the above project. Inspite of the best efforts of the authors, there may be many references left out of this compilation which is not intentional. I am sure that this publication will be useful to the targeted end users.

**MOHAN JOSEPH MODAYIL
DIRECTOR**

16 November, 2002
Cochin

PREFACE

The scientific staff of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute have been engaged in research on various aspects of marine fisheries, marine aquaculture and oceanography since the establishment of the Institute in 1947. The research results were published in the Institute's publications, such as Indian Journal of Fisheries, Bulletins, Special Publications, Marine Fisheries Information Service T & E Series, Annual Reports and also in the Journal of Marine Biological Association of India. Research papers have also been published in Indian and foreign journals and in the proceedings of several national and international symposia and seminars.

The scientific output of the Institute has greatly increased in recent years and the papers resulting out of the research efforts have also been widespread in different journals. Further, there have been several publications of the staff of the Institute and other research organisations on the Gulf of Mannar. However, except for earlier attempts in 1986, 1992 and 1998, there has not been any serious effort to bring together all the publications on Gulf of Mannar at one place. Such an endeavor, it is felt, would facilitate easy reference to the works on Gulf of Mannar for future use to the scientific community engaged in marine research. Therefore, in the present publication entitled **Bibliography of the Gulf of Mannar**, all the relevant literature has been compiled author-wise, subject-wise and in alphabetical order. In spite of the best efforts, there can still be some omissions. It should be possible to include such references at a later stage, when the bibliography is updated. It is earnestly hoped that this comprehensive volume of references would serve a useful purpose for the scientific community within this country and abroad. As part of the project on Development of GIS based Information System for critical habitats in the coastal marine areas - collection of quantitative and qualitative data on fisheries- Gulf of Mannar, work on the present publication was initiated during April, 1998.

I am extremely grateful to Dr. M. Devaraj and Dr. V. Narayana Pillai, former Directors of CMFRI for giving me the encouragement in preparing this bibliography during the implementation of this project on the Gulf of Mannar. Dr. Mohan Joseph Modayil, the present Director of CMFRI facilitated the publication of this work. I am thankful to him for his willing support and cooperation. Further, I place on records my high appreciation for the suggestions made by Dr. N.G. Menon, Dr. N.G.K. Pillai and Dr. N. Kaliaperumal for the improvement of this publication.

The Integrated Coastal Marine Area Management (ICMAM), Division of the Department of Ocean Development, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India, has been kind enough to support the project. I thank the project personnel, Shri. K. Dorairaj, Former Principal Scientist & Officer - in - charge, Madras Research Centre of CMFRI, Shri. K. Arunjunairajan, Dr. T. Jesi Selvarani, Senior Research Fellows and Shri.K. Balasubrmanian, Technical Officer, Tuticorin Research Centre of CMFRI for putting up with difficulties during the fishery survey and for their assistance. Shri. V. Edwin Joseph, Technical Officer attached to the Library and Documentation section of the Mandapam Regional Centre of CMFRI assisted me in preparation of this bibliography. I place on record my appreciation for his sense of involvement and thank him for his unstinted support. I thank Dr. B.R. Subramanian, Project Director, ICMAM, Chennai under the Department of Ocean development, Government of India for encouragement throughout the course of this project investigation.

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INTRODUCTION

The Gulf of Mannar has a chain of 21 islands (area of each island : 0.95 to 130 ha) along the 140 km stretch between Tuticorin and Rameswaram (Lat 8°55'-9°15'N and Long 78°0'-79°16'E) (Figs.1&2). They have fringing coral reefs and patch reefs rising from shallower areas of sea-shore. Fringing reefs are located mostly at a distance of 50-100 m from the islands and are narrow. Patch reefs arise from depths of 3 to 5 fathoms and are 1-2 km in length with widths of as much as 50 meters. These coral reefs have a rich variety of food fishes and ornamental fishes of various dimensions, colours and designs. The Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve (GOMMBR) is the India's first Marine National Park. The Biosphere includes the microecosystems of coral reefs, rocks, seaweeds, seagrasses, each supporting its own characteristic community structures and zonations. The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve, is the last preserve of the dugong, the most endangered mammal on earth. The area of the Gulf of Mannar under the Indian EEZ is about 15,000 sq. km., where commercial fishing takes place in about 5500 sq.km (upto 50 m depth). The depth of the Gulf of Mannar beyond the island chain ranged from 3.5 to 15 m with a precipitous fall giving oceanic condition to the coastal areas. This ecosystem supports a wide spectra of flora and fauna of taxonomic and economic importance. They comprise of 128 species of corals, 641 species of crustaceans, 731 species of molluscs, 441 species of finfishes, 147 species seaweeds and 52 species of seagrasses besides seasonally migratory marine mammals like whales, dolphins, porpoises, curious dugongs and all the species of turtles. This habitat holds vast patches of mangroves belonging to 9 species of vegetation along with the supporting fauna.

The Gulf of Mannar was severely exploited and the benethic habitat trampled in the fishing activity, curious collections and by other anthropogenic impact together with pollution caused by domestic and industrial wastes. All such activities severely affected both the habitat and biodiversity which made the ecosystem imbalanced and invited the attention of policy makers and scientists to declare this habitat as a marine protected area (GOMMBR) thereby controlling and preventing excessive human interventions.

A large number of taxonomic, biological, ecological studies on coral reefs, mangroves, seaweeds, seagrasses, sponges, corals, gorgonids, polychaetes, crustaceans, bivalves, gastropods, echinoderms and fishes of the Gulf of Mannar have been made by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute and other organisations. The total marine fish landings (including crustaceans and molluscs) in the Gulf of Mannar during 1997 - 2001 fluctuated from 49813 t to 79089 t (CMFRI, 2001). In the total catch, the pelagics contributed 54.4%, demersal 34.9%, crustaceans 5.7% and the rest by molluscs. The production of 14t per km² from the Gulf of Mannar is much higher than the national average of 9 t per km².

All the 21 islands in Gulf of Mannar can be classified into 4 major groups. They are Tuticorin group, Vembar group, Kilakarai group and Mandapam group. (i) Tuticorin group - '*Van Island*', '*Kasuwar Island*', '*Karaichalli Island*', '*Vilanguchalli Island*'. (ii) Vembar group-

'Upputhanni Island', 'Puluvunnichalli Island', 'Nallathanni Island', (iii) Kilakarai group - 'Anaipar Island', 'Vallimunai Island', 'Poovarasapatti Island', 'Appa Island', 'Thalaiyari Island', 'Valai Island', 'Mulli Island' (iv) Mandapam group - Muyal (Hare) Island', 'Manoli Island', 'Manoliputti Island', 'Poomarichan Island', 'Pullivasal Island', 'Krusadai Island', 'Shingle Island'.

The fish landing centres in the above four groups of the Gulf of Mannar islands from Tuticorin to Rameswaram are as follows: (i) Tuticorin Group-Keezha Vaipar, Sippikulam, Pattinamaruthur, Tharavaikulam, Vellapatti, Alangarathattu, Tuticorin North, Tuticorin Fishing Harbour, Tuticorin South, Tuticorin harbour Point. (ii) Vembar group - Valinokkam, Keezha Mundal, Mookaviyur, Narippaipur, Rasemanagar, Vembar. (iii) Kilakarai group - Periyappattinam, Kalumangundu, Pallivasalpadu, Sethukarai, Pakriyappapadu, Kilakarai, Bharathinagar, Sadamurivasal, Chinna Ervadi, (iv) Mandapam group - Dhanushkodi point, Moondrurayar Chathiram, Othaiputti, Paradi, Thavukadu, Othalalai, Rameswaram Road (Thuraimugam), Naduthurai, Kadarsapadu, Pungamapadu, Kundakal Point, Chinnapalam, Thoppukadu, Pamban Therkuvadi, Thorithurai, Mandapam, Vedalai, Seeniyappa Dharga, Pudumadam, Thalathoppu, Muliyanthoppu, Muthupettai.

The annual fish landings in the Tuticorin Group of islands ranged from 34,199 t to 46,279 during 1997-2001; 3026 t 5556 t in the Vembar group os islands, 1981 t to 5973 t in the Kilakarai group of islands; and from 7024 t to 21,281 t in the Mandapam group of islands. All the islands of the Gulf of Mannar are uninhabited whereas tourists visit frequently these islands.

(i) **Tuticorin Group**

1. **Van Island**

This island is 6 kms away from Tuticorin with circumference of 2015 meters, with an area of 16.0 ha. This island is sandy with sparse vegetation of low bushes, mostly grasses and xerophytic plants.

2. **Kasuwar Island**

This island is 7 kms from Tuticorin with circumference of 2160 mtrs., with an area of 19.50 ha. The island is mainly sandy, with small sand dunes here and there, highly strewn with shingles; a few bushes here and there but devoid of trees. The whole island is covered with xerophytic vegetation. In the southwestern side of the island, live reef exists 500 meters away from the shore.

3. Karaichalli Island

This island is 15 kms away from Tuticorin with circumference of 1610 meters, with an area of 16.46 ha. Live coral reefs exist all around the island at a distance of 0.5 to 1 km.

4. Vilanguchalli Island

It is a very small island with a circumference of 614 meters and area of 0.95 ha. This island completely strewn with coral rubble with some bushes and grasses grouped towards middle of the island. Isolated patches of thin reef of corals are found along southeastern side of the island.

(ii) Vembar Group

5. Upputhanni Island

This island is about 29.94 ha. and is situated opposite to Mukayur village. This island can be reached by vallam (motorised canoe) in 25 minutes from this village. The island is 8 km away from Vembar. There are few trees here and there, with a number of tall bushes. The entire island is covered with grasses. Several fishermen from Naripaiyur camp here to quarry coral boulders buried in the centre of the island, thus disturbing the natural formation of corals in the island. They also camp here frequently for commercial exploitation of the seaweed *Gelidiella* sp. and *Gracilaria* sp.

6. Puluvunnichalli Island

This island is with 1372 meters circumference and a total area of 6.12 ha. This island is with a good sandy beach; fairly good portion of the island has thick vegetation. A few *Thespesia* trees are found on the eastern side of the island. This island is surrounded by live coral reef all round except for a small stretch on the eastern side.

7. Nallathanni Island

This island is 5 kms from Mundel and has a circumference of about 5000 meters with an area of 110 ha. One of the big islands containing about 4000 coconut trees, palmyrah and other woody trees. Coral reef and coral boulders are distributed all round the island at a distance of 0.5 km on the southern side and very near to northern shore.

(iii) Kilakarai Group

8. Anaipar Island

Anaipar is 15 km from Kilakarai and about 1600 meters circumference with 11 ha area. It is fully covered with tall shrubs and *Acacia* trees. Good amount of dead coral blocks are partly exposed on the southern shore upto a distance of 200 meters, with a good growth of seaweeds. Live coral reef is seen near western shore of the island upto a maximum distance of 200 meters from the shore.

9. Vallimunai Island

Vallimunai is 1889 meters in circumference with an area of 6.72 ha. and it is about 10 kms away from Kilakarai. This is a small linear island lying parallel to the mainland and connected to Thalayri island by a channel which is submerged during high tide.

10. Poovarasanpatti Island

This is a narrow sandy flat (100m. x 25m) exposed during low tide and fully covered over by high tide water. It is misnomer to call this an island. It lies midway between Appa island and Valliamunai island. Live reef surrounds the area upto a distance of 100 meters, except on the northern approach. Apart from a few boulder type, corals occurring on the eastern side, the rest are branching type of corals which lie at depth of 1-2 meters. Collection of seaweed (*Gelidiella* sp.) by fishermen is the only activity of interest here.

11. Appa Island

Appa island is 4840 meters in circumference with 28.63 ha area. It is about 8 kms away from Kilakarai. This island is traversed on the southern side by an intervening coral-stone struddled sandy flat which is flooded during high tide preventing easy accessibility from one end to the other. The southern island portion is highly elevated (6 meters), standing on fossilised coral stones of large dimensions. The northern portion, like other islands, has an elevation of only 2.5 meters from the spring tide level.

12. Thalaiyari Island

This is an extensive elongate island with 83.38 meters circumference. The total area of the island is about 75.15 ha. The broadest portion of the island is on the western tip of the island. The island is thickly covered with trees and cattle grazing meadows. There is a narrow strip of foreshore on the northern side and a restricted foreshore on the southern side. Live coral reef exists very close to the shore all along the length of island on the northern shore except for an area near northwestern edge. Continuous fringing reef exists for a distance of 0.75 km along the southern side.

13. Valai Island

It is a small linear island lying parallel to the mainland and connected to Thalaiyari island by a channel which is submerged during high tide. This island is with 1889 meters circumference and an area of 10.15 ha. The western side of northern shore has a good portion covered by boulder reef as well as branching corals. The southern reef is far out beyond the breather zone and lies at 3 meters depth.

14. Mulli Island

It is about 2000 meters in circumference with 10.20 ha area and it is 9 kms away from Kilakarai. It is a small, sandy island completely covered with tall shrubs and bushes with a swamp. Northside approach to the island is strudded with boulder reef. On the eastern side low fringing reef continues outward upto 3 meters depth. The southern reef is far outside at a distance of 1.25 km from the shore and extends west on the western side.

(iv) Mandapam Group

15. Muyal (Hare) Island

This is the largest of the islands in the fringing reef. It is 4 kilometers long with a width from 250 to 1800 meters. Total area is about 160 hectares. Human interference has made the vegetation and animal population different from that of other islands. Cattle, goats and monkeys are present in addition to the animal population of the islands of this area. Dense coconut gardens are found. Shore is sandy.

16. Manoli Island

Manoli island is about 2 kilometer long and 350 meters wide covering an area of 24 hectares, having a complex topography. The northern and southern beach ridges are separated by an area of *Thespesia* woodland. Pools and open mud flats are found. Shrubs and trees are found in large numbers in this island. Extensive coral reefs are present. Fishery, especially the "Kalankatti" fishery is regular during some seasons. In this fishery, net is spread during low tide; the fishes enter the enclosed area during high tide and get trapped during the next low tide. Seaweeds are collected from this island area. This island is 6 km from Mandapam. The creeks and pools of this island are rich in milkfish and mullet seeds. Large number of sea birds visit this island during March to September.

17. ManoliPutti Island

It is a very small island with an area of about 3 hectares. Extensive mud flats with a vast population of bushes are present. Patchy corals can be found around this island. From

this island, fishing is carried out during particular seasons. This island is 8 kilometers away from Mandapam.

18. Pullivasal Island

This island is the continuation of Krusadai island, cut off by a shallow stretch of water. Northern part is muddy and marshy. Eastern and southern shores are sandy. A continuous coral reef is projected into the sea from the southern shore. This forms an ideal shelter for an array of animal life, making this island an area of biological interest. The name of the island is derived from the word "Pallivasal" which means mosque. The area of the island is about 30 hectares. Thickly wooded jungle adds an attraction to this island. Occasionally fishing is carried out from this island. Potable water is available in this island. It is about 7 kilometers from Mandapam.

19. Poomarichan Island

This island covers an area of about 18 hectares. The soil of this island is marshy. Thickly wooded jungle is spread over the island. The water area encloses a continuous reef. This island is about 4 kilometers away from Mandapam.

20. Krusadai Island

This is generally called as the biologist's paradise, because of the richness of variety of fauna and flora. Large number of students and zoologists visit this island. Seaward beach ridges have a diverse vegetation of grasses and sedges. Mangrove woodland is extensive on the north coast. Many ornamental species of plants were introduced in this island. The area of this island is about 66 hectares. Generally, no fishing activity takes place around this island. Field rats, birds, moths, beetles and garden lizards are the main inhabitants of this island. The Marine Biological Station (Tamil Nadu State Fisheries Department) which is at present functioning at Mandapam was established in this island and carrying out valuable service to the cause of fisheries research in this area. Hydrobiology of the island has been regularly studied and recorded. Experiments on milkfish culture, oyster culture and seaweed culture were also attempted. At present, pearl oyster culture is attempted with a view of commercialising the activity. The western end of the island is full of mangrove trees and other vegetations. The coral beds of these islands are well suited for biological habitats. Several groups of animals find their shelter in this ecological niche. West of this coral bed, growth of sponges is found. The rare hemichordate *Balanoglossus* sp. was recorded from this island. Coconut trees are found in this island. This island is 4 km away from Pamban. The irrational exploitation of the rare flora and fauna from this island has already caused severe environmental biodiversity problems.

21. Shingle island

Shingle island has an area of 13 hectares. Northwest shore is sandy and slopes rapidly down into moderately deep waters. It has higher steeping beaches than other islands. According to Gravely *et al.* (1927) it consisted of two separate islands in 1878 and then formed the present Shingle island between 1920-27. Northeastern shore of this island is also sandy. Here, we can find a large variety of living corals of beautiful shape and colour. Southwestern shore is full of dead corals offering shelter for a rich variety of interesting fauna. In the past, Singhalese fishermen used to land here and stayed during their fishing operations. So it was called "Singala thivu", which was later called as 'Shingle tivu'. This island is fully covered with bushes and trees. Sometime back, coral removal for commercial purpose was going on in this island. No fishing activities were found in this island now. This island is 8 km away from Pamban.

Functioning as a marine national park since 1989, the Gulf of Mannar is a fragile ecosystem. Many conservation measures have been adopted, but the area continues as a traditional source of livelihood for people living along the coastline. The sensitive nature of the problem has called for management measures that recognise the needs of the people while, at the same time, control the over-exploitation of the environment. The need for special management and conservation strategies to preserve the biological wealth in the Gulf of Mannar, led the biosphere reserve to be selected as one of the few national sites for a detailed study.

Since 1991, the Tamil Nadu Forest Department has taken over all but one of the 21 islands which fall within the park, a couple from private hands. One island (Krusadai) still remains with the State Fisheries Department. Over the years, the Forest Department has made some headway in protecting the area. A considerable check has been introduced on the illicit removal of coral. Rich in calcium carbonate, coral extraction was rampant when it was being procured by a couple of nearby large industries for their manufacturing processes. These companies have been persuaded to source their requirements of calcium carbonate from elsewhere.

Trawling activity which results in the destruction of both flora and fauna, has also had an impact on the sacred chank beds. Efforts have been made to make local fishermen aware of the need to protect it.

Despite the widespread interest around the globe to conserve fragile biodiversity regions like the Gulf of Mannar, no systematic efforts have been made to compile the list of publications of the Gulf of Mannar. The present compilation is intended to create awareness on the relevance and importance of the biosphere among the scientific community, policy planners and public.

FIG. 1. MAP SHOWING GULF OF MANNAR AND PALK BAY

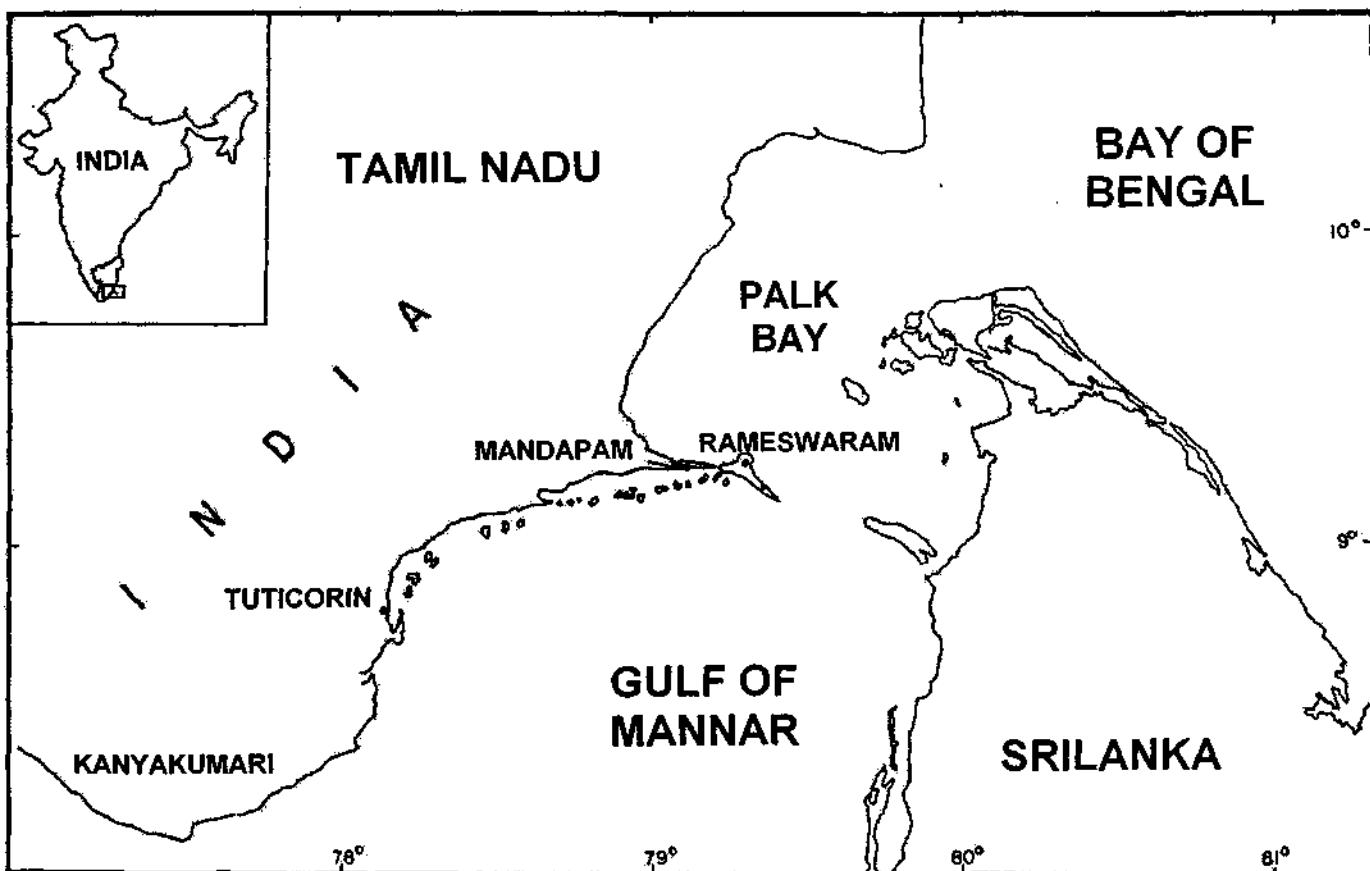
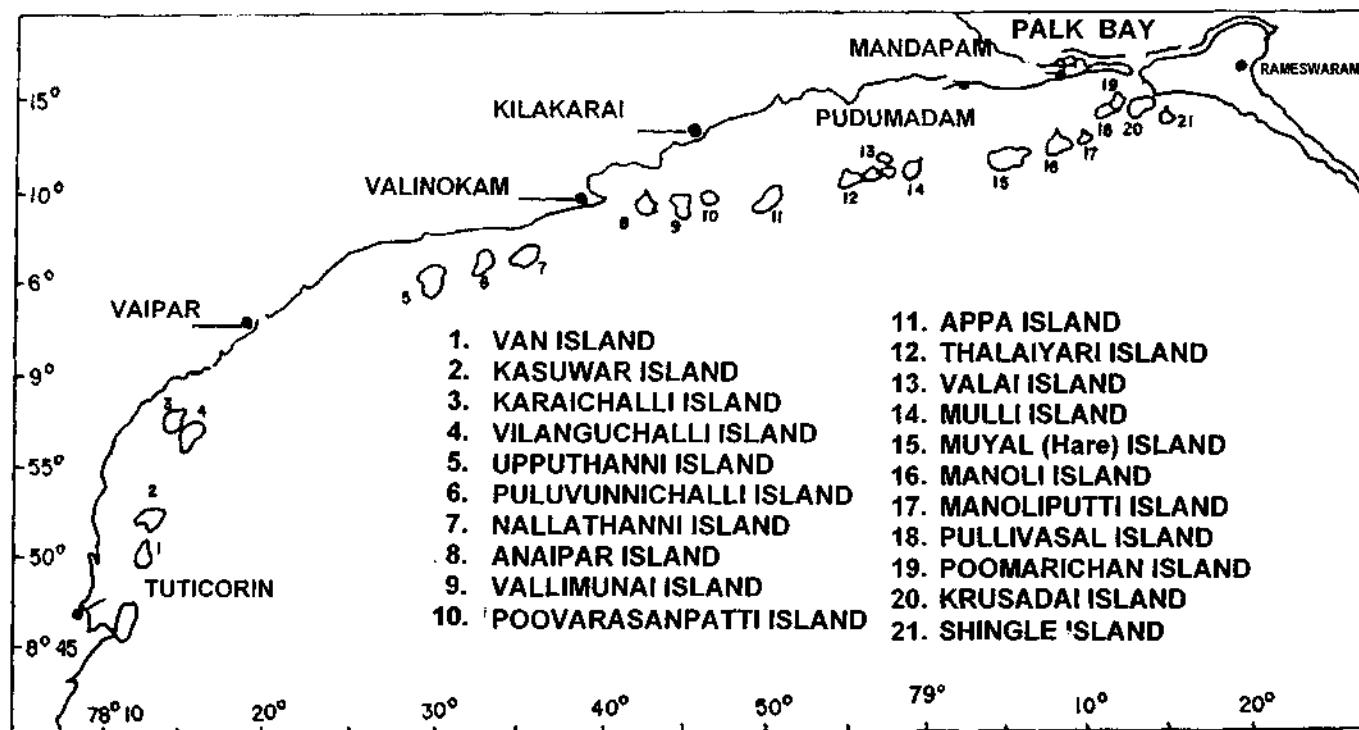


FIG. 2. MAP SHOWING GULF OF MANNAR ISLANDS



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