
Feudalism: A Pastime of Power, Economic and Political influence in Pakistan

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Feudalism is an economic concept, in which we discuss feudal relations with society and state. It is considered as an activity of power rule and economic dominancy on the society and institutions by the landed aristocracy. Therefore, feudalism used as an activity of power which has left a great impact on the socio-political, economic and all other institutions of the country. Historical analysis of feudalism also explains that it is used for the distribution of power and authority to the specific group of society to cooperate with the state. However, gradually the dimensions of feudalism were changed and it became a threat for the stability of state and society. On the other hand, feudalism in the western world was replaced with capitalism as Karl Marx explained in his theory but still prevails in the developing world including Pakistan. It cannot be denied that the feudalism and capitalism both exist in the country almost monopolizing all major political and economic institutions of Pakistan.

The term feudal has been constructed from the Latin word 'feodum'. However, multiple theories have been presented about the construction of word as it is derived from feu, feud or feudalism. Some scholars said that it is derived from a Germanic word or from Arabic roots. In the early writings of Medieval Latin Europe it has been explained that a land is granted in exchange for

services which is called 'beneficium' but later it became feodum or feodum (feudalism).¹ Moreover, the term of 'feudum' or 'feodum' was used in different languages of Europe in different times as it first entered in the French language in 1823, in Italian in 1827, in English in 1839 and in German in the second half of the 19th century.²

The word feudalism is mainly used in the context of an agrarian system. Many scholars as Marc Bloch, William Stubbs, Archibald R. Lewis, Louis the Pious and so on interpret the term and the origin of feudalism in their own ways. Alauddin Samarrai is of the view that this term originated from the Arabic word 'Fuyu' which means returned. It is used for the land which was conquered by the soldiers from the opponents. This theory is an early form of 'fief' and feo.³ However, Karl Marx explained that it is a process of historical development within the modes of production, while other claimed it as a system of land holding used mainly for agricultural purposes.⁴ Karl Marx as a capitalistic explained his theory about the mode of productions and focused on the relations of towns and industry rather than the agriculture. He sets out four different stages of land ownership, tribal, ancient, feudal and capitalistic mode of productions.⁵ The debate about feudalism in Pakistan is having two distinct forms. One is in terms of agrarian and economic relations and the other is as an obstacle for the institutional reform. However, many scholars including Hamza Alvi present theories on feudalism and capitalism. He used these theories in the same context and tended to follow the steps for the economic development of people and society. Moreover, he also explains that it is a misleading concept to make a clear distinction between feudal landlords and capitalistic farmers.⁶ He shifted his analysis from the feudal mode of production to the capital mode of production. Moreover, he argues that feudalism and capitalism both were used for the exploitation of the rights of people in the society.

Feudalism is a term that is not used in the Asian region but in Europe. Now, it rarely used to describe any situation in the western world. It is mainly used in the context of the agrarian system of 10th to 13th century Europe. The same term now is used in the developing world to explain some existing social relationships. Basically, it is an agricultural country and more than 65% people are attached with the agricultural profession. This paper is intended to deal with feudalism in a narrow, technical and legal sense of the word. It refuses to the development of power pastime of a class to increase their influence upon different socio-political and economic institutions.

Basis of Feudalism

The origin and basis of traditional feudalism can be traced from the ninth century Europe. It was argued by Bishop Stubbs that its historic origin related with the Franks. The word 'feudum' did not exist before 9th century.⁷ The real development of feudalism may trace back to the Frank influenced by its first arrival in Rome. Further, it existed in England but fully developed in France. In the age of Normans it prevailed as a complete organization of society through the medium of land tenure, in which form the king to the lowest landowner, all were bounded for the defense services. These services based on the nature and extent of the land held by one of the other. Different authorities of political, financial, judicial, military and other public institutions increased the power of feudal government, while central authority was not except an apparent authority.⁸ It was a system of Western Europe and a political edifice built on the ruins of Roman Empire and it had originally based on the violence, spoliation and murder like that empire.

Feudalism may generate in the past and different tribes and rulers including states worked for the rise of it. It is of the view that the crusades which fought with the Muslims in the name of Christianity contributed for the development of feudalism. The feudal lords of England took part in the earlier crusades but some

people were so poor as could not prepare themselves for the distant expeditions just like knights. So, a number of them got larger fiefs and worked to strengthen the reigning royalty, while other became vested in such ignorable possessors of money as had made advances of cash for the equipment of heroes. Thus, a new class of elites was also developed in these manners.⁹

In the early Europe, the feudal form of government did not assume an aristocratic style. It was a collection of individual despots and aristocrats but they were isolated from one another. These people were sovereign in their own areas. Therefore, in the feudal aristocracy, everything was individualistic and personal and each fief could draw his strength and importance in the society at economic and political level. However, the most common reason for the disintegration of the economy of country was the state failure. This is an aspect that rural landlords, urban intellectuals and farmers agreed on unanimously. However these are considered as the cause of the development of feudalism.

In the medieval Europe, for the feudal lords most important element was the land in which had a competent political power. So, he neglected all moral and social ethics for the protection of his land. He had preferred land over his own people faith and country. Through the distribution of land, the rulers developed a legal group of people for them even in some cases rulers distributed among the favorites. Similarly in 1535, 1539, and 1545 an English ruler Henry VI captured the land and distributed among his royal members and contrary to this, rulers sometime captured the land of the feudals to strengthen their rule as Charles Martial did so.¹⁰

Basically, before 14th to 15th centuries it had highly influenced the societies of world, especially in Europe. During the 18th century, economic changes such as development of mercantilism and industrialism in many regions brought a great change in the relations of elites (lords) and peasants. This change

worked for the ultimate decline of feudalism. Karl Marx is of the view that mercantilism brought changes in social relations that took place in the urban centers. The people in these areas depended upon the lords, which developed a traditional system of political and economic authority.¹¹

Many other regions such as Japan, Egypt and China could also be considered feudal areas in the context of western experiences. The society of these areas was associated with the exploitation of the lower peasantry by the aristocratic nobility. There were unfree peasants bounded for the services of their masters.¹² Therefore, it could not be denial that in the feudal society the exploitation of the rights of peasants was common.

Feudalism is a relationship of lord and vassals under a personalized government, which is most effective on the local level and has relatively little separation of political function. Therefore, it is a system of landholding consisting of the granting of fiefs in return for service and assurance of future services. Under the landed aristocracy, the existence of private armies and a code of honor developed in which military obligations were stressed. There were also defined the seigniorial and manorial rights of the lord over the peasant.¹³

In actual, feudalism takes roots in those societies which depend on agricultural mode of production. In the system land is distributed among landlords and the status of the peasants is reduced to those of subjects, and the landlords can seize the surplus produce using political, social and religious authority.¹⁴

Feudalism in Subcontinent

It is considered as a multi cultural and multinational region, where in different ages many groups ruled the local community. The indigenous (Hindu and Muslims) and oriental rulers introduced their policies under their rules. In the subcontinent, the seeds of feudalism can be traced from the Hindu dynastic rule.

In this region from Buddhist period to the 3rd century, the king, the priests and warriors dominated the state. They depended on the surplus income of peasants and the artisans. Later on, when political disintegration and chaos created hurdles in the way of collecting revenue directly, a system was which awarded landed property as Jagir to warriors and priests. It allowed them to collect the revenue with the help of their own means. It also shifted the responsibility of the maintenance of law and order to the land lords. The feudal system in its different forms continued in India till the Turkish conquests.¹⁵

During the Sultanate period it was a custom to allot the land rather than salaries and the landlords obliged to help the rulers in their military campaigns. This system of land allotment was known as Iqtaa. It was first implemented by the Buwayid rulers of Baghdad and adopted by the emerging Muslim states in Central Asia and India. The Mughals, in their empire introduced a new system of Jagirs. The term Jagir was first used in the 16th century and took the place of Iqtaa. It was also assigned in spite of cash salary. However, the Jagir was not awarded permanently to the people and officials. The Jagirs were transferred from one Jagirdar to another Jagirdar so that Jagirdars were unstable to consolidate their position and confront the central authority.

In 1647, the ruling class comprised of the Emperor and 8,000 Mansabdars who were given Jagirs or large tracts of land as payment for looking after troops, from which they collected revenue for the state. Alongside the Jagirdars as they were called was another level of assignees called the Zamindars. There were mostly chieftains who also responsible for the collection of revenue for emperor. As the Mughal Empire began to weaken in the early 1700s, there Jagirdars and Zamindars assumed the de-facto possession of the land.¹⁶

On the other hand, there was not any concept of private property. So the frequent change of Jagirs did not allow the

holder to take interest in increasing of agricultural production and to take steps to improve the condition of peasants. His only interest was to exploit peasantry and to accumulate wealth as much as he could. The European travelers found the system detrimental to agriculture and obstacle to inventions and development of new technology.¹⁷

When the British established their rule in the region, it became difficult for them to understand the Jagirdari system that was different from European feudalism. There private property was regarded as sacred institution and leitmotif for the agricultural production and political stability. On the other hand, many major changes were made in the industrial law, which also granted the Jagirdars and Zamindars property rights over ownership of lands, provided the collection of revenues collected continued to be handed over to the new British rulers.¹⁸

The English law of primogeniture was applied to protect the property, which allowed the elder son to inherit it. Moreover, the other sons were appointed in the army and church and also inducts into the military services to create their own property as as a reward of their services by the British government. In the colonial region, the major source of income was land revenue, and the British authorities adopted different methods to increase this revenue for the stability of their economy. The colonial powers introduced permanent settlement policies in different areas. Moreover, in second half of 19th century, the British power felt a need of landlords as essential collaborators to hold control on the masses. Therefore, they also privileged those Jagirdars, who supported them during the uprising and created new ones who promised to be loyal to them. It was the colonial tradition to allot a piece of land to the army officers after their retirement, which consequently created a loyal class to the raj. The results of these policies were in favor of colonial powers and the feudal lords not only supported the British government but also helped it by recruiting soldiers for its army.

These landlords were consciously prepared to ensure economic and political power and stability. Moreover, there were introduced different acts and petitions through which tried to make clear the position of Jagirdars. In the alienation act of 1900, it was disallowed to the urban people to purchase the rural property. This step was taken because the elite urban Sahukars and Seths who were purchasing the lands. This step was subsequently weakened the landed Gentry in the rural areas. Therefore, there were taken different reformative steps by the government, in case of any corruption and mismanagement of Jagirs. In other words, it can say that the colonial power took safe measures for the protection of aristocracy. They were also made authoritative in their allotted lands. So, gradually the Jagirdars got their monopolize position and took socio-political and economic influence upon the local people.

On the other hand, the government established institutions for their education and to make the Jagirdars modern and conscious of new changes. It started some training institutions such as Aitcheson college Lahore, Mayo College Ajmer and Talluqdar College, Oudh. This class remained loyal to the British Government and collaborated with its officials to maintain law and orders in their areas.¹⁹

Thus, the colonial powers provided full opportunities to the Jagirdars for the asserting their influence and political power in the region. Therefore, they worked for the British government but also took their own motives and at the end of colonial rule asserted their power in the same manner.

Feudalism in Pakistan

After the creation of Pakistan in 1947, capitalistic discourse came into full play as the government sought to mechanize agriculture and redistribute land through successive land reforms from the 1950s onward.

Basically, there are two main categories of feudalism. In the first case the higher authority or the King use to impose revenues on his feudal lords and allowed them to administer their areas, as they liked. In the second case, the King recognized the power and authority of those lords, who had already controlled their landed property. They were given permission to collect revenue from the peasants and provide soldiers to the King in time of needs. The difference between these two was that under the first category, the officials of the central government collected taxes, while under the latter category the responsibility to collect the taxes and pay to the state treasury rested with the landlord.²⁰

There are three schools of thought about feudalism in Pakistan. Some social scientists maintain that with the advent of colonial rule feudalism came to an end and the capitalistic relations were established between the land owners and tenants. The other school of thought mentions that the agriculture remained feudal and at least recapitalist during the colonial rule but today there is no feudalism in Pakistan. The third and last contends that agriculture is still feudal in character and the present situation is semi feudal and semi industrial.²¹

Feudalism is surviving in Pakistan because of two major factors, first the feudals organized themselves through the political parties that were loyal to the ruling classes and secondly they cooperated with the bureaucracy and the army in order to protect their properties and privileges. Thus, they kept their positions unchanged, whether there was democracy or military dictatorship. Therefore, the institution remained deep rooted in Pakistani society. The feudal culture is prevailing in all parts of life. Moreover, the feudal values that were detrimental to modern and industrial society are highly? and accepted. People take pride in their family extraction and subordinate groups are accepted to be loyal to their patrons. The feudals consider themselves above the law and they enter politics to protect their privileged and superior position. In short, feudalism and feudal culture have

become an obstacle in the political, social and economic progress of the country.

Most of the intellectuals claim that feudalism no longer exists in Pakistan but actually it is in dominant position. Moreover, the feudal lords having a monopoly position and hold over the transporters, fertilizers and pesticide agencies, financiers and market contractors. On the other hand the development of capitalism has transformed the cash links with the tenurial and land links. Therefore, the landlords can no longer control his lease holders but a number of powerful groups dominating in Pakistan. In the present scenario, the focus is on the development of social science, imposition of laws and the distribution of equal rights and all other facilities. The codification of law will remove the trashes of feudalism from the society and set a glorious example of enlightened jurisprudence to the whole civilization.

Economic and Political Influence in Pakistan

The growth of feudalism is mostly rooted in political spheres. The political and administrative agencies of Pakistan are totally controlled at the higher stratum by feudal lords. The relationship between feudal mentality and the authoritarian tendency in the Pakistani political life is not difficult to perceive. The feudal lords occupy positions as political executives. They tend to consider the country as their property and the citizens as the subjects. Thus authoritarianism is entrenched in the feudal personality and is as essential to the feudal system as oxygen is to human life.

In the absence of effective land reforms, the evil of feudalism soon permeated the whole body politic. Presently, feudalism has become a metaphor for all that is wrong with Pakistani economy and society. This may be unfair but the feudal lobby protests too much when it claims to have been wronged. There are of course, many other dramatic personalities, who worked and left influence in Pakistan tragedy of development. This nexus between the bureaucracy and a few thousands allottees of evacuee property

gave rise to the first edifice of a complex structure of patronage based economic relationship in the country as a whole, while sowing the seeds of ethnic contention which was erupt in later years. At the same time, an excellent opportunity was missed for carrying out land reforms, which could have provided the foundation for a more democratic developmental ethnicity and would have reduced poverty on a continuous basis.

Among the influential ruling elites in the first decade of the existence of Pakistan there were politicians, including the first governor general and the prime minister and bureaucrats, who came from Indian provinces and had no vested interests in land in Pakistan, although many had left behind landed property in India. They could by forming appropriate alignments with other elites, succeeded in catalyzing radical land reforms.

The highly distorted nature of agrarian structure in Pakistan created demand for wide ranging land reforms at various decades. There have been attempt to introduce land reforms but could not be sustained and implemented fully. The Muslim League was the standard bearer of the Pakistan movement, dominated by feudal interests and did not favor any serious attempt to carry out land reforms. The debate about feudalism is not an inoperative one about a vanished socio-economic system, but a live one in the context of the present political situation. It is important to realize the inhibiting role of feudalism in poverty mitigation and the need for overcoming it through genuine rather than aesthetic agrarian reforms. These reforms could work as a direct relief from poverty and its democratizing role in providing other anti-poverty reforms a chance to benefit the poor rather than being hijacked by the elites.

The political power of the feudal class is derived from their economic power, as their political power enables them to consolidate and expand their economic stability. This combination provides a way to control over national affairs and enabled them

to analyze that how the egalitarianism used to maintain their hegemony. On the other hand, economically, in Pakistan feudalism has denoted traditional parasitic landlordism as well as agricultural stagnation, as the core of national economy is agricultural and the state of agriculture directly affects the lives of many Pakistani people. The need of concern for rationalizing and modernizing production in rural areas has been policy problem for ruling elite since independence.²²

Moreover, the feudal economic relations also deprive the state and dominant political groups of opportunities for integration and penetration of the rural economy. The traditional landlords arbitrate economically between tenants and market in a functional parallel to political mediation through patron and client networks. Many opportunities for supplies of working and fixed capital, position for urban and rural capitalists are denied not only by the economic stagnation of feudalism but also by the mediating function vis-à-vis inputs and marketing. Moreover, a stagnant agricultural sector deprives the regime of flexibility in extracting tax resources. Beyond these economic imperatives, in the policy logic of land reforms in Pakistan there has been a great deal about feudalism that justified its eradication. Politically, the concentration of power in the hands of landed families has tied the hands of Pakistani administration, preventing political maturity and integration. The landed families have roots and branches in both types of economies, modern and traditional feudal and capitalist, the analytically distinct categories interpenetrate on the ground.²³

The rural development, poverty alleviation and human development programmes have failed to take a significant impact because of the dominance of the rural elites in the institutional mechanism for their implementation. Therefore, it is necessary that some measures of effective land reforms be under taken ensure the empowerment of the poor and as condition for enhancing their ability to benefit from poverty elevation

programs. The land reforms of 1969 and 1972 have largely remained unimplemented till present. The issue of land reforms has also been put on the back by policy makers and power elites because of a shared perception that the issue is sensitive and may give rise to unnecessary social conflicts without achieving the aims of greater social and distributive justice.

On the other hand, the features of socio-economic system reinforce the argument that our society is basically feudal. The political power has remained in the hands of feudal lords since its inception till today, whether it is a military or a civil government. Therefore, at the local level in rural areas, the landed aristocracy exercises full power with the assistance of other influential groups. This landed aristocracy behaves dominantly and does not permit the opening of social welfare institutions.

Thus, the value system is predominantly feudal and negates scientific thinking and scientific behavior. However, the religious and sectarianism remains the ideology of state and continues patronization of mullahism in Pakistan. Either, the education in country is also made more restricted for the region of elites in the name of encouraging private sector. Even the political parties revolve around the commitment of a particular personality just like a Jagir and Jagirdars and formed the specific groups. So, it can say that the feudalism is a reality in all its aspects and from all angles, which must be abolished for a better future of the people of Pakistan.

Conclusion

At the end it can be generalized that the feudalism has passed through from the different ages of its evolution and used in various perspectives. In actual, the real concept of feudalism almost same to take hold and influence on the peasants and society. The Feudalism was, a western concept but it also transferred in the under developed countries. In Europe may this not existing and replaced with the capitalism but in Pakistan the

term is present with zeal and zest. However, the capitalism also exists parallel to the feudalism. The feudalism used to assert power and for the economic benefits. In present scenario, the feudal lords are not only asserting their power but also present in the political institutions as bureaucrats.

Thus the feudal elites work as the political and economic authorities in the country. They have remained as the dominant class in society. Moreover, they are having deep rooted impact on the local tenants who worked on their lands. As a result, the tenants remained poor and faced economic dispassion in the society. On the other hand, feudalism is proving a? for the development of Pakistan as have political and economic influences. Thus, feudalism as well as capitalism have become a great cause of economic, social and political chaos in Pakistan.

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