

Introducing Bhaṭṭa Jagaddhara's *Varṇaśikṣāsaṅkṣepa*, a Medieval Sanskrit Compendium on Phonetics

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Abstract

My presentation will discuss Paṇḍita Bhaṭṭa Jagaddhara's text on phonetics named the *Varṇaśikṣāsaṅkṣepa* or *Compendium on the Training of Speech Sounds*. Jagaddhara was a prolific fourteenth-century author from Kashmir, best known as a poet, particularly for his magnum opus the *Stutikusumāñjali*. Notably, he also made contributions to what we call today the field of linguistics. His compositions the *Varṇaśikṣāsaṅkṣepa*, a *śikṣā* text, and the *Bālabodhinī*, a commentary on the *Kātantra* grammar, are currently known examples.

Though Jagaddhara's *Compendium* has survived in a single manuscript, the text consisting of approximately a hundred verses is significant for its comprehensiveness, non-sectarian approach, and systematic arrangement of topics. These qualities distinguish the text from other *śikṣā* texts most of which are sectarian and narrow in their selection of topics. Despite its significance, the *Compendium* has not received any scholarly attention except for instances of brief catalogue references. To date, we do not have any edition or translation of this text.

My presentation will make the initiative to fill this gap. I will first situate the *Compendium* within the broader *śikṣā* tradition by locating the sources that contributed to the composition of this text. Next, I will present my analysis of the text's content, structure, and stylistic features. Lastly, I will discuss some of the unique features of this text so as to demonstrate its special importance in the field of linguistics in premodern India.