CHAPTER - VI

CONCLUSION

Extensive discussion has been going on over the question of the distinction between European feudalism from which modern western capitalist society emerged and Indian feudalism which was replaced by a colonial capitalist social order created by the British Conquerors. An adequate comparative investigations of some of the great civilizations such as those of India, China and other having continuous history from neolithic to the modern times has become very necessary for a proper comprehension of the various trends of social development that are taking place in those countries. Hence, we made a systematic attempt to explore the latent causes and type of feudalism they presented according to their own socio-economic structure. However, Indian feudalism differs so much from its European counterpart, at least, as regard superficial manifestation, that very existence of feudalism in India has sometimes been denied. Unlike in tribal society, there were enormous variations in the nature of feudal societies. Feudalism assumes different aspects, and through its various phases in different orders of succession. But certain universals
remain the same. This is not negated even by the critics of Indian Feudalism who are of the view of variations in characters and period Feudalism. Of course land and agricultural products play a decisive role in feudalistic societies, but the specific situation in relation to land distribution and appropriation of agricultural products differ from region to region. We can not compare Europe feudal structure with Indian one. Feudalism was not the monopoly of Western Europe, we cannot apply and adopt clear cut tools about feudalism.

Although European type of feudalism was absent in India, the existence of some of the characteristics of feudalism like landed aristocracy, peasantry, slavery, forced labour, urban decay and other delineate India in the period of evolution from nomadic tribal life to capitalism passed through indigenous feudal system. Eventually the suzerains started giving land grants at first to the priests and later on to the state officers and aristocrats, they exercised all the administrative and Judicial power over their tenants. As we come to know that both religious and secular grants were made to the people. Latter grants were mostly enjoyed by the state officials and former one was made to the families of
the religious establishment, to be enjoyed by the Brāhmaṇas. But the Brāhmaṇas alone were not made powerful and wealthy by the process of land grants, the state officials too became equally influential and powerful by being made to the donees. There is almost a unanimity about the origin of feudalism in early India. Scholars have wide divergent view about its actual date. Some strive to trace the symptoms of feudal structure in the Buddhist and pre-Mauryan period, and another group of scholars scrinminate any such effort which trances the origin of feudalism in the Sātavāhana and the Gupta periods. After a cartious survey of literary as well as archaeological records, we cannot preclude the existence of feudal society in early India, although a close affinity could not be established between Indian and European feudalism, owing to their divergent socio-economic and political milieu. The feudal elements in India can be pushed back to Mauryan India. But we must keep mind that the Mauryan India witnessed a highly centralised state administration under the head of the state. The centralised political and administration set up could well suppress the feudal tendencies for sometimes, but the things were reversed with the coming of weak successors of Aśoka to the throne. The Mauryan empire feced disintergration owing to serveral factors and
suppressed feudal tendencies could find ample scope to manifest origin of feudalism with the decline of Mauryan Empire or coming of the Sunga to the throne.

Our sources of Ancient India are not only confusing but also contradictory by nature. However, we have put every effort to extract every bit of information from them. The literature of early incidently throw much valuable light on our theme of discussion. The epigraphic sources are more important and relevance to our study owing to their quality of reliability and their issuance started from Mayryan and post Mauryan periods to which from modest the origin of feudalism can be traced. But Mauryan from Inscription we get very less information about feudal elements. So we have to believe the reliability of earlier literary sources.

Feudalism in India can not be evoluted in terms of fragmentation of political and administrative powers only brought about by chiefs and vassals, because of its recurrence from early India onwards. As we observe feudalism is a political social and economic order in which the upper class appropriated the surplus produce of the peasants by exercising supervisory rights over their land as well as the
persons tied to the land, this phenomenon of expropriation of surplus produce in the Indian historical sense with emergence of Mauryan empire. Landlords who claim to collect rent from the peasants, and the subject peasantry, after meeting its needs, paid the remainder to the landlords. They (peasants) are actual tiller of the land are compelled to pay rents in cash, kind or labour to the landlord. The rents and labour services are collected by the landlord for themselves. Peasants did not pay because of expectations but because of custom and legal sanction. All religious texts were written by Brāhmaṇas or priestly class and they tried to prove the low origin and social status of the peasants. Landlords collected rents and services on the basis of land charters granted them by king. If peasants deny the rents or payment, force is also used by landlords.

Thus, all services religious, military, political, administrative etc., are remunerated through the land-grants. In the case of lower officers and higher functionaries were granted revenue from the village. The handicraft was mainly attached to the villages, unlike Europe and artisans were not attached to villages, or big estates or religious establishments.
The intrusion of foreign powers, such as ‘Śaka’ Kuśāṇa, Pārthians, Hūṇa etc. led deep the polarisation of already fragmented society by their incessant kind of grants to the vassals and to the priests who in turn guanted the Kṣatuiya status and by integrating them into Hindu system. There are plethora or reference lying scattered in the literautre and inscriptions. Normally the inscriptions were donative by nature and these donations were made by either by kings or private persons. The charaters testifying land grants, need careful study because these had been made for both religious as well as secular persons. Without entering into any dispute with regard to the purpose and character of land grant, we can safely deduce that they played crucial role in the socio-economic development or early India. The state controlled economyt of the prefudal period got transformed itself into a feudal economy by dint of issuance of land grants which generated a landed aristocracy within caste divided varṇa society.

It is clear that kings granted land to temples, monastrices, Brāhmaṇas and to such individuals who were under government service in lieu of their cash salary, or as a recognition of their learning for
distinguished services. Generally the donees got full proprietorship over the land granted to them, the Brāhmaṇas were sometimes granted whole villages, which was called aghahāra. These grants not only increased their economic position but also gave them administrative authority over such agraḥāra village. Even the agraḥāra villages were given them the perpetuity, in such village the tenants paid the dues and taxes to the Brāhmaṇas and not to the state.

Thus the revenue from the donated village was packeted by the donees. Even the Crown in later period conferred its right to nobles or doners on such matters like water reservarries, salt and other mines. Thus the Brāhmaṇas had become landed intermediaries between the state and actual little of land. These landed intermediaries lord in their turn make grant to their vassals and thus subinfeudation of land came into existence. However, on certain occasion, the intermediaries sought permission from his suzerain while making such grants. But powerful feudatory was less interested in seeking permission from his suzerain while making grants. It appears that it had become a fashion to converts princes and defeated kings into tributary chief.
The practice of recruiting officers from a family on hereditary basis could have accelerated the process of strengthening the feudal tendencies. It was mentioned by Kautilya that post of amātyas was hereditary. This system was prevalent earlier then it was accepted by the scholars. It is said that the son was allowed to succeeded his father as minister, and the amatyas too were on a hereditary basis. Although the states vassal stokes existed in large numbers in early India but their status and powers of their respective feudatories were not alike. In some case the suzerain appointed spies to inform him weather the feudatory chiefs were contemplating sedition or revolt against the imperial power. The suzerain could exercises having due consideration of the states and position of feudatory chiefs and its own capacity of check him. As a norm the feudal chief paid obedience to imperial order and any charter issued by the vassals must bear the name of their suzerain first as per the convention of the time. Attendance on the ceremonicol occasion and at periodical interval was expected in the royal court. A regular tributes had to paid, and spicial presents were also expected on the occasion of festivity to the suzerain.
The socio-economic aspect of feudalism in India was intimately connected with the transformation of the 'Sudras, who were common helots of the three higher Varṇas. Probably they were provided the waste and undeveloped land, because old peasants would not like to shift from settled areas, or aborigind cultivators were enrolled as Śūdras in the Brāhmaṇical social organisation. They were called peasants. Hence in Gupta and post-gupta texts it became necessary to call them cultivators. Yuan Chawang, describes the Śūdras as farmers. In the Mauryan period slaves and artisans who were generally belonged to Śūdras castes were subjected to forced labour and subsequently it became well recognised phenomenon.

The decline of trade and petty commodity production is also indicated in early Indian history, particularly from the Hūnas period onwards. We noticed that many cities and towns were in the slate of decline, such as, Pātaliputra, Vaiśali, Kotragarh, Chirand, Khairadīh, Manjhi, Vārānasī, Kauśāmbi, Mathurā, Ayodhyā, Purāṇā Qilā, Ropar, Sanghol, Karnāṭaka, Tamil Nadū, Mahāraṣṭra and Āndhra Pradesh etc. Thus we notice only few similarities between Indian structure and European structure of feudalism. The grant of a village to priest can be compared to the
practice of giving benefices to the church in Medieval Europe. But church as an organisation had actually become very strong in Europe and their counterpart India’s could not form a homogenous religious organisation to assert their religious authority thereby. It may be owing to the prevalence of polytheism and existence of diverse religious beliefs.

Thus, religion could hardly play such formidable role in India as it did actually in Europe. Feudal landlord in India did not directly cultivate their plots of land therefore, in India regular labour service on the forms of the land were not rendered by the peasants. Here we find mostly casual or occasional labour service, and do not have serfhood in any considerable scale as it was in Medieval Europe and absence of large farms or Europe like manors. However, in various parts of the world, feudalism adopted various forms, and different countries and society entered the different phases of the feudal formation at different times. The universal character of West European feudalism does not mean that its individual and local manifestations in the various parts of the continent were the same. This institution in other parts of the world followed a different pattern.