

## Bali-offerings in the Brahmanical and Buddhist Texts

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The term *bali* originally means a tribute to the human rulers and the supernatural beings as well. In the ritual context *bali* denotes a kind of oblations and *bali*-offerings are mentioned often not only in the Vedic and post-Vedic texts but also in the Buddhist texts. The following three points are confirmed by J. Gonda in his Vedic Ritual, pp. 417-420: 1. The daily offering of a part of food to various beings, which is usually called *vaiśvadeva* and is prescribed in the Gṛhyasūtras, is a most typical example of this offering. 2. A number of rites include *bali*-offerings as a part of ritual procedure. 3. There are several rites the title of which ends with *bali* such as *sarpabali*, *viṣṇubali* and so forth.

The Jātakas and a limited number of other Pali texts hand down some examples of *bali*-offerings which are sometimes combined with the so-called *pūjā* worship of certain deities. The rite to cure the snake-bite described at the end of the Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī and the two rites described in the Meghasūtra also show the *bali*-offerings with the *pūjā* worship. This combination of the *bali*-offerings and the *pūjā* ceremony can be found in other Buddhist ritual texts such as the Amoghapāsakalparāja and the Susiddhikarasūtra as well. And the same thing can be said about the domestic rites with the title ending with *bali*.

When the method of the *bali*-offerings, namely putting oblations on the ground or throwing them in the air, is taken into consideration, we can find other examples of the *bali*-offerings even in some Śrauta rituals. Those deities of these rituals and the beings to which *bali* is offered show that they are not always the great gods of the Vedic and post-Vedic pantheon but rather semi-divine beings.

Some oblations, mostly those mentioned in the Jātakas, are sanguinary and that reminds me of the so-called *balidānas* which are performed for the Śākta goddesses.

In this paper I will examine these facts mentioned above in some detail and try to show that the *bali*-offerings are a very popular, namely widely known to the people of ancient India, way of worship of the super-natural beings and they seemingly form another strong current of religious traditions common to Brahmanism and Buddhism.