

Week 2: GOVIC

FEUDALISM

Feudalism is one of the earliest forms of government that was practiced by man on his march to civilization. It was a form of government that became popular in Europe between the 5th and the 12th centuries. Basically, it refers to a form of government where the powers of the state are controlled and exercised by those who control vast amounts of Land. These controllers of land were considered the owners of the land for as long as they could control it. They were called feudal Lords and they exercised enormous powers that were almost at par with the powers of a king. They made laws in their fiefdoms and they administered justice.

The Feudal Lord's were assisted in their functions by vassal lords who were like their commanders and to whom they granted significant amounts of land. These Vassal lords then granted small portions of land to peasants for cultivation. The peasant who received lands were called serfs and they were expected to pay tributes in their produce to their vassal lords as well as respond to the calls of the vassal lords for military service. These portions of lands were known as fiefs and on receiving them the serfs swore loyalty to their vassal lords.

The vassal lords on receiving lands from the feudal lord's also swore loyalty to the feudal lords who were themselves ceremonially vassal to kings.

FEATURES OF FEUDALISM

1. **VASSALAGE:** This refers to the hierarchical loyalty of serfs to vassal lords and from vassal lords to feudal lords and from feudal lords to Kings. A breaking of the oath of loyalty could lead to the taking away of lands of the oath breaker by his immediate lord.
2. **HIGHLY TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES:** Feudalism was practiced during the times when traditional beliefs and values were much more accepted in the world. Even today in many parts of the developing countries which are still under a lot of traditional values there still exist different forms of feudal practices.
3. **AGRARIAN SOCIETIES:** This is another very important feature of feudalism which can be said to have been practiced in times and in societies where land was the main factor of production and agriculture was the major preoccupation.

MERITS OF FEUDALISM

1. It helped to maintain law and order at a time when strong states had not been established.
2. It laid the foundation for the establishment of stronger states.
3. It provided security and safety for the peasant class.

DEMERITS OF FEUDALISM

1. There were lots of cases of oppressiveness by feudal and vassal lords
2. There were frequently conflicts between feudal lords
3. Feudalism promoted traditional values which delayed the rise of modern culture