Maldives became a British protectorate in 1887 and remained so until 26 July, 1965, when it attained independence. After independence, the country abandoned the Sultanate system and became republic again on 11 November 1968. The political system and governance in Maldives from 1968 to 1998 has passed through many phases. The study covers 30 years of Maldives existence as an independent nation. The year 1968 signifies the country's emergence as a republic, and in 1998 Maldives adopted a new Constitution.

The political system and governance in Maldives is highly centralized. The country has a Presidential form of government. The President is the Chief-Executive and Controls the entire constitutional machinery, including the legislature and Judiciary. After independence, the regime structure under the Maldivian constitution has reflected a considerable degree of continuity. Also stability and orderliness have been the hallmark of its political system with only two persons occupying the office of President so far-Ibrahim Nasir (1968-1978) and Maumoon Abdul Gayoom (since 1978). Nasir operated as a benevolent despot. In contrast, Gayoom has viewed his own role as a liberal democrat but he enjoys absolute powers even under the new constitution, which came into force on 1 January 1998.

The main objectives of the proposed study are:

1. It has examined the nature of political system in Maldives.
2. It has analysed the political processes and the problems of governance.
3. The study understands the structure and the functions of the local administration.
4. It has analysed the relationship between the Atoll Administration and the Central Government.
5. The study has evaluated the steps taken by the president to strengthen the political system. And
6. It has analyzed the challenges to political order in Maldives.
The study has proposed to test the following hypotheses:

1) A Centralized political system in atoll states can bring about political stability at the cost of freedom and open competition for power.

2) Participatory institutions tend to be weak in atoll states because of undeveloped political culture resulting from the state controlled electoral process.

3) People tend to accept a centralized political system because they are more concerned about development and economic survival.

4) Centralization of power is only possible in Atoll-State like Maldives because mobilization of people for political reforms is difficult.

5) Finally, problems of governance in atoll states are more political than economic or cultural.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Apart from defining the key concepts like political system and governance in atoll States, the first chapter discusses the geographical frameworks and historical background of the country. It examines the nature of the society and culture of the Maldivians. The role of Islam in unifying the country and the pre-Islamic society of Maldives also examined.

The second chapter analyses the evolution of political system from the ancient period. It specially deals with the political system of the Sultanate system in the pre-constitutional development period. The second chapter also emphasizes the nature of the Sultanate political system; and what were the institutions, how the power was concentrated, and how the Sultan governed in the atoll-state. It extensively analyses the impact of colonialism (Portuguese, Dutch and British rule) on the political system of Maldives. The chapter also highlights the agreements with British and its impact. An analysis of the Constitutional development and the political system under various Constitutions up to the period of independence has also been given. The purpose is to find out the nature of the political system during the pre-
independence period so that the continuity and change in the post-colonial political system can be identified in the Maldives.

The third chapter analyses the nature of post-colonial Maldivian political system. It focuses on the constitutional development in Maldives. The main backgrounds of the 1968 Constitution and the 1998 Constitution of the country have also been analysed. The powers and functions of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary under the 1968 and 1998 Constitutions have also been studied extensively. The chapter also highlights the Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties of the Maldivian citizens. Analysis of Maldives Public Service Commission and its contribution to the government has been given. Finally, the chapter also makes a critical review and an assessment of the nature and functions of the political system in Maldives.

The fourth chapter analyses national institutions of governance in Maldives. In this chapter, the focus is on political and economic institutions, which govern the country. There are many national institutions; it may be political or economic institutions, nevertheless, functions for the government. This chapter analyses the functions of some of the key political institutions such as Ministry of Home and Environment, Ministry of Defence and National Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Treasury and also Ministry of Atolls Development. Among them, the Ministry of Home and Environment is important and its functions rely upon the nation’s development of the nation. The chapter made a profile of certain economic institutions such as The Maldives Monetary Authority (MMA), Bank of Maldives Limited (BML), Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MNCCI), State Trading Centre (STC), and the National Security Service (NSS). Finally, it highlights how these institutions function for the development of the nation.

The fifth chapter analyses the local administration. It deals with the powers and functions of the Atoll-Chief and the Island-Chief, and how the national government controls the local administration. It highlights the type of political system that strengthens the local administration. Also,
Urban/Municipality administration of Maldives has been analysed. An extensively analysed of administrative relations has also been given highlighting how local administration is carried out in the country. Economic development of the local level administration is also another important point discussed. Budgetary allocations of the central government to the local administration of the country have also been analysed. Finally, the chapter highlights the socio-economic indicators of the country, and how much the policies and programmes of the central government are helping to the local administration.

The sixth chapter analyses the problems of governance in Maldives. It focuses on how the geographical factor has been the source of problems of the country. The chapter analyses problems of the socio-economic development and also socio-economic implications of regional imbalances in Maldives. It deals with challenges of seating human resource base in the country. The challenges of widening political representation in the higher Offices of Maldives have also been analysed. The country’s security problems both, military and non-military; the causes for the coup attempts, and the Maldivian Government’s strategies to overcome such challenges have also been dealt with in this chapter. Finally, it analyses the 1988 coup attempt and India’s military involvement to foil the coup attempt in Maldives.

The thesis has concluded with identifying the trends in the political process of Maldives and the changing nature of political system and also its acceptability in the country.

The proposed study is based on historical-analytical method. The required data for the study has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The constitution, government documents and speeches of the leaders form the primary sources. The secondary sources comprise of books, articles, newspapers and magazines etc.