Acharya Lama Kelzang Wangdi's teachings on
Sakya Paṇḍita's *Treasury of Valid Cognition and Reasoning*
Chapter 1. Investigation of the Object

Dates: Tuesdays, Feb 7 to June 27, 2023 (Except no class on Feb 21, Mar 7, and April 25)
Time: 10 am-12 pm Mountain Time Zone (US), 6-8 pm Central European Time Zone.
Zoom Link: TBD. Classes will be taught live. Recordings of the live classes will be available afterwards, by 12 midnight Mountain Time Zone of the same day, which is 8 am Central European Time Zone

Course Text:
The course will be based on an important Sakya commentary by Loter Wangpo (Blo gter dbang po), specifically the section on Chapter 1. "Investigation of the Object" of Sakya Paṇḍita's *Treasury of Valid Cognition and Reasoning*.[1] The commentary is called *Lamp that Illuminates the Seven Treatises [of Dharmakīrti]:A Word-by-Word Commentary on [Sakya Paṇḍita's] Treasury of Valid Cognition and Reasoning*.[2] The translation of Loter's chapter 1 has been kindly provided by the Milinda Program, and will be supplied to studies by Nitartha Institute.

Prerequisites:
Any interested student may take this course. However, since this is a course of the Advanced Curriculum of Nitartha Institute, it is recommended for students who have completed the Foundation and the Intermediate Curriculums of Nitartha Institute. In particular it is recommended that students have completed the Mind and Its World I and II courses that are based on the Lorik (Classifications of Mind) root text by Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, or have had equivalent detailed study elsewhere.

Course Description:
Acharya Lama Kelzang Wangdi will begin his teaching on Sakya Paṇḍita's entire *Treasury of Valid Cognition and Reasoning* by teaching chapter 1, "Investigation of the Object" this spring. This chapter sets forth major terminology of the tradition of valid cognition: valid cognition and mistaken cognition, their related objects that are things, non-things, and clearly appearing non-existents, and the modes of engagement of objects as appearing objects, referent objects, and objects of engagement. The theories of perception of the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas are analyzed, with a critique from the Mahāyāna schools using the reasoning of one and many.

Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251) is one of the great scholars of Tibet. He was renowned for the breadth of his knowledge, but particularly for his expertise in epistemology or valid cognition (*pramāṇa*). His *Treasury of the Valid Cognition and Reasoning* was so renowned that it was translated into Sanskrit, circulated in India, and non-Buddhist Indian scholars even came to Tibet to debate him, but were defeated by him.

Sakya Paṇḍita's text has continued to be a major text in the study of *pramāṇa* in the Tibetan tradition to this day. Though there are variations of interpretations in all the traditions, the Sakya,

[1] "Tshe ma rik pe ter," *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter.*
[2] "Tshe ma rik pe ter gi chen drel de dün sel be drön me," *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi mchan 'grel sde bdun gsal ba'i sgron me.*

Kagyu, and Nyingma traditions have generally agreed with Sakya Paṇḍita's nominalist, anti-realist view of language and concepts, while the Geluks have followed the moderate realist interpretation from the earlier Sangpu tradition that Sakya Paṇḍita criticized. His text is the source of Khenpo Tsültrim Gyamtsho Rinpoche's *Lorik* or *Classifications of Mind* root text, which is taught in Nitartha's Mind and Its World I and II courses. Studying Sakya Paṇḍita's text is thus crucial to deepening one's exploration of the valid cognition tradition.

Background:
Sakya Paṇḍita had qualms and questions about the understanding of *pramāṇa* that prevailed at the time, which was associated with Ngok Lotsawa Loden Shayrap (Ngog Lotsawa Blo ldan Shes rab, 1059-1109), Chaba Chökyi Senge (Phya pa chos kyi seng ge, 1182-1251), and the Sangpu school. In particular, by the thirteenth century, some of the scholars in this tradition explicitly asserted a "moderate realism" that reified concepts as existent phenomena, Sakya Paṇḍita sought out the opportunity to study with the Kashmirian scholar Śākyaśrībhadra (1127–1225) and the Indian scholar Sugataśrī while they were in Tibet. During his study, he revised the Tibetan translation of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* and developed what is considered to be an understanding that is more faithful to Dharmakīrti than the interpretations of the Sangpu tradition.

Having resolved his questions, Sakya Paṇḍita wrote his *Treasury of Valid Cognition and Reasoning* from a resolutely nominalist, anti-realist view of language and concepts, while criticizing the Sangpu tradition on this and other points. Controversy thus immediately arose about his work given its criticism of the prevailing tradition of interpretation. The controversies have continued and, though there are variations of interpretations in all the traditions, the Sakya, Kagyu, and Nyingma traditions have generally agreed with Sakya Paṇḍita's nominalist, anti-realist view, while the Geluks have followed the moderate realist interpretation from the Sangpu tradition. The study of Sakya Paṇḍita's text is thus important to understanding the range of Buddhist traditions of *pramāṇa*.