Since schooldays Geography and Sanskrit have been my favourite subjects of study. The diverse topography of lands far and near, their mountains, rivers and forests fascinated me as much as the study of the ancient oriental language of Sanskrit. Later on, however, my interest of Sanskrit gained prominence and I took up this subject for my higher studies.

During my M.A. studies with 'Epigraphy and History' as my special paper, I had an opportunity to interact with Dr. Sukumar Sengupta (about whom I shall make a special mention later on) who taught the subject of Ancient Indian Geography. He showed me how interestingly political boundaries and nomenclature of countries change with changes in its history from age to age. His discussions opened up the immense wealth of geographical information hidden under the veil of the philosophical and metaphysical discourses in the ancient literature. My lost interest in geography was rekindled to an extent that I almost decided to carry on research work in Ancient Indian Geography. The seed of my research work was thus planted. The reason for using Buddhist literature as back drop of my research is that in Buddhist literature sober geography has a more ample place, especially in early Pali texts. No doubt, valuable pieces of work have been undertaken by eminent scholars like S.N. Majumder Sastri, Dr. H.C. Raychaudhuri, Dr. B.C. Law, Dr. B.M. Barua, Dr. D.C. Sircar and others in the field of
geography in Buddhist literature, yet I felt that a systematic study of geography of this country on the basis of information derived from Buddhist sources (Pali and Buddhist Sanskrit works compiled and composed between 5th century B.C. and few centuries A.D. as also some comparatively modern books like Kṣemendra’s Avadānakalpaṭa of 11th century A.D. and Pāṇḍāsāmi’s Sāsana-vāpaṇa of 1861 A.D.) needed to be done. This dissertation is an effort in that direction. It aims at highlighting the different geographical characteristics of India found in Buddhist literature with a note on their evolution in later ages wherever possible.

As I have said earlier, the seed of this work was planted by Dr. Sukumar Sengupta, M.A., Ph.D., Suttavīśārada, sometime Head and Retired Reader in the Department of Pali, and Lecturer in the Department of Sanskrit, Calcutta University. It was but natural that I approached him after completing my Postgraduate studies, to suggest a suitable topic of research and to be my guide. Despite his various preoccupations, I am glad, he obliged me on both counts. Beyond hundreds of hours of his wise counsel he brought to the personality of this work his special qualities. Not only has he offered me his expert knowledge at various stages, but despite his frail health and failing eyesight has read the draft more than once and helped me in refining it. Dr. Sengupta has been generous and forbearing with me during the long gestation of this work and without prodding me has taken keen personal interest in its progress. No words will be sufficient to express my gratitude to him.

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Flesh was given to this work by many others who offered their time and energy. If I cannot acknowledge by name, I hope this work has done them justice.

I do not claim to present any deep erudition in this work. It is an effort of a humble student who sees things with her own eyes and analyses them rationally. My work on this subject was for an extended period partly due to my ill health and partly due to my family responsibilities. It has, however, been a memorable experience for me and not merely a task.