PREFACE

The present study on the inscribed images of Bengal and Bihar (c. 7th century-13th century A.D.) is an endeavor to bring together and study analytically each published and unpublished images and art objects that have come to my notice bearing an epigraphic record of the Pāla-Sena period. The sculptures of the Pāla-Sena schools have received scholarly attention from the art historians mainly from the stylistic and iconographic point of view. The inscriptions on the images have been of marginal importance in their work. The present dissertation is therefore a humble attempt to bring together and make an in-depth analytical study of the dedicatory inscriptions recorded in the images of Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jaina pantheon. The aim is to juxtapose judiciously the two significant sources i.e. images and inscriptions and understand the inherent relationship between art history and epigraphic studies. The area of research tries to give a holistic account of the image inscriptions of Bengal and Bihar from the point of view of iconographic appreciation of each art object, and an understanding of the epigraphic content of inscriptions that have been a long felt desideratum.

The art objects included in this study do not aim at constituting a comprehensive catalogue of all the dated and undated materials under scrutiny. Many inscribed images have certainly escaped my attention, while others still wait to be discovered. But on the whole, our attempt to study a large corpus of dated and undated images and other votive objects including few dated stūpas, fragmentary pedestal that formed part of both figurative stelae and architectural members, and few interesting architectural elements (stone slabs, door lintel, pillars, etc) as a whole is based on a verification of available published sources and photographic documentations, can be considered as a research endeavor.

The present discourse has been a humble attempt of my experiences that I have gathered over last ten years of research. Script and image complement and elucidate one another. By juxtaposing the two important archaeological sources, art material and inscriptions on the same plane, I have tried to ferret out the inherent relationship between the two in the light of image inscriptions of the Pāla-Sena period.
Nevertheless, the analysis of inscribed images from the epigraphic and iconographic point of view remains somewhat limited in this work. However, I apologize for the lacunae and pitfalls crept herein, if any. I have somehow tried to lay bare the ground for future research in this area. There is always a scope for further investigation in this field of work with the new discoveries of inscribed art materials, and a study of the inscribed sculptures from Bihar and Bengal that have escaped my notice.