PREATORY NOTE

Himachal Pradesh, which lies on the northwestern outpost of India, came into being on April 15, 1949, as a result of the integration of the twenty-one hill states into one centrally-administered unit, under the charge of a Chief Commissioner. Prior to that, these states were ruled by the hill chiefs, Rajas and Ranas, who had feudal relationship with the Paramount Power and held their territories not by virtue of any treaties with the East India Company or the Crown but subject to conditions stipulated in the Sunnuds (or the Deeds of Allegiance) which bound them to strict obedience, loyalty and attachment to the British Government. With the grant of Independence to India in 1947, the suzerainty of the British Crown over the Indian States came to an end. The rulers of the Simla Hill States (along with others in the rest of the country, except Hyderabad, Kashmir and Junagarh) were compelled to accede to the Dominion of India and ultimately to cede (to the Dominion Government) full
and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and power for and in relation to the governance of their states. The unconditional and absolute cession of jurisdiction and authority not only facilitated the process of integration of states but also brought the Himachal people, all of a sudden, into the main stream of the Indian democracy. With the adoption of a completely modern democratic Constitution on January 26, 1950, and the passing of the Government of Part C States Act, 1951 (granting responsible government with a Lieut.-Governor at the head of the State, aided and advised by a Council of Ministers, responsible to the popularly-elected legislature), Himachal Pradesh took, in her political life, a leap of more than one-and-a-quarter century.  

1. After the British-Nepalese War of 1814-15, the erstwhile states of Himachal Pradesh were brought under the British suzerainty, which insulated them from the new ideas and movements current in British part of India.
Patterned, to a large extent, on the British parliamentary model, Himachal Pradesh has the legal framework to operate a system of responsible government. How does the system behave in relation to social structure and environmental setting? This has not so far been a topic of serious and detailed study by the research scholars. It is with a view to filling this important lacuna in our knowledge that the present study has been undertaken. Implicit in the study is a desire to uncover an 'inside story' of how the important democratic institutions - political parties, legislature, council of ministers and administration - actually work in practice in a society which is markedly different from that of the West. The initial aim of the author was to cover the period 1948-1956 but while writing the thesis, many significant developments (i.e. withdrawal of the democratic set-up in 1956, re-introduction of responsible government in 1963 and the enlargement of the Pradesh in 1966) took place. These developments have been brought within the ambit of the thesis to make the study meaningful and the analysis, realistic.
In his method of study, the author has followed the standard techniques of the political scientist, viz., examining political institutions and processes, interviewing top level officers and political leaders, compiling and interpreting statistical data, scrutinising legislative and parliamentary proceedings and reports, gathering news and views appearing in the press, and so on. The conclusions thus arrived at have been subjected to the rigours of first-hand and intimate observations and experiences of the author extending over twenty years of the area, its people and institutions. This has helped the author to correct the bias that is inherent in all available governmental information and personal opinions of political leaders and civil servants. The conclusions have further been verified by a sample field study. Thus equipped, the author has probed into the "hows" and "whys" of the existing facts and has attempted to analyse the political system in its relation to social structure and environmental setting.
Applying the institutional-functional approach, the political system has been studied in a three-dimensional perspective: environmental, institutional and functional or operational. In the environmental dimension, the author has brought forth the geographical setting, the socio-cultural complex and the politico-historical background - some of the important variants that influence the general temperament of the people and the operational capacity of the democratic institutions. The structural dimension includes, inter alia, the governmental and administrative organisation, the centre-Pradesh relationship and an analysis of the decision-making process within the political system as a whole, i.e. within the formal as well as informal organisations. In the functional dimension, which is interwoven with the structural dimension, the author has sought to analyse the behavioural patterns of the main political actors within the parties and the governmental and administrative units. For the general framework, the author has
benefitted greatly from some of the recently published thoughtful and penetrating books like "The Politics of the Developing Areas", eds. Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman; "Leadership and Political Institutions in India", eds., Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker; "The Legislative System: Explorations in Legislative Behavior", eds., Wahlke, Sulsu, Buchanan and Ferguson; "Politics and Society in India", ed., C.H. Philips; "Politics of Scarcity" by Myron Weiner; and "The Government and Politics in India" by J.H. Morris-Jones. But for the guidance received from those illuminating books, the author would not have been able to present and analyse his material in a systematic manner.

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