

# *Exploitation of Fin Fish Resources of Lagoons and Estuaries in Sri Lanka*

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## **Introduction :**

Lagoons and estuaries which represent about 15% of the coastal zones of the world are among the most productive ecosystems in the biosphere (UNESCO, 1982). These coastal resources are of great importance to human populations in many ways. They provide nursery grounds for fish and crustaceans whose adults are either marine or freshwater. Some euryhaline species live permanently in the lagoons. In addition, these brackishwater environments lie within the migratory routes of catadromous and anadromous fish species. Because of this, the lagoon environment not only affects other large scale fisheries in coastal and off-shore regions but may also support small scale fisheries within the lagoon itself. Lagoons also provide environments for brackishwater aquaculture and commercial and recreational fisheries.

Lagoons and estuaries are subjected to natural modifications and are vulnerable to disturbances made by human populations. However, these can play an important role in the production of food, especially protein for the increasing human populations. These waterbodies therefore, if properly managed could provide employment and selfsufficiency in protein for people living around them.

Over the last 20 years there has been a continuous and growing interest in estuarine and lagoon environment and considerable research has been carried out on various aspects of these brackishwater habitats. The areas of recent investigations on brackishwater environments include origin and evolution, sedimentation, geochemistry, heat budget, hydrobiology, plankton and benthic fauna, primary and secondary productivity, fin fish and prawn fisheries, aquaculture, pollution and management. Much knowledge regarding the physico-chemical and biological aspects on tropical lagoons and estuaries has come from work carried out in India (Anon, 1982).