CHAPTER II

ORIGIN OF FEUDALISM

It is highly interesting to observe the origin of an institution, popularly known as feudalism which exercised tremendous influence in moulding the socio-economic and political life of medieval Europe. Though institution closely similar to feudalism has existed in Europe and other parts of the world even before the Middle Age yet the term feudalism, used variously, atleast finds its association more deeply with the land system and polity. The original concept of feudalism was of course developed on the basis of European history and such a concept was not unknown to India, if its early history is observed. Hence we should not be apathetic to take European feudal society as model considering the existence of feudalism and lot many monographs that were brought out about feudalism; and this can only enable us to prepare a scientific background for our problem. The sifting of vast-source material in a true historical perspective may lead to the refutation of even some of well established ideas. But we do not have other way than to reinterpret the sources in order to present modest origin of feudalism in early India.
Feudalism had various forms in various parts of the world, and different countries witnessed their respective feudal way of life when advantageous situation came to for such system not necessarily within the same time limit. The characteristics of West European feudalism did not have similar manifestations all over the European continent. They differed from place to place, although broadly speaking all of them inclined to have feudal mode of life. This institution in other parts of the world followed a different pattern. The scholars have almost no statistics about the allocation of period to the origin of feudalism. Every country in the world underwent the process of socio-economic and political evolution and consequently experienced feudal way of life. The feudal system however did not originate simultaneously in all countries. It originated in different historical period in various parts of the world. For instance, it originated in Middle Age in 9th century A.D in Western Europe. This is a fact which is unanimously accepted by the historians and scholars that it originated in North Africa during 7th century A.D. Ethiopia experienced Feudalism in 10th century. In America feudalism developed in three stages, first in 1490, then in 1550 and 1560. The Ottoman Empire faced
feudalism in 14th and 15th centuries A.D. But nothing is known of the beginning of feudalism in China. Accordingly to the earliest literary sources feudalism was already in existence in the third millennium B.C. But the earliest definite and credible information concerning feudal tenures refers to the time of king Wa-Wang, the founder of the Chou dynasty during the 11th century B.C, and in Japan during the Takhgawa regime in particular.\(^1\) Another important fact with regard to the origin of feudalism in these countries is that it originated in different conditions. Sometimes the factors were identical and at other they were so divergent that they possessed serious problems for the scholars to draw uniform method to write about it. It is a debatable question as to when did feudalism originate in India. The scholars of Indian history and society are unanimous with regard to the origin of feudalism in early India and this unanimity is marred by the highly divergent of opinion when the question of fixing date is taken up. Some strive to trace the symptoms of feudal structure in the Buddhist and the pre-Mauryan period. Whereas other group of scholars recriminate any such effort and try hard to prove the origin of feudalism in the Sātavāhana and the Gupta India.
Thus, the origin of feudalism is placed between 6th century B.C and 4th century A.D. This, by no means, presents a scientific solution to the origin of an institution which indeed exercised a far reaching impact on the life and thought of Indians. This requires a more scientific approach and through a meticulous and objective study we can reach to the truth. Our job is not a mere reiteration of what has been said of feudalism rather to coalesce evidences in order to study them afresh to fix a conclusive period for its modest origin. With a view to knowing the opinions of scholars working on feudalism, it has become imperative to discuss all of them and through that we can only be in a position to put our hypothesis. Haran Chander Neogi an indologist states that the Buddhist period witnessed the origin of feudalism in India. According to him, feudalism originated where the basis of slave economy was weakened and the growth of feudalistic economy depended on the degree by which slavery was decaying. Neogi opines that in India Buddhism supplied the philosophy which weakened slavery and strengthened feudalistic factors. But no single factor be ascribed to the origin of such an institution as Neogi suggests. As we know the 6th century B.C. saw the first territorial state fashioned by centralised
administration in Indian history after the coming of Bimbisāra to the Magadhan throne and this centralised efficient administration might have checked effectively the growth of incipient feudal tendencies. H. Chatterjee another scholar of repute is of the opinion that feudalism might have orginated in India during the period of Manu Saṃhitā (200 B.C to 200 A.D). He quotes the Manu Saṃhitā in support of his argument, wherein Īśa and Adhipatī are mentioned. These terms are according to him, related with feudalism. But unfortunately the period of Manu itself is a matter of controversy, although broadly speaking the period is fixed between 2nd century B.C. and 2nd century A.D. This leaves a margin of about 400 years. This dichotomy of period is sufficient to refute chatterjee’s view. Since 400 years is too long a period to be considered for its origin. Moreover Chatterjee has never tried to document the conditions prevailing in India before Manu. G.M. Bongard Levin argues that feudalism originated in India in first century A.D. He developed this idea on the basis of epigraphic sources of the Sātavāhana period where he could find that the king could donate small plots from his own lands to Brāhmaṇas and followers of others creeds. If there was no vacant land he had to buy land from a private owner and then could dispose it of at
his own discretion. But he admits that ancient sources (including those related to the Mauryan period, the Buddhist texts, the Dharmasūtra etc.), contain numerous references to private land ownership and private estates. Being a Marxist historian he places the origin of feudalism in the 1st century A.D. supporting other Marxist scholars who have equally placed the origin between Sātavāhana to Gupta period. A thorough discussion of his theory will be made together with the Marxist historians latter.

However, D.D. Kosambi, R.S. Sharma, Romila Thapar, Yadava, R.K. Choudhry, B.P. Muzumdar, D.N. Jha, I.W. Mabbett and many others hold the view that the modest origin of feudalism can be fixed in Gupta period. But Sharma suggests many alternatives centuries for the beginning of Indian feudalism, ranging from 2nd century B.C. to 4th century A.D. According to him feudalism in India, unlike in Europe, began with the issuance of land grants made to the Brāhmaṇas, temples and monastries which covers only political aspect of feudalism, he further argues that it was multiplied by Gupta times when villages together with their fields and inhabitants, fiscal, administrative and judicial rights (with the right to enjoy fines received) and excepted from the interference
of royal officials were given to religious beneficiaries. If land grants are to be taken only criterion for the beginning of feudalism in India then the system seems to be as old as the Brāhmaṇas and the Buddhist literature. Sharma also admits that the early Pali literature of the pre-Mauryan period refers to the villages granted to the Brāhmaṇas by the rulers of Kaśala and Magadha. It is mentioned that the administrative rights were given up for the first time in the grant made to the Buddhist monks by the Sātavāhana ruler Gautamiputra Śātakarṇi in the 2nd century A.D, but grants which are recorded in early texts do not mentions the abandonment of any administrative rights by the donors. Sharma also states that there was decline of trade and commerce during Gupta and post Gupta periods, which he connected with the development of feudal condition. At the same time he has attempted to shows the evolution of feudalism in the early period when trade was certainly in a flourishing condition over a considerable period. He admits that the Kuṣāṇa layers belonging to the first to the 3rd centuries A.D are flourishing in every aspects.

The prosperity of the Kuṣāṇa empire so remarkably attested by the gold pieces struck by
Kadphises II, appears to have increased under Kaniska. A large number of gold coins issued by the latter furnishes direct evidence of economic prosperity prevailing during the reign of Kaniska. The large number of gold coins during Kuśāṇas bear evidence of a direct contact with the Roman Empire. It is believed that the gold coins issued by the Kuśāṇa monarch may have been mainly to fulfil the necessities of foreign trade and commerce; their numerous copper coins were minted for every day local uses and small internal transactions. The trade channels in the country and the movement of the caravans of merchants with their goods from Northern India to the parts on the Western coast, despite the hazardous and difficult terrain in the way with not very smooth times of the communications Northern India was as well to join the famous inland silk trade-route between China and Rome. The production in Taxila and Vārānasī is expected to be sufficient for meeting the domestic needs. The references to weight and measure and several varieties of gold coins some equivalent to the Roman auricuption to the necessity of meeting the requirements of the people in a developed economy, and also for enduring a fair and honest deal in external trade. Thus, we cannot accept the contradictory theory of evolution of feudalism in India during 2nd or
3rd centuries A.D which Sharma propounded on the basis of decay in trade and commerce which was a later phenomenon. Lallanji Gopal on the other hand, suggests the origin of feudalism during the seventh century A.D. He argues that "towards the close of the seventh century A.D there had, grown in India some sort of a feudal tendency. The practice of allotting lands to the states officers and the ministers of State and common officials all have their portion of land and are maintained by the cities assigned to them. He quoted Yuan Chawang in support of his statement. Those who speak of the origin of feudalism in pre Gupta and earlier period seem to have given corroborate their argument. This leaves sufficient scope for a fresh attempt to trace out the modest origin of feudalism in earlier period.

Before indulging ourself with the discussion about the earlier origin of feudalism, an attempt to survey the Indian institutions of early India were not be out of place here. The term Samrāt in Rgveda stands for an emperor who had many small rulers under him and he is further described as Samrāt or an emperor and Rajan is very frequently mentioned and it generally cannotes a king employed in the sense of a noble or a chief the Rājanva another term a found
mentioned in the Vedic Literature denotes a member either of royal or noble families. Another word Swāraj also occurs in Vedic Literature which might be interpreted as self ruler or king. We come across the term Sātapanī (the lord of hundreded villages) who might have arrogated to himself both political and administrative powers, not only that he too became the commander of the army in war. There is another term called the Vispatī in Vedic Literature which means the head of the Vis and below his rank was the Vrajapati or the grāminī. However, during the war he was to be attended by the Kulapās who were the heads of the family, consequently the head of the family used to go to war under the leadership of Vrajapati. A R̄gvedic Grāma or village therefore consisted of a number of gr̄has or house inhabited by several family or kulas, under the leadership of Gr̄hapatis. These Gr̄hapatis were independent in exercising various powers and rights. The above references conclusively prove the administrative division, or administrative hierarchy in the Vedic society, but the feudal hierarchy was absent. In the battle of ‘ten kings,’ we find that the victorious king Sudas, made Aja, Sirgu and Yakṣu countries as paying tributes to him. This was the tributes levied on conquered country and this should not be interpreted as feudal vassalage. Thus feudal
hierarchy was not known in Vedic period.

The existing evidence of the later Vedic period show a marked differences in the religious practices of the period. A more complicated ceremony was introduced by the priests who could only officiate it for the ruler. It is observed that the Rājasūya sacrifice was performed by the Rājan and Aśvamedha or Vājapeya by the Samrāt. During the course of sacrifices the Samrāt was accepted as overlords by all vassal chiefs and lords. Taittiriya Samhitā describes that the petty chiefs were the tributary of their immediate greater chiefs known by the names of adhiraja and Samrāt, implying thereby that feudatory lords reduced to vassalage.

The Indian social structure was based on the hierarchical division since the Vedic times. The upper two Varnas Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas having brain and muscle power could enjoy both political and social superiority. The theory of the survival of the fittest prevails not only in political but also in socio-economic life. The weaker sections of the population found themselves helpless and no protection came from the upper Varnas and the two lower Varnas were ultimately made to leave their higher Varna in return
of security provided to them. The need for interdependence between power seeker and protection leads to the mutual ties of relationship. It indicates that there was graded political herarchical order in later Vedic period but not feudal hierarchical as some hold it. We come across the terms like adhirājā mahārāja, Rājan or rājā and Samrāt etc., suggesting graded political herarchical authority in later vedic period. The growth of agriculture and trade led to the formation of wealthy land owning classes and rich trading communities. The Rgveda refers to the introduction of cultivation by means of wooden plough and used fire in burning down the forest and therby brought more land under cultivation.25 Thus agriculture became the main industry of the Aryans as references to irrigation are not lacking.26 The end of the Rgvedic period witnessed stupendous transformation on the life pattern of the early Aryans. They now became settled and continuous migration now ceased to exist; and the pastoral people began to exchange their nomadic life for an economy based agricultural life. The Aryan agricultural settlement led to cleaning of the land eastward along the Gaṅgā Valley and the river soon became a natural highway of trade with numerous riparian settlement growing into market.27 but with the extensive use of iron for agricultural purposes
from about the 10th century B.C. onwards, the villages must have started producing surplus food grains and this ultimately strengthened the economic condition of landowners and brought them closer to the king or ruler. The landowners under this situation might have maintained small groups of army to protect their own estates from the external and internal danger. Iron seems to be cheap metal and this made agriculture easy and possible in early India; more and more land was brought under cultivation with help of iron tools and iron ploughshare. The arrival of a new stage in technological progress promoted rapid growth in every branch of industry. With the discovery of iron, the agriculture spread over a vast area and supplied the needs of a growing population. It had enlarged the field of exploitation of nature and strengthened the foundation of material civilization in the country. Thus, this helped the agricultural process and brought a revolutionary change in the method of production. This led the increase of surplus and agriculture became market economy and with this surplus the non agricultural producing population could subsist easily.28 With the increasing emphasis on agriculture, more labourers were needed for cultivation of land and more food grain was produced. This might have motivated to employ slave for agricultural production.
Thus it seems that such vast plot of lands could not be brought under cultivation without employing the slave labour. The most important event that has been recorded in the history was the emergence in 6th century B.C of the sixteen Mahājanapadās (soloṣa-mahājanapadā) or ‘sixteen great kingdom.’ The paramount power of North India was divided into a large number of independent states. There were three most important kingdom, such as Magadha, Kosala and Vastra and Sixteen great kingdoms were mentioned in Buddhist text. These kingdoms flourished just before the time of Gautama Buddha. They are as follows, Anga, Magadha, Kāśi, Kaśala, Vriji, Malla, Chedi, Vatsa, Kura, Pañchāla, Matsu, Śurasena, Asuka, Avanti, Gandhāra and Kāmboja. There were many small kindom and vassal states all over India. Undoubtedly, they had to discharge certain military obligations and other functions on behalf of the great kingdoms. In due course of time, Magadha held the commanding position in Northern India at the cost of other state. Three royal patrons of the Buddha viz. Prasenajit, Bimbisāra and Ajātsātra ruled over vassal states. Prasenajit is described as the head of a group of five Rājās. Bimbisāra had maṇḍalikarājjas under him, and Prasenjit was mighty monarch ruling a vast area. His kingdom was loosely controlled through tribal chieftains and vassal.
The rural economy of India at the coming of Buddhism was based on a system of village communities or what in Europe is known as peasant proprietorship. But there is no clear testimony to prove the existence of isolated large estate of feudatory, or to absolute lords of soil holding large estates. In the monarchical system of India. The king thought autocratic actively governing had a right to raw product collected as a yearly tax, and only to this extent could be considered the ultimate owner of the soil. The grants of lands were made in the kingdom of Magadha and Kośala to the Brāhmaṇas and secular persons. A Brāhmaṇa landowner offers a thousand Karīsas of his estates as a gift and a merchant entangles an unwilling noble in the sale of a park. The holding in the arable land called the Khetta of each village would be subject to redistribution and redivision among a family, as one generation succeeded another. But it is not clear whether any member of a village community could give or sell any of the Khetta to an outsider.

Most probably in India Buddhism supplied the philosophy that weakened slavery. It is well known
that Buddha preached the doctrine of piety, social equality and economic justice, worthlessness of caste division that imposed restrictions on occupations and Brāhmaṇical rituals being a source of exploitation to the poor. Most of his converts came from the common and socially oppressed classes. The new ideology gave a serious shaking to the old order of things and gave a new lease of life on the society by freeing men from cast bondage. The ideology brought mobility of labour which was indespensable in the age for the growth of industry. The condition became such that the slaves and the downtrodden people could no longer be kept under control unless some sort of privilege was granted to them.36

But actual labour was done by slave37 and landlords got their land cultivated by them.38 Thus, from the available sources it may be surmised that the rural economy in the age of the Buddha was based on peasant proprietorship and slave formed a part of economy. Since the slaves were to a considerable extent engaged in some sort of productive work. Buddha emphasised the importance of their work and advised his followers to look after their well being. H.C. Neogi propounds basis of his assumption that Buddhist period the experienced in that slave system. We must bear in
mind that rot in the slave system cannot alone be considered a single factor for the emergence of feudalism as suggested by Neogi. It is to be supplemented and supported by its correlaries factors.

Private ownership of means of production were recognised. Land was indeed the most important means for the production of wealth during this period and the most important source of public revenues even when owned or cultivated by private people. Kautilya recommends the grants of tax free land to the Rituih (preceptor) purohita (chaplin) and Brāhmaṇas learned in the Veda.39 The mention of the Brāhmaṇadēva land side by side with Āthitya40 (land granted to judicial officers) is an important point to be discussed. We notice that the revenue collector was required to prepare a statement "villages that are exempted from taxation (Parīhārika) those that supplied soldiers to the state (Āyudhīya)41 Military officers were too assigned lands. If land tenure based on military system was to be taken as the only essential element of feudalism (which is of course)." We can trace the origin of feudalism here, but the highly centralised Mauryan Empire kept feudal tendencies under control until the decline of Aśoka.

We come across references to Bhumidaṇa which
was to be given to the officials in return of cash. The grants of course, created big landed intermediaries who flourished in an agrarian economy. Kautilya refers to some land grants to the superintendent of various departments, the accountants, the gopas who were in charge of five or ten villages, the Sthānikas the veterinary doctors (anikastha) the physicians (Chikitska), the horse trainers (aśvādamonaha) and the messenger etc. It seems that the land might have been granted to lieu of salary to the officers for the state services. These land grants are discussed in detail in the succeeding chapter dealing purely with land grants.

There was no question of communal tillage or the communal ownership of land. Each cultivator was to cultivate his land separately and was responsible personally for the payment of land revenue to the state. He was subjected to specific punishments, if harmed his co-cultivators. Crime against personal cultivator were described in the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya and law books of contemporary India. The step was taken to define the boundary of each cultivator which are inconceivable except on individual ownership of land. Disputes concerning fields shall be settled by the elders of the neighbourhood or of the
same village. If they are divided in their opinions, the case referred to more respectable people of society having pure and impeccable character and on the extreme the disputants were allowed to divide the disputed holding equally among themselves. If both of these methods fail the king was supposed to take possession of the disputed land. The same rule shall hold good in case of a holding for which no claimant is forthcoming; or it may beneficially be distributed among the people. Occupation of a holding by force, shall be punished as theft." Kautilya further describes that "tax payers shall sell or mortgage their field to tax payers alone. Brähmaṇas shall sell or mortgage their lands only to those who are endowed with such land. But on the other hand we cannot deny state ownership of land during Mauryan period. It is evident from the Arthaśāstra that state exercised the overriding authority over state land (Sītā) and pastures; plains and forest were not subject to individual ownership. The Arthaśāstra distinguishes crown land (Sītā land) from the rest of the feudal domain called Raśtra land. In fact, the Arthaśāstra is particularly concerned with the exploitation of Sītā land. Thus it is quite clear that all unoccupied land is supposed to belong to the state or king. It is evident that land which was ready for agriculture
should be given to those who were willing to pay the taxes and the land which were not under the supervision of king. These land appeared to belong to private owners. There are clear indications in the text about the private ownership of land. The Kṣetuika the owner of the field was distinguished from the Upavāsa. Now we can safely draw our conclusion on the basis of aforesaid discussion that the land formed very much the private property of its owner.

Slavery the most ancient institution of every society has been attracting the attentions of western scholars since long; what is more important that this institution has become a pot of dispute among the Indian scholars when they try to look into it in order to evaluate its value against the background of India’s past socio-economic and political condition. Some of them are of the opinion that slavery was not in existence in Ancient India, they refer to Megasthenes work ‘Indica’ in support of their views. We cannot take Indica from its face value. Megasthenes might have been influenced by his preformed idea of Greek society where the slaves did not have any kind of personal rights. Magasthenes describes that "there was no slavery in India and all men were free." But this argument does not seem to be correct. Our other
references to this fact point that the slavery was a regular feature in India, but it was different from the slavery of the West. Actually, Megasthenes possessed little or no real knowledge about India. He had nebulous conception, which were vague, loose, uncertain and mysterious. He had acquired little knowledge mainly through some second hand sources which he honestly believed to be true and current.

The account of Megasthenes popularly known as the *Indica* is lost. Only some of its fragments are to be found in the writing of later historians like Strabo and Arrian. His work is not only conflicting but also incredible. But we cannot say that the entire account of Megasthenes was filled with false details. He depicted what he heard from Brāhmaṇas with whom he came in contact during his stay at the imperial court.

But we find lot of references to slavery in *Arthaśāstra*⁴⁹, a contemporary work of Megasthenes. Kautilya has devoted a full chapter to slave where he has discussed at length their socio-economic status in the society. He says there are nine types of slave depending on the circumstances where the free mess were enslaved. It is evident that serfs, slaves and landless labours for the king were provided food and
We notice from the Arthashastra that the Sitadhakṣya (superintendent of agriculture) had under his direct control a large number of slaves and hired labour for agricultural operation on the state land. It is therefore, natural to suggest that a good number of Śudras were also employed by the landlord and state as slaves and labourers in agricultural production. Though Āsoka exhorts people to treat slaves well, but he did not contemplate to abolish it altogether sometimes state was forced to take recourse to slave labour to reclaim new land for the imperial farm. Thus in the Mauryan period, it existed purely in relation to economic factors as we find the Dāsa-Karmakāras engaged in all type of productive work. It is known from the Arthashastra that the Śudra labourers (Karmakāras and artisans) and slaves labourer did manual labour for the state instead of paying taxes. These labourers work recruited by some supervisor (Viṣṭivandhaka) and state officer was required to maintain a proper account of forced labour contributed by the each householders. It appears that the forced labourer considered to be the lawful privilege of government servant and land owning class. Forced labour was source of income to the state in Mauryan period and it was not imposed on the independent peasantry in the
village.

The importance of irrigation was recognised as early as the 4th century B.C by Kauṭilya, who repeatedly advised the king to take care of (Setubandha) or waterworks. Though irrigation is looked upon as a state activity during Mauryan time but privately owned irrigation tanks are also thought of. There is, for example, the rule that the ownership of a tank is lost if it is not used for five years or a person can sell or mortgage his tank. It indicates that irrigation was owned privately even during Mauryan time.

We find a feudal social order, where the exploitation of two lower Varṇas were very much evident and these lower Varnas, the producers of wealth for the higher Varṇas with whom the state had the alliance. The relation between the lower class producer and the upper class enjoyers had a feudal character. Arthaśāstra is a ‘Graded Universe.’ Punishments are graded, there is nothing in life which is not classified into superior, middling and low and high grade, rank, status, position in the pecking order. These are the hallmarks of all feudal societies. The main form of exploitation was feudal and was yielded by
the slave and Śūdra labour applied to the land. The surplus was appropriated by the feudal ruling class of India. Thus, the political hierarchy, stratified social structure based on Varṇa system, coming of private property and private ownership in land, together with division of labour produced a distinct social system, which was more overtly seen in Mauryan empire, when the highly centralised empire of Maurya was in declining, the already existing feudalistic tendency got strengthened and the feudal system with its ramification pervaded through the society in subsequent period mentioned factors had their own origin in different periods of Indian history through the evolutionary process. Increasing emphasis on trade with growth of artisans led to the urbanisation on an enormous scale and thus sharpened the class and caste divisions. However, we can say that all the necessary ingredients or essential conditions of feudalism were more prominent during Mauryan period or last phase of Mauryan empire. Thus after surveying the literary of feudal society in India, although a close affinity could not be established between Indian and European feudalism, owing to their divergent socio-economic and political millieu. The feudal elements in India can be pushed back to Mauryan India witnessed a highly centralised state, wherein the state exercised direct
control over vast empire. The centralised political and administrative set up could well suppress the feudal tendencies for sometimes, but the things were reversed with the coming of weak successor of Åśoka to the throne. The empire faced disintegration owing to many factors and the suppressed feudal tendencies could find ample scope to manifest and were strengthened. Hence it is safe to determine the modest origin of feudalism with the declining of the Mauryan Empire of with the coming of the Śuṅga rulers.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4. G.M.Bongard-Levin, Mauryan India (Delhi), 1985, pp. 181-83.

5. Ibid., p. 182,

S.K.Mitra suggests the origin of feudalism in the Deccan in the early centuries of the Christian era. He refers to a Sātavāhana Inscription (Myakadoní-Inscription, Bellary District) in support of
his argument which records a village owned by a **Gaulmika** included in the **āhāras** of a superior officer (a **mahāsēnapati**).

"Feudalism in Ancient India" D.C. Sircar (ed.), *Land System and Feudalism*, op.cit., p. 54.


Kosambi suggests that system bare the seeds of feudalism in early period but were not the feudal till the end of the 6th century A.D. Romila Thapar speaks that feudalism originated in Gupta period particularly under Samundragupta, and the conquered feudatories were allowed to rule as independent feudatories. *A History of India*, op.cit., pp. 241-242.; B.N.S. Yadava suggests that the evidences tend to supplements the epigraphic evidence which indicate that "the evidences tend to supplement the epigraphic evidence which indicate that "the whole spread practice of land grants in the Gupta period paved the way for the rise of Brāhmaṇa feudatories who performed administrative function almost independently. "Problems of the emergence of

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Feudal relations in Feudal India", in I.H.C. 4th session (Bombay), 1960, pp. 23-25.

B.P. Mazumdar, states that "feudalism and feudatories came to occupy some prominence for the first time during Gupta", Socio-Economic History of Northern India, (1030-1194) (Calcutta), 1960, p. 8

I.W. Mabbett, points out that Gupta empire was some sort of feudal type empire, Truth. Myth and Politics, (Delhi), 1971, p. 12.

D.N. Jha also suggests its origin during the Gupta, he is of the opinion that the troops supplied by the feudatories constituted the major portion of the Gupta military strength and the Guptas did not enjoy a monopoly of elephants and horses which were essential ingredients of military machinery, in Ancient India an Introductory Outline, (Delhi), 1981, pp. 99-100.

R.K. Choudhary "Problems and Methods of Socio-Economic History of Ancient

8. Ibem.
9. Ibid., p. 221.
10. Ibid.
12. B.N.Puri, India under the Kushaṇas (Bombay), 1965, p. 105.
13. Ibid.
15. S.S.Parkash, Sarasvati and S.Vidyalankar, (Trs.) Rgveda Samhitā (Delhi), 1977, various volumes, 1.25.10, 11.28.6, V.85. 1, VI. 68.9, VIII, 42.1.; Samrāt as king both for gods and men, 11.27.10.
16. Ibid., 1.32.
17. R.V. 1.40.8, 108.7.
18. Ibid., 1.36.7, 51.5, 61.9.
19. Ibid., VI.46.1, VIII. 36.5, VIII. 19.36.
20. Ibid., X. 179.2.
21. Ibid., VII. 18.19.
23. Ibid., V.2.2.14-15.
26. Ibid., 111.45.3, VII. 49.2.
28. The Aryan rulers Mitani knew the value of iron and guarded the secrets of its production and maintained state monopoly over their metal trades, many people identify Vyasa with iron. Iron objects in India have been found in the layers 1000 to 900 B.C. Iron implements were found at Taxila (5th Century B.C.) at Ropar, (6th Century B.C.) Puranaquila Delhi, Hastinapur (1100 to 600 Centuries B.C.) Vikaramashela (about 800 B.C.) and
at various places including Atrangi Khera (Aligarh) The century had stepped into the iron age by the second half of the first millennium B.C. Iron does not appear to have been imported over since it is found all over the country. In about 400 B.C. iron and steel weapons were being exported to the market of the Near-East by the Dravidians. Iron smelting must have been known to Indian in about 800-700 B.C. The use of iron in Bengāl, Bihār and Uttar Pardesh is suggested in a number of sources. It used in South India independently by the Aryans and iron was being widely worked in South India by 700 B.C.

R.K. Choudhary "Problems and Methods of Socio-Economic History of Ancient India in a New Perspective," in J.B.R.S. (Patna), 1968, Vol. 54, H.1-4, pp. 98-99. Iron plough share was used for cultivation Śātāpatha Brāhmaṇa. S.B.E. Vol.XLI-XLIII, part III-IV, VII. 2.2, VIII, 1.14, Iron weapon such as spears, arrows heads and knives have been unearthed from the strata of period assigned to 700-500 B.C. and the use of iron for agricultural purposes in India around 800-700 B.C. S.D. Singh "Iron in Ancient India," in
J.E.S.H.O. (Netherland), 1962, Vol. V. p. 214. This metal had became chief metal in the Mauryan period too and it is evident from the Pali literature that Brāhmaṇa from Magadha who tilled his field with a iron plough share and after days work if had become hot and was quickly dipped into the water, G.M. Bongard-Levein Mauryan India, (Delhi), 1985, p. 119. It is evident that people used to come to iron smith from the village just to have Razors, Axes and ploughshare, Jātaka, 111. 281, VI. 7.


30. R.C.Majumdar and A.D.Pusalker (eds.) History and Culture of the Indian People, the Age, Imperial Unity, 4th (ed.) (Bombay), 1968, p.1.


H.C.Neogi states that during the war between Ajātaśatru and Vajji confederacy, Vassakara visited the Buddha, apparently for
counsel who told him that the confederacy could not be overcome in battle, but only by cunning, by breaking up their alliance in battle. Thus the Buddha was the brain behind the empire building of Ajātaśatru who later became a follower of the Buddha. Thus Buddhism seems to have supplied the ideology and took active part for a change in the society favourable to feudalistic developments." (idem.).


The ownerless land is described as kings land (Jăt, 1.398, 14.485, VI. 348), he could replace these cultivators from his holding who had been declared defaultors and could increase the tax according to his own will. The grant of land to religious advisors and instructors proved the king ownership of land. (Jăt, IV. 169, 229.339, 400, V.98, 1.135, 11, 428-29, 111, 105, 8.229, IV. 437, VI. 344, and in Gautama XI. 1.

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35. E.J. Rapson, op. cit., p. 178.

Early Buddhist literature records many land grants in favour of religious and secular purposes (Gautama, XIX.16.19) Brahmanas are provided with royal land Jat. 1.97.8,11.42, 229, 404 IV. 437, No. 542, 546) and sometimes private person used to grant land, Boudayana, 111,10.4.


37. Jāt, 1.504,V.412. The Pali literature inform us that the so called lords got their land cultivated by the slave labourers.

38. Ibid., 11.81, 111, 293, IV, 76.

"The hiereling wage earner day labourer was no men's chattel yet his life was probably harder sometimes than that of the slaves, he was to a great extent employed on a larger land holding", E.J. Rapson, op.cit., p. 183.

39. A.Ś. 11.2

"He (the king) should grant (lands) to
priests, preceptors chaplain and learned Brāhmaṇas land (as) gift to Brāhmaṇas (brahmadēṇi) exempt from the fine and taxes (adaṇḍakarani) any yielding suitable (revenue)," G.M. Bongard-Leivan, *Mauryan India*, op. cit., p. 182.

The sale of mortgage of land is governed by certain regulations. The sale of land is also referred to the purposes of restricting the transaction to the person of the same categories by tax payer to tax payer and grant holder to grant holder. The priest preceptor and Brāhmaṇas which are to pass inheritance to person belonging to the same category. Such lands are distinguished from tax paying land, R.P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashāstra*, Part III (Bombay), 1965, pp. 170-1.

40. Ibid., 11.20.

41. *A.S.* 11.35-6-111.10.

H.C. Neogi, compares Āyudhiya land (land held by officers on condition of supplying troops to the state or king) with the Muslim Jāgīr system. ; H.C.

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"Rājabhogāin Raṇṇa Dinnaīm Rājadayānī Būahmadeyām" found in 10th literature has been explained as elienation of the king’s right.

42. A.Ś., 11.1

"Land grants are recommended to adhyapaṇas accountant and other lower officers without the right to sale or mortage. This means that they have only independent land neither full ownership nor exempted from tax. R.P.Kangle suggests that neither or the two types of grants corresponds to the Jāgīr of later days, much less can be said to established feudal relationship, R.P.Kangle, The Kautilya Arthashāstra, op.cit., p. 171.

43. A.Ś. 111.9. 169. English (Tr.).

If a holding is taken possession of by another on some reasonable grounds he shall be made to pay to the owner some rent the
amount of which is to be fixed after mature consideration of what is necessary for the subsistence of cultivator of the holding by him. Encroachment upon boundaries shall be punished with a fine of 29 pānas. The same rules shall hold good in disputes concerning hermitage in forest, pasture lands, high land cremation grounds, temple, sacrificial places, and places of pilgrimage.

44. Iben.

45. A.Ś. 1.14, 111.10, IV. 10, VII. 11.

"Obstruction to roads for inferior beasts or men shall be punished with a fine of 12 pānas to roads for superior beasts 24 pānas, to roads for elephants or to those leading to fields, 45 pānas to those leading to any building or forests (setuvanapathan) 600 pānas, to those burial grounds or villages 200 pānas to those for dhonamukha, a fortress, 500 pānas and those landing to Sthāniya country parts, or pasture grounds 1000 pānas. A.Ś. 111.10.

46. The rāstra taxes have collected under ten separate
heads the taxes that are fixed (pindakara) taxes that are paid in form of one sixth of produce, (Shādhaga) provision, (Samabhahta) taxes that are levied for religious purposes (bāli) taxes or subsidies that are paid by vassal king and other (kara) taxes that are specially collected on the occasion of the birth of a prince (utsanga) taxes are collected when there are some margin left for such collection (Pārshva) compensation levied in shape of the grain for any damage done by cattle to crop (Parichinaka) presentation made to the king and taxes are all these come under the head Rastrā. Kautilya states that crown land (Sītā) was cultivated by the free working class without any claim to land on the share.


48. N.S. Kalota, India as Described by Megasthenes (Delhi), 1978, p. 99.

49. R. Shamasastry, (Tr.) Kautilya Arthashāstra (Mysore), 1960, 111. 13.

According to Kautilya there are nine types of slavery such as (1) person captured in war or a battle was enslaved for a very short period because these persons always
used to belong to the Aryan or called (Dhujahuits). (2) There was a slave who accepted the slave status for their living is called as (Udaradasa). (3) Third type of slaves is born slaves (Grihyatah). (4) Kautilya mentioned slaves who were bought slaves (Krita). (5) Fifth type was gifted slaves (Labdhah). (6) Sixth type was called as (Dayah-agatah) or treated as chattles slaves. (7) A person enslaved because of the judicial punishment has been mentioned as (dand praneet). (8) Kauṭilya described about those slaves who enslaved themselves voluntarily by selling themselves. (9) And mortgaged slaves are described as (Ahitaka) by Kauṭilya.


51. A.Ś., 11.24

52. A.Ś.1.3

Settlement on unoccupied land is to be in form of villages (grāma) each containing from 100 to 500 families mostly belonging to the Śūdras agricultural class".

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It runs as: "People practice various ceremonies. In illness at the marriage of sons and daughter at the birth of children where going on a journey on these and on other similar occasions people perform many ceremonies. Women especially perform a variety of ceremonies which are useless. If such ceremonies must be performed they have but small results. But the one ceremony which has great value is that of Dhamma. This ceremony includes, regards for slave and servants, respect for teachers, restrained behaviour towards living being and donations to Srammans and Brāhmaṇas these and similar practices are called the ceremony of Dhamma"


55. A.S. 11.4, 11.15

56. Ibid., 11.35, 11.7.

57. Ibid., VII. 14.
"Irrigational works (Setubandha) are the source of crops, the results of a good shower of rain are even attained in the case of crops below irrigational works."

58. Ibid., 11.9.

59. Aś., 1.3.

"The duty of the Brāhmaṇas is study, teaching, performance of sacrifice, officiating in others, sacrificial performance and the giving and receiving of gifts, that of a Kṣatriya is study, performance of sacrifice, military occupation, and protection of life that of a Vaiśya is study, giving gifts, agriculture, cattle breeding and trade. That of a Śūdra is the serving of the twice born (divijati) agriculture cattle-breeding and trade (Vārtā), the profession of artisans and court boards (Kārukuṣilavakarma).; R. Shamasastry, (Tr.) Kautilya Arthashastra, (Mysore), 9th.(ed.), pp. 6-7.; R.P.Kangle, The Kautilya Arthashastra, (Bombay), 1965, Part, 111, p. 188.

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