

PREFACE

Yoga is one of the six systems of Indian Philosophy, and Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra is one of the earliest treatises amongst them. His Yoga aphorisms deal with the mind and its fluctuations, showing the way how they can be controlled and how complete mastery over the mind can lead to cessation of misery and attainment of peace leading to salvation. The pithy maxims were amplified by Vyāsa and this amplification has come to be regarded as an integral part of the aphorisms to ensure correct understanding of the philosophy underlying them. Various commentators in ages past gave their observations and interpretations to elucidate the complex problems relating to the human mind, but very few in recent times have attempted the task. One of these very few was Sāṃkhya-yogāchārya Śrīmat Swāmi Hariharānanda Āraṇya, head of the Kāpila Monastery.

Under monastic convention the previous life-history of a monk is a sealed book but this much is known and can be stated that the revered Āchārya Swāmiji hailed from a well-to-do Bengali family and after a scholastic education voluntarily renounced wealth, position and comfort in search of truth in his early life. Cheerfully accepting the austerities and privations of the life of an ordained monk, he spent most of his time in solitude and a good many years in solitary caves in complete and undisturbed possession of his soul so very necessary for deep contemplation and realisation of truth as did the ancient sages of India. The first part of his monastic life was spent in the caves of Barābar hills in Bihar, hollowed out of single granite boulders bearing the inscriptions of Emperor Aśoka and very far removed from human habitation. He spent some years at Tribeni, in Bengal, at a small hermitage on the bank of the Ganges and several years at Hārdwār, Rishikesh and Kurseong—all in the Himalayas. His last years were spent at Madhupur in Bihār where he lived the life of a hermit in a dwelling containing a built-up cave. The only means of contact at that time between him and his disciples was through a window opening on a big hall. He spent the last twenty-one years of his life in that solitary sequestered residence where he left his mortal abode.

While leading a hermit's life the revered Swāmiji wrote numerous philosophical treatises, the Yoga Darśana being his *magnum opus*. Most of his books, the product of his meditation and realisation, were written in Sanskrit or in his native language, Bengali. At first most of