

CORALS OF BYRAMGORE REEF, LAKSHADWEEP¹

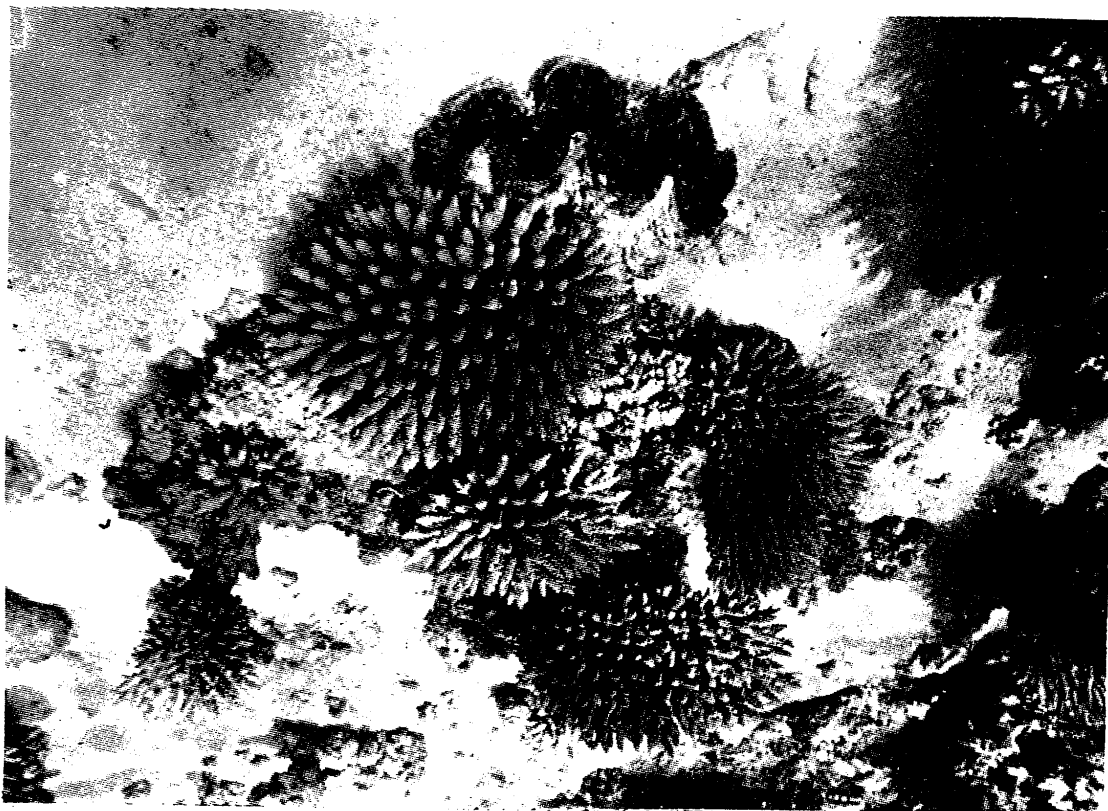
Dr. M.V.M. Wafar

National Institute of Oceanography,
Dona Paula, Goa 403 004.

The Lakshadweep coral atolls are the only ones along the Indian coast which are offshore reefs. These comprise of a variety of reefs at various stages of evolution. The first are the typical atolls which include an island, a lagoon and a reef. These are keep-up reefs which have managed to track the sea level rise. The second are the reefs that are submerged but lie just below the mean sea level. These catch-up reefs include Byramgore and Cheriapani reefs. The last category includes

the submerged banks (Passas de Pedro, Sesostris Bank, Cora Divh) which got drowned during the late Quaternary transgression.

Unlike the atoll reefs which are raised and form a site for human habitation, and hence have their coral fauna subjected to human interference, submerged reefs are far from such destructive activities, and hence sustain a rich and diverse coral fauna (Plate



(Photographed by S.N. Bandodker, Marine Archaeology, NIO.)

1. These corals were photographed by Mr. Srinivas Bandodkar of the Marine Archaeology Division, NIO in February 1990 during an expedition organized by the Indian Naval Authorities - *Editor*.

1). Most of the coral species here belong to the *Acropora* genus, with *A. tenuis* (Plate 2) and *A. formosa* (Plate 3) being among the dominant species. Because of their high biological productivity, reefs also sustain a variety of other animal life. A common form one encounters on a reef is the holothurian or sea cucumber (Plate 4) which has both food and pharmaceutical value.

The Byramgore reef is subjected to only occasional fishing activities, and hence is in a pristine stage in comparison with other reefs of Lakshadweep. The abundant animal and plant life renders it ideal for establishment of a marine park.



(Photographed by S.N. Bandodker, Marine Archaeology, NIO.)