CHAPTER-I
INTRODUCTION
The World consists of 196 independent states now; of which only 24 are Island-states. Of these Island states, the atoll-states are very few in the world. The number of total atoll-states is only eight in the world, which have different types of administrative system. The atoll-state is an island made of coral; it is shaped like a ring with a lake of salt water in the middle. The basic material comprises of limestone of organic origin, formed by the accumulation of the calcareous skeletons of marine animals and plants, mainly corals and coralline algae. The most important group of atolls is the Maldives, which is located in the Indian Ocean. In the Atlantic Ocean there are several atolls in the Lesser Antilles; and the Bahamas contain some rather artificial atolls. The largest atoll in the land area is Christmas Island, in the central Pacific.

It is a fact that large numbers of island states are small, remote and poor in resources. They share enough in common with each other (as well as with non-Island small states) to merit attention as a group. The smallness of these states can be appraised not only in terms of their single but also in terms of power. The major components of power wealth, organization, status, and will are highly deficient in these small atoll-island states. It is however; noteworthy that smallness can be viewed only in general terms. For instance, if one talks of deficiencies, the various indicators connoting them cannot be absolutely quantified and correlated. At best, they give an idea of the range of smallness. Secondly, smallness is a relative concept. Some states may be viewed as large in the regional framework but small in global terms. Finally, smallness is not static but dynamic. The discovery of an important resource or a better mobilization and augmentation of available resources may change the position of a state in the power hierarchy.

It is true that atoll-island states are totally different from other states because of so many factors. The incidence of a large number of islands, remote from each other, with small population poses problems for its own in planning for the provision of welfare services and infrastructure for economic development. The geopolitical point of views of these atoll-island states are different. Majority atoll-island states have unitary political system because political elite prefers unitary structure to federal structure. This is so because unitary political system offers more political stability at the cost of freedom and also open competition for political power. The political elites in atoll-island states have thus been trying how to establish a strong unitary political system that they can benefit from the system. The federal structure gives more welfare to the common people. The centralized political system tends to be strong in the atoll-island states than decentralized system because of enormous challenges to real political order.

Atoll-island states are not without challenges. Challenges are there in the area of politics, economics, and the military. Given the central control of the political life and dispersal of population throughout the atoll-island political process itself is very much centrally controlled. It is a fact that political elite belonging to a narrow geographical zone and wider representative of elites is encouraged in atoll-island states with centralized political system. Hence, political stability, which is ensured through strict executive control, is identified with the regime stability in atoll-island states. For example, Kiribati is one of the atoll states in the world where unitary political system is found. In Kiribati, executive power is vested in the President. The President governs with the assistance of the Vice-President and the Cabinet whom he appoints from the among members of the Manaca.

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The Marshall Islands is an atoll-state, where federal political system is there. The constitution of the Republic of the Marshall Islands provides for a parliamentary form of government, with legislative authority vested in the 33 members of Nitijela. The Nitijela elects the President of the Marshall Islands from among its own members. In Marshall Islands, the local governmental units are the municipalities and the villages. Elected Magistrates and Councils govern the municipalities so that village government remains largely traditional.  

Nauru is a small atoll-state in the world. Nauru has a unitary political system. Legislative power is vested in the parliament, with 18 members elected by universal adult suffrage for three years. Executive authority is vested in a Cabinet, which consists of the President of the Republic. The President is elected by the Parliament, and the ministers are appointed by him. Responsibilities for administration are divided between the Nauru Local Government Council and the Government. The Council, an elected body of nine members from the country’s 14 districts, elects one of its members to be the Head-Chief.

However, Papua New Guinea is an island-state in the SouthWest Pacific, where federal political system is followed. In Papua New Guinea, executive power is vested in the British Monarch (the Head of State), represented locally by the governor-general, who is appointed on the proposal of the National Parliament by simple majority vote. The governor-general acts on the advice of the National Executive Council, which is led by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. The Prime Minister can be appointed and dismissed by the Head of State on the proposal of the National Parliament. The federal structure of the parliament has been there since very beginning. New regional authorities and local councilors have replaced provisional governments.  

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Therefore, it is true that small population and land areas with this population lack appropriate political structure. Personal as well as geographical factor has also been source of some problems for federal system in atoll-island states. This is the reason why majority of atoll-island states has unitary political system. As mentioned earlier, the political stability of these small atoll-islands is ensured through strict executive control. Similarly, the small Atoll-island State of Maldives shares this characteristic, which marks the significant feature of any atoll-island political system in the world.

Geographical Framework of the Maldives
The Republic of Maldives comprises of an archipelago of 1190 small coral islands. It is located 600km southwest of the southern tip of India and 670km southwest of Sri Lanka; only 200 islands of these are inhabited. These islands are constituted into 26 natural atolls for easy administration. They are further divided into 19 administrative units or atolls. These islands are very small and low-lying, with many no more than two metres above the sea level. Common features are tall coconut palms, white sandy beaches and crystal clear lagoons. The land area, however, is only about 298 sq. km. The total area including land and sea is about 90,000 sq. km. The length of the archipelago is 823 km, while it is 130 km at its greatest width.\textsuperscript{10}

\begin{center}
\textbf{TABLE-I}
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\textsuperscript{10} Source: http://www.luptravel.com/international/asia/maldives/topography.htm.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: Atolls</th>
<th>Islands</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inhabited</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. North Thiladhunmathi</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. South Thiladhunmathi</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. North Miladhunmadulu</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. South Miladhunmadulu</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. North Maalhosmadulu</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. South Maalhosmadulu</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Faadhhippolhu</td>
<td>04</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Ari Atoll</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Male Atoll</td>
<td>09</td>
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<td>10. Felidhe Atoll</td>
<td>05</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Mula Katholhu</td>
<td>09</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. North Nilandhe Atoll</td>
<td>05</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. South Niandhe Atoll</td>
<td>08</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Kolhumadulu</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Haddhunmathi</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. North Huvadhu Atoll</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. South Huvadhu Atoll</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>18. Foamulah</td>
<td>01</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. Addu Atoll</td>
<td>06</td>
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<tr>
<td>20. Male (Capital) (Part of Male Atoll)</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Islands</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Population: The population of Maldives has been increasing rapidly in recent years. The population of Maldives according to 1990 census was 213,215. The country's population in mid-1994 was estimated at 252,077. The high 1994 birth-rate of 44 per 1,000 has led to an increase in population, with more than 276,000. According to 2001 census, the population of the country was 288,800. Now, the population of Maldives has already reached more than 300,000. It is expected that to reach about more than 400,000 by the turn of 2020. Although the high population growth rate is considered a serious problem, Maldives still lacks an official birth control policy. It is true that the growth-rate of population also poses problems for the country's future food-supply because the dietary staple of rice is not grown in the islands.\textsuperscript{12} The largest concentration of Maldivian population is in Male, a small island of approximately two square kilometres, whose population (1990 census) of 55,130 represented slightly more than 25 percent of the national total. The 1990 census recorded an average population density of 706 persons per square kilometre in Maldives.

The first accurate census was conducted in December 1977 and showed 142,832 persons residing in Maldives, an increase of 37 per cent over the 1967 estimate. The next census in March 1985 showed 181,453 persons, consisting of 94,060 males and 87,393 females. This pattern has been continuous in Maldives. Despite rapid population growth, family planning programmes in Maldives were not implemented in a well funded and planned manner until the UN implemented several programmes in the 1990s. Maldives is the 7th most density-populated country on earth. The government has not taken actions for over limiting the number of children for a couple, or set a target population goals.\textsuperscript{13}

History of Maldives

It is true that only distinct ethnic minority is found in Male, capital city of Maldives, among the trading community of Indians, who settled there in the 1800s. Several hundreds in number, they are a religious minority. A small

\textsuperscript{12} Source: http://www.hellomaldives.com/Maldives/population.
number of Sri Lankans have come to Maldives in recent years to work in the tourist resorts; because Maldivians, as devout Muslims, refuse to work in facilities serving alcoholic beverages. So, this situation has created some sort of resentment among the local Maldivians who are facing employment problems. The islands were originally inhabited by aborigines of Dravidian descent who were driven from South by the wave of Aryan immigrants about the fifth or fourth centuries BC. Over the centuries, trading contacts with the Arabs, Negroes and Asians (particularly Indians and Sri Lankans) have also had their imprint on the Maldivian society. Arab and Persian influences appear to be the most important, as is evident from the religion, language and culture of the Maldives.

Mohammed IBN BATTUTA, the first traveller, visited the Maldives in 1344 AD. He was the first to reside in Maldives Islands before putting down his experiences in writing. Hence, his writing can be called the first authentic account of the archipelago. It is true that the written history of Maldives begins with the conversion of King Kalaminja to Islam in 1153 AD.

The early history of the Maldives is obscure. The first ruler of the Maldives was Theemugey Maha Kalaminja (1141-1153 AD), but it was too difficult and rare the names of his parents as it were not recorded. T.M. Klaminja (Raja) ruled as a Buddhist King and he embraced Islam in AD 1153.

Once upon a time when Maldives was sparsely inhabited, a prince of Mogal birth named Koimala Kalo was married to the daughter of the King of Human. He made a voyage with her in two vessels from Lanka. When they reached in the Maldives islands, they were welcomed in the Rasgetheenu.

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Island in Raa Atoll. The people of that island learned that the two chief
visitors were of Lanka royal decent from Lanka, and invited them to remain.

Koimala was crowned as King of Maldives in Rasgetheemu. Two
vessels were sent to Lanka to bring people from the Lion Race. Koimala and
his wife actually reigned as a Buddhist rules for twelve years, and he was then
converted to Islam. He ruled for thirteen years and after that finally went for
Mecca.

However, the authentic record on the chronology of ruling sultans and
their descendents also gives a keen insight into the political behaviour of the
hereditary oligarchy. Thaarekh (History) is presented in an abridged form in
English in H.C.P.Bell’s account of Maldives. H.C.P.Bell had written about
Maldives to date its history, archaeology, coinage, climate, geography, and
every other aspect of the people’s lifestyle. He not only brought together all
the preceding studies on this islands but also gave new interpretation to them,
adding new knowledge and research.18

According to Maldavian history, the country remained a sultanate
uninterruptedly for 836 years since the beginning of its recorded history
(AD1153), with an unbroken line of sultans and upto 1953, except for a short-
lived republic that came into existence. It reverted to sultanate rule in 1954
and remained so till 1968, from which date it named itself the Republic of
Maldives with an elected President. Maldives achieved political independence
in 1965.19

Britain finally recognized Maldives as a fully independent and
sovereign state when the agreement on independence was signed in Colombo
on July 26, 1965. Historical facts prove that there were only two periods when
Maldives was under foreign domination and rule. The first period was under
the Portuguese. The Portuguese managed to gain control over it in 1558 which
lasted to 1573, for about 15 years, the rule exercised by a governor resident in
Goa. The second period was under the Dutch, who occupied Male with a

18. H.C.P. Bell, The Maldives Islands: An Accounts of Physical Features Climate,
History, Inhabitant, Productions and Trade, Sessional Paper XLIII, 1883, p.11.
19. Urmila Phadnis and Ela Dutt Luithui, The Republic of Maldives: Development
detachment of troops for some time, though this seems to have had no significant impact on the Maldives.  

The Maldives Islands was a British protectorate from 1887 to 1965. The British did not interfere in local affairs and administration of the Maldives. The reason why the British did not interfere in local affairs was because the British struck a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of the country. The British was only interested in how to establish airstrips in Maldives. Hence, at the outbreak of the Second World War, the British established two airstrips: one was at Gan in the southernmost Addu, Atoll and another was at Kelaa in the north. The British people were given a 100-year lease of Gan airbase. So, at last the country became fully independent on July 26, 1965; later the same year, on September 21st, Maldives became the 117th Member State of the United Nations. Following a referendum in 1968, the country adopted another Republican constitution. The country's English name was changed from "Maldive Islands" to the "Republic of Maldives. Now the country is totally free, sovereign and independent.  

The Nature of Maldives Society  

Islam is the state religion since the twelfth century. Almost all Maldavians belong to Sunni Sect, which was introduced into the islands in the 19th century. Religion is a dominant force in the national life of Maldives. The importance of Islam in Maldives is further evident in the lack of a secular legal system. Maldives' traditional Islamic law code of Sharia, known in Dhivehi as Sariatu, forms the basic law code in Maldives. It was interpreted that local Maldivian conditions are to be conformed to by the resident, the attorney general, the ministry of Home Affairs, and the Majlis. In Maldives, mosque forms the central place where Islam is practiced. Maldivians are religious minded. Friday is the most important day for Muslims to attend mosque; shops  

and offices in towns and villages close about 11 a.m and sermon begins by 12.30 p.m. Most inhabited islands have several mosques. Male has more than thirty-five mosques. Now Maldives has a total of more than 724 mosques and 266 women's mosques.\(^\text{23}\)

In Maldives, prayer sessions are held five times daily. The mosque caretakers make the call. Most shops and offices close within fifteen minutes after each call. During the ninth Muslim month of Ramadan, Muslims of Maldives fast during the daylight hours. Actually, Ramadan begins with the new moon and ends with the sighting of the next new moon.

It is true that men eat before the rest of the family and make all the major decisions, while the women stay at home and look after the family. Under Islamic law, men are allowed up to four wives; in the past it was considered a mark of eastern and piety to have as many.\(^\text{24}\)

But today it's becoming rare for a man to have even two wives. Each wife is considered equal and lives in a different house. In Maldives, some marriages are still arranged. There is an increasing desire for romantic love, partly inspired by Hindi films and western literature. It is very easy for men to divorce than to marry in Maldives.\(^\text{25}\)

Maldives has been mentioned for its high literacy rate in South Asia. The literacy rate of the country is very high compared with other countries in South Asia. The Medium of instruction is Dhivehi in Secular Schools and Arabic in Islamic Schools. Government middle schools in Male use English as the medium of instruction. Only primary and secondary education is imparted, neither of which is compulsory. Students seeking higher education must go abroad to a university.\(^\text{26}\)

\(^{23}\) Source: http://www.hello Maldives.com/Maldives/index.htm


\(^{25}\) http://www.hellomaldives.Com/maldives/people/index.htm

However, it is a fact that the traditional nature of Maldives society has been changed under the influence of modern elements. Firstly, the country came under foreign contact, which posed a problem of threat to its distinctive identity. Another important point is, a large number of students go abroad for education and business purposes. People of Maldives particularly young people, are influenced by the value of modernization. 

The Culture of Maldives

Despite some negative connotations, modernization helped Maldives to be more homogeneous in the early 1990s. Traditionally, a significant gap existed between the people living in Male and the rest of the population inhabiting the outer atoll-islands distant from Male. Modernization has brought changes on the basic unit of society. Around 80 per cent of Maldives households consist single nuclear family composed of a married couple and their children rather than an extended family.

Unmarried adults remain with relatives instead of living alone or with strangers. Their society is patrilineal, but women do not accept their husbands’ names after marriage, and can retain their maiden names.

In the early 1970s, Islam was widely disseminated. Religion and culture of Maldives define a set of behavioral expectations. Maldivians have a strong sense of cultural distinctiveness and national identity. In the process, a strong tradition of Koranic scholarship has prevailed at all levels. Koranic schools are the major institutions for the dissemination of formal education. In Maldives, disobedience to the rules set by the religion can bring capital punishment, and the worst punishment for the offenders is banishment or exile to an uninhabited island. Despite strong Islamic restrictions, women participated in all social activities and held important positions.

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Language of the Maldives

The official and common language of Maldives is called Dhivehi. It belongs to the Indo-European language family related to Sinhala, a language of Sri Lanka. English is widely used in commerce, and is increasingly becoming the medium of instruction in government schools. Characteristically, the numbers from one to twelve in Dhivehi are of Sinhalese origin, and after twelve, Hindi. Dhivehi is spoken throughout the atolls. Dialect differences are pronounced in the four southeastern atolls. The traditional script, Thana, is written from right to left. This locally invented script contains twenty-four letters. The first nine of which are forming of the Arabic numerical. In 1977 a script was introduced along with Thana for official correspondence but since 1979 the requirement of the language was no longer mandatory.

Recently, use of Roman Script has been officially permitted to make it possible to use typewriters for correspondence in Divehi, which is the official language of the country. However, Dhivehi has many regional variations. In the northern region, stretching from the northernmost atoll Hua Alif to Laam in the south, the language of the people of Maldives is called Male Dhivehi and it differs from atoll to atoll. In the southern atolls, however, different dialects are spoken which are thought to represent a more original form of Dhivehi. Addu atoll has one dialect, Fuah Mulaku another, and the giant Huvadhu atoll has several dialects.

Socio-economic Issues

Earlier, there used to be narrow socio-economic base of the authority structure, but that has changed. The poor socio-economic state is directly related to the literacy of the islands and the policy matters. It brings into sharp focus the paucity of educated and trained manpower. Even if there may be high level of literacy, the educational attainment of the population as a whole

29 Maldives, US Department of State, Bureau South Asian Affairs, February 2005.
30 Clearance Maloney, People of the Maldives islands (Madras: Orient Longmans, 1980).
remains low level in the country.\textsuperscript{31} In Maldives, primary education comprises classes one to five, enrolling students in the corresponding ages of six through ten. Secondary education is divided between classes six through ten, which represent overall secondary education; and classes eleven and twelve, which constitute higher secondary education. In 2000, Maldives had a total number of 73,642 students in school: 32,475 in government schools and 41,167 in private schools.\textsuperscript{32} It is a fact that in Maldives there is no university. If somebody seeks higher education, he or she must have to go abroad for higher education.

However, International Organizations enabled the establishment of the Science Education Centre opened in 1989. Japanese aid enabled the founding of the Maldives Centre for Social Education in 1991.\textsuperscript{33} In the latter months of 1993, work began on the Maldives Institute of Technical Education to help eliminate the shortage of skilled labour.\textsuperscript{34} As far as educational policy is concerned, the policy should focus on enhancing the qualifications and productivity of Maldivian teachers by providing more multisubject training and introducing more multigrade teaching. In particular, the skills of primary school teachers must be enhanced, especially in the outer islands, which will raise the current relatively low level of student achievements. The provision of equal access to education for the people residing in the outer islands is necessary for the decentralization of administrative responsibilities in the atolls and for ensuring more geographically balanced growth. Another major challenge related to human-resource development is the curtailment of the population growth-rate, which is currently above 3 per cent and one of the highest rates in South Asia.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{31} Maldives, Social Indicators of Development 2000 published for The World Bank, the Johns Hopkins university place, Baltimore and London.
\textsuperscript{32} Maldives, \textit{Asian Development outlook} (published for the Asian Development Bank by the Oxford University press, 2004). P.139.
\textsuperscript{34} www.Geole.com.Maldives, library of congress country studies.
Therefore, the government of Maldives is keen on introducing educational systems to meet the increasing and diverse man-power. Its main target is achieving universal primary education. So that it also enhances the skills of the workforce through vocational training. In addition, it will start the implementation of a third training and education project to develop human resources, encouraged by the effectiveness of two previous projects in this field. Maldives is facing many problems because of lack of trained man-power, and it is the main cause for underdevelopment. Without trained man-power, no blueprint for development can be launched.36

Conclusion
Maldives has a cohesive society, and is not confronted with the problem of divisiveness. Maldives is famous in South Asia for its history, culture, and traditions. The nature of society of the country was very traditional but it has changed over the years. However, religion, culture, language and regional variations are still playing a great role in unifying the different communities in Maldives. It has always maintained the political, social, and cultural uniqueness, with interrelations between the islands and atolls. But it would do well to recognize that in the process of modernization, social tensions are bound to arise. It must be sensitive to this issue. Maldives is not developed because of lack of trained man-power. In fact, it is the bottleneck for development.

Growth-rate of population also poses problems to Maldives. Lack of an adequate educated class, including the absence of qualified teachers for basic education needs, aggravates the difficult situation. There is the question of resources to meet the demands of many important and high priority projects. The important things are how to improve the financial resources and to diversify the nation’s economy, with a dynamic government under an able leadership. The government of an atoll state should be concerned of

36. Ibid.
environmental needs. No other countries in South Asia would be as seriously affected by environmental changes as Maldives. In fact, its very survival would be threatened. Maldives should effort to highlight this issue. Maldives can capitalize this issue in global level so that it can maintain the democratic spirit if it has to develop overall.