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The Sarv~stiv~da Doctrine of Simultaneous Causality

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The Lectureship

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The Lecturer

From January to April 2000 **Bhikkhu Dr. Kuala Lumpur Dhammajoti**, Head, Department of Buddhist Literary Sources, Post Graduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Sri Lanka was the Chairholder for the Numata Chair in Buddhist Studies. He has received an M.A. (1979) with distinction for his Dissertation *Skandhila's Abhidharm~vat~ra* and a PhD (1990) for his Dissertation *The Chinese Version of the Dharmapada*, both from Kelaniya University, Sri Lanka.

He specializes in the Chinese Buddhist sources, with Abhidharma Studies as his primary field. Other related areas of academic research and teaching/supervision include the comparative studies of the Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan Abhidharma texts and early Mahayana. He is credited with a lengthy list of book chapters, refereed articles, translations, and with having supervised many MA and PhD students. He travels extensively throughout Asia to share his academic expertise with both the lay followers of Buddhism and other Buddhologists.

ABBREVIATIONS

AKB = Abhidharmakoṅkabh~ṣya of Vasubandhu, ed. P.Pradhan, 2nd. ed. (Patna, 1975)

Entrance = Dhammajoti K, *Entrance Into the Supreme Doctrine*. Colombo: Karunaratna & Sons Ltd., 1998.

MVS = *Abhidharma-mah~vibh~ṣa-ṅkstra (T27, no.1545)

Ny = *Abhidharma-ny~yanus~ra-ṅkstra (T29, no.1562)

T. = *Taishō Shinshu Daizōkyō*

Tanaka = Kenneth K. Tanaka, “Simultaneous Relation (śahabhā~hetu): A Study in Buddhist Theory of Causation” in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 91-111.

Vy = Abhidharmakoṅkavy~khy~ (Sphāṅk~rth~) of Yaṅkmitra, ed. Wogihara, U. (Tokyo, 1932 - 36)

The Sarv~stiv~da Doctrine of Simultaneous Causality

Introduction

The Sarv~stiv~da is a Buddhist school that originated in the period of Abhidharma Buddhism, around the 2nd century B.C. The central thesis of this school is that dharmas exist in all the three periods of time.¹ At least by the time of K~ty~yan~Spātra (circa 150 B.C.)², this school evolved a theory of causality which enumerates six different causes: The co-existent cause (*sahabhā~hetu*), the conjoined cause (*saṃprayuktaka~hetu*), the homogenous cause (*sabh~ga~hetu*), the universal cause (*sarvatraga~hetu*) and the retribution cause (*vip~ka~hetu*), and efficient cause (*k~raṇa~hetu*).

Of the six, the co-existent cause – of which the conjoined cause is a subset confined to the mental domain - represents a doctrine of simultaneous causal relationship. This doctrine is of great doctrinal significance for the Sarv~stiv~da. Among other things, it lends support to their doctrine of direct perception; and the latter again reinforces their doctrine of pluralistic realism. For the Sarv~stiv~dins, one can be absolutely certain about the existence of external objects because our five senses directly perceive them. Thus, within the single moment of visual perception, the visual faculty, the object and the corresponding visual consciousness all arise simultaneously. All three function as co-existent causes. Just as the five physical senses, our mind too perceives mental objects directly. One of the major arguments of the Sarv~stiv~dins for their thesis of tri-temporal existence is that the objects of perception must be real. They maintain that the power of an object to cause a perception (*buddhi*) in us, is the true mark of the real³. The fact that the mind can think of past and future objects then constitutes an important proof of the reality/existence of past and future dharmas

The Sautr~ntika, another abhidharma school, on the other hand, insists that causality necessarily involves a temporal sequence. This basic premise, coupled with the doctrine of momentariness (*kṣaṇikav~da*), leads them to an epistemological theory of indirect perception. If everything is momentary, and if a cause necessarily precedes an effect, then the inevitable conclusion is that we can never ever have direct knowledge of external reality. What we actually perceive is only a mental image left behind in our mind by the perceptual object as it arises only to perish within a moment.⁴ This Sautr~ntika theory presents a serious threat to Sarv~stiv~da realism, and contributes significantly to the Mah~y~na doctrine (around 4th century A.D.) of *vijñaptim~trat~* – that external reality is nothing but a projection of the mind. But if our perception is necessarily indirect and depends on a mental image as the actual object, then the very thesis of tri-temporal existence is at stake. For, it follows, among other things, that we cannot be so certain as the Sarv~stiv~dins that the objects of our perceptions are always and necessarily real. The Sautr~ntika holds that the reality of external objects can only be inferred (*bahy~rth~numeya*). Indeed it is a Sautr~ntika view that objects of perception may or may not be real⁵.

From the above outline of the fundamental difference in the epistemological positions of the two abhidharma schools, we can therefore readily appreciate how the validity or otherwise of the type of simultaneous causation as advocated by the Sarv~stiv~dins becomes a heated dispute. Recently, Kenneth K. Tanaka has made an extensive study on this Sarv~stiv~da causal category,

utilizing mainly the two important orthodox Sarv~stiv~da works, the Abhidharma-mah~vibh~s~ (= MVS) and the *Ny~y~nus~ra (= Ny), “in order to correct the shortcoming of the earlier studies.”⁶ These two texts are preserved in Chinese translation only. It is his contention that great modern Buddhist scholars such as Th. Stcherbatsky, E. Conze and others, have failed to understand correctly the nature of this *sahabhã-hetu*.⁷ In particular, he charged that they have erred “in holding this hetu responsible for the production of new dharmas.”⁸ In conclusion, he states that *sahabhã-hetu* is not a theory of causation; and as part of its definition, “inseparability (or mutuality) - expressed as “mutual cause and effect , ... [means] in actuality the “inseparability” of the dharma that comprise *sahabhã-hetu*, and not causation.”⁹ Tanaka’s highlighting of the doctrinal importance of this Sarv~stiv~da causal category is praise-worthy. However, he left out considerable amount of important arguments and descriptions in Ny, and in our opinion, also mistranslated and misinterpreted some important passages in these two texts. In this paper, we propose to examine the whole dispute between these two schools, on the basis of the data we can gather from Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośabh~ya* (= AKB), Yañmitra’s *Sphuṭ~rth~abhidharmakośa-vy~khy~* (= Vy), MVS and Saṃghabhadra’s Ny. It will be seen, however, that it is in Ny that we can discern the most articulate concept of this causal category. For this reason, where possible, we have given in our discussion below complete and literal translation of the most important passages in Ny.

1 Definitions and examples the co-existent cause and the conjoined cause

Since one other causal category, the conjoined cause, is essentially a subset of the co-existent cause, it will be instructive to study the descriptive definitions, along with examples, of the two together. We shall begin with MVS (completed around the early part of the 2nd century A.D.), chronologically the earliest of the orthodox Sarv~stiv~da works among our sources:

1.1 MVS

1.1.1 “Question: What is the essential nature (*svabh~va*) of *sahabhã-hetu*? Answer: All the conditioned (*samskṛta*) dharmas... Question: What is the meaning of ‘*sahabhã*’? Answer: ‘*sahabhã*’ means ‘not mutually separated’, ‘sharing the same effect’, ‘mutually according with one another’, This *sahabhã-hetu* is definitely found in the three periods of times, and produces the virile effect (*puruṣak~ra-phala*).”¹⁰

1.1.2 “Question: What is the conjoined cause? Answer: All the dharmas .which are thoughts and the mental concomitants.. Question: Why are the thoughts and the mental concomitants mutually conjoined cause to one another? Answer: Because they are reciprocally cause, arisen through their mutual strength, mutually induced, mutually nourished, mutually strengthened, mutually dependent. This is like two bundles of straw which stay in position through mutual dependence. [Likewise,] when many ropes are combined, a huge log can be dragged; and many people can cross a big river by joining hands together. Because conditioned dharmas are weak in their nature, they can accomplish their activities only through mutual dependence. If we were to ask sensation (*vedan~*): ‘Without conception (*sañjñ~*), can you [alone] sense/ experience an object?’

The answer would be: ‘No.’ The same questions [and answers] apply to the other thoughts and mental concomitants as well.”¹¹

1.1.3 “Question: What is the difference between the conjoined cause and the co-existent cause? Some say that there is no difference, as in one [and the same] moment (*kṣaṇa*), sensation and conception etc., are both types of cause. Therefore, in this regard, one should say thus: Whatever are conjoined cause are also co-existent cause; there exist some co-existent cause which are not conjoined cause, viz. the disjoined (*viprayuktaka*) co-existent cause. Thus there are differences between the two causes... [Their differences]: conjoined cause means companionship; co-existent cause means sharing a common effect. The first means having the same basis (*~Nāya*), mode of activity (*~k~ra*) and object (*~lambana*); the second means conforming with respect to arising (*j~ti*), deterioration (*jar~*) staying (*sthiti*), perishing (*vyaya*), effect (*phala*), emanation (*niṣyanda*), and retribution (*vip~ka*). The first is like holding a stick, the second is like performing an action having held the stick. The first is like [a group of people] joining hands together; the second is like crossing a torrent having held hands together. The first means mutually according with one another; the second means not being mutually apart... the first means equality; the second, (mutually assisting in) accomplishing the same deed (T. Vol 27, p.81b, p.81c)”¹²

1.2 AKB

Vasubandhu’s AKB (circa early 5th century A.D.), gives the following descriptions:

1.2.1 “The co-existent [causes] are those which are reciprocally effects... For examples: the four Great Elements (*mah~bhāta*) are co-existents mutually among themselves; so also thought and the dharmas which are the thought-accompaniments (*citt~nuvartin*); so also the [four] characteristics of the conditioned (*saṃskṛta-lakṣaṇa*) and the characterised (*lakṣya*) [conditioned dharma]. In this way, the whole of the conditioned, accordingly as it is applicable (i.e. where a mutual causal relationship obtains) are co-existent causes. (Vasubandhu adds:) It is to be added that without being effects to each other, a dharma is the co-existent cause of its secondary characteristics (*anulakṣaṇa*); not vice versa. ... [The case of the co-existent cause] is like the staying in position of three sticks through their mutual strength - this proves the causal relationship (*hetuphalabh~va*) of the co-existents”¹³

1.2.2 “Those thoughts and mental concomitants whose supporting basis is the same are conjoined causes to one another... Thus, the supporting basis of visual consciousness (*caḥsurvijñ~na*) which is the visual faculty (*caḥsurindriya*) of a given moment, is the very same supporting basis of [the mental concomitants,] sensation, etc., conjoined with it...”¹⁴

1.2.3 “Whatever is conjoined cause is also co-existent cause. In what sense then are they co-existent cause, and in what sense are they conjoined cause? They are co-existent cause in the sense of being reciprocally effects, like the case of fellow merchants traversing a road through their mutual strength. They are conjoined cause in the sense of conjunction in terms of the five-

fold equality,¹⁵ like the case of these very merchants being engaged in the same activities of eating and drinking, etc; even if one is lacking, they are not conjoined together.”¹⁶

1.3 Abhidharm~vat~ra

The slightly post-AKB work, the *Abhidharm~vat~ra* of Skandhila who according to tradition is Saṅghabhadra’s teacher, gives similar, but not identical descriptions:

1.3.1 “The thought and thought concomitants which are mutually conjoined with one another and which apprehend a common object, are named conjoined causes – e.g. thought with sensation, etc.; sensation, etc., with [ideation], etc.; sensations, etc., with thought; in each case [the mental dharma] cannot be [a conjoined cause] for itself”.

1.3.2 “The conditioned dharmas which are effects of one another, or which together bring about a common effect are named co-existent causes - e.g. the Great Elements; the [conditioned dharmas which are] characterized and the [four] conditioned characteristics; the thought and the thought-accompaniments. These are [in each case co-existent causes] for one another.

1.3.3 The distinction between the conjoined cause and the co-existent cause [may be illustrated] by the example of a caravan of merchants: The merchants, by rendering mutual assistance to one another, are able to pass through a risky road – this is co-existent cause. They consume the same food and drinks – this is conjoined cause”¹⁷

1.4 Ny

Saṅghabhadra, a junior contemporary of Vasubandhu, gives several explanations which are comparatively more articulate. One is a revision of or elaboration on that given in AKB, and some are given in the context of the debate (See below, §§ 3.2 - 3.2.8)

1.4.1 “Thus, the *sātra* says, ‘the coming together of the three [- visual faculty, visual object and visual consciousness -] is contact; born together are sensation, conception and volition ...’¹⁸ Such kind [of dharmas] are co-existent cause. This cause is established because [there are cases that] when conditionings (*saṃsk~ra*) co-exist, they accomplish the same deed by mutually according with one another (*anu-ōvrt*)”

1.4.2 “The co-existent [causes] are those which are reciprocally virile effect, on account of the fact that they can arise by virtue of mutual support.... For example, the four Great Elements are co-existent cause mutually among themselves, ... for it is only when the four different kinds of Great Elements assemble together that they can be efficacious in producing the derived matter (*up~d~ya rāpa*); so also thought and the dharmas which are thought-accompaniments; so also the [4] characteristics of the conditioned and the characterised [conditioned dharma]. In this way, the whole of the saṃsk~ta, accordingly as it is applicable (i.e. where a mutual causal relationship obtains) are co-existent causes. (the underlined words are those in AKB). Herein, the scope of the characteristics of the cause [as described by Vasubandhu] is too narrow - the thought-accompaniments and the characteristics [of the conditioned] should in each case be mentioned

as co-existent causes among themselves. Thus, he should not have said that only those which are reciprocally effect of one another are co-existent cause. A dharma and its secondary characteristics are not reciprocally effect, yet it is a [co-existent-]cause of the latter [though the latter are not its co-existent cause]. ... Therefore, the characteristics [of this cause] should be explained thus: Those conditioned dharmas which share the same effect can [also] be considered as co-existent causes; there is no fault [in explaining thus], as it is so explained in the *māla-Ñ-stra*. ...¹⁹

1.4.3 “Why are the thought-accompaniments not the co-existent cause of thought? [i] Because thought does not arise by virtue of them; [ii] thought and these are not reciprocally effect; [iii] these have efficacy with regard to one dharma only; [iv] these do not share the same fruit with thought.”²⁰

1.4.4 “[Only the following among the cases of co-nascent dharmas can be considered as co-existent cause]: Only those which share the same effect; or those which are reciprocally effects; or where by the force of this, that dharma can arise. Such co-nascent [dharmas] have a cause-effect relationship.” (See also, below § 3.2.4)²¹

1.4.5 “... whatever are necessarily co-nascent, are necessarily cause one to another. ... though [dharmas] may share the same cause of arising, those which are not reciprocally cause to one another do not necessarily arise together. [Conversely,] those which are necessarily co-nascent definitely arise with one another as reciprocal cause. Accordingly, the co-nascent causes (including co-existent and conjoined causes) are universally established.”²² (See also below, § 3.2.6)

1.4.6 “This [conjoined] cause is established because, thought and mental concomitants, being conjoined, accomplish the same deed by grasping the same object.”²³

1.4.7 “What is the difference between these two causes - co-existent and conjoined ? To begin with, dharmas which are conjoined cause are also co-existent cause. There exist dharmas which are co-existent cause and not conjoined cause -viz the *anuvartaka-rāpa, j-ti* etc., and the Great Elements. If the conjoined cause is also the co-existent cause, what in this case is the difference in significance between these two causes? It is not the case that the conjoined cause is none other than co-existent cause, for these two causes differ in their significance.? However, in the case where one and the same dharma is a conjoined cause as well as a co-existent cause, this is the difference in significance: conjoined cause signifies ‘not mutually apart’; co-existent cause signifies ‘sharing the same effect’. Again, having the same arising, staying by virtue of the mutual strength - this is co-existent; grasping the same object by virtue of the mutual strength - this is conjoined cause. According to some masters: On the account of the meaning of being reciprocally effect, the co-existent cause is established; this is like the case of fellow merchants who, mutually supported, traverse a risky road together. On account of the meaning of the five-fold equality, the conjoined cause is established; this is like those same fellow merchants having

the same experience, same activities of eating, etc. Herein, they are not conjoined even when one is missing, and thus is universally established the fact of being reciprocally cause.”²⁴

1.5 We may summarize the various descriptions as follows:

Definition	Examples
<p>(MVS) Sahabhā-hetu Not mutually separated; sharing the same effect; mutually according with one another; Conforming in having same effect (mutually assisting) to accomplish the same deed conforming with respect to jar~, sthiti, anityat~, phala, niṣyanda, and vip~ka</p>	<p>Acting after having held a stick People crossing torrent having held hands together 2 bundles of straw staying in position through mutual strength;</p>
<p>Samprayuktaka-hetu reciprocally cause; arisen through mutual strength; mutually induced; mutually nourished; mutually strengthened; mutually dependent; equality; companionship</p>	<p>Many ropes combined can drag big log; Many people holding hand can cross big river;</p>
<p>(AKB) Sahabhā-hetu reciprocally effects</p>	<p>One caitta requires other caitta in conjunction to operate;</p>
<p>Samprayuktaka-hetu conjoined in terms of 5-fold equality</p>	<p>Holding a stick (ready to act); People holding hands (ready to cross torrent)</p>
<p>(Abhidharm~vat~ra) Sahabhāhetu reciprocally effects; sharing a common effect;</p>	<p>Co-nascent lamp and light; sprout and its shadow (infra, §2) 3 sticks staying in position through mutual strength</p>

Samprayuktaka-hetu

mutually conjoined, grasping a common effect.

Merchants traversing a road through mutual support

Merchants on a trip eating and drinking together

Merchants traversing a road through mutual support;

(Ny)

Sahabhāhetu

mutually according and accomplish same deed;

reciprocally effects (as in AKB);

sharing same effect;

one arisen by virtue of the other;

necessarily co-nascent;

having same j~ti, sthiti, etc, through mutual strength

Merchants on a trip eating and drinking together;

Conascent lamp and light (infra, §3.2.5);

Ceasing of all caitta in nirodhasam~patti (infra, §3.2.6);

Co-arising of cakṣurindriya, rāpa and cakṣurvijñ~na;

Samprayuktaka-hetu

being conjoined, accomplish the same deed by grasping the same object;

not mutually apart

taking same object through mutual strength

having the 5-fold equalities (acc. to some masters)

Four Great Elements

Merchants traversing a road through mutual support

Mutual dependence of n~ma-rāpa and vijñ~na (Ny,p.409a)

Merchants on a trip eating and drinking together

The definitions and examples given in the above sources are not always entirely distinct. Some are more or less identical. The variety in these descriptions suggests that there had been some effort on the part of the Sarv~stiv~dins to integrate various explanations passed down in their tradition over time. On the other hand, the near identical definitions seen in many cases, from sources stretching over several centuries (from MVS to Ny), also indicate that the notions of the *sahabhā-* and *samprayuktaka-hetu* must have been fairly well delineated and understood in their tradition. We may broadly classify these definitions or descriptions of the essential characteristics of *sahabhā-hetu* / *samprayuktaka-hetu* into three:

(1) In the sense that the co-nascent dharmas are reciprocally causes, reciprocally effects p(Saṃghabhadra (infra, § 3.2.4) explains that between the two, both are causes as well as effects of each other), mutually induced, arisen through mutual strength, necessarily co-nascent, etc. The very existence of one is necessarily dependent on the other.

(2) In the sense that the co-nascent dharmas are mutually dependent and suitably co-ordinated and strengthened to give rise to a common effect, or accomplish a common causal event simultaneous to them.

(3) In the sense – at least – that between the two co-nascent dharmas, one is arisen through the strength of the other. These three cases tally well with Saṃghabhadra’s statement in §1.4.4 above.

K. Tanaka’s deliberate usage of the rather vague term ‘mutuality’ – apparently for fear of any causal connotation – blatantly ignoring the original phrases “mutually/reciprocally cause/effect”, etc, is noteworthy. Moreover, in quoting the said statement, he strangely left out the last part (“or where by the force of this, that dharma can arise”).²⁵ To support his assertion that Saṃghabhadra prefers the definition of “common effect,” he quotes the last four sentences of Saṃghabhadra in statement §1.4.2 above, but leaves out the character ‘can’/ ‘may’, making Saṃghabhadra say: “... From this meaning, one ought to determine that “those conditioned dharmas with a common effect are (double-underline ours) *sahabhā-hetu*.”²⁶ It is clear that what Saṃghabhadra is saying is that *sahabhā-hetu* includes not only those co-nascent dharmas which are reciprocally effect – as Vasubandhu so narrowly proposes – but also those which share the same effect.

Tanaka further asserts that the “common effect” definition dominates the extensive discussion in MVS on *sahabhā-hetu*.²⁷ In this context, he further thinks it “... worth noting that none of the three major Sarv~stiv~din texts mentions the metaphor of the tripod, suggesting further that “mutuality” – the concept which the metaphor was intended to illustrate in the AKB – did not constitute the principal meaning for the Sarv~stiv~dins.”²⁸ Yet, we find in MVS the essentially identical metaphor of a straw-bundle as an example of the *saṃprayuktaka-hetu*. (§ 1.1.2) While it is basically true that the “common effect” definition is the predominant one in MVS, we cannot ignore the meanings of “mutually cause/effect”, “mutually arisen”, etc which figure quite frequently in the discussion on *saṃprayuktaka-hetu*, a subset of *sahabhā-hetu*. Obviously, what should interest us – Tanaka included – is the existence, or otherwise, of the notion of simultaneous causation; whether it is expressed under *sahabhā-hetu* or its subset is of secondary importance. Moreover, as Saṃghabhadra argues, for the Sarv~stiv~dins, what are necessarily co-nascent are necessarily cause one to another (supra, §1.4.5; also cf debate below in §3.2.7). For this reason, the meaning of “reciprocally effect” may be considered as being implicitly subsumed in the definition of “common effect”. It is this latter that broadens the definitional scope of the causal category. This is possibly why Saṃghabhadra alters Vasubandhu’s verse which defines *sahabhā-hetu* as “reciprocally effect” to “*sahabhā* are those dharmas sharing the same effect” (T.29. No. 1563, o. 814c)²⁹ At any rate, judging by the amount of effort Saṃghabhadra puts into the defence of the “reciprocal cause-effect relationship” of the co-nascent lamp with its light, etc., it can hardly be true that Saṃghabhadra considers this aspect to be the less important one.

In this same context, Tanaka gives a translation from MVS which says, “Why is it said that “mutuality” is not *sahabhā-hetu* ...?” making the text explicitly reject “mutuality” as a definition. But the original phrase here means simply “reciprocally/ mutually.” (The question is asked: “... If so, since the derived matter produced by one Great Element contains many atoms (*param~nu*), why are they not reciprocally *sahabhā-hetu*?” T27, No. 1562, MVS p.663c lines 9-10).

2 Controversy on the co-existent cause in AKB (and Vy)

We are fortunate that there is a long drawn out debate on the issue of simultaneous causality between the Vaibh~ṣika (the orthodox Sarv~stiv~dins based mainly in KañmŚra) and the Sautr~ntika, preserved in AKB, Vy and Ny. From this debate, further details concerning this Sarv~stiv~da notion emerge with greater clarity. The following debate is based on AKB and Vy³⁰. (Sau = Sautr~ntika, Vai = Vaibh~ṣika).

Sau: Among what is universally accepted as a cause-effect relationship in the world – e.g., from a seed, the sprout arises subsequently; a sound comes after a striking³¹ – this kind of simultaneous causality has not been observed. You must therefore explain how a causal relationship can obtain among co-existent dharmas. (*kiṃ tu prasiddha-hetuphalabh~v~n~ṃ bŚ~dŚi~m eṣa ny~yo na dr̥ṣṭa iti vaktavyam etat*)

Vai: This is like the case of a lamp which necessarily arises together with its light; and a sprout in sunlight, with its shadow.³²

Sau: This requires examination: Does the light have the lamp as its the cause; or is it that in either case, a congruence of causes and conditions from the previous moment serves as the cause for the co-nascent lamp and light – e.g. oil, wick, etc.,³³ and the co-nascent sprout and shadow – e.g. seed, sunlight, etc.,³⁴ respectively. (*saṃpradh~ryaṃ t~vat etat kiṃ prabh~y~ḥ pradŚpo hetur~hosvit p̄ārvotpannaiva s~magrŚsaprabhasya pradŚpasyasacch~yasya aṃkurasya utpattau heturiti*)

Vai: There is a causal relationship in as much as when the one exists or does not exist, the other likewise exists or does not exist (*itas tarhi bh~v~bh~vayos tadvattv~t*). For, according to the Logicians, this is the characteristic of a cause-effect [relationship]: When A exists or does not exist, B necessarily exists or does not exist; then A is the cause, and B is the effect (*etat dhi hetuhetumato lakṣaṇam ~cakṣate haituk~ḥ / yasya bh~v~bh~vayoḥ yasya bh~v~bh~vau niyamataḥ sa hetur itaro hetum~n iti /*). Now in the case of the co-existent dharmas, when one exists, all exist; when one does not exist, all do not exist. Thus, they are in a mutual cause-effect relationship.

Sau: Let us suppose that there could be a causal relationship among the co-nascent dharmas (*sy~t t~vat sahotpann~n~m ...*) – for instance the visual faculty, though arisen together with visual consciousness, serves as the cause of the latter's arising³⁵. But how are the conascent dharmas mutually cause and effect (*parasparaṃ tu katham*), since the visual consciousness does not become the cause of that visual faculty?³⁶

Vai: It follows precisely from what we have said: When the one exists or does not exist, the other likewise exists or does not exist – When the mental concomitants etc. exist, thought exists; and when they do not exist, it does not exist. Thus they also become the causes of thought.³⁷

Sau: In that case – according to your definition that mutual causality consists in the fact when one exists all exist and when one does not exist all do not exist (*yadi ekasya bh~ve sarveṣ~ṃ bh~vaḥ sarveṣ~ṃ c~bh~va ekasyeti ato 'nyonyam̐ hetu-phala-bh~vaḥ*) – it follows that derived matter comprising inseparable (*avinirbh~vin*) form, taste, smell and touch, are mutually co-existent causes to one another.³⁸ Likewise, the Primary Elements together the derived matter. Likewise, the secondary characteristics of the thought-accompaniments (*Vy: citt~nuparivarty-anulakṣaṇ~n~ṃ ca*) together with the thought etc. Likewise, the acquisitions together with their co-nascent dharmas (*Vy: pr~ptibhiḥ sahaj~bhiḥ pr~ptimat~m*). [But in your system, these are not regarded as cases of co-existent causes.]

Vai: The causal relationship holds good in the case of co-existents such as thought and mental concomitants etc., in the same manner as the standing up of three sticks through their mutual support.³⁹

Sau: Now this has to be examined: Is their standing up through the strength of their arising together or is it by the force of a preceding congruence [of causes and conditions] that they arose standing together and that they now similarly arise supported one on another? Moreover, there is not only the mutually supporting strength here;⁴⁰ there are also other things – a rope, a hook, and the ground [which cause them to stand together].

Vai: In addition to the co-existent cause, these co-existents also have other causes – homogeneous cause, universal cause, retribution cause and efficient cause – which have a role like that of the rope, etc. [in this example]. The co-existent cause is thus established.⁴¹

3 The debate continued in *Ny~y~nus~ra

In the above debate, the Sarv~stiv~da is not represented as being successful enough in defending its case. In particular, in the example of the lamp and its light, it has not been demonstrated sufficiently that the two together constitute a simultaneous mutual causal relationship. This example is important for the Sarv~stiv~da in establishing the co-existent cause. In Ny, besides the lamp-light metaphor, other metaphors are also discussed. It is in Saṃghabhadra's defence in this text that we can discern with much greater clarity what it is that comprises the salient features of the co-existent cause according to the Sarv~stiv~da.

3.1 The Sautr~nika criticism of the co-existent cause in Ny⁴²

Sthavira **Drṣ~ta**, the Sautr~ntika leader in Saṃghabhadra's time, raises the following as regards the possibility of simultaneous causality:

I. Causality among co-nascent dharmas cannot be established since before they arise, they have not yet come into existence; one cannot specify which dharmas give rise (cause) to which

(effect). This would also mean that the present dharmas are without cause, and that we need to seek two other dharmas for the two co-nascent dharmas.⁴³

II. It is taught that where there is a cause, there is an effect. If dharmas in the future period can function as causes for other dharmas to arise, there would be the fallacy of dharmas arising perpetually.⁴⁴

III. Among two co-nascent dharmas - as in the case of the two horns of an ox – one cannot prove legitimately which is the cause which is the effect.

IV. In the world, among cases where a cause-effect relationship is universally acknowledged – such as the production of sprout from a seed - such a simultaneous causality has never been observed.

3.2 Saṃghabhadra's defence

Saṃghabhadra claims at the outset that according to the Buddha's teaching, there are two types of causes: Those which precede their effects (*agraja*, *pārvaja*) and those which are co-nascent with their effects (*sahaja*, *sahaj~ta*)⁴⁵. The co-existent cause which he needs to establish, together with the conjoined cause and part of the efficient cause, comes under the second type.⁴⁶ It should be noted that the lengthy arguments purporting to establish the co-nascent cause is in fact primarily aimed at establishing the co-existent cause. This is clear from the statement right at the end of the whole debate: "Thus has the co-existent cause been discussed."⁴⁷

3.2.1 The general characteristics of causality

Saṃghabhadra begins his lengthy defence with an examination of the nature of causality. For this, he invokes part of the Buddha's succinct statement of the principle of conditionality:

"This being, that exists. From the arising of this, that arises"

(*asmin sat..daṃ bhavati / asyo'tp~d~d idam utpadyate*).⁴⁸

Saṃghabhadra explains:

"Contrary to this are non-existence, non-arising. This is the general characteristics of causality. In [the Buddha's statement above], The first [sentence] illustrates the case of the co-nascent cause; the second further illustrates that of the previously-produced cause."

To this, however, the Sautr~ntika argues:

"If this be so, there is definitely no co-nascent cause, since the Bhagavat states, 'this being, that exists': As the future [dharmas] are non-existent, how can they become causes?"

Samghabhadra⁴⁹ replies that in fact this *sātra* passage proves the existence of future dharmas. This is because, for the Sarv~stiv~dins, future dharmas do exist in their essential nature. And though devoid of the type of activity called *k~ritra* found only among present dharmas, these future dharmas can still serve as causes, and – as required in this context – simultaneously give rise to one another, becoming co-nascent causes in the present moment.

Dril~ta interprets this passage differently. The first sentence means: there having first been a cause-series (*hetu-santati*), an effect-series (*phala-santati*) follows. The second sentence intends to answer the questions, “which has first arisen? Which, having arisen, remains?”. Thus, the passage, instead of supporting Samghabhadra’s claim of simultaneous causality, actually illustrates the point that the cause having first arisen, the effect arises subsequently and remains as a series. Samghabhadra rejects this interpretation. He demands a valid reason (*hetu*) for the assertion that the first sentence concerned refers only to a cause-effect series, and not to an individual cause-effect moment (*kṣaṇa*). Moreover, he insists, it accords with logic that the sentence refers to the fact that when there is a moment of cause, there is a moment of effect. Neither can one claim that the reference to causes and effects in terms of a series is made on account of the difficulty in perceiving momentary causes and effects. For it is impossible that without the interval of an effect-moment, a cause-series can arise; and without the interval of a cause-moment, an effect series can arise. The kind of interpretation as proposed by **Dril~ta** would imply that the Buddha’s statement is illogical. As regards **Dril~ta**’s interpretation on the second sentence, Samghabhadra remarks that the two questions supposed by **Drṣṭ~ta** are not relevant to the first sentence, for the two sentences have independent purports, unrelated to each other. The first statement does not depend on the second. It is the second sentence that, for its explicitness, requires the question ‘because of whose arising that arises’, and the subsequent explanation ‘because of the arising of the cause the effect arises.’⁵⁰

Drṣṭ~la also gives another interpretation of the *sātra* passage: “The former *sātra* [sentence] purports to show that all conditionings (saṃsk~ra) have their causes (i.e. they are caused). The latter purports to counteract the view of a permanent cause.” Samghabhadra again rejects this, saying that the latter sentence alone suffices for the two purposes – “By stating that cause and effect arise successively [in the second sentence], it shows that the conditionings have causes, counteracting the no-cause view. By the word ‘arising’, it shows that there is no permanent cause, counteracting the view of a permanent cause; for permanent dharmas definitely do not arise... [Moreover,] even if one interprets the former in the manner that **Dril~ta**] does, the case of the co-nascent causes is not contravened: It is in dependence on the existence of the co-nascent cause that the co-nascent effect can arise.”⁵¹

3.2.2 Reply to objection I

Having distinguished the two types of causality, Samghabhadra then proceeds to answer **Drṣṭ~ta**’s objections one by one. Regarding the first objection, Samghabhadra argues that since the Sautr~ntika accepts that future dharmas have causes – his non-acceptance would entail that these future dharmas

are absolute non-existents like a hare's horn – he must also accept that they exist in their essential nature (*svabh~va*, *svar~āpa*). In fact according to the Sarv~stiv~da, past and future dharmas exist, though devoid of the specific type of causal function called *k~ritra*.⁵² At the time when they are arising, and are about to enter the present time period, though without *k~ritra*, they can have the causal efficacy⁵³ of giving rise to other dharmas. Thus, “it is not the case that the future dharmas, being completely without their essential nature, can be [distinguishably] said to be the producers and the produced.”⁵⁴ Dr̥ṣṭa's view is an upside down one: He regards dharmas without any essential nature as cause, and reject those which have as being incapable of causal functions.⁵⁵

Moreover, Saṃghabhadra demands that Dr̥ṣṭa provide a valid reason for the assertion that at the time when the two co-nascent dharmas are about to arise, one is not the cause of the other. To respond that it is because they are not yet arisen is not good enough, as this in turn requires a valid reason. He must prove legitimately that dharmas which have not yet arisen cannot serve as cause. Moreover, if it be the case that dharmas which have not arisen cannot become causes and those which have can, then he must concede that past dharmas definitely have causal efficacies – which contradicts the tenet of his school that only present dharmas are real. This would also render useless his theory of serial elements (**anudh~tu*, also called **p~ārv~nudh~tu*). This theory states that only the present dharmas exist, and that a present dharma contains the causal efficacy – the serial element – of the corresponding past dharma which no longer exists, transmitted through a contiguous succession from moment to moment.⁵⁶ Or, his position would entail that his serial elements are without cause. He cannot respond that the past dharmas are the contiguous causes; for being completely devoid of any essential nature (being completely non-existent) they cannot be considered as causes. Should he respond that the cause is past, not that the past (i.e. the past dharma) is cause; the same should apply for the future. For, in this case, just as non-existent past dharmas are not to be considered as contiguous causes, the equally non-existent dharmas cannot be considered as contiguous effects. Moreover, a contiguous succession is a series. But given his denial of the existence of past and future dharmas, the notion of a serial succession of causes becomes invalid, since it is illogical to speak of the same present dharma as succeeding itself as the next serial member.

As to Dr̥ṣṭa's charge that two other dharmas need to be accounted for as being responsible for the arising of the two co-nascent dharmas, Saṃghabhadra argues that this does not contravene the Sarv~stiv~da tenet. For, his school concedes that in the case of co-nascent dharmas such as thought and the mental concomitant, they are arisen by both the previously-arisen homogeneous causes of their own species as well as by the co-nascent heterogeneous causes of other species.⁵⁷

3.2.3 Reply to objection II

Saṃghabhadra replies that the Sarv~stiv~da does not claim that causes, whether already arisen or not arisen, are real agents. For, dharmas do not have real activities (*k~ritra*). That is, dharmas as causes and conditions do not always have the ability to create effects – such is not the Buddha's teaching. The Sarv~stiv~da claim is that dharmas arise in a causally inter-related manner. In this

inter-relation, when one of causal factors is lacking, the other dharmas cannot arise. Thus, in the context of the co-nascent dharmas, it is not the case that, this not arising that can arise. It is in accordance with such a logical criterion (*pramāṇa*) that this is said to be the cause of that. It is not the case that this cause has efficacy at all times, or that without the help of other dharmas the co-nascent causes alone can give rise to other dharmas. Hence the fallacy of perpetual arising of dharmas is not incurred.⁵⁸

3.2.4 Reply to objection III

Samghabhadra points out that this is a case of false analogy – the two horns of an ox are not causally inter-related as in the case of co-nascent causes. It is observed that when one of the horns is broken, the other is not thereby broken. In this context, he offers a very articulate definition of the co-nascent cause:

“We do not concede that a mutual cause-effect relationship obtains in all cases of co-nascent [dharmas]. Which are the cases conceded by you? Where [the co-nascent dharmas] share a common effect; or where they are effect one to another; or where, through the force of this [dharma], that dharma can arise. Such co-nascent [dharmas] have a causal relationship.”⁵⁹

Having rejected this analogy, Samghabhadra further explains that the *~bhidharmikas* do not concede that among the co-nascent dharmas which are cause one to another, there is any decisive criterion to say “this alone is the cause; this alone is the effect.” They concede only that within such an assemblage, all are causes as well as effects *viññāna-viññāna* themselves.⁶⁰

3.2.5 Reply to objection IV: The metaphor of the co-nascent lamp and its light

This objection is already met with in AKB (see supra §2). Here, in his own treatise, Samghabhadra takes the liberty to argue more cogently on behalf of the *Sarvastivādins*. We give below the whole argument in a dialogue form constructed from a literal translation.

Vai: There is another example which proves the co-existent cause ... It is observed in the world that on account of a cause-effect relationship, a lamp arises together its light.

Sau: What reason do you have to prove that the lamp is the cause of its light?

Vai: Differences arise in the light accordingly as the [state of] the lamp – the light [accordingly] becomes stronger or weaker, is moving or stationary. Moreover, a person who likes light will fetch a lamp; one who dislikes light will destroy the lamp.

Sau: We also concede that the light arises because of the lamp. But we do not concede that it is caused by a co-nascent lamp. Why? Because the lamp and its light arise together; it cannot be that the light must depend on the lamp for it to arise. It is not reasonable that co-nascent dharmas depend on one another; just as an entity does not depend on itself to arise. It is only on account

of the previously arisen lamp as the condition that the light can arise in the succeeding moment. Hence, you should not give this as an example [of simultaneous causality].

Vai: This is not reasonable. For it is not perceived (*upa-%labh*) that when the lamp first arises, there is the lamp without the light. It has never been observed that a lamp exists without light [– a lamp is always that which has light]. Neither is it reasonable to claim that it is not perceived owing to the brevity of time, as it is not universally established (*prasiddha*) to be so. If it is universally established in the world that there exist some lamps without light [and] then should one be questioned as regards the non-perceived cause, one could answer that it is non-perceived owing to the brevity of time. But there does not exist any lamp without light which is universally established in the world. Hence, it ought not be claimed that owing to the brevity of time, it becomes a case of a non-perceived cause.

Sau: If one concedes that a lamp and its light always arise together, then one ought not claim that the lamp is the cause of its light, for the lamp and its light are arisen together by a common cause. That is, the oil, wick, etc., serve as the cause for the lamp as well as that of the light. These two being arisen by one and the same cause, the light is not arisen by the lamp, just as the lamp is not arisen by the light. There is another example [which shows that co-existent things] are not arisen through mutual causation. Thus, in a sesame, there is a combination of three things – the outside skin, the inner kernel,⁶¹ and oil. It is universally established that these [three] being born of one and the same cause, are not mutually cause one to another. Similarly, the lamp and its light being born of one and the same cause, the light definitely ought not have the co-nascent lamp as its cause.

Vai: It ought not be the case that the lamp and its light are arisen by one and the same cause, as in the case of the skin, the kernel and oil in a sesame. No [mutual] cause-effect relationship is observed in the combination of the skin, the kernel and oil born of a sesame born of a common cause. In the case of the pair of the lamp and the light, it is observed in the present moment that they serve as causes which equally accord with each other, which proves the presence of causality. Hence one cannot claim that they are born of one common cause. Moreover, it is universally established that co-nascent dharmas, having been produced by one common cause, have various causes. That is, it is visible to everyone that the each of the co-nascent dharmas – form, smell, taste, touch – in a sprout, having been produced by a seed, has a different cause. Since within the same sprout, the form, smell, taste and touch, arise simultaneously and each has a different cause, it can be known that a lamp and its light, arising simultaneously, are likewise not born of a common cause. In fact, if a lamp and its light were born of a common cause, then when someone covers up the lamp with something, its light – like the lamp – ought not cease to continue. The lamp – being on a par with its light – likewise ought not arise [anymore]. It is not the case that, at the stage of being produced by a common cause, within the combination of the skin, kernel and oil in a sesame, when one is not arisen owing to deficiency in condition the others can still arise. The case of a lamp and its light is different; hence, their cause is not the same.

Should you claim that a lamp and its light do not differ in substance, it causes no harm to our [doctrine of the] co-existent cause. Moreover, a lamp and light not being dharmas of the same category, are different in substance; and as mentioned above, on account of their being causes which equally accord with each other, can serve [mutually] as cause and effect. Hence the metaphor of a lamp and its light is universally established.

3.2.6 The mental concomitants - sensation, conception, etc - as co-nascent cause

The Sarv~stiv~da teaches that whenever a thought - whether wholesome, unwholesome or neutral - arises, it arises with a set of ten mental concomitants known as the universals (*mah~bhāṃika*). This comprises sensation, conception, volition, etc. It is a common Buddhist doctrine that in the two meditation known as *nirodha-sam~patti* and *asaṃjñi-sam~patti*, there is no mental activity. Now, it is taught that a meditator enters into the *nirodha-sam~patti* on account of loathing sensation and conception. But upon entering into it, his other mental concomitants such as volition etc., also cease completely. This, Saṃghabhadra argues, indicates that one can from experience understand that the arising of other mental concomitants are invariably bound to that of sensation and conception. Hence there obtains a mutual causal relationship among these co-nascent mental concomitants.⁶²

Sau: Volition and other mental concomitants cannot arise in *nirodha-sam~patti* owing to their sharing the same cause of arising with sensation and conception; not because they are reciprocally cause of arising for one another.

Vai: What is their common cause of arising? If you say it is contact (*sparṣā*), it should exist in this state, since your school holds that [in this state] thought exists [though the concomitants do not]. If you say it is their supporting basis, it also exists in this state, for all mental dharmas arise with consciousness as their support. Now, since the common cause is present, why don't they arise? Moreover, by conceding contact and consciousness to be their cause, you have slipped from your tenet [that thought and mental concomitants] arise sequentially [not simultaneously]. Accordingly, you should not claim that volition etc do not arise on account of their sharing the same cause of arising with sensation and conception.

Moreover, it is observed that there are cases where things do not arise together even though they have the same cause. Hence we know that whatever are necessarily co-nascent, are necessarily cause one to another. That is, from the consciousness arisen in the previous moment by the visual faculty and the visual object, innumerable visual consciousnesses can arise. Though the cause of arising is the same, [these visual consciousnesses] do not arise simultaneously. This is because they are not arisen having one another as mutual cause and because a succeeding consciousness can arise only from a preceding consciousness, but not vice versa. From this, one can understand that though [dharmas] may share the same cause of arising, those which are not mutually causes to one another do not necessarily arise together. [Conversely,] those which are

necessarily co-nascent definitely arise with one another as its reciprocal cause. Accordingly, co-nascent causes are universally established. Moreover, as we have said above, form etc., within a sprout arise together and their cause is different in each case. Thus we know that even when [dharmas] do not have the same cause of arising, they can still arise simultaneously. Hence it is not necessary that on account of the cause being the same or different, there is accordingly co-nascent or otherwise.

3.2.7 Visual faculty, visual object, and visual consciousness as co-existent causes

Although the important example of co-existent cause in the perceptual process is not found in AKB, it occurs in both Vy (supra, §2) and Ny. Saṃghabhadra argues:

“It contradicts the principle of Conditioned Co-arising (pratītya-samutpāda) [to hold that there are no co-nascent causes]. Thus the sūtra says, ‘Conditioned by the visual faculty and visual object, there arises visual consciousness.’ [If the visual faculty, visual object and visual consciousness were not simultaneous,] then the visual faculty and visual object produced in the preceding moment ought not be the supporting basis and the perceptual object, [respectively,] for a visual consciousness of the succeeding moment, because [in that case, the latter] exists but [the former are] non-existent. One cannot call an absolute non-existent (*atyantābhava*) a supporting basis or a perceptual object. The same applies here – at the time when visual consciousness arises, the visual faculty and the visual object have already ceased. This would mean that without any conditions assisting, the visual consciousness arises by itself! This is due to the fact that non-existent dharmas cannot serve as supporting basis and that visual consciousness can only take a present object. If the visual faculty, visual object and visual consciousness do not arise simultaneously, this would mean (lit. this would entail) that the visual faculty and visual objects do not serve as conditions for visual consciousness, [because] otherwise, the auditory faculty and sound etc., would also serve as conditions for visual consciousness, being equally unrelated to visual consciousness. If the Bhagavat says that only conditioned by the previously arisen visual faculty and visual object visual consciousness arises, then he ought to say that visual consciousness has only consciousness as its condition, because a condition of the same species [– in this case consciousness –] is a strong one, like a seed and because a preceding consciousness serves as the equal-immediate condition (*samanantara-pratyaya*) for a succeeding consciousness. Since he does not say that visual consciousness is conditioned by consciousness, we know accordingly that in this context, he speaks only of the simultaneously arisen visual faculty and visual object as the conditions for visual consciousness. As within the same body, no two consciousnesses arise together, he does not speak of consciousness as the condition for visual consciousness....”⁶³

3.2.8 The question of the first pure (outflow-free an~srava) dharmas

The question as to how, given the impure mental states of an ordinary worldling (*prthagjana*), pure mental states leading to final liberation can begin to arise at all, is a fundamental issue of Abhidharma Buddhism. Saṃghabhadra asks:

“For those who loathe [the doctrine of] the co-nascent cause, from what cause does the first outflow-free dharma arise?”

Implicit in Saṃghabhadra’s question is the basic tenet of Buddhism that all dharmas arise in dependence on causes and conditions – the pure Noble Path (*~rya-m~rga*) cannot be an exception. In the Sarv~stiv~da system, dharmas of various nature already exist in their essential nature, though inactive, in the future period. It is only a matter of inducing their arising by a congruence of causes and conditions. The first pure dharmas, arising at the stage of direct insight into the Truth of Unsatisfactoriness, do not have the homogeneous cause (*sabh~ga-hetu*), since there have hitherto never been any pure dharmas. But there are other causes, including the co-existent cause.

The Sautr~ntikas explain this by their doctrine of seeds (*bṣa*) which are potential energies or forces, though not considered as real entities, of different moral nature – wholesome, unwholesome, neutral – within the mental stream. Thus, the Sautr~ntika solution to this problem is that these pure seeds have always been in our mental series. However, these are only potentiality for purity; in themselves, they are impure (i.e. with outflow - *s~srava*). In Dṛṣṭa’s terminology, these are called the Pure Elements (*Ñbha-dh~tu?*). This is like the case of a piece of wood which is not the fire in its intrinsic nature – which is initially without the atoms of the Fire Element – but which nevertheless can yield fire when rubbed.⁶⁴ Thus, the Pure Elements, though already in existence, can give rise only to pure dharmas through a process of progressive transformation in the practitioner’s series (*santati-pariṇ~ma*) and through the help of favourable conditions. Saṃghabhadra criticizes this by saying:

“If you say that these Pure Elements have always been there, there being always the cause, what prevents the outflow-free dharmas as effects (*an~srava-phala-dharma*) from having arisen? Should you say that [their arising] further requires the assistance of other conditions, then why not consider these required [conditions] as the causes? ... Neither is it logical to say that it requires a process of transformation in the series, for there is a fallacy whether one considers this [transformational series] as identical with or different from the Pure Elements. If they are different, the same objection as before applies – why is this very transformation not considered the cause? Why do you still [need to] hold that the Pure Elements are the seeds? ... If they are identical, then the anterior and the posterior being identical, there would not be any capability at all to produce the outflow-free. But there is no differentiating cause in the anterior-posterior [continuum] and it cannot become different by itself without a cause. You might say that it is like the case of a seed which requires [appropriate] conditions [for its series] to be transformed. In the case of seeds of the same species, when assisted by a congruence of conditions such as the ground etc., there can be a process of transformation which in time culminates in a point of distinction (*pariṇ~ma-viÑeṣa*) [capable of producing an effect]. [But] in the case of what you hold to be the Pure Elements which are the seeds of the outflow-free dharmas? If they are with outflows (impure), then your assertion [of the need of a transformational process] is in vain, since dharmas with outflow ought not become seeds of the outflow-free and outflow-free dharmas likewise ought not become seeds of those with outflow. If [these Pure Elements] are outflow-free, then how is it possible for [beings] who are already in possession of (*samanv~gata*) the Noble Path [– the outflow-free dharmas being already present in them –] to fall into the bad planes of existence (*durgati*) ? Does it not entail [the contradiction] that being already in possession of the Noble Path, one is yet an ordinary worldling? ...”

4 Remarks on the debate: The nature of simultaneous causality

Tanaka, in his eagerness to demonstrate that the *sahabhã-hetu* type of relationship does not involve causation, interprets Saṃghabhadra's criticism of Dr̥ṣṭa's explanation on the second sentence of the Buddha's statement of causality (supra, § 3.2.1) as follows:

“For Saṃghabhadra, the simultaneously-produced *hetu* is not responsible for the production (*sheng*) of dharmas; he attributes such function to the previously-produced *hetu*. It is in this latter kind of *hetu* – where the relation between cause and effect is indicated by “because” or “on account of” (*ku*) – that he saw causation and, thus, the production of new dharmas. On the contrary, the former type emphasizes the mutual reliance (*i*) which allows the “member” dharmas to co-exist but which cannot by itself lead to the production of new dharmas.”⁶⁵

But clearly, the whole discussion by Saṃghabhadra is aimed at proving that there can indeed be a cause-effect relationship obtaining among co-nascent dharmas. Thus, in the case of two such dharmas the very dharmas simultaneously produced are the cause and the effect. Regarding the first sentence of the Buddha's statement, Saṃghabhadra clearly says that the relevant question and explanation are respectively “Depending on whose existence that exists” and “Depending on the existence of the cause the effect exists.”⁶⁶ This is explicitly stated to be a case of cause-effect relationship. The criterion used by Saṃghabhadra is this: Given two entities A and B, if whenever A occurs, B also invariably occurs, then there is causal relationship between A and B – i.e., A is the cause of B. This is the same criterion that the Vaibh~ṣika is represented in AKB as adopting from the logicians in showing that thought and mental concomitants etc., are in a relationship of reciprocal causality. It is a principle of Inductive Reasoning. As we have seen above in the descriptive definitions and arguments on *sahabhã-hetu* (cf especially §§ 1.5, 3.23-3.27), however, such a cause-effect relationship can be (i) a two-way (reciprocal), or (ii) one-way causal relationship, or additionally (iii) it can be one in which the members are causally conditioned by one another in such a way as to be efficacious for a common effect.

In § 2 above, Yañomitra gives the example of the thought and mental concomitants as the Vaibh~ṣika explanation of simultaneous mutual causation:

“When the mental concomitants etc ., exist, thought exists; and when they do not exist, it does not exist.”

Quoting this very explanation, Tanaka states:

“What is clearly shown here is that “to be mutually cause and effect ... does not refer to causation. It, instead, points to the relationship in which the one is inextricably related to the rest and vice versa. It is a matter of relation, and does not refer to one causing the other to be produced.”⁶⁷

But we are not so clear as Tanaka. For us, to say that two things are simultaneously cause and effect to each other and at the same time also that they are not caused by each other constitutes a contradiction. It makes better sense to follow the logicians' criterion, as the Sarv~stiv~dins

themselves do (§ 2). Undoubtedly, Tanaka is not wrong to say that here is a necessary relation. But it is certainly more than that. It is, as all such passages explicitly state, a necessary relationship of reciprocal causality. In his lengthy argument on the lamp-light metaphor, Saṃghabhadra took great pain to establish that the two are reciprocally cause as well as effect to each other. Tanaka, however, claims that such an understanding constitutes an error on the part of modern researchers, and “goes contrary to the above findings.”⁶⁸ Yet, we do find Saṃghabhadra explicitly stating that the ~bhidharmikas concede that “within such an assemblage, all are causes as well as effects viññāna-viññāna themselves” (cf supra § 3.2.4 and note 60).

Among the claims of Tanaka, the one that differs most radically from the understanding of other scholars is that the *sahabhā-hetu* “... is not responsible for the production of new dharmas.”⁶⁹ Concerning the lamp-light metaphor, Tanaka claims that Saṃghabhadra’s

“... position is that the previously-produced *hetus* are responsible [for the production of the lamp and light]. They are the previously-produced lamp and light which in this case function as *sabh-ga-hetu* and *k-raṇa-hetu*. This is in basic accord with the view delineated in the *Koṅṅi*.”⁷⁰

But this is a serious distortion of Saṃghabhadra’s argument! Nowhere can we trace such a view of Saṃghabhadra in the whole argument which, if it did exist, would have defeated the whole purpose of Saṃghabhadra’s painful effort to prove that the lamp and the light are reciprocally caused and not produced by a common cause outside the two such as the oil, wick, etc. It is in fact the position of the opponent! (cf § 3.2.5). If Tanaka be right that the common effect is not one produced simultaneously with the co-nascent dharmas named *sahabhā-hetu*, but is subsequent to them⁷¹, then the whole debate would have been in vain! For, the Sautrāntika too would accept that several causes can co-exist to produce a result in the subsequent moment. This is in fact how they explain that visual perception is necessarily an indirect process .

In this connection, Tanaka refers to the argument on the tripod in AKB. But there again, he has misunderstood the Vaibhāṣika reply. What AKB and Vy in fact say there as a reply from the Vaibhāṣika is that the *sahabhā-hetu*, as well as other *hetu* – *sabh-ga-hetu* etc. – contribute to the staying in position of the tripod.⁷² In Ny, Dharmatrāta actually demands that in the case of two co-nascent dharmas, the Vaibhāṣika must account for another two dharmas which are responsible for the arising of the pair of co-nascent dharmas. Saṃghabhadra replies that indeed his school concedes that in the case of co-nascent dharmas such as thought and the mental concomitant, they are arisen by both the previously-arisen homogeneous causes of their own species as well as by the co-nascent heterogeneous causes of other species. (§ 3.2.2)

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, a full-scale investigation of all the major sources on the issue convinces us that the *sahabhā-hetu* of the Sarvstivāda indeed is a doctrine of simultaneous causality. This causal relation, however, admits of three possible cases:

(i) The co-nascent dharmas are both causes as well as effects to one another, the new dharmas produced in this case being these very members themselves in the reciprocal causal relationship. The co-arising of thought and mental concomitants exemplifies this situation, with the lamp-light metaphor as the typical illustration.

(ii) Not all the co-nascent members are reciprocally co-produced. Given three (or more) members A, B, C, constituting the *sahabhã-hetu*, because A and B are causally coordinated, [they] co-produce C simultaneously. The classical exemplification is the production of visual consciousness, conditioned by the visual faculty and visual object (§ 3.2.7).

(iii) Two co-nascent dharmas may also be said to be in a *sahabhã-hetu* relationship if one is necessarily – though not reciprocally – produced by the other. Thus, a dharma is a *sahabhã-hetu* of the secondary characteristics, but not vice versa. This is because in the Sarv~stiv~da system, a secondary characteristic is causally efficacious with regard to its corresponding primary characteristic (*mãla-lakṣaṇa*) only, not to the dharma.⁷³

These three cases of *sahabhã-hetu* find their explicit confirmation in the Vaibh~ṣika definition given by Saṃghabhadra.

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NOTES

1 Cf *Entrance*, pp.261 ff.

² This theory of the six causes is explicitly mentioned in K-ty-yanSputra's work, *Jñ-naprasth-na* (T26, pp.920c ff)

³ Ny, p621c - 622a: "What is real/exists is what produces *buddhi*. This is divisible into two: What exists truly (*dravyato'sti*), and what exists conceptually (*prajñaptito'sti*), the two being designated on the basis of Conventional Truth (*saṃvṛti-satya*) and Absolute Truth (*param-rtha-satya*) [respectively]. If, with regard to a thing, a *buddhi* is produced without depending on anything else, this thing exists truly - e.g. *rāpa*, *vedan~* etc.. If it depends on other things to produce a *buddhi*, then it exists conceptually/ relatively. - e.g. a vase, army, etc.

Those which exist truly are further divisible into two : Those which have only their essential natures (*svabh~va / svarāpa*), and those which [in addition] have activities (*k~ritra*). Those which have *k~ritra* are again of two types: with or without function (*s~marthya / vy~para / Ākti*) ... Those which exist relatively are also of two types: having existence on the basis of something real or on something relative, like a vase and an army respectively "

⁴ Cf Dhammajoti, K. "The Abhidharma Controversy on Visual Perception", in *Recent Researches in Buddhist Studies*, ed. Dhammajoti K, et. al. (Colombo, 1997), pp.85 ff

⁵ cf *ibid*, p.90 f. It may be noted that in spite of the Sautr-ntika's vehement rejection of the *sahabhā-hetu*, the Yog~c~ra, to whose emergence the Sautr-ntika had significantly contributed, finds it an indispensable doctrinal category in their theory of *bṣa*. One of the six essential characteristics of a *bṣa* is that it gives rise to its effect in the same moment as itself. (cf **Mah~y~nasamgraha*, T31, p.135a; also T30, p.302b)

⁶ Tanaka, p.92

⁷ *ibid*, p.106

⁸ *ibid*, p.98

⁹ *ibid*, p.106

¹⁰ MVS, p.85b

¹¹ *ibid*, p.80b-81c. This virile effect has a rather wide scope, but it is particularly correlated to the co-existent cause and the conjoined cause.

AKB (p.95 f): *sahabhāsaṃprayuktakahetvoḥ puruṣak~raphalam /... yadbal~jj~yate yattatphalam puruṣak~rajam /* ('The co-existent and conjoined causes have the virile effect. ... That [*saṃskṛta*], which is born from the force of which, is the effect [of that force – an effect] born of a virile (or 'manly' action.) (See Vy, p.225: *yad-bal~j j~yate iti vistaraḥ/ yasya balaṃ yad-balam iti ṣaṣṭhṣam~saḥ/ yasya bal~j j~yate yat saṃskṛtaṃ tat phalam tasya puruṣak~rajam/ puruṣak~raj~taṃ puruṣak~rajam puruṣak~ra-phalam ity arthaḥ*

//). Saṃghabhadra (Ny, p.437a) explains that there are four types of virile effect: those which are (i) simultaneous with the cause, (ii) born immediately after the cause, (iii) born after some time interval from the cause, (iv) not born – i.e. the *pratisaṃkhy~nirodha*. the virile effect of the *sahabhā-* and *saṃprayukataka-hetu* are those of the first type. (also cf. *ibid*, p.436a)

¹² *ibid*, p.88b

¹³ AKB, p.83-85: *sahabhā*r ye mithaḥ phal~ḥ / ...yath~ ... catv~ri mah~bhāt~ny anyonyaṃ saḥabhāhetuḥ / cittaṃ citt~nuvarttin~ṃ dharm~n~ṃ te'pi tasya / saṃskṛta lakṣaṇ~ni lakṣyasya so'pi teṣ~m / evaṃ kṛtv~sarvameva saṃskṛta μ saḥabhāhetur yath~yogam / vin~pi c~nyonyaphalatvena dharmo'nulak-aṇ~n~ṃ saḥabhāhetur na t~ni tasyety upasaṃkhy~tavyam ... tridaṇḍ~nyonyabal~vasth~navat ... saḥabhuv~ṃ hetuphalabh~vaḥ sidhyati //

Tanaka (p.92) translates *mithaḥ* in the verse as 'together', apparently in an attempt to support his theory that 'mutuality' as part of the definition of *sahabhā-hetu* does not mean causation. But it is hardly appropriate here since the prose clearly explains this word by '*parasparam*,' and the intention is to show that *sahabhā-hetu* are those which are reciprocally effects.

¹⁴ AKB, p.88: *saṃ~na ~Nāyo yeṣ~ṃ te cittacaitt~ḥ anyonyaṃ saṃprayuktaka hetuḥ / ... tadyath~ ya eva cakṣurindriya kṣaṇa~cakṣurvijñ~nasy ~Nāya ú sa eva tatsauprayukt~n~μ vedan~ dṣṇ~m eva ...//*

¹⁵ The five-fold samenes or equality (*pañcadh~ samat~*) – for the mental constituents to be said to be in conjunction – are: 1. They must be supported by the same sense organ (*~Nāya-samat~*); 2 they must take the same object (*~lambana-samat~*); 3 they must have the same mode of activity (*~k~ra-samat~*); they must be simultaneous (*k~la-samat~*); 5 they must in each case of a singular substance (*dravya-samat~*): In one citta is conjoined one vedan~, one sañjñ~, etc. (cf AKB, p.62; also cf *Entrance*, p.91, and note 301)

¹⁶ *ibid*, loc. cit. : *yaḥ saṃprayuktakahetuḥ saḥabhāheturapi saḥ / atha ken~rthena saḥabhāhetuḥ kena saṃprayuktakahetuḥ / anyonyaphal~rthena saḥabhāhetuḥ / sahas~rthik~nyonyabalam~rgaprayoṇ(g)avat/ pañcabhiḥ samat~bhiḥ saṃprayog~rthena saṃprayuktakahetuḥ / teṣ~m eva s~rthik~n~ṃ sam~n~nnap~n~diparibhogakriy~prayogavat / eken~pi hi vin~ sarveṇa na saṃprayujyante //*

¹⁷ T29, No. 1554, p.988a-b; *Entrance*, p.142

¹⁸ Cf AKB, p.146: *cakṣuḥ pratṣya rāp~ṇi cotpadyate cakṣurvijñ~nam / tray~n~ṃ saṃnip~taḥ sparṇuḥ / saḥaj~t~ vedan~ sañjñ~ cetaneti / Also cf S ii, p.72: cakkhuṃ ca paṭicca rāpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvijñ~ṇaṃ / tiṇṇaṃ sa l gati phasso / phassapaccay~ vedan~ / vedan~paccay~ ta l h~ /...; M i, 111 ff has, after 'vedan~', 'yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañj~n~ti / yaṃ sañj~n~ti taṃ vitakketi ...' / From the P~li text, only in *peḷakopadesa*, p.89, is found the word *saḥaj~t~*: *cakkhuṃ ca paṭicca rāpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvijñ~ṇaṃ /tattha saḥaj~t~ vedan~ saññ~ cetan~ phaso manasik~ro ete te dhamm~ ekalakkhaṇ~ upp~dalakkhaṇena //* See also, T. Vol 2. p.72c, lines 9-10 and p.87c, lines 26-27.*

¹⁹ Ny, p.417c

²⁰ ibid, p.418b

²¹ ibid, p.419c

²² ibid, p.420b

²³ ibid, p.416c

²⁴ ibid, p.425c:

²⁵ Tanaka, p.99

²⁶ ibid, p.100

²⁷ ibid, p.100 f

²⁸ ibid, p.101

²⁹ T29, No. 1563, p.814c. Cf Tanaka's comment (Tanaka, p.100)

³⁰ AKB, p.84 f; Vy, p.197 f. Sanskrit words in brackets whose source is not specified are those in AKB.

³¹ Vy: *pārvam hi bṣam pañ~d amkuraḥ/ pārvam abhigh~taḥ pañ~c chabda iti /*

³² ibid: *pradṣaḥ saprabha evotpadyate na ni-prabhaḥ/ amkurasy' ~tape utpadyam~nasyaiva ch~y~ bhavati /*

³³ ibid: *varti-sneh'~dik~ s~magrṣ*

³⁴ ibid: *bṣ'~tap'~dik~*

³⁵ ibid: *sahotpann~n~ṁ hetu-phala-bh~va iṣyate/ tadyath~ cakṣuḥ sahotpannam api cakṣur-vijñ~nena tad- utpattau hetur bhavati /*

³⁶ ibid: *na hi cakṣur-vijñ~naṁ tasya cakṣuṣo hetur bhavati /*

³⁷ ibid: *bh~v~bh~vayos tadvattv~t ... caitt~dṣi~μ bh~ve cittasya bh~vad abh~ve c~bh~v~t te'pi cittasya hetavo bhavanti /*

³⁸ ibid: *rāpa-rasa-gandha-spraṣṭavya-svabh~vasyop~d~ya-rāpasya ... anyonya-sahabhā~hetu-prasaṅgaḥ /*

³⁹ *ibid*: *yath~ tridaṇḍasya daṇḍa-trayasy~nyonya-balen~vasth~nam / evaṃ sahabhuv~ṃ citta-caitt~dṣi~ṃ hetu-phala-bhavaú sidhyati /*

⁴⁰ *ibid*: *n~nyonya-balam eva*

⁴¹ *ibid*: *eṣ~m api sahabhuv~m anye'pi sabh~ga-sarvatraga-vip~ka-k~raṇa-hetavaú sãtrak'-di-sth~nṣi~ bhavantiṣi siddhã sahabhã-hetuḥ /*

⁴² Ny, p.418c

⁴³ These last 2 points are mentioned towards the end of the debate (p.421b).

⁴⁴ Tanaka (p.95), "In the second argument, the Sautr~ntika's claim that if a cause-and-effect relation were recognized for the future, an unacceptable situation would result in which the dharmas would exist in the future and the past as well as in the present, making dharmas eternal." This interpretation does not seem to be quite right.

⁴⁵ Ny, p.417a

⁴⁶ Contra J. Kato, *Kyōryōbu no kenkyū*, (Tokyo, 1989) p.309 f.

⁴⁷ Ny, p.422a

⁴⁸ Xuan Zang's rendering here is 'Depending on this, that exists. Because of the arising of this, that arises.'

⁴⁹ Ny, p.419a, 419c

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p.418a-b

⁵¹ *ibid*, p.419b

⁵² *k~ritra* is unique to a present dharma. It is the efficacy of projecting its own effect (*svaphal~kṣepa*). That is, it is only in the present moment that a dharma has the causal efficacy of causally conditioning itself to be arisen in the next moment of its series. See *Entrance*, pp.272 ff.

⁵³ Saṃghabhadra explains that the causal efficacy of a dharma is two-fold. One is *k~ritra* which Xuan Zang in such context carefully renders as . The other, representing causal efficacy in general other than *k~ritra*, is rendered by Xuan Zang as corresponding to various Sanskrit originals - *vṛtti*, *vy~para*, *s~marthya*, etc.

⁵⁴ Ny, p.419c

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p.421b

⁵⁶ Samghabhadrā argument here seems to be that if past dharmas are accepted as causally efficacious, such a theory would serve no purpose for the account of continuous causal efficacy of dharmas.

⁵⁷ Ny, p.421b-c

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p.419c

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.419c. Contra Tanaka's tr. (Tanaka, p.99) which left out the third alternative.

⁶⁰ Ny, p.420a, line 3

⁶¹ I take *ren* (Mathews' Dictionary no. 3097) here to be *ren* (Mathews' no. 3099). For the passage, see T. 27, p. 420a, lines 25-28.

⁶² Ny, p.420b

⁶³ *ibid.*, p.420c-421a

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p.713b

⁶⁵ Tanaka, p.96

⁶⁶ *loc. cit.*

⁶⁷ Tanaka, p.98

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p.98 f.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p.98

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p.97

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p.101

⁷² AKB, p.85; see also *supra* § 2

⁷³ Thus, the secondary characteristic of arising (*j~ti-j~ti*) is responsible for the arising of the characteristic of arising (*j~ti*) alone, and that of any of the remaining eight dharmas. Cf AKB, p.76.