PREFACE

The present study “A Historical Development of Middle-Indo-Aryan with Reference to Buddhist Literature and Epigraphy” is carried out under the direct supervision of Dr. Mani Kuntala Halder(De), Head of the Department of Pali, University of Calcutta, Kolkata. I am really indebted to my supervisor and it is not a matter of exaggeration to say that her help and guidance in every respect alone could not get me reach the desired destination.

It is a well known fact that the Indo-Aryan language which happened to be the mother of other North Indian languages was initially introduced in India by the intruding Aryans during 1500 B.C. Actually, the Indo-Aryan language can be divided three distinct categories, viz., Old-Indo-Aryan (upto 600 B.C.), Middle-Indo-Aryan (600 B.C. to 1200 A.D.) and New-Indo-Aryan (1200 A.D. onwards). Among those three categories, the Middle-Indo-Aryan (MIA) language which comprises of Pali and Prakrit has important historical values. Since Pali and Prakrit, belonging to the category of MIA language contained vast amount of historical materials related to Buddhism. Cultivation of same in proper perspective is supposed to yield important results related to historical analysis.

The present study consists of seven chapters. Chapter-I is an introduction containing a general survey of MIA languages. The total period of MIA languages can be divided in four sub-divisions, viz., (a) period of early development, (b) transitional period, (c) period related to the development of later Prakrits and (d) later phase of development. Chapter-II contains the palaeographic records of MIA languages. Chapter-III deals with
the history, structure and characteristics of Pali and Prakrit — the early MIA languages (600B.C to 100B.C.). Chapter-IV depicts a phase of change in the realm of MIA languages (100B.C. to 400A.D.) which includes Prakrit, Prakrit influenced by Sanskrit, Sanskrit influenced by Prakrit and the three dialects of the fragments of Āśvaghoṣa’s drama. Chapter-V deals with a particular stage of development of literary Prakrits (400A.D. to 600A.D.) consist of Maharāṣṭrī, Sauraseni, Māgadhī, Ardha-Māgadhī, Paisācī etc. Chapter-VI is, in fact, a discussion on the development of late MIA, i.e., Apabhraṃśa and Avahāṭha (600A.D. to 1200A.D.). Chapter-VII forms the concluding part.

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[SAHELI DAS.]