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*The Impact of the Press in the Tradition of the Nyāyabhāṣya*

**Abstract** – The *Nyāyabhāṣya* (NBh), composed by Vātsyāyana Pakṣilasvāmin in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, is the earliest and perhaps most influential commentary of the *Nyāyasūtra*. These two works constitute the programmatic foundation of Nyāya philosophy, one of the predominant schools of thought in classical India.

Despite the impact of the NBh on the history of Nyāya, its textual transmission has not yet been thoroughly studied. This gap is gradually been fulfilled by the research project “Metaphysics and Epistemology of the Nyāya Tradition” (FWF projects P17244, P19328, and P24388) based at the ISTB, University of Vienna (<http://www.istb.univie.ac.at/nyaya/>), in the course of which copies of 60 manuscripts of the NBh and of the extant printed editions have been gathered, collated and studied, with a new critical edition in view.

Based on the formidable documentation gathered for the project, this paper deals with the motives and editorial strategies that have inspired the editio princeps of the NBh, *Nyāyadarśana with the Commentary of Vātsyāyana*, published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1864–5 and edited by the Nyāya scholar Jayanarayana Tarkapanchanana.

Jayanarayana prefaced his edition with a brief foreword in Sanskrit verses, where he mentioned the mission of preserving endangered works undertaken by his employer, the British Government in the form of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. In the same foreword he also wrote how the new printed edition of the (at that time) rarely available NBh was undertaken by him under the order of the Asiatic Society to give new life to this important work, and he declared that the new printed edition would not only have saved the NBh from oblivion, but also allowed its multiplication or ubiquity.

In the present paper this Sanskrit foreword is examined, together with some key variants in the NBh text. These passages from the editio princeps are then matched with the data contained in the inventory, description, collation and stemmatic analysis of the NBh manuscripts; as a result, two of the three manuscripts used by Jayanarayana are identified with a fair degree of certainty, and the reasons behind the selection of the manuscripts and of the readings become more distinct and transparent. This inter-textual study also reveals a possible scenario in which a late Sharada manuscript must have been a copy of the editio princeps, a so far unexplored hypothesis in the textual transmission of the NBh that could open new perspectives on the phenomenon of witnesses’ contamination.