

FEMALE PATRONAGE OF BUDDHIST ROCK CUT CAITYAS AT KĀRLE AND BHĀJE

RUPALI MOKASHI

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY,
R. K. TALREJA COLLEGE,
ULHASNAGAR, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA
PERMANENTLY AFFILIATED TO
THE UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI

ABSTRACT:

People of western Deccan were familiar with Buddhism since the pre Mauryan times. Buddhist tradition identifies a wealthy merchant converted monk Puṇṇa of Śūrpāraka. It was evidently in the Mauryan period that Buddhism emerged as a distinct religion with great potentialities for expansion. A Yavana called Yona Dharmarakṣita was then sent to Aparāṃta where he is said to have successfully converted a large number of people including women and nobles to Buddhism. Early Buddhist missionaries must have naturally gravitated to the niches in Sahyadri Mountains to suit the needs of their ideas of asceticism and the monastic life. As a result of the expressions of faith in Dhamma, rock cut Caityas like Kārle and Bhāje nestled in the Sahyadri ranges since 2nd Century BCE. The conversion of simple caves to magnificent structures required highly skilled artisans and craftsmen as well as finances for their construction and maintenance. This paper will try to analyze the finances provided by female devotees who belonged to different stratas of the society.

KEY WORDS: Buddhism, Karle, Bhaje, Female Patronage, inscriptions
