

Teaching and Learning Guide for: Kali age crisis as Jaina–Brahmana conflict

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Abstract

In the 1960s, an attempt was made to discuss the presence of feudalism in the context of early medieval India covering the period between 3rd century and 10th century CE. The Puranic literature provides information regarding the Kali age crisis. R.S. Sharma and B.N.S. Yadava considered it as representing feudalism. However, B.D. Chattopadhyaya and B.P. Sahu have questioned this argument. Kali age crisis represents the Jaina–Brahmana conflict in the age of state formation. This conflict is represented in the form of the fear expressed by the Brahmanas concerning the domination of the heretics including the Jains. Such a study provides a new orientation to the Indian feudalism debate.

1 | AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

In the 1960s, an attempt was made to discuss the presence of feudalism in the context of early medieval India covering the period between 3rd and 10th centuries ce. The Puranic literature provides information regarding the Kali age crisis. R.S. Sharma and B.N.S. Yadava considered it as representing feudalism. However, B.D. Chattopadhyaya and B.P. Sahu have questioned this argument. Kali age crisis represents the Jaina–Brahmana conflict in the age of state formation. This conflict is represented in the form of the fear expressed by the Brahmanas concerning the domination of the heretics including the Jains. Such a study provides a new orientation to the Indian feudalism debate.

2 | AUTHOR RECOMMENDS

Sharma, R. S. (2003). *Early Medieval Indian Society: A Study in Feudalisation*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

It attempts to find the origin and growth of feudalism in early medieval India. There is a discussion regarding the Kali age crisis. The Brahmanical fear regarding the loss of their position to sudras and other non-Brahmanas is re-

vealed in this work. It is an ideal place to learn regarding the definition of feudalism, which refers to weakening of the state authority and the rise of the landed intermediaries.

Chakrabarti, K. (2016). A History of Intolerance: The Representation of Buddhists in the Bengal Purāṇas. *Social Scientist*, 44(5/6), 11–27.

In this work, Kunal Chakrabarti discusses the Brahmanical intolerance of the heretics including the Buddhists. He provides evidence to this argument based on the study of the Bengal Puranas. The Brahmanas reacted to the challenges from the heretical sects by emphasizing the study of the Vedas, which was rejected by the Buddhists and the Jainas.

Jha, D. N. (May–June 2016). Brahmanical Intolerance in Early India. *Social Scientist*, 44(5/6), 3–10.

The Brahmanical intolerance of the heretical sects is described and analyzed by D.N. Jha. Even though he supported the Indian feudalism thesis, he did not agree with Sharma that the Kali age crisis represented feudalism. He noted the conflict between the Brahmanas and the Jainas. The former, indeed, attacked the places of worship of the Jainas.

Hazra, R. C. (1975). *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs* (Second ed.). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

The work of R.C. Hazra is important for few reasons. He has provided one of the most authentic methodologies of dating the Puranic texts. The dating of the Puranas enables us to place the texts in proper historical context. Hazra has shown that the Puranas were mostly composed during the period between 5th and 10th centuries ce. This was also the period that represented the Jaina–Brahmana conflict. Hazra notes that the Kali age crisis represented the conflict between the Brahmanas and the heretics.

Sahu, B. P. (2013). *The Changing Gaze: Regions and the Constructions of Early India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

B. P. Sahu has shown that early medieval India should be studied from the perspective of state formation rather than feudalism. It was a period when there was the emergence of regional states. He also noted the Jaina–Brahmana conflict in the Kali age. In this way, he suggested modification to the thesis of R.S. Sharma concerning the Kali age crisis.

Champakalakshmi, R. (2009–2010). General President's Address: The Making of Religious Tradition: Perspectives from Pre-colonial South India. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 70, 1–24.

She has noted the role played by the Jainas and Buddhists in state formation in South India. This fact has been generally ignored by historians working on this region. The Jainas and Buddhists obtained the state patronage. It was not to the liking of the Brahmanas who attempted to monopolize the state patronage.

3 | ONLINE MATERIAL

A few online sources available for this course it outlined below.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44147831?seq=1>

Jstor.org provides information regarding the articles published on a topic searched by the research scholar. The database is useful to have an understanding the nature of work that has been undertaken by the scholars concerning the Kali age crisis.

<http://scholargoogle.com/>

It provides a list of the scholarly books, articles, and book review regarding the Kali age crisis and its relationship with the Jaina–Brahmana conflict.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0376983614544571>

The above website provides a link to an article, which supports the contention of R.S. Sharma that the Kali age represented feudalism. The scholars can search in the database of journals.sagepub.com to find further on this topic.

https://brill.com/view/journals/ijj/61/4/article-p396_4.xml

It includes an article, which discusses the nature of the interaction between the Shaivas, Vaishnavas, and the Buddhist in the age of Kali.

4 | SAMPLE SYLLABUS

It introduces the students to the Indian feudalism debate and the debate concerning the Kali age crisis. The syllabus should assist the students to appreciate the prevalence of this debate in the historiography.

4.1 | Week I: Introduction and overview

In the opening sessions, the students will be introduced to the debate of Indian feudalism and how it is being challenged by some scholars interested in presenting a different perspective of state formation. One can start with the following readings:

Sharma, R. S. (2003). *Early Medieval Indian Society: A Study in Feudalisation*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

Sahu, B. P. (2013). *The Changing Gaze: Regions and the Constructions of Early India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

4.2 | Week II–III

During these sessions, students will be introduced to some original sources. For example, Vishnu Purana has a myth regarding the conflict between gods (devas) and demons (daityas). Gods defeat demons by encouraging them to abandon the Vedas and study the heretical works. It shows the anti-Jaina approach of the Brahmanas. The following works provide the relevant information:

(1998). *Agni Purana, Part I*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

(2002). *Brahmanda Purana*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Wilson, H.H. (1865). *Vishnu Purana, Vol. II*. London: Trubner & Co.

4.3 | Week IV–VI

Students can be encouraged to study the specific texts relating the Kali age crisis as represented in Karnataka. One can recommend the following texts:

Bhanumati, Y.C. (Ed.). (1984). *Sahyadri Khanda*. Mysore: University of Mysore.

Basavaradhya, N. (Ed.). (1973). *Shantaniranjana Virachita Abbaluru Charitre*, Mysore: University of Mysore.

5 | FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. Analyze the argument that the Kali age crisis represented the fear of the Brahmanas regarding the loss of their status in the Kali Yuga and in what way it represented feudalism?
2. How did B.D. Chattopadhyaya and B.P. Sahu question the argument of R.S. Sharma when he argued that the Kali age crisis represented feudalism?
3. What evidence are you able to obtain regarding the Jaina–Brahmana conflict in the early medieval period and how do you connect this evidence with the Kali age crisis as represented in the Puranas?
4. Assess the significance of the Puranic texts to the study of the Kali age crisis. Support your answer with some examples from the *Vishnu Purana* and *Brahmanda Purana*.

5. How do you evaluate the Kannada text, *Sahyadri Khanda* to analyze the nature of Jaina–Brahmana conflict? Support your answer with relevant examples.

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