

---

# Study Group – *Aryadeva's 400 Verses*

༄༅། །བསྐྱབས་འཛིན་བཞི་བརྒྱ་པའི་སྐུ་བཞི་སྐུ་བའི་ཚོགས་ལེན་པའི་སྐུ་སྐུ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ། །

*Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga*

*Translated by the Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe*

18 September 2007

---

As normal we set a positive motivation for receiving the teachings such as, 'In order to benefit all sentient beings I need to achieve enlightenment. So for that purpose I will listen to the teaching and put it into practice as best as I can'.

## **CHAPTER XI: INDIVIDUAL REFUTATION OF TRULY EXISTENT FUNCTIONAL PHENOMENA: REFUTING TRULY EXISTENT TIME**

This chapter establishes that time is neither truly existent nor inherently existent. To establish that, one needs to see the faults that would arise from the various assertions about the way time exists. Keep that in mind as we study this chapter.

The two main headings of this chapter are:

1. Explaining the material in the chapter
2. Presenting the name of the chapter.

### **1. Explaining the material in the chapter**

Explaining the material of the chapter has two main sections:

- 1.1. Refuting that time is substantially established by nature
- 1.2. Refuting the proof [of substantially established time]

#### **1.1. Refuting that time is substantially established by nature**

This section is sub-divided into three:

- 1.1.1. Refuting the past and the future
- 1.1.2. Refutation by examining whether the effect exists or not
- 1.1.3. Refuting a truly existent present

##### **1.1.1. Refuting the past and the future**

Refuting the past and the future has three sub-divisions:

- 1.1.1.1. Refuting a substantially established future
- 1.1.1.2. Refuting a substantially established past
- 1.1.1.3. Detailed refutation of the future

##### **1.1.1.1. REFUTING A SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED FUTURE**

This heading has four sub-headings:

- 1.1.1.1.1. Showing the fallacies if the future is truly existent
- 1.1.1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder
- 1.1.1.1.3. Consequence that it is present if substantially established
- 1.1.1.1.4. Consequence that impermanence is impossible if all three times are substantially existent

##### **1.1.1.1.1. SHOWING THE FALLACIES IF THE FUTURE IS TRULY EXISTENT**

*Assertion of Vaidantikas and other proponents of permanent time [including the Vaibhasikas]:* Though it is correct to admit that a permanent self does not exist since it is not established by either direct or inferential cognition, permanent functional things are not non-existent since there is permanent time. Though water, manure, seeds and so forth are present, one observes that sprouts, flowers and the like are not produced at certain times but are produced at others. From this one can infer the presence of another cause which is time. Though it is a permanent entity different from the functional things which exist in the three times, it is revealed in terms of instants, moments, brief spans, and so forth.

'Though it is correct to admit that a permanent self does not exist' indicates that the Vaidantikas, and other proponents of permanent time, agree that there could not be a permanent self, and the reason they give is that a permanent self cannot be 'established by either direct or inferential cognition'. Things that can be directly observed refers to things we observe with our direct sense perception, such as seeing a pot or cup directly with our eyes. Inferential cognition refers to things that we can perceive only through inference, which means through reason, such as establishing that form is impermanent. The impermanence of form cannot be perceived directly by our sense perceptions, but only through inference.

Thus, as the Vaidantikas explain, they agree that the self is not permanent because it cannot be perceived as permanent either directly or by inference. They say, however, that there are permanent functional things like time. Their reason is that when a seed sprouts it needs manure and water and so forth, but even when all the conditions are present it is not certain whether the seed will sprout. There has to be another condition for the seed to sprout and this other condition or factor is time. So, they assert, time is a permanent functional thing, and all three times (referring to the past, present and future) are asserted as being permanent.

They say that time is a permanent entity different from normal functional things and it reveals itself in terms of instances. In relation to a seed and its sprout, from the moment the seed is planted in the fertile ground one begins to see change occurring. Through instants, moments, and brief spans of time one can see the seed transforming slowly into a sprout. That is what indicates that time is also a cause.

In our system we accept that the effect, which is a sprout coming from a seed, is dependent on time. However, unlike the assertions of the non-Buddhist schools the sprouting of the seed is not a dependent time that is permanent, or a time that is truly existent. That is where our system differs in explaining how time exists and that the production of sprouts from seeds and so forth depends on time. It does not however depend on a truly existent, or permanent time, or a substantial entity that is completely separate from time.

Thus we establish our own understanding from the Buddhist point of view. Of course time does exist,

however when refuting the non-Buddhist schools and establishing that time is impermanent, one must try to understand what impermanence means, how things are impermanent, and furthermore how time is established as being not truly existent. What one should derive from that understanding is how time is empty of true existence, and empty of inherent existence and thus gain an understanding of emptiness. The main point of refuting the non-Buddhist schools is to establish our own point of view that everything is empty of inherent existence. The main thing we establish here is an understanding of emptiness, which is something one needs to develop as we go through the text.

*Answer:* This is unacceptable, for if time were an entity different from functional things it should be perceived but it is not perceived. That has already been refuted.

This was mentioned in one of the earlier verses.

*The present pot and the past one  
Do not exist in the future pot.  
Since both would be future,  
The future would not exist.* 251

The refutation is made by taking a future pot to represent future time, as well as the other two times.

It follows that the present pot does not exist in the future pot, nor does the past pot exist at that time, for if they both existed at that time, time would be disrupted, since things which are to occur later would already exist at an earlier time.

As the commentary points out, the main refutation is in reference to time being disrupted, in the sense that you could not establish time. As well as refuting the non-Buddhist schools, this refutation relates to the assertion of one of the four schools within the Buddhist Vaibhasika school, which is that time and so forth is substantially existent phenomena.

We will leave out the assertions of the other Vaibhasika schools for the time being. Here we are only concerned with the Vaibhasika school that asserts that time exists in the past, the present and the future. The analogy that they use to establish their assertion is that if, for example, someone is attached to a particular woman, it would not be the case that he does not have any attachment to other women. That woman is his primary object of attachment and it may seem as if he is only attached to that one woman. But in fact he does have attachment to other women as well.

Just as this man has a primary focus of attachment, so too time exists at all three times, but with different intensity. In the present the stronger and more established of the three times is the present, while in the past the more strongly established time would be the past, and similarly with the future. That is how this Vaibhasika sub-school asserts time.

The non-Buddhist schools and this particular Vaibhasika sub-school assert that as this is the case, time exists in all the three times. The refutation of the disruption of time is that you would have to assert that the past and present pots exist in the future pot. If that were the case then it would be an absurdity. The reason time is disrupted, is

because according to their assertion the future pot would already exist. How could we say the past and present pots already exist in the future, or that the future pot already exists now in the present? As it mentions in the commentary:

Also at any one time another cannot exist. For these reasons, since both the past and present would be future if they existed at the time of the future pot, they do not already exist at that time.

If a past and present pot existed in the future, the past and present pot would already exist before the future occurs - the future pot would already exist before it was the future. If the past and present were to exist in the future, then the past and present would have to be the future. So:

If the future of the future existed by way of its own entity, it should be future. In that case since all three times would have to be future...

If the past and present were the future, then all three times would have to be the future. Then by default,

...there could not be any past or present.

If past and present were to be the future then all three times would have to be the future, but in that case there couldn't be a future, because what we call the future depends on the past and present. The future itself is reliant on the past and present, so if past and present were the future then, by default, you couldn't have the future as well.

As the commentary concludes:

If that were so, the future itself would not exist, since it could not be posited as future in relation to anything.

#### **1.1.1.1.2. REFUTING THE REJOINER**

*Assertion:* The past pot is not altogether non-existent in the future pot. Since there is a part of it which has not yet come into existence as an entity that has occurred, there is no error.

This is saying that there is a pot which is in the future, and there is a pot of the past, so it is not as if the pot doesn't exist at all.

*Answer:*

*If a disintegrated thing exists as  
A future entity in the future,  
How can what is future in nature  
Become that which is past?* 252

If at the time of the future pot, [the term 'vase' could also be used, but this translation uses 'pot'], the disintegrated pot existed in the future as an entity which had not yet come into existence, it would follow that the past pot was future because of being, by way of its own entity...

This is all in relation to true existence. Therefore if you assert that, 'at the time of the future pot the disintegrated pot existed in the future as an entity, which has not yet come into existence, it would follow that a past pot was future, because of being by way of its own entity',

...that which had not yet occurred at the time of the future pot.

The refutation is that if there is a disintegrated pot that you say is the future pot, then that is its own entity, and it exists in that way in the present. The main point here is that if the disintegration of the pot is established in the future, then what is actually being established as a pot in the future is the past pot, because the disintegration of the pot is the past of the pot. The very term 'disintegration' indicates the past, so if it is established that the disintegration of the pot is in the future, then by default you are saying that the past of the pot is in the future.

The commentary concludes:

If this is accepted, it follows that there would be no past. This would necessarily be so, for how could anything that truly existed as future in nature become past? It is contradictory. Moreover by virtue of this reasoning, if the future in relation to the pot is asserted as truly existent it must be accepted as being only future, which undermines the contention.

**1.1.1.3. CONSEQUENCE THAT IT IS PRESENT IF SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED**

*Because of being future in nature* 253  
*A future functional thing*  
*Is thus present*  
*And cannot be future.*

The commentary explains the verse thus:

If, according to proponents of permanent time, future things exist, it follows that the future pot is present because of already being in the nature of a future substantially established entity. If something exists as a substantially established entity, it must be present since it has been produced and has not disintegrated. If this is accepted, it follows that it cannot be future.

The way the assertion is being refuted is that if you establish that the future is existent, then it would have to exist in the present, which by default means that as the future is in the present, the future could not be established.

As the commentary says, 'If something exists as substantially established entity, it must be present since it has been produced and has not disintegrated. If this is accepted it follows that it cannot be future'. According to the reasons given earlier, if that is established, 'it follows that it cannot be the future', which means then you cannot establish the future, and thus the future cannot exist.

This is in relation to the present, and according to the assertion if the future is established as being in existence now, then the contradiction is that a future could not exist.

**1.1.1.4. CONSEQUENCE THAT IMPERMANENCE IS IMPOSSIBLE IF ALL THREE TIMES ARE SUBSTANTIALLY EXISTENT**

*If the future, past and present exist,* 254  
*What does not exist?*  
*How can there be impermanence*  
*For one for whom all times exist?*

As the commentary explains:

If, as asserted by Vaisesikas, Vaibhasikas and so forth, things existent by way of their own character exist in the future, exist in the past and exist in the present,

what part of a thing could ever not exist? How can there be impermanence for a proponent of substantially existent time?

This is in relation to a substantially existent past, present and future at any time.

It follows that there cannot be any impermanent things, for if all three times are substantially existent, whatever exists at an earlier time must be accepted as existing later and whatever exists at a later time must be accepted as existing earlier.

In other words, what is being refuted is that if all three times were to be substantially existent, then that would mean that what we call the past would have to exist in the present as well as in the future, and the future would also have to exist in the present and in the past. In that case there could not be any change from the past to the present to the future, and thus nothing could be established as being impermanent.

The main point being refuted here is that if time was to be established as being substantially existent or truly existent, then time could not be established as impermanent phenomena.

If all three times were asserted as being substantially existent, and furthermore if they were established as being truly existent, then there would be no past, present or future. They would be only mere terms. What we call the past would also exist in the present, and as mentioned previously the future and the present would not have to depend on each other, because they would be truly existent in their own right. Thus there would be no interdependent relationship between the past, present and future. In reality the very establishment of past, present and future indicates that there is a dependence between past phenomena, and the present, which exists at this time, and from the present to the future.

**1.1.1.2. REFUTING A SUBSTANTIALLY ESTABLISHED PAST**

The future is not substantially existent since future time cannot exist in the future. Similarly has the past passed beyond its own nature as the past or not?

*If it has passed beyond the past* 255  
*Why is it the past?*  
*If it has not passed beyond the past*  
*Why is it the past?*

We have refuted the future as being substantially existent so, the question then is whether the past is also substantially existent or not? Has it passed beyond its own nature as the past, whether it exists as substantially existent or not?

As the commentary explains:

In the first case, why is it the past? It follows that it is not the past because of having passed beyond and gone from the past...

If it is in the past time then it has already passed, so how could it exist if it already has passed in the past.

In the second case, for what reason is it the past? It follows that it is not the past for it has not passed beyond being a past substantial entity but continues to exist as a substantial entity performing a function.

### 1.1.1.3. DETAILED REFUTATION OF THE FUTURE

This is subdivided into two sections:

1.1.1.3.1. Refuting the assertions of Vaibhasikas and so forth

1.1.1.3.2. Refuting the assertions of Sautrantikas and so forth

#### **1.1.1.3.1. REFUTING THE ASSERTIONS OF VAIBHASIKAS AND SO FORTH**

This has four sub-headings:

1.1.1.3.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the future is produced or unproduced

1.1.1.3.1.2. Consequence that impermanence is impossible if the two times are substantially established

1.1.1.3.1.3. Showing that the existence of future functional things is absurd;

1.1.1.3.1.4. Consequence that things already produced are produced again

1.1.1.3.1.5. Refuting that yogic perception of wished for objects directly perceives future things.

##### **1.1.1.3.1.1. Refutation by examining whether the future is produced or unproduced**

This is sub-divided into two:

1.1.1.3.1.1.1. Actual meaning

1.1.1.3.1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder

###### **1.1.1.3.1.1.1. Actual meaning**

Regarding Vaibhasikas and so forth who assert that there is a common locus of a pot and the future:

*If the future is produced* 256  
*Why is it not present?*  
*If it is unproduced*  
*Is the future permanent or what?*

If a produced future pot exists, why is it not present? It follows that it should be, because it has been produced and has not ceased. If it is not produced, is the future pot permanent or what? It follows that it should be permanent because of being an unproduced thing.

This is refuting the assertion of the non-Buddhist school establishing an existent future pot. According to our system if a pot exists it has to exist right now in the present, and a future pot does not exist right now. However the non-Buddhists system establishes a future existent pot. Thus the question asked of them is that if the future pot exists then is it a produced pot or not? If it is a produced pot then it has to be present, because it has already been produced.

'If it is a produced pot then it has to be present, "because it is produced and has not ceased". Where else could it be but in the present? Therefore what is termed here as being future pot by you is in fact actually the present.

'If you establish that the future pot is not produced then the line of reasoning would follow that because it is an unproduced pot then it would have to be permanent pot.'

###### **1.1.1.3.1.1.2. Refuting the rejoinder**

Refuting the rejoinder means refuting the rejoinder made by the non-Buddhists in response to the earlier refutation of a produced future pot. If it is produced then it has to be present, but if it is not produced then it has to be permanent. To that they assert:

*Assertion:* Although the future is unproduced, causes and conditions make it become the present, thus it is not permanent.

*Answer:*

*If the future is impermanent because* 257  
*Though not produced it disintegrates,*  
*Since the past does not disintegrate*  
*Why not consider it permanent?*

If even though the future is not produced, the future pot is impermanent because it subsequently disintegrates, why not consider the past pot permanent since it does not disintegrate? It follows that it is permanent because of being a thing which does not disintegrate.

##### **1.1.1.3.1.2. Consequence that impermanence is impossible if the two times are substantially established**

Alternatively, what is impermanent according to you?

*If the past and present* 258  
*Are not impermanent,*  
*The third which is different*  
*From these is also not.*

The past and present are not impermanent because the past cannot disintegrate. If the present is impermanent by way of its own entity, through its subsequent connection with disintegration it follows that disintegration, too, is impermanent.

This is in relation to the earlier assertion that the future does not disintegrate. As mentioned here, 'Through its subsequent connection with disintegration, it follows that disintegration too is impermanent'. The refutation, as presented here, is that the past and present are not impermanent, because the past cannot disintegrate. If the present is impermanent by way of its own entity (as asserted), then through its subsequent connection with disintegration it follows that disintegration too is impermanent...

Since the third which is different from both the past and present, namely the future, also is not impermanent, there is nothing impermanent for proponents of inherently existent things. Thus it is inappropriate for them to assert the existence of time.

The non-Buddhist school and some Vaibhasika divisions assert time as being either substantially existent or truly existent. If that is asserted, then the main refutation is that time could not be established as an impermanent phenomena.

Their first assertion, that the past and present are substantially existent has been refuted, which also refutes the future as being substantially existent as well. If they were to assert that the past, present and future are substantially existent, then they could not be impermanent phenomena.

##### **1.1.1.3.1.3. Showing that the existence of future functional things is absurd**

*Assertion:* Future things exist because they are produced later when the conditions obtain. That which is previously non-existent, like a barren woman's child, will not be produced later.

Answer:

*If a thing which will be produced  
Later exists beforehand,  
The contention of Niyativādins  
Is not erroneous.*

259

If a thing to be produced later is substantially existent prior to its production, the contention that things are inherently established as causeless held by Niyativadins and those asserting that things are not created by peoples' activity and are without cause is not erroneous. Yet their assertions are wrong for they contradict everything that is both seen and unseen.

If a thing to be produced later is substantially existent prior to its production, then that is basically saying that there is a substantial existent prior to its production. This is similar to the contention of the non-Buddhist school called the Niyativadins, who assert that things are not created by the activity of people, and are without cause. 'These non-Buddhist schools' assertions would not be erroneous according to your assertions. Do you agree with that or not?' If they agree then, 'Their assertions are wrong for they contradict everything that is both seen and unseen'. This is basically mentioning that these non-Buddhist assertions do not accord with the conventional reality of things being produced, and thus have causes and effects.

The main refutation is made along the lines that if a substantially existent or truly existent phenomenon is produced later, then it is produced prior to its production, i.e. prior to its cause. Thus it could not cause an effect because it is truly existent prior to its production.

The assertion of the non-Buddhist schools that things are causeless goes against what can be perceived directly by the sense perceptions and through inference. Through sense perception we can directly see a sprout being produced from a seed. The sprout does not exist at the time of the seed, but is produced as a product of the seed, and that can be established by direct perception.

#### 1.1.1.3.1.4. Consequence that things already produced are produced again

*To say something which will be made to occur  
Already exists is unreasonable. 260  
If that which exists is produced,  
What has been produced will arise again.*

Moreover even if the future were substantially existent, it would be unreasonable to say that a thing which will be made to occur later is substantially existent prior to its production. If that which already exists is produced later, what has already been produced will come into existence again, which is purposeless. As a consequence the effect would find no opportunity for production, since the cause must reproduce itself until the end.

The absurdity being pointed out here is that if that which already exists is produced later, then what has already been produced will come into existence again. According to the assertion if the present were to already exist in the future then it is as if that thing which is already produced will be produced again when the future time comes. However that would be purposeless, because it is already

been produced. Why would it have to be produced again? 'As a consequence the effect would not find opportunity for production' means that the effect would find no opportunity for production; 'since the cause must reproduce itself until the end', means that if the cause itself has to be reproduced again then there would be no end to that cycle. The cause would have to be reproduced again and again, which will prevent the effect from ever being produced, because the cause has to keep producing itself over and over again.

#### 1.1.1.3.1.5. Refuting that yogic perception of wished for objects directly perceives future things

This is subdivided into three:

1.1.1.3.1.5.1. Actual meaning;

1.1.1.3.1.5.2. Consequence that fresh restraint from non-virtue and so forth are unnecessary if the future is substantially existent

1.1.1.3.1.5.3. If impermanent it is contradictory for something to exist prior to its production

##### 1.1.1.3.1.5.1. Actual meaning

*Assertion:* The future exists because there is yogic perception of wished-for objects [referring to clairvoyance] which focuses on future things, and because predictions concerning the future are later seen to turn out just as predicted. This is impossible in relation to a barren woman's child.

Answer:

*If future things are seen,  
Why is the non-existent not seen?  
For one for whom the future exists  
There can be no distant [time].*

261

What is being implied here is that those who have a clairvoyant mind are able to predict things that will occur in the future, and that they will occur as has been predicted. This means that it exists; you couldn't predict a barren woman's child, because it does not exist. So in other words you couldn't predict something which does not exist, and if you were to predict something that does occur, then that, by default, means that it does exist.

As the commentary explains:

If future things are directly perceived by way of their own entity in the period before their production, why are non-existent things not seen? It follows that they would be seen, for it is not feasible to make distinctions between what is seen and not seen with regard to the non-existent

The assertion made earlier is that the future does exist because it can be predicted, and it can be seen. If it was not existent then it would not be able to be seen, just like a barren woman's child. From the Buddhist side this is refuted with this question: if future things are directly perceived by way of their own entity in the period before their production, why are non-existent things not seen? What is being pointed out here is that establishing things as existing from their own entity from their own side in the future is like establishing that a barren woman's child can be seen. If you were to say that you can directly perceive things that exist from their own entity, then that would be similar to saying, 'Why couldn't you see a barren woman's child as well, because they are equally

---

non-existent?’ That is the main point: future things existing of their own entity do not exist according to the Buddhist point of view. ‘Thus’, say the Buddhists, ‘It would be similar to your assertion’.

As the commentary further reads:

Such fallacies arise for those who assert that the past and future exist by way of their own entity, but no fallacies accrue to us who assert the three times as arising dependently without inherent existence.

Buddhas directly perceive in the present even those things which will occur after ten million aeons. Though they are future at the time of the consciousness perceiving them, they are neither non-functional nor permanent for they will not remain for a second moment after their formation.

What is being explained here is that it is true that a buddha who has unlimited clairvoyance will be able to perceive things that will occur ten million eons later. However the fact that those things are seen does not indicate that they are permanent or non-functional. Once those things that are seen to occur do occur they will change. They are in the nature of being momentary, and thus a change will occur, and thus they are impermanent phenomena.

As the commentary further explains:

There is no need for a Buddha to cognise the present explicitly and the past and future implicitly, for though the latter do not exist at that time, they are in general directly perceived.

A buddha’s mind or consciousness can perceive the past, present and future simultaneously, but that does not indicate that the past, present and future are produced or exist simultaneously. Although they can be seen by a buddhas eye or mind simultaneously, they occur sequentially when they do occur.

Similarly it is not contradictory for objects of aspiration, though they do not exist at that time, to appear clearly to yogic perception of that which is wished for, just as a dream appears to be real.

According to the assertion it is true that yogic perception can see things occur in the future just as they wish, however that does not contradict the fact that what they see does not exist now. They appear clearly, or vividly to the yogic practitioner, but just as a dream appears to be real, but does not actually exist, what is seen through clairvoyance does not have to exist now.

As commentary further reads:

Even though the barley seed exists, the sprout which has not come into existence may be called future but the sprout itself must not be called future. An understanding of the other two times should be inferred from this. In our own system we accept that Buddhas perceive all three times directly and do not at all assert to trainees that they merely appear to do so.

An understanding of the other two times should be inferred from this. In our own system we accept that Buddhas perceive all three times directly and do not at all assert to trainees that they merely appear to do so.

The ability for a buddha to perceive all three times directly is to be taken literally. It is not as if this ability is asserted just for trainees. In other words, it is established that the Buddha knows the three times and it is not the case that this is asserted just for trainees or disciples. This assertion of the Buddha being able to perceive all the three times directly should be taken literally.

Furthermore:

Moreover there cannot be a distant time for a protagonist for whom the future exists by way of its own entity because the future exists in terms of its own entity.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks  
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett  
Edit 2 by Venerable Michael Lobsang Yeshe  
Edited Version*

© **Tara Institute**

Verses from *Yogic Deeds of Bodhisattvas* used with permission of Snow Lion Publications.