



Buddhist Logical Studies in Sakyapa School of Tibetan Buddhism

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Introduction

Sakya (Wylie: Sa skya) literally grey land was predicted to be the great seat of learning by Atiśa Dīpankara Śrījñāna (982-1054) in 11th century while he passed through this area on his way to central Tibet. Later in the year 1073 Khon Konchok Gyalpo (Wylie: 'Khon dkon mchog rgyal po, 1034-1102) established the Sakya monastery and gave rise to his new school known as Sakya. Hence, Sakya School is the name given after the name of the place called Sakya where this school emerged.

Sakya is now one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism which is flourished all over Tibet, Outer Mongolia, Indian Himalaya, Nepal and in the western countries in the recent past.

Among the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, Sakyapa School played a very important role in the contributions of Tibetan Buddhist literature especially that of Buddhist logic and epistemology.

In this paper, the attempt will be made to substantiate the scholarship and the expertise of various noted Sakyapa scholars in the field of logic over the centuries.

Sakya monastic institutions offer the eighteen major philosophical and logic texts in their monastic academic curriculum known as *Drag-chen co-gyay* (Wylie: Grags chen bco brgyad) which consists of sixteen Indian root texts and the two Tibetan texts authored by Sakya Paṇḍita are taught. These Indian root texts along with their Indian commentaries incorporated in *Tangyur* and their native Tibetan commentaries are thoroughly studied. (See below in the Table)

The scholars of four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism have made a great deal of contribution towards the academic pursuit and dissemination of Buddhist logic & epistemology in Tibet through their writing commentaries especially on *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (Tib. Tshad ma kun btus) of Ācārya Dignāga (Tib. sLob dpon phyogs glang) and *Pramāṇavārttika* (Tib. Tshad ma rNam 'grel) of Ācārya Dharmakīrti (Tib. sLob dpon chos grags). Sakyapa scholars of post Sakya Paṇḍita (1182-1251) period in particular has not only confined their learning in *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and *Pramāṇavārttika* and *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (Tib. Tshad ma rnam nges,

Ascertainment of Valid Cognition) but they thoroughly studied the logical work of Sakya Paṇḍita i.e. *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* (Treasury of Reasoning of Valid Cognition) and its auto-commentary known as *Rigs gter rang 'grel* (Auto-commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*).

The Spread of Buddhist Logic within the Sakya School

Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (Wylie: Sa chen kung dga' snying po, 1092-1158), who was both son and the disciple of Khon Konchok Gyalpo. His son Jetsun Sonam Tsemo (Wylie: rJe btsun bsod nams, 1142-1182) has enrolled in the Kadampa Sangphu Neuthog (Tib. gSang phu ne'u thog) monastery¹ at the age of seventeen and thoroughly studied Buddhist epistemology and logical texts such as *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (Tib. Tshad ma kun btus, Compendium of Valid Knowledge) and *Pramāṇavārttika* (Tib. Tshad ma rnam 'grel, Commentary to Compendium of Valid knowledge) with renowned logician Chapa Choekyi Senge (Wylie: Phya/cha pa chos kyi seng ge, 1109-1169).

The tradition of Sakyapa logic has its origin from Kashmiri Paṇḍita Śākyaśrī Bhadra (1127-1225). He was invited to Tibet in the year 1204 by Lotsawa Jampay Pal (Wylie: Byams pa'i dpal) when Paṇḍita Śākyaśrī was on escape from Nālandā fearing that he would meet the fate in the hand of Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji's invaders. Sakya Paṇḍita has studied logic under the tutelage of Kashmiri Paṇḍita Śākyaśrī Bhadra. He initially began his learning of Buddhist logic at the age of 17 with the thorough study of *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (Tib. Tshad ma rnam nges, Ascertainment of Valid Cognition). Sakya Paṇḍita was twenty seven years old when Kashmiri Paṇḍita Śākyaśrī Bhadra reached Tibet.² From Paṇḍita Śākyaśrī Bhadra, he studied the Buddhist epistemological works of Ācārya Dharmottara (Tib. sLob dpon chos mchog) and the “*Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge*” (Sanskrit. Sapta pramāṇasāstra, Tib. Tshad ma sde bdun) of Ācārya Dharmakīrti³. He received the instructions on “*Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge*” from Paṇḍita Śākyaśrī without the influence of Tibetan interpretation. He edited the Tibetan translation of *Pramāṇavārttika* of Ācārya Dharmakīrti and thereby disseminated and popularized the academic study of logic in the various Sakya monasteries in Tibet. Followed by this, Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltzen wrote a *Tshad ma rigs gter* (Sanskrit. *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*) one of the earliest indigenous and independent logical text of Tibetan writer is one of the masterpiece of Tibetan

¹ Ngog Legpay Sherab, the disciple of Atiśa Dīpankara established the monastic institution Ne'uthog in Sang-phu in 1073 and since then the academic pursuit of logical study was once again flourished in Tibet. Ngog Legpay Sherab was the contemporary of great Lotsawa Rinchen Sangpo (958-1055).

² Kelsang, Ācārya Khangkar Tsultrim. *Tsha ma'i lo rgyus dar ṭik mdzes rgyan*, (A History of Logical Studies in Tibet) New Delhi (no publisher's name), p. 18, 1986.

³ *Sapta Pramāṇasāstra* (Tib. Tshad ma sde bdun) of Ācārya Dharmakīrti are:

1) i) *Pramāṇavārttika kārikā* (Tib. Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshing le'ur byas pa), Peking edition, Vol. 130

ii) *Pramāṇavārttika vritti* (Tib. Tshad ma rnam 'grel pa, the auto-commentary to 1st chapter),

Peking edition, Vol. 130

2) *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (Tib. Tshad ma rnam nges), Peking edition, Vol. 130

3) *Nyāyabindu nāma prakaraṇa* (Tib. Rigs pa'i thigs pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa), Peking edition, Vol. 130

4) *Hetubindu nāma prakaraṇa* (Tib. gTan tshigs kyi thigs pa zhes bya ba'i rab tu byed pa), Peking edition, Vol. 130

5) i) *Sambandhparikṣā prakaraṇa* (Tib. 'Brel ba brtag pa'i rab tu byed pa), Peking edition, Vol. 130

ii) *Sambandhparikṣā vritti* (Tib. 'brel ba brtag pa'i 'grel pa), Peking edition, Vol. 130

6) *Santānāntarasiddhi* (Tib. rGyud gzhan grub pa), Peking edition, Vol. 130

7) *Vādanyāya* (Tib. rTsod pa'i rigs pa), Peking edition, Vol. 130

logic literature. It is a compact and a compendium of various topics scattered in *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and “*Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge*”.

Pramāṇayuktinidhi of Sakya Paṇḍita has written and interpreted in accordance with the viewpoints of Sautrāntika (Tib. mDo sde ba) and Cittamātra schools (Tib. Sems tsam pa, Mind Only School) of Indian Buddhism.⁴

The author wrote an Auto-commentary to *Tshad ma rigs gter* (Sanskrit. *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*) known as *Tshad ma rigs gter rang 'grel* (Auto-commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*). Today it is taught in the Sakya monastic institutions as a core paper in the logic class.

Some of the chief disciples of Sakya Paṇḍita namely a noted Sakyapa scholar named Hu-yug-pa Rig-pae Senge (--1253) wrote a logic text entitled *Tshad ma'i bstan bcos rigs mdzod chen mo* (Treatise of Valid Cognition, a Great Treasury of Reasoning), and Lhopa Kunkhyen Rinchen Pal wrote a few texts on logic. Hu-yug-pa and his disciple Zhang Do-dey Pal made a great contributions in disseminating the academic learning of Buddhist logic in Sakya monasteries. As a consequence, the famous lineage holders in the Sakyapa school namely Jamyang Kyawo, Panglo Chenpo, Choeje Lama Dampa Sonam Gyaltzen, Nya-pon Kunga Pal etc. were appeared.

It is said that the credit goes to Sakya Paṇḍita and his direct disciple Huyug pa Rigpae Senge for the dissemination of *Pramāṇavārttika* teaching in Tibet that still extant today.⁵ Lama Dampa Sonam Gyaltzen (1312-1375) and Nya-pon Kunga Pal wrote a commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika* (Tib. Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi ṭīkā).

Hence, the popular Tibetan saying goes as

“*Tshad ma nya la thug*” means the “*Scholarship on logic is entrusted to Nya-pon*”.⁶

The disciple of Nya-pon known as Kunkhyen Yag Mipham Choekyi Lama (1350-1414) has written a commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika* entitled *rNam 'grel gyi ṭīkā yid kyi mun sel* (Dispel the Darkness of Mind, a Commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika*) and *Rigs gter gyi ṭīkā rigs pa'i 'od stong* (Thousand Rays of Reasoning, a Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*).⁷

Yagrong Darma Rinchen wrote *rNam 'grel ṭīkā*, (Commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika*), Pang Lotsawa Lodoe Tenpa has written *rNam 'grel ṭīk-chen* (A Great Commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika*), Lotsawa Drakpa Gyaltzen also wrote a commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika* entitled *rNam 'grel ṭīk-chen*.

A prolific writer Bodong Panchen Choglae Namgyal (1375-1451) has to his credit few masterpiece works on logic viz., *Tshad ma'i dka' 'grel chen mo* (A Great Critical Commentary to Valid Knowledge), *Tshad ma'i dka' gnad bye brag tu bshad pa rigs pa'i snying po* (The Essence of Reasoning, a Special Exposition of Critical Points on Valid Knowledge), *Tshad ma rigs gter ṭīkā* (A Critical Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*), *rNam 'grel gyi ṭīkā* (A Critical Commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika*) and so forth.

⁴ Synonyms of Cittamātra school are Vijñānavāda (Tib. rNam rig smra ba, The Doctrine of Consciousness) and Yogācāra (Tib. rNal 'byor spyod pa, Yoga Practice School).

⁵ Roerich, George N., (trans.). *The Blue Annals*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, p. 335, 1996.

⁶ Kelsang, Ācārya Khangkar Tsultrim. *Tsha ma'i lo rgyus dar ṭīk mdzes rgyan*, (A History of Logical Studies in Tibet) New Delhi (no publisher's name), p. 19, 1986.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Among the six eminent scholars (Tib.mKhas pa sgo drug) of Sakyapa School, the two, who were regarded as well-versed in *Sūtra* are Yagton Sangyay Pal and Rongton Sheja Kunrig (1367-1449). Rongton established a monastic college in 1435 known as Nalendra (Nālandā) at Phanpo (U-tsang province) where there used to be a strength of monk students about three thousand during that time⁸. The following works on logic are attributed to Rongton Sheja Kunrig; i) *Tshad ma mdo'i 'grel pa*, (A Commentary to *Pramāṇasūtra*), ii) *Tshad ma'i 'grel pa*, (A Commentary to Valid Cognition), iii) *Tshad ma'i spyi don che ba sde bdun gyi rgyan* (A Major Overview of Valid Knowledge: An Ornament of Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge), iv) *Tshad ma'i spyi don chung ba sde bdun gnad kyi zla zer*, (A Minor Overview of Valid Knowledge: A Moonlight of Critical Points on Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge), v) *Tshad ma rigs gter gyi 'grel pa* (A Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*) etc.

Another prominent 15th century Sakyapa scholar Serdog Panchen Shakya Chokden (1428-1507) thoroughly studied Buddhist philosophy especially Buddhist logic under the tutelage of Rongton Shecha Kunrig and eventually produced a fine masterpiece on logical texts namely i) *Rigs gter 'grel pa rtog ge'i 'khrul 'joms chen mo* (A Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*: A Great Dispelling of Error of Reasoning), ii) *sDe bdun de nyid bsdus pa rtog ge'i snying po* (A Compendium of Suchness of the Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge: An Essence of Reasoning), iii) *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi rnam bshad* (An Explanation of *Pramāṇavārttika*), iv) *Tshad ma'i lo rgyus* (A History of Logic in Tibet), v) *sDe bdun bang mdzod* (A Treasury of the Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge), vi) *dKa' 'grel rigs snang* (A Critical Commentary: A Vision of Reasoning), vii) *sDe bdun ngag rol* (The Entertainment of Speech of the Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge).⁹

His disciple Choelung Kachupa wrote the commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* called *Rigs gter gyi ṭikā rigs pa'i mgul rgyan*. (Necklace of Reasoning, a Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*). Then there appeared a scholar named Khyenrab Wangchug Dragsang who has authored a commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika* under the guidance of Rongton Shecha Kunrig. Subsequently, under the tutelage of both Rongton and Khyenrab Wangchug Dragsang, Kunkhyen Sangyay Phel alias Jamchen Rabjampa though did not write any commentaries to logical texts but made a profound contributions in the teaching of logic by which many noted Sakyapa intellectual has emerged as a brilliant logicians.

His disciple who was one of the extraordinary luminaries in the Sakyapa school called Gorampa Sonam Senge (1429-1489) has authored one major and one minor commentaries to *Pramāṇavārttika* viz., *rNam 'grel ṭikā che ba kun bzang 'od zer* (A Major Commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika*: A Rays of all-good), the major commentary and the minor one entitled *rNam 'grel ṭikā chung ba sbyor ṭik* (A Minor Commentary to *Pramāṇavārttika*: A Connotation in Syllogism Form). Similarly he composed two commentaries to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* i.e. one major and one minor viz., *sDe bdun rab gsal* and *Rigs gter gsal byed* respectively. The disciple of Jamchen Rabjampa known as Panchen Bumdrag Sumpa¹⁰ has written a commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*. He has also written a concise, comprehensive and critical commentaries to

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹ The complete collected works (gsung 'bum) of Serdog Panchen Shakya Chokden (gSer mdog paṅ chen Shā kya mchog ldan) is published in Thimpu, Bhutan.

¹⁰ He is known as Bumdrag sumpa ('bum phrag gsum pa) because comparatively within a short span of three months, he memorised complete *Śatasāhasrikā* text (100,000 line Perfection of Wisdom Sutra=Tib. 'Bum). 'Bum phrag literally means 100,000 and gsum means three (indicating 3 months), pa refer to a person.

Pramāṇavārttika and other logical texts alike. One of the many highly intellectual disciples of Jamchen Rabjampa was a Muekong Nyangtoe Kachenpa. The Panchen Kongton wrote a logic text entitled *Tshad ma'i spyi don blo rtags* (An Overview of Valid Knowledge, a “Mind & Reasoning”).

rNam 'grel gyi tika sde bdun dgongs rgyan and a commentary to Pramāṇayuktinidhi entitled *Rigs gter gyiu tika rigs lam gsal ba'i nyi ma*, *rNam rig gnyis ka'i spyi don rdo rje thog 'bebs* were credited to Muepa Rabjampa, the disciple of Jamchen Rabjampa.

The contemporary of Jamchen Rabjampa was a noted Sakyapa logician called Jamyang Kunga Choesang (1433-1503) wrote a commentary entitled *Pramāṇavārttikatika gzhung thon rab gsal*. Followed by this, Khedup Tensel composed an independent logic text *rTags rig chen mo* (A Great Reasoning and Sign). Panchen Shung Gyapa who was trained in logical studies under both Jamchen and Jamyang Kunga wrote a critical commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*.

Sakyapa Dragpa Lodoe's (1367-1446) disciple who was one of the noted Sakyapa logicians known as Taktsang Lotsawa Sherab Rinchen (1405-1477) wrote voluminous texts (comprises of 16 volumes) including critical commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* entitled *Rigs gter ſik chen* (A Great Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*).

Then in the early 16th century, there appeared a brilliant scholar known as Glo bo mkhan chen Sonam Lhundup (1456-1532) produced a masterpiece of philosophical works especially related the works of Sakya Paṇḍita including a wonderful commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* entitled *Rigs gter 'grel bshad chen mo rigs pa ma lus par 'jug pa'i sgo* (A Great Explanation of *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*: The Entrance to Complete Reasoning).

Subsequently, the other Sakyapa luminaries Mangtoe Ludup Gyatsho (1529-1596), the disciple of Tsharchen Losel has contributed to the dissemination of logic studies in the Sakyapa academic world by producing a fine commentary on *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* called *Rigs gter dka' 'grel* (A Critical Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*).

Then under the tutelage of Mangthoe Ludup Gyatsho, the great abbot Khenchen Ngawang Choedrag (1572-1641) wrote a comprehensive and critical commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* entitled *Tshad ma rigs gter gyi dgongs don gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad ngag gi dpal ster* (Elegant Sayings that gives the Glory of Speech and Clarify the Viewpoint of *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*).

The tradition of *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* teaching has influenced in the Nyingmapa school which probably began with the great Nyingma scholar Ju Mipham (1846-1912) who wrote commentaries to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* entitled *Tshad ma rigs gter 'grel pa* (A Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*) and *Tshad ma kun btus mchan 'grel* (Annotation to *Pramāṇasamuccaya*) and so forth.

Jamyang Lo-ter Wangpo (1847-1914), the disciple of Sakyapa Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo has to his credit a commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* known as *Tshad ma rigs gter mchan 'grel sde bdun gsal ba'i sgron me*. (A Connotation to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*: Lamp that illuminate the Seven Treatises of Valid Knowledge).

A critical commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* entitled *Tshad ma rigs gter gyi ſikā* (A Critical Commentary to *Pramāṇayuktinidhi*) was credited to Khenpo Lodoe Gyaltsan. The recent Sakyapa scholar Khenpo Lodoe Sangpo (1924-1986) who was the abbot Sakya Ngor Gompa in Sikkim has produced a fine commentary on *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* entitled *Tshad ma rigs gter legs bshad bzang po gsum ldan*.

The then 41st throne holder of Sakyapa School Sakya Trichen has received his instruction on *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* from the great abbot Khenchen Sangye Tenzin (1904-1990) and Khenchen Ape Rinpoche

(1926-2010) in India. The 42nd Sakyapa throne holder has received his teaching on *Pramāṇavārttika* from late Khenpo Migmar Tsering (1955-1999) who was a disciple of late Khenchen Ape Rinpoche of Sakya College based in Dehradun in the Indian state of Uttarakhand.

Khenchen Sangyay Tenzin has his lineage of *Pramāṇayuktinidhi* instruction from Khechen Zhanga (1871-1927) of Nyingmapa School.

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Sakya monastic institutions offer the eighteen major philosophical and logic texts in their monastic academic curriculum known as *Drag-chen co-gyay* (Wylie: Grags chen bco brgyad) are grouped under the six categories as follows;

| I. TEACHINGS OF THE MAHĀYĀNA PERFECTION DOCTRINE (INCLUDING THE FIVE TREATISES OF MAITREYA) | | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|------------------|--|
| S I. | Sanskrit Title | Tibetan Title (Wylie) | Author | Translator(s) |
| 1 | Abhisamayāṅkāra | mNgon rtogs rgyan | Maitreyaṅāth | Go mi 'chi med, Loden Sherab |
| 2 | Mahāyānasūtrāṅkāra | mDo sde rgyan | --do-- | Śakyasiṅha, Kawa Paltseg etc. |
| 3 | Madhyāntavibhaṅga | dDus mtha' rnam 'byed | --do-- | Jinamitra, Śilendrabodhi, Yeshe De |
| 4 | Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga | Chos dang chos nyid rnam 'byed | --do-- | Śāntibhadra, Tsultrim Gyalwa (later revised by Paraheta, (Parahita) & Gador) |
| 5 | Uttaratantra | rGyud bla ma | --do-- | Sajjana, Loden Sherab |
| 6 | Bodhicaryāvatāra | Byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa | Acārya Śāntideva | Sarvajñādeva, Paltseg (Later revised by Dharmasrībhadrā, Rinchen Zangpo, Shakya Lodoe, Sumatikīti, Loden Sherab) |

| II. MONASTIC DISCIPLINE | | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| 7 | Prātimokṣa sūtra | So so thar pa'i mdo | Buddha | Jinamitra, Lu'i Gyaltsen |
| 8 | Vinaya sūtra | 'Dul ba mdo rtsa ba | Guṇaprabha | Jinamitra, Lu'i Gyaltsen |

| III. MĀDHYAMAKA PHILOSOPHY | | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---|
| 9 | Mūla Mādhyamaka Kārikā | dBu ma rtsa ba shes rab | Nāgārjuna | Jnanagarbha, Lu'i Gyaltsen (Revised by Hasumati, Nyima Drag) |
| 10 | Catuḥśataka | bZhi brgya pa | Aryādeva | Susmajāna (Sūkṣmajāna), Nyima Drag |
| 11 | Madhyamakāvātāra | dBu ma 'jug pa | Candrakīrti | Kriṣṇapaṇḍita, Nagtso Lotsawa Tsultrim Gyalwa (Revised by Tilakakalaśa, Patshab Nyima Drag) |

| IV. ABHIDHARMA | | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------|------------------------------------|
| 12 | Abhidharmasamuccaya | Chos mngon pa kun btus | Asaṅga | Jinamitra, Śilendrabodhi, Yeshe De |
| 13 | Abhidharmakośa | Chos mngon pa mdzod | Vasubandhu | Jinamitra, Paltseg, |

| V. LOGIC & EPISTEMOLOGY | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|--|
| 14 | Pramāṇasamuccaya | Tshad ma kun btus | Dignāga | Jinamitra, Śilendrabodhi, Yeshe De |
| 15 | Pramāṇavārttika | Tsad ma rnam 'grel | Dharmakīrti | Subhūtiśrīśānti, Gewae Lodee |
| 16 | Pramāṇaviniścaya | Tsad ma rnam nges | Dharmakīrti | gZhan la phan pa bzang po etc., Loden Sherab |
| 17 | Pramāṇayuktinidhi | Tsad ma rigs gter | Sakya Paṇḍita | Tibetan author |

| VI. RIGHT PRACTICE OF THE VOWS | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| 18 | Trisaṃvarapravedha | sDom gsum rab dbye | Sakya Paṇḍita | Tibetan author |