

“*Apūrva*” “*Devatā*” and “*Svarga*”:
Arguments on the Words Denoting Non-experiential Objects

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We cannot directly experience and understand the objects of the words such as “*apūrva*”(Unprecedented Potency), “*devatā*” (Divinity) and “*svarga*”(Heaven), while the words such as “cow” and “horse” immediately stir listener’s concrete images of them that were previously experienced. Therefore, in Indian linguistic context, some assert that there are two kinds of words. However, a grammarian philosopher Bhartrhari (ca. 450) introduces a verse that states that there is no difference between the denoting power of the words such as “cow” and that of the words such as “*apūrva*” in the second book of his *Vākyapadīya*. Other Indian thinkers as well deal with this issue in various contexts. This presentation aims at exploring the idea expressed in the Bhartrhari's verse and the related arguments found in other treatises.

Although, according to Bhartrhari, a sentence (*vākya*) is the primary indivisible unit of language, and therefore words are merely abstracted from it, he occasionally explains various views on word-meaning with disregard to the sentence/word issue. The verse VP 2.119 presents a view that asserts the power of each word is confined to denote an object in general (*arthamātra*), or *sattā* (Being) only, and the understanding of particular forms such as a cow and a horse is the results of the repeated use of the words for specific objects. According to this view, denoting powers of two kinds of the words are identical regardless of their apparently different kinds of objects. Kumārila (ca. 660), who directly quotes and criticizes the verse, also considers these two are identical, but he regards thus because both denotes *ākṛti* (form/universal) of their objects.

In contrast to them, the Naiyāyikas and the Sāṃkhyas distinguish these two in the context examining language as a valid means of knowledge (*pramāna*). Uddyotakara (ca. 610) states that Heaven (*svarga*) and so on are imperceptible for ordinary people, therefore words of Vedic sages, which speak about them, should be regarded as a *pramāna* called *āptopadeśa* (teaching of credible persons). Thus, Uddyotakara approves the difference of the words denoting Heaven and so on from words denoting ordinary experiential objects. The author of the *Yuktidīpikā* (ca. 675) also explicitly states that

words telling about “Heaven” should be regarded as *āgama* but the words like “tree” should not be.