



Medieval and Early Modern World (feudalism and Mercantilism) c. 500 CE- 1700 CE

JYOTI TIWARI
NEW DELHI

Abstract:-I would discuss in detail the course of development in the field of economy and feudal society in early modern Europe on the basis of two books: Medieval civilization by Jacques LeGoff and Perry Anderson's Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism.

Keywords:- Feudalism, Mercantilism,

The first part of each book deals with the history of Europe. In the book, they talked about the Germanic tribes attacking Europe which led to both destruction and renewal. These invasions had one of the essential elements of the third-century crisis. It left wounds such as a devastated countryside and towns which are unable to act. This hastened economic change and a decline in agricultural production and also the town shrank. This fostered the fall in population and change in society. From that time onward, colonies and small tenant farmers grew closer to that slave. The military, political and economic unity of the Western Empire was irretrievably shattered. A few of the Roman field armies of comitatenses survived for some decades after the frontier defenses had been swept away; but encircled and isolated by barbarian-dominated territory, autonomous military pockets like Northern Gaul only emphasized the complete disruption of the imperial system as such. Provinces relapsed into endemic disorder and confusion, their traditional administration submerged or adrift; social rebellion and banditry were rife over large areas; archaic and buried local cultures surfaced, as the Roman patina cracked in remoter regions. There was no case of a barbarian community simply occupying the Roman lands directly contiguous with its original region of domicile. The result was that the clusters of Germanic settlers in Southern France, Spain, Italy, and North Africa were from the outset necessarily limited in number, because of the long itinerary behind them, and were largely cut off from further reinforcements by natural migration.

The feudal mode of production that emerged in Western Europe. It was a mode of production dominated by the land and a natural economy, in which neither labor nor the products of labor were commodities. The immediate producer the peasant was united to the means of production of the soil by a specific social relationship. The agrarian property was privately controlled by a class of feudal lords, who extracted a surplus from the peasants by politico-legal relations of compulsion.

According to Perry Anderson, there are three structural institutions for this system. First, the survival of communal village lands and peasant allows from pre-feudal modes of production, although not generated by the latter, was not incompatible with it either. Second, the feudal parcelization of sovereignties produced the phenomenon of the medieval town in Western Europe. The feudal mode of production nevertheless was the first to permit it an autonomous development within a natural-agrarian economy. Thirdly, there was an inherent ambiguity or oscillation at the vertex of the whole hierarchy of feudal dependencies.

But according to LeGoff despite their efforts to take over the political and administrative inheritance of Rome the Franks had not acquired the sense of the state. In Slav and Scandinavian lands urban centers fulfilled more of a military than an economic function.

He was more religious in his attempts to understand the condition of Europe. He talked about the conversion of Prussians into Christian in the 13th century. He tells us that lands were annexed to the respublica christiana by the conversion of pagan peoples.

According to Anderson Roman and Germanic social formations in the periphery area had gradually narrowed the gap between the two, although it remained in most important respects an immense one. It was from their final, upheaval collision and fusion that feudalism was ultimate to be born.

After the demographic crisis that shocked the whole of Western Europe notice the rise of new forms of production and new relations of production which started to give a new shape to Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries CE. It is important to understand that this one has to see the deceptive similarity in the relations of production in the feudal levy, and large taxes which meant that sometimes peasants had enough production we can say that for their subsistence but there was also the time when they did not have self-subsistence production. However much healthy incentive arose for technical and improvement in farming, peasants were not able to refurbish their lands with good surplus productivity and that is why feudalism moved towards the demographic crisis.

This relationship that caused the eventual decline of this overarching system changed in the late medieval era leading mainly to two different courses of development, First decline of serfdom in Western Europe with the emergence and predominance of it in Eastern Europe, and the second is the growth of agrarian capitalism in England. Not only this era showed these two different developments but also showed several other trajectories of development including the move from agricultural to mercantile capitalism in the united provinces, the sharp decline of serfdom in South-West Europe, and the Slavic region slave mode of production declined and serfdom emerged on those regions.

Aristotle expressed the resultant social ideology of late classical Greece with his casual prescription: “those who cultivate the land should ideally be slaves, not all recruited from one people nor spirited in temperament {so as to be industrious in work and immune to rebellion}, or as a second-best barbarian bondsmen of a similar character.”

The slave labor of classical antiquity has two contradictory attributes in whose unity laid the secret of the paradoxical urban precocity of the graeco-roman world. On the one hand, slavery represented the most radical rural degradation of labor by converting them into the inert means of production and depriving them of there every social right and legal assimilation to beasts of burden. On the other hand, slavery was made the most drastic urban commercialization of labor conceivable.

France, as the central homeland of European feudalism, can be dealt with relatively briefly. Northern France, in effect, always conformed more closely to the archetypal feudal system than any other region of the continent. South, where the impress of Antiquity was greater, was somewhat less feudalized, with a greater proportion of noble estates held outright rather than in fief, and a larger non-dependent peasant population. This meant that France continued having the same problems as the demographic cycle of over population and slower growth of production. This finally led to crushing taxation, rising prices, and led to the peasantry being forced into deep debt. In England, by contrast, centralized feudalism was imported from the outside by the Norman conquerors and systematically implanted from above, in a compact land that was only a quarter the size of France.

This period talk also about the constant forces of regionalization and the sheer size of France that led to the inability to create a consolidated French market. This led to unable to charter the organized investment needed to marshal a national market, instead, France fell into Dutch monopolies. This caused huge problems for several French exports like the luxury markets, especially the wine market. In two regions of Italy alone, was a full-scale feudal politico-economic system implanted. It is no accident that both were essential ‘extensions’ of the most organic and powerful feudalism in Europe, that centered in France. fiefs were distributed and a true baronial system emerged, complete with appanages and serfdom; the monarchy which ruled over this southern simulacrum of the

French synthesis was, if anything, strengthened by Orientalized conceptions of royal paramountcy due to lingering Arab and Byzantine influences.

Feudalism in Western Europe, then, emerged in the 10th century, expanded during the 11th century, and reached its zenith in the late 12th and 13th centuries.

Impressive agrarian progress and urban vitality that the stately aesthetic and intellectual monuments of the High Middle Ages were raised, the great cathedrals and the first universities. Van Bath comments: 'In the twelfth century a period of exuberant development broke out in western and southern Europe. In the cultural as well as the material field a high point was reached in the years between 1150 and 1300 that was not equaled again till much later. This advance took place not only in theology, philosophy, architecture, sculpture, glasswork, and literature but also in material welfare.

If we go further in detail we will find By the mid-fifteenth century alongside many other regions in western Europe England saw through flight resistance a peasant population that had escaped labor services and the arbitrary tall age of lords and had gotten rent fixed, though this proved a problem later with growing inflation. During the demographic crisis, lords took advantage of the vacated peasant land to add it to their demesne.

A great demographic surge must have occurred in their remote homelands to explain the tidal character of this movement. By the end of the 6th century, Slav tribes had occupied virtually the whole of the immense expanse from the Baltic to the Aegean, and back to the Volga. The exact tempo and distribution of these migrations remain obscure: their general social outcome in the succeeding centuries, however, is clear enough. Prisoner of war slavery was often another characteristic of these rudimentary social formations, providing captive household and field labor for the clan nobility, in the absence of a serf class. Communal political institutions, with folk assemblies or justice, often survived to coexist with a hereditary social hierarchy. Agriculture remained extremely primitive, slash-burn techniques long-prevailing amidst the unending forests. Those are mixed interpretations by Perry Anderson and LeGoff on how feudalism rises in Europe.

Both Perry Anderson and LeGoff say that the Roman Empire had declined due to its internal problems like social problems and economic problems. And they also include internal struggle between peasant, slaves, and the rulers like revolts which I mentioned above, taxes because till second-century tax was only 10% of the production but in the third century, it rises to 30%. Peasant wants that emperor to reduce tax and when he refuses to do so they show disinterest by revolting. The emergences of colonate were in 3rd to 7th century. Invasion of Central Asian invaders {Muslims} shrinks the territory of roman and there was no new slave. The purchase of the slave became expensive and roman has to buy new slaves as a "status symbol". This leads to a rise in the price of the cost of production because slaves are the mode of production in Europe then. Slaves were used as a helper of artisan, in farms. They were also used in mining the most hazardous working conditions for extracting minerals. When rose the roman started intensifying the work of slaves by increasing their working time without noticing the capacity of an individual to work.

Perry Anderson argues that this crisis was the fundamental reason for the beginning of declination of the economy of the Roman Empire.

The stagnation period after the decline of the Roman Empire also leads to stagnation in new technology for production. This lead to less agricultural production. The continuous war between nomads and roman lead to the formation of colonate. Since the use of slaves was diminishing during the fifth to the eighth century. Free people i.e. mainly peasants started to work as attached labor or dependent labor. They were gradually called the surf during the period of feudalism. The surf was bound to the land. They were mainly the peasant who works for the owner of the land. Surfs didn't have the right to mobility. The judicial subjugation was to the feudal lords. They were the ones who are doing cultivation

during the early middle ages. Invaders who invaded Rome became their chieftains and Romans had to pay the rent to protect themselves. The attached produce was called *coloni* and the whole system was called *colonnate*. Roman society was not succeeded in technology. Some of the scientific whatever is biennial land rotation system, hand mill, hand spinning, and weaving tools, gold and blacksmith, and failure of Roman in inventing anything. They failed because they don't have funds to invent new nor they tried to use efficiently the existed one. Like the watermill was first invented in Egypt in first-century BC and known to Roman by the 4th century. Ploughing was done there with the use of oxen and light iron *Ferro*. 1st century onwards ploughing with the help of horses and wheels which is known as wheel plough. Because of the wheel, it can be fast and easy to move by animals. It can dig deeper useful for plants. The horse has more strength than oxen. The belt is used in different ways for harvesting the animals.

Roman society is dependent on slaves for their production they were not considered about inventing. Their cultural and philosophical problem. The separation between mind and labor. Philosophers never use their skills and ability to uplift society. They thought if they do productive work they will lose their respect in society.

Historian LeGoff tells in his book that Christianity is not only successful because of preach but also through the forcible suppression of those who don't follow Christianity and the religion was imposed on them. Then they are the citizen of the new empire called *Christian*. They not easily coned to the new religion of Christianity. Europe as the Christianity state only in the 13th 14th century. The peasant who practices Christianity would give protection. Roman emperor was not interested in zero some war. They wanted to bring the idea of Peace and unity for preventing nomad invasion. Land grants were given to clergy. In Rome, there were three orders – clergy, the feudal lords or nobility or king, and serfs. The class of clergy includes two classes one is the bishop, pop, and other abbots who manage the property of the church. Several churches were built in Europe most of them were built during Byzantine period. Monasteries were building where clergy pursue the education of children. The abbe, the monks they build all this for the expansion of Christianity. The largest expansion was under the rule of Charlemagne we know the ruler has his origin from the barbaric nomadic rule he and his family were from the Germanic tribe. His descendent create from the Franco kingdom. He defeated the British people in the Anglo section region. Once he became powerful he persuaded pop to declare him as the emperor. He was the one who spends money on education being in power. Family of lords and clergy and military are the people who teach their children because other is busy in production.

Mark lord tells us that there were two feudal ages. Early and later feudal age. *Colonnate* is the organization. Serfdoms in which serfs are responsible for productive activity. They were peasant only. We call them serfs because of the degradation of slavery. They became bound to the land and cannot leave it. Lack of mobility was a sign of their non-freedom. When the land was shifted to another feudal lord the serf will also go along with it to the new lord. People do not have the right to appeal against the feudal lord to the king. They are restricted only to the feudal lord. Serfs can use the land but cannot own it this is called the used factory right. Rents, dues, tallages, unpaid labor they had to pay all these without any question. Feudal lord has direct control over the land and this land is called *demesne*. Unpaid labor is those who work on the feudal lord's direct controlled land. Fief is the territory that is under the control of a feudal lord. Feudal lord would get land from the king as the land grant there was the hierarchy of feudal lords. The junior-most feudal lord was known as a knight. The land grant was the mode of payment because of the crisis of legitimacy and crisis in the monetary and market economy. The land was expanded by cutting down the forests or by matrimonial alliances. Feudalism has emerged as a culture.

The feudal society was a society of perpetual war fair to expand the fief. To perform military services they have to maintain weapons, horses, they save a part of their income to maintain these. Mostly in summer, the military used to perform. Traders had to pay taxes but if bandits plunder them feudal lord will lose the taxes. Superior lord made the practice owed and sent their children to be brought up at the house of the king. After some time increase in population results in the expansion of the economy.

