



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Feudalism in British India: Causes and Consequences**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of the current study is to explore the causes and consequences of the promotion of feudalism in British India. Feudalism was a part of the feudal society where the peasants displayed loyalty to their Lords and received land from them got confirmation of the security of their lives and land. When the British established their government in India, it was very problematic for them to understand the Jagirdari and Zamindari system, because the nature of European feudalism was different from feudalism in India. The colonial powers provided the Jagirdars full support to use their power and political authority in their area. As a consequence, they operated for the British government but also followed their interests, and when colonial rule was over, they continued this practice. The nature of the research is qualitative. The historical and analytical approach is applied for the analysis of data. In the light of analysis, it is concluded that British imperial power promoted feudalism in British India to save their political interests.

**KEYWORDS:** Colonial Power, Feudalism, Jagirdari System, Promotion of Feudalism

**Introduction**

The Feudalism is essentially a form of socio-economic institutional that sites itself in a farming economy where land is the prime source of agricultural production, as well as revenue. Feudalism, in this sense, names the distribution of the ownership of land and the division of labor such delimitation involved in a society, as well as the allocation of the surplus. . In other words, feudalism was a complex society with a system of hierarchical relationships, where farmers confirmed loyalty to their Lords and in return received some land from them, thereby serving their owner, in different means finding assurance from them for their life and land. In 1647 the ruling King Shah Jahan comprised 8000 Mansabdars who allotted the property called jagirs, this land spread over large areas.

The jagirdars had authority for receiving the revenue from the state. The jagirdars also called the zamindars were also had responsibility for the collection of revenue for the king (Alavi, 1980). During the King, there was not allowed private property. The private property concept was banned. The holder of the property was responsible for to initiate policy for promotion of agricultural as well as responsible for the development of farmers. Unfortunately, His sole purpose was to maximization of his wealth accumulation by the exploitation of the peasants. When the British came to India and established their rule in India, it was very difficult for them to understand the Jagirdari and zamindari systems, because European feudalism was different from Indian feudalism (Timberg, 1982). At the same time, many main amendments were introduced in industrial law, which also given the zamindars and jagirdars property ownership and rights of the land, allowing them to the collection of revenues according to new British rules. The property was safeguarded by the English primogeniture law, allowing the older son to inherit it. The colonial powers gave the Jagirdars ample opportunities to assert their power and political influence in the area. As a result, they not only served the interests of the British government but also protected their

interest too even when colonial rule ended, they continued the practice. Historically, the broad concurrence among scholars is that feudalism was the principal mode of production in early medieval India, just about between the 5th and the 13th centuries, though it is declared that the impression of it remains up to this day (Sharma, 1958). Within the historical context of Medieval Civilizations however, Feudalism materialized as the principal mode of political organization and remained so up until as late as the Industrial Revolution (1750–1840). concerning the question of periodization in History (Green, 1992), it observed that feudalism was a form of decentralization which follows the fall down of an empire. (Parasher, 1987)

### **Literature Review**

Alavi (1980) analysis of India's history since the start of the British conquest, just over 200 years ago, raises questions about the precise nature of the structural changes that were brought about during the colonial transformation as well as, incidentally, the contribution of British relations with India to the start of the Industrial Revolution in England, a significant turning point in human history. In this study the reasons behind the Industrial Revolution in England is not discussed rather, the first set of questions is the main focus in this essay. However, some concerns do come up in this context as well, and they seem to be somewhat significant.

In the study of Mukhia (1981) India, in any case, was as yet a pre-entrepreneur social development when the English victory came to fruition; the Northern Indian culture could truth be told be portrayed, fundamentally, as a medieval society. How far the design of the Northern Indian culture did relate to that of a communist idea a "primitive method of creation" and how that construction was changed by the provincial effect is what we propose to look at here. The deconstruction of Indian feudalism's foundation in agriculture is one of its greatest assets. His "free peasantry" argument is persuasive in that it distinguishes between economic and non-economic concepts of "free" and is helpful in that it asserts the importance of productive characteristics in the discussion of feudalism. It is telling to claim that Marxist writers on Indian and European feudalism frequently downplay or disregard the fundamental nature of agrarian relations. If political, legal, and other non-economic aspects of feudal societies have been given explanatory privilege in analyses of these societies, a fundamental question of Marxist analysis - that of precisely determining such things as politics, law, and ideology - is begged, and with that, the most perceptive insight.

According to the Stein, (1985) there were two main groups of villagers: ryotwari villages and zamindari villages. The zamindar was the local lord and master of zamindari communities, but he was also obligated to the state to collect and give it land revenue. He played an important functional role similar to the manorial lord in England, though not the same, in the structure of Indian feudalism. Due to the descriptive complications of overlapping rights and roles and semantic plurality, this aspect of his role has not been highlighted sufficiently in descriptive Indian historiography. It has been noted that the name "zamindar" has been used to refer to lords of various levels of status and authority, starting with the little ruler.

Moore, (2002) The agrarian class ties that encircled the majority of the population had a significant impact on the historical geography of feudalism. The conflict between landowners and peasants over who would receive a portion of the agricultural surplus tended to create moderate (but always finite rather than endless) pressures for increasing productivity and market production. Thus, starting in the 10th or 11th century, the growth of simple commodity production served as the fundamental foundation for the growth of medieval market towns and cities. The incredible increase in international trade, the expansion of major commercial hubs like Venice, and other events are historically subordinate to the development of the forces of production in agriculture.

Purohit .V (1980) explain Indian feudalism was substantially comparable to the Votchina and Pomese-based feudal system in Russia, as well as nearly identical to the Byzantine version of Pronoia. Private land ownership has been a feature of Indian culture since the beginning of time, as detailed in Kautilya's Arthashastra. In general, British bureaucrats assigned multiple and contradictory meanings to terms like Ryot, which was simultaneously held by Baden-Powell to mean actual cultivators or individual assesses whether cultivators or not, or final judgement. This was in addition to the fact that at certain times, British Imperialists were interested in undermining the property rights of Indians in order to expropriate their lands for railway construction and increase land revenue demands of the state.

### **Material and Methods**

This study is qualitative in nature and exploratory and historical methods are used to explore the colonial power contribution in the promotion of feudalism. The nature of the data is archival. Secondary sources of data that consisted of research journals, books and internet sources are used for the present study. Analytical process as described by Creswell (2012) are used for data analysis. The data for this study is gathered through a review of previous studies from various databases such as Google Scholar and JSTOR. The sources were selected depending on their application to the research objectives, and only peer-reviewed and scholarly sources were consulted.

### **Feudalism in India**

Sub-continent consists of many tribal areas, many religions, many castes, and many ethnic groups. The area of the subcontinent is 2673861 sqm, also known as a multi-cultural and multinational area and multi-religion, in which many diverse age groups rule the local population. The subcontinent detects the seed of feudalism from the rule of Hindu dynasty. In these areas from the Buddhist era to the 300AD. The Monarch, the preacher, and the fighters control the state. They depended on the excess income of the peasants and the craftsmen. Later on, when the political system came into the sub-continent, it was difficult to collect revenue directly from peasants and craftsmen. They found a new way to collect revenue from peasants and craftsmen, which gave land possessions as jagir to the fighters and preachers. It permitted them to accumulate the revenue and also shifted the responsibility to the landlord to keep peace and maintenance of law and order. The landlord was fully powerful, all in all, they can do anything, they want. The feudalism system continued in India in different for the Turkish conquests (Habib, 1963).

In the Sultanate's time, it was a fashion to gift the land instead of salaries, the landlord was bound to support the ruler in their armed campaign. The scheme allotment of land was called Iqtaa. This system was used first time by the monarchs of Baghdad and after that, it was adopted by Muslim countries in central Asia and India. When the Mughals came into power they introduced a system, which is known as Jagir, and Munsab Jagirs' words used first time in the 16th century replaced the Iqtaa. Mughals changed the system of allotment of land to the landlord. In this system, Mughals pay cash salaries rather than land allotment. However, the Mughals allot permanent land temporarily, through this system, the jagirdars were remand unstable because land transfer from one jagirdars to another jagirdars in this way no owner long time jagirdars.

### **Mansab**

There was no image of their private property, changing the property from one jagirdar to another. This system made the jagirdar unstable, therefore, a lack of interest in the production of agriculture. The result is a lack of revenue, during jagirdari the jagirdar does only their money. Their only wish and interest were to exploit the poor peasants and the target to collect money as much as they could. They did nothing for the improvement of

peasants, peasants lacked interest in the production of agriculture. The European travelers found this system, which has no use of technology and inventions they were dependent only on agriculture. The European traveler understands the system and thinks about trade with Indians. At last, when the British came to India and established their rule in these areas, it was very difficult to comprehend the jagirdari system because it was dissimilar from feudalism in Europe. industrial law, which was amended by British government was only law for revenue collection under the British rulers.

The British rulers introduced a new English law, the purpose of this law was to protect property rights, also protect property. Through this law the elder son was the owner, additionally, the other sons were also recruited in army to make their property as a reward for their cooperation to British rulers. The British rulers had a main and big source of income land revenue, but it was not enough for the British so, the British used many other different methods to increase their income because the income was very important to the stability of their economy and government. The British introduced the colonial system to make their government strong and long-term and introduced new policies that made Indian people loyal to the British. In the mid of the 19th century (1860 -1899) the British felt the need for India's landlord, it was necessary to control all over India( Pozzo, 2007). Therefore, the British allot the land to those jagirdars who supported the British during wars and the uprising against the British.

The British also gifted the land to those people who promised to be loyal to the British, because without India's loyalty the British could not rule India. During the colonial period, the British allotted the land to army officers after their retirement, in this way they produced a new loyal class for the raj. this class remained loyal to the British till their death. The result of these plans was in the support of the British power and the feudalism system. The nobles of India were loyal to the British so, they not only helped The British rulers but also supported them to create an army. The British wanted to make their colonial system strong, therefore, through the implementation of different acts and law they defined the responsibilities of Jagirdars.

The British government passed a new law, called the Alienation Act of 1900, the main purpose of this act of stop the urban people from purchasing rural land. This law was introduced to stop the purchasing of urban land because the rich people of the urban purchasing the land. Therefore, the British government has taken some steps to control this activity (Swamy, 2011). Through these steps, the government controls the maladministration of jagirs. The reason of application of above mentioned action was that the British power want to kept strong hold on India.

### **British Government Steps**

The British power wants the loyalty of Indian, and in this regard, it has taken many steps, including allotment of property, allotment of jagir, position in the army, etc. The British want their government long-term, and it has taken many steps. the government of British needed the landlord to increase their money to develop their economic condition(Arnold, 1983). The British wanted to show the India that British government did work for the Indian people's success. To educate the Jagirdars and make them more modern and aware of upcoming changes, the government established institutions like Mayo College in Ajmer, Aitcheson College in Lahore, and Talluqdar College in Oudh as educational institutions.

This class stayed steadfast to the British power and worked with its administrators to uphold law and order in their respective regions. In addition, landlords were seen as essential collaborators by the British power during the period of 1860-1899 to maintain mass control. As a result, they also favored the Jagirdars who provided them with support throughout the unrest and produced new members who pledged to be faithful to them(

Duly,1965). After army officers retired, it was the custom during colonial period to give them a piece of land. This created a class of people who were loyal to the Raj. These policies helped colonial government, and the feudal lords not only supported the British power by recruiting fighters for its military but also supported it (Kosambi,1955). The Jagirdars were granted full possibilities by the colonial empires to establish their political influence in the area. Consequently, they helped the British government while also succeeding their own objectives, and at the end of Colonial reign, they made the same type of power rights.

### **Colonization and Peripheralization**

Industrial Revolution in united Kingdom was a big landmark in human history. The British rule in India was a new relationship with the people of India. What role did British colonial rule in India play in the development of the Industrial Revolution in England, as well as the new relationships that developed as a result of that rule? Studies of the Industrial Revolution, the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England, and the colonial transformation do not typically ask such a question. Together with other "world economies" and "mini-systems" of isolated and involuntary simple agricultural hunting or gathering societies, the "Indian Ocean area," which was previously a "proto-world-economy," is dissolved. as well as being incorporated as new peripheries into the expanding modern world system that is centered on Europe.

The term "agreement" and colonization were both used in the 19th century. The idea of agreement. gave the right to Europeans to control the land of Indians, land in their name. Think about the settlers they were a man of capital, who brought their money and resources to India. Their number was expected to remain in a small figure. As the India Commission observed in 1930, the Europeans in India were "a foreigner, who, after passing his working years in India, looks forward to freeing from his job to that other country which is his real home( Omvedt, 1980). Only a small portion of those who go out for the motive of business settle down in India permanently, and the domiciled European community does not grow".

During Colonization immigration from the British to India came, The British government allotted the land to the immigration person and the army man(Gough, 1974). After the allotment of land to the British people, they were the permanent members of India. Without capital, they needed the basic skills of forming and handcrafts and they were to live by their labor on the land. when India for as long as Europeans limited commercial and political engagement with India confined them, to some shore factories the issue of colonization and labor did not seriously arise (Rudra,1981).. But the British were a success in settling in India, during the second half of the 18th and starting years of the 19th century, British settlement and then colonization came to the fore. The attitude of East India Company was negative. The British wanted to access Europe in India without barriers, In 1830 it was in a position that changed its attitude into an effective policy(Chutia,2020).

English landowners or pioneers would be both 'hazardous' and 'crooked'. Working up resistance to the British would be the logical rule, separate the laid out arrangement of farming and tax assessment, and substitute for cultivators experienced in the harvests, soil, and environment of India Europeans who were aliens to these. "We cannot understand the arts of cultivation in this soil and climate so well as the natives. The landholder will consider us with jealousy and hatred, as the invaders of his rights and property. The ryots, attached by custom, religion, and prejudice, to the authority of their ancient masters, will not readily submit to labor for new ones, to whom they are not bound by any natural relation of manners or religion, or by reciprocal obligations of protection and dependence. A few Europeans will be thinly scattered over the face of the country; the native inhabitants will desert it".

## **Feudalism Development in India during British Rule**

The British came into power in India and started working for revenue because the British wanted their economy stronger than the other countries (Sharma, 1985), they used many methods to increase the revenue and introduced many systems to India like the Zamindar, Ryotwari System, Mahalwari System, which revenue collector for British (Husain, & Sarwar, 2012).

### **Zamindar**

The zamindar system was introduced by Cornwallis in 1793 through Permanent settlement. Under this act, the British government allotted the land to the zamindar permanently. Lifetime Zamindar agreements were made in Bengal, Orissa, and Bihar divisions of U.P. This agreement was extended in 1800 to Northern Carnatic and North-Western Provinces. Zamindars were the owners of the lands (Murdoch, 1984). Zamindars were permitted to collect revenue from the peasants. The Central Provinces, Punjab, and the central provinces while Oudh villages are placed under middlemen with whom the government deals directly (Perveen, & Dasti 2014). The Zamindari system covered mostly 30 % of the British controlling area. The always paid tax even the production was zero. tax The paid tax in cash tax The realized amount would be divided into 11 parts. 10/11 of the portion belongs to East India Company. 1/11 of the portion belongs to Zamindars.

### **Ryotwari system**

The Ryotwari system was also a revenue collector system to increase the income of the British government. This system was implemented by Sir Thomas Munro in 1820, who was appointed as Governor of Madras in 1820. This system was extended to the Mumbai area under the supervision of Thomas Reid (Roy, 2011). The taxation was based on the condition of land not the income of land. But in some conditions, they demand 50 % of the gross revenue. Under the Ryotwari System, the farmers had ownership rights but tax rate was very high 50% tax on barren and 60% on irrigated land was imposed. British administration directly gathered taxes from the farmers.

### **Mahalwari System**

Mahalwari system was also a revenue gatherer system. Holt Mackenzie introduced it in 1822 and it was amended in 1833. This was the preliminary land taxation system introduced in North-West India. Later it was introduced in North-West Frontier, Central Province, Agra, Gangetic Valley, Punjab, etc of British India. According to this system, the land was distributed into Mahals. Each Mahal contains one or more villages. The whole village or Mahal was counted a single unit for tax collection. The village committee was assigned the responsibility of tax collection. Possession rights were bestowed the peasants. The tax rate was very high. The Mahalwari system consisted on many provisions of Ryotwari and the Zamindari System.

The property or mahals restrictive bodies where terrains have a place together with the town's local area called the group of co-shares. The assortment of co-shares is answerable for the installment of land income however individual obligation was not forgotten about the singular obligation stays working totally. The subject of presenting a settlement of land income close by finished and rural regions came to be the front of the approaching of nineteenth 100 years. Nonetheless, this framework was begun exclusively by passing the Regulation VII of 1822 which was the down-to-earth ramifications of Mackenzie's moment of 1819. The framework had been poor down in light of the extreme state interest and unbending nature in its working and assortment of land income. In an ordinarily Mahalwari town, the co-sharers are the cultivators. The owners didn't draw in themselves exclusively with the public authority, yet by villages.

### **The pioneer Madras Presidency**

Contained an area of 148,796 square miles (385,380 km<sup>2</sup>), of which 141,705 square miles (367,010 km<sup>2</sup>) were under direct British rule, while the rest was disseminated amongst the regal states. In the areas managed by the British, three frameworks of land ownership existed zamindaris, and ryotwari. In 1911, zamindari homes covered 26 million sections of land (110,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and involved more than one-fourth of the total region of the presidency. In 1945-46, there were 20,945,456 sections of land (84,763.25 km<sup>2</sup>) of Zamindari estates which yielded an income of 97,83,167 Rupees and 58,904,798 sections of land (238,379.26 km<sup>2</sup>) lands which yielded an income of Rs. 7,26,65,330.

### **Constitutional Steps**

The British government passed many laws in India to maintain its occupation. The year 1919 was a great year when the First World War ended. During this period the British government in India adopted aggressive policy to destroy the Indian militants and nationalists those challenged British colonial rule ( Halifax, 1935). The purpose of the Government of India Act of 1919 was to benefit the Indian elite class which was politically average by creating a road map to allow Indians the ability to finally govern themselves but under British rule( Rizwan, & Hassan, 2020).The British wanted to change India's political system and develop an as liberal and international vision for all nations( Haridas,2020). The internationalist talk put pressure on nations of colonies. International laws are necessary for the relationship with European nations. As the British government confronted anti colonial challenges, it oddly extended its impact under an internationalist system in different spots, maybe most strikingly, the Middle East, where it held order over enormous pieces of the previous Ottoman Empire. The Most important reform after the World War British India was the pathway of the Indian Government Act 1919, it is also known as the Montagu Chelmsford reforms. This act is well known as the great change in India's history in the 20th century.

### **Conclusion**

In the end, it can be summarized that feudalism has passed through different ages and stages of its evolution and is used in various viewpoints. The real concept of feudalism is almost the same as taking hold and affecting the peasants and society. Feudalism was, a European idea but it also moved into underdeveloped countries. Europe may not exist in this time, after and return to capitalism. The British changed many methods to stabilize their feudalism in India, and to collect revenue. British used this step in India for stability to their feudalism. British Government's main purpose was to make money from India. The purpose of the British was to make the people loyal to the British government.

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